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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

HEIDEGGER AND LEVINAS AND THE CRISIS OF PHENOMENOLOGY:  
THINKING THE PROPRIETY AND A-PROPRIETY OF TIME

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

TRAVIS TENNEY ANDERSON

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Emmanuel Levinas

AQAE Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence

CCP Collected Philosophical Papers

DEE De l'existence a l'existant

EAI Ethics and Infinity

EE Existence and Existents

EI Éthique et Infini

OTB Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence

TAI Totality and Infinity

TI Totalité et Infini

TO Time and the Other

Martin Heidegger

BPP The Basic Problems of Phenomenology

BT Being and Time

BW Basic Writings

GA 43 Gesamtausgabe 43 (Nietzsche: der Wille zur Macht als Kunst)

GP Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie

HCT History of the Concept of Time

HW	<u>Holzwege</u>
OWL	<u>On the Way to Language</u>
PGZ	<u>Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs</u>
SD	<u>Das Sache des Denkens</u>
SZ	<u>Sein und Zeit</u>
TB	<u>On Time and Being</u>
UZS	<u>Unterwegs zur Sprache</u>
VA	<u>Vorträge und Aufsätze</u>
W	<u>Wegmarken</u>
WCT	<u>What is Called Thinking?</u>
WHD	<u>Was Heisst Denken?</u>
WGM	"The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics" (The English language translation of the introduction to <u>Was ist Metaphysik?</u> , from Walter Kaufmann, <u>Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre.</u> )
WM	<u>Was ist Metaphysik?</u>

## INTRODUCTION

While both Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas explicitly consider themselves phenomenologists and approach their divergent subjects accordingly, their gestures intimate that each of them in varying degrees and ways understands phenomenology and its limits quite differently. Nevertheless, when we consider their respective conceptions of phenomenology and its limits with specific regard to the question of time, we find that these two philosophers are actually much closer in both their concerns and their ultimate conclusions than they might otherwise appear--and certainly closer than either philosopher himself apparently realizes. In addition, we find that each philosopher's thought moves beyond phenomenology in such a way as to implicitly call its basic concepts into question and direct thinking toward what is thought in that excessive movement as what *must* be thought in any future attempt to revise those basic concepts, and thus genuinely ground phenomenology as a rigorous philosophical science.

On the one hand, I will argue that Heidegger finds in the question of time a persistent and radical problem for phenomenology in general and for the hermeneutic of Dasein in particular. Specifically, he discovers the unaccountable trace of a dimension to time refractory to both the categorical thinking of metaphysics and the intuitive thinking of phenomenology, and thus discovers both Dasein and time to lie beyond the reach of propositional thought. The discovery



of this trace proves problematic for phenomenology as a science because the basic concepts of phenomenology cannot be fully grounded until the meaning of being and the nature of Dasein are at least provisionally understood, and yet this understanding would seem to require both a transparent concept of time and, at the same time, a rethinking of the concept as such. The problem and the task is thus to think about time in such a way as to open the possibility of grounding phenomenology, without transforming time in the process or remaining with a kind of thinking in which the traditional understanding of the concept still remains intact or implicitly reasserts itself.

Since the discovery of this trace thus interrupts the work of phenomenology on a radical level and moves both thinking and Dasein toward an essential transformation, I will ultimately suggest that its discovery occasions the phenomenological equivalent of a scientific crisis and thus demands nothing less than a radical revision of phenomenology and its basic concepts, a revision which must be accomplished before phenomenology can ever realize the end Heidegger envisioned for it in universal phenomenological ontology. I will also suggest that Heidegger finds relatively early in his work that the trace of this other time is linked to the trace of the holy, even though he does not fully explore that link and explicate thereby its ethical implications. I believe that Heidegger's explicit affirmation of the essential inadequacy of ontological thought to the temporal generosity animating the dynamic of time in its fugitive recession--which dynamic is thought in his later work as the movement of Ereignis-Enteignis in its

withdrawal from the thinking it draws along--indicates an attempt to find a way to think time and the source which grants it from within the exclusive perspective opened by the ontological question of the meaning of Being, while preserving the integrity of time in that attempt. As Levinas will show that such an attempt is destined to failure as long as its point of departure is an ontological question, I will ultimately contend that the Heideggerian analysis implicitly opens upon the way toward a resolution of the crisis, even though it explicitly only reaffirms the limits of human finitude without recognizing that opening for what it is.

On the other hand, I will argue that while Levinas seems comparatively disinterested in the critical implications of his work for phenomenology as a rigorous science of being, Levinas clearly recognizes in the concept of time the opening upon a redemptive escape from the finitude of being, and thus paves the way, I believe, toward a radical rethinking of phenomenology. Levinas, like Heidegger, sees in time the trace of an essential discontinuity in existence, but unlike Heidegger, Levinas finds a way to account for that trace. He discovers temporal discontinuity, or diachrony, to have its source in the ethical relation, the transcendent relationship with the personal other. Levinas finds this relation to be essentially different from all ontic, ontological, categorical, and even phenomenological relations--in other words, different from any of the possible care-ful compartments of human being understood as Dasein, or as what

Alphonso Lingis has appropriately called "deathbound subjectivity."<sup>1</sup> This relation proves to be so unlike any other relation, in fact, that Levinas calls it a rapport sans rapport. And yet, this relationship with what is otherwise than being is a relationship essential to both human nature and the meaning of being. While Levinas reaffirms Heidegger's contention that the question of time must be thought together with the question of human nature and the meaning of being, I feel he moves beyond Heidegger in showing precisely how and why: because the ethical relation with the Other fundamentally conditions the possibility of Dasein's existence by granting Dasein a true time in which it can exist as the primordial place of the disclosure of being. Insofar as Levinas' work thus determines that the relation of being and time can and must be understood alongside the fundamental hypostatic plurality of the Same and the Other, I will suggest that it effectively opens the way toward a revision of phenomenology and a resolution of the crisis effected by the ontological questionability of its basic concepts.

In summary, the bulk of this work is addressed to an analysis of time in Levinas' early texts and in Heidegger's late texts and Hölderlin essays, mostly with an eye to showing the essential proximity of Levinas and Heidegger with respect to the question of the alterity of time and the inadequacy of phenomenology to think it. But in conclusion, I will suggest--and only suggest, as the limits of this

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<sup>1</sup> Alphonso Lingis, Deathbound Subjectivity (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). Though I somewhat disagree with Lingis' reasons for calling Dasein a subjectivity, which Heidegger patently does not understand it to be, I find the phrase aptly descriptive from the Levinasian perspective I will attempt to explicate in this text.

work preclude anything more--that in thinking what I will call the propriety and appropriety of time, Heidegger and Levinas provide us with a way to think through what subtly announces itself in their work as a crisis of phenomenology.

## PART ONE

### THINKING THE HYPOSTATIC PRESENT AND THE A-PROPRIETY OF TIME IN THE ONTOLOGY OF EMMANUEL LEVINAS

It will be the aim of the first part of this work to show that Levinas, like Heidegger, is concerned with the question of the meaning of being, but that, unlike Heidegger, he sees a need from the very beginning to go beyond phenomena and intuition in broaching an answer to that question. Furthermore, although there is no evidence that Levinas explicitly recognizes in this need the indication of a crisis of phenomenology, I will eventually suggest that this is ultimately what it amounts to.

We will see that Levinas attempts to liberate a meaning for existence beyond that produced by a solitary subject in the intentional freedom and security of knowledge and enjoyment, for whom existence is found to be both ineluctable and tragic--and hence, fundamentally senseless: Levinas affirms that the definitive subject escapes the senselessness of anonymous being by virtue of its definitiveness, but he shows as well that by virtue of that same definitiveness the subject is immediately condemned to a burdensome, fatal present without a true future--from which there is then necessitated yet another escape. What Levinas ultimately discovers is that only time can effect this second escape. And yet,

Levinas also shows that time cannot be produced by the subject alone in the definitiveness of its solitary being, but is opened to the subject in a moment prior to the moment in which its definitive subjectivity is accomplished--in a moment prior to the moment of being, in other words. Finally, Levinas shows that as phenomenology and propositional thought cannot reach beyond being and phenomena, in order to effect that reach and account for time, one must then move beyond phenomenology.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE FIRST MOMENT OF HYPOSTASIS: EXISTENCE AND EVANESCENCE

Levinas prefaces De l'existence a l'existant with the demarcation of a distinction between transcendence and what he calls "ex-cendence."<sup>1</sup> He says the former refers to the act whereby an existent would realize a higher existence, a higher state of being, whereas the latter names the relationship with the Other, a movement toward the Good. In contrast with this economic transcendence, the movement of ex-cendence does not realize another mode of being; rather, it

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<sup>1</sup> The reference to "ex-cendence" [ex-cendence], and the opposition between "ex-cendence" and "transcendence," are effectively limited to this passage in De l'existence a l'existant. In Le temps et l'autre the word "ex-cendence" is never used (nor is it used again in either Totalité et infini or Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence), though an explicit differentiation is drawn in a number of places between the transcendence of temporality and the transcendence of space, light, and need--the former apparently corresponding in meaning to what Levinas earlier seemed to suggest by "ex-cendence." On two occasions in Totalité et infini Levinas uses a neologism apparently coined by Jean Wahl, "trans-ascendence" [trans-ascendance], which again seems to correspond in meaning to "ex-cendence," and seems to be used primarily to help clarify the meaning of transcendence in his text and deconstructively differentiate it from its historical counterparts (See TI 5, 12/TAI 35, 41). Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence begins by addressing precisely this confusion and says of transcendence, understood in this ex-cendent sense: "If transcendence has a meaning, it can only signify the fact that the event of being, the esse, the essence, passes over to what is other than being. . . . Transcendence is passing over to being's other, otherwise than being. Not to be otherwise, but otherwise than being" (AQAE 3-4/OTB 3).

signifies an escape from being, a radical "dis-inter-estedness."<sup>2</sup> But De l'existence a l'existant does not directly address this escape from being, as do the later works we will consider. Levinas says in the preface that ex-cendence and the Good necessarily have a "foothold" in Being and that De l'existence a l'existant is limited to an exposition of that foothold. Instead of directly addressing the departure from being realized by the social relation, this text addresses the position in being presupposed and required by that departure: "it sets out to approach the idea of Being in general in its impersonality so as to then be able to analyze the notion of the present and of position, in which a being, a subject, an existent, arises in impersonal Being through an hypostasis" (DEE 18/EE 19). Hypostasis, as we will see, is the passage from activity to substance accomplished in the event of the present. It is the instantaneous positing of an embodied, determinate subject which dominates and breaks up the anonymity of indeterminate existence, but only at the expense of its own tragic fatality.

In the radio interviews with Phillippe Nemo broadcast in 1981 and published as Éthique et infini the following year, Levinas characterizes De l'existence a l'existant as a text that deals with the phenomenon of impersonal being, the unsettling fact that "there is" [il y a]:

My reflection on this subject starts with childhood memories. One sleeps alone, the adults continue life; the child feels the silence of his bedroom as "rumbling." . . . It is something resembling what one hears when one puts an empty shell close to the ear, as if the emptiness were full, as if the silence were a noise. It is something one can also feel when one thinks

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<sup>2</sup> See EI 51/EAI 52.



that even if there were nothing, the fact that "there is" is undeniable. Not that there is this or that; but the very scene of being is open: there is. In the absolute emptiness that one can imagine before creation--there is. (EI 45-46/EAI 48)

Levinas adds that the impersonal existence thematized by the French expression "il y a" is what is evoked in expressions like "it rains" or "it is night." He calls it at one point "the play of being which is enacted without players" (DEE 169/EE 98). In the preface to the second edition of the French text Levinas says that the turn to the "there is" is a return to "those strange obsessions one remembers from childhood and which resurface in insomnia, when the silence resounds and the emptiness is full" (DEE 10).<sup>3</sup> The "there is," he explains, is neither being nor nothingness. Above all, it is neither joy nor abundance. Levinas' understanding of the "il y a" evolves in sharp contrast to his understanding of the Heideggerian expression "es gibt," which evokes generosity and plenitude. Levinas sees only the shadow of dread in the inevitable fact that "there is," and he finds only horror and panic in those experiences which phenomenally open to consciousness a glimpse of this impersonal being.

Levinas tells Nemo that he first sought a solution to the horror of the "there is" by analyzing the event of hypostasis. Hypostasis is, of course, from a Greek philosophical term etymologically traceable to hypo, a preposition meaning "under" or "beneath," and stasis, meaning "a placing," "a setting," or "a standing." Hypostasis thus evokes the image of "standing under," and ontologically

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<sup>3</sup> This translation is my own.

understood in that way is quite literally translated by its Latin equivalent, substantia. When Levinas speaks of hypostasis, however, he means to express the event in which a substance, a substantial being, is accomplished out of the insubstantiality of the "there is,"<sup>4</sup> the hypostatic *passage* from the activity of existing to the substantiality of an existent. This event is accomplished in a moment of definitive mastery over the "there is" which dreads in being, since in a moment of hypostasis the determinate existent is not borne by the "there is," but dominates it.<sup>5</sup> Levinas' analysis of this virile moment of hypostasis thus marks an attempt to seek salvation for being ontologically, as he himself later noted: "Being which is posited, I thought, is 'saved'" (EI 50/EAI 51).

But Levinas finds the ontological search unsuccessful. He discovers that while the dominating existent succeeds in escaping impersonal being, it does so only at the cost of yet another captivity; an existent secures its definitive being only by "chaining" itself to itself in the closure of a burdensome, solitary and fatal existence. As Levinas shows, this tragic side to hypostasis manifests itself both on the level of the pure event and on the level of consciousness:

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<sup>4</sup> As Richard Cohen remarks in a translator's footnote to Time and the Other (TO 53), Levinas uses the word "accomplish" very carefully, as he explains in Totalité et infini:

The break-up of the formal structure of thought (the noema of a noesis) into events which this structure dissimulates, but which sustain it and restore its concrete significance, constitutes a deduction--necessary and yet non-analytical. In our exposition it is indicated by expressions such as "that is," or "precisely," or "this accomplishes that," or "this is produced as that." (TI xvii/TAI 28)

<sup>5</sup> See EI 49-51/EAI 51.

The hypostasis, in participating in the there is, finds itself again to be a solitude, in the definitiveness of the bond with which the ego is chained to its self. The world and knowledge are not events by which the upsurge of existence in an ego, which wills to be absolutely master of being, absolutely behind it, is blunted. The I draws back from its object and from itself, but this liberation from itself appears as an infinite task. The I always has one foot caught in its own existence. Outside in face of everything, it is inside of itself, tied to itself. It is forever bound to the existence which it has taken up. This impossibility for the ego to not be a self constitutes the underlying tragic element in the ego, the fact that it is riveted to its own being. (DEE 142-143/EE 84)

As there proves to be no ontological salvation from both the horror of indeterminate being and the inescapable burden of determinate being once taken up, a remedy is called for which the "ontological adventure" cannot provide.

Levinas thus says he subsequently sought salvation for being by following what he calls in Ethics and Infinity "an entirely different movement" (EI 50/EAI 52). This other movement turns out to be that belonging to the second direction taken by the philosophical spirit in the search for truth, which is described in "La philosophie et l'idée de la infini" as heteronomy. Levinas explains:

To escape the "there is" one must not be posed, but deposed; to make an act of deposition, in the sense one speaks of deposed kings. This deposition of sovereignty by the ego is the social relationship with the Other, the dis-inter-ested relation. I write it in three words to underline the escape from being it signifies. I distrust the compromised word "love," but the responsibility for the Other, being-for-the-other, seemed to me, as early as that time, to stop the anonymous and senseless rumbling of being. It is in the form of such a relation that the deliverance from the "there is" appeared to me. (EI 50-51/EAI 52)

According to the interviews, then, De l'existence a l'existant traces the path of the first movement, or "adventure," while leading us to a point from which we may embark on the second.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Levinas finds in the course of his analyses that the movement of the diachronic relationship does not resemble the illuminating movement of an "intentional ray," and its distance is not that which separates noeses from noemata. We could say it detours from what he calls the ontological adventure by way of an ethical adventure, traversing without spanning the interval of transcendence, the infinite distance between the same and the Other. An understanding of the difference between these two adventures offers a provisional view of the difference between the two "times" traversed in each.

In Totalité et infini Levinas likens what he calls in De l'existent a l'existence the ontological adventure to the journey of Ulysses: the illusory transcendence of knowledge and adequate thought. He says there, "the transcendence of thought remains closed in itself despite all its adventures--which in the last analysis are purely imaginary, or are adventures traversed as by Ulysses: on the way home" (TI xv/TAI 27). This ontological odyssey corresponds to the movement of autonomous philosophical research, which Levinas describes in La philosophie et l'idée de l'infini as "the reduction of the other to the same" and which he equates there with the conquest of being (DEHH 166/ CPP 48). It identifies the diverse and dissolves the alterity of the other by inevitably returning to its point of departure only to find everything the same. The ethical adventure, on the other hand, is analogous to a journey toward the other. This journey leaves the intimate and familiar behind, never to return. Levinas shows that the metaphysical movement toward the Other takes the form of an insatiable desire that remains in a dimension foreign to that of the metaphysician--like Abraham, who in turning toward God leaves his country, his kindred, and his father's house to live a life at the limits of propriety, forever a stranger in a strange land, dispossessed and renouncing all possession. The sequence indicated in God's command to Abraham, recounted in Genesis 12:1, may be said to aptly indicate the peculiarity of this transcendent journey: Abraham is not instructed to first leave his father's house, then his kindred, and finally his country--which would reflect the order of a geographic departure; his journey is not an autonomous expedition, and it accordingly originates beyond its point of departure, leaving last that which is ontologically closest.

Both these journeys figure as types in Levinas' work and correspond to the difference between the proper, economic time of the "I" and the a-proper time of transcendence: whereas the former movement is broken into moments and thus breaks up the eternal into a derivative time of subjective captivity, the latter opens upon an infinite future and thus constitutes true ex-perience. Levinas says

While succinct and helpful, this brief recapitulation of the first search fails to mention a number of crucial discoveries made in the course of that search, discoveries which must be addressed if one is to properly understand the liberating deposition of which Levinas speaks.

First, there is the question of why a being must be deposed in order to be saved, or redeemed, from anonymous being. The startling answer is that a subject must be deposed in order to be redeemed because of itself it cannot produce a time with a true future, that is, a time wherein the radically new is possible, and only such a time can effect a redemption from the definitiveness of being.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the first important discovery made in De l'existence a l'existant is that the solitary subject is condemned in being a definitive existent because as such it is without true time! Granted, the subject has what one might call a time of its own, an economic time of reconciliation and commerce, but this economic "time" is without a true future and thus is not true time. Or, if this timeless time of the

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in a footnote to the preface of Le temps et l'autre that diachrony is "the very length of time" traversed in awaiting and desiring the Other (TA 12/TO 33). He refers the reader particularly to the essay "God and Philosophy," where the proximity of the Other "remains a dia-chronic break, a resistance of time to the synthesis of simultaneity" (CPP 167). It is thus that Levinas can say that the diachronic relationship with the Other is a dialogue which ultimately has to be thought "in terms other than those of the dialectic of the solitary subject"--a diachronic dialogue, he says, which "will furnish us with a set of concepts of a new kind" (DEE 160/EE 93-94).

<sup>7</sup> The word "deposition" must be understood, I think, in the context of the hypostatic situation of a conscious being, the situation that Levinas says in "God and Philosophy" is "overturned" in the catastrophic awakening to the responsibility for the Other. In other words, I think Levinas uses the terms "deposition" and "catastrophe" somewhat analogously.

world is considered to warrant the name "time" simply by virtue of convention, tradition or fiat, then we must say that in order to have a future the subject must be granted an other time, an a-proper time. In effect, we could say that in investigating the relation between an existent and existence Levinas discovers the present to be the hypostatic constitution of an existent, that event which in its accomplishment roots and bases a being in the anonymous rustling of existence. But we must, then, also say that he thereby finds the present to be but an "apparition" at grips with this existence, and the creature given place by this creative present to be nothing more than the substantiated dynamism of an arche which animates an "eternal presence to oneself" (AQAE 144/OTB 113). Hence, what the first search reveals, in effect, is that the definitively posited subject has no "virginal" beginning and no "true future" (DEE 40/EE 29); in order to redeem being there must be a time with a true future, an other time, a time other than the economic 'time' of the solitary subject. The radicality of this necessary alternative is perhaps most clearly visible when it is contrasted with the efforts of Husserl and Heidegger to understand time in terms of a synthesis of past, present, and future. Levinas would maintain in this regard, as Richard Cohen so aptly observes, that no inner-time synthesis is capable of accounting for either the non-identity of the diachronous instant or the alterity of a true future: "for Levinas the alterity of time's dimensions--the pastness of the past and the futurity of the

future--must be linked to an absolute alterity precisely beyond even the most far-reaching syntheses of the subject."<sup>8</sup>

Levinas ultimately finds that redemptive alterity in the future granted by the Other in the ethical relation. This is the second decisive discovery Levinas makes: that this other time is the very relationship with the Other. This other time proves to be true time, and will be hereafter referred to simply as time, since the proper time of the "I" and its variants are shown to be founded modes of this a-proper time.

The third discovery of immediate importance to us is that if Levinas is right ontology, even a fundamental ontology, cannot comprehensively account for this other time, since it requires the Other, and thus has its source beyond the reach of either ontological thought or phenomenology. With specific regard for the question of time and the problem it poses for phenomenological thought, then, we must say that what De l'existence a l'existant actually uncovers in its phenomenological analyses is not time itself, but the exigency and trace of time in being.

Thus, the real significance of the ontological solution sought in De l'existence a l'existant, at least with respect to the question of time and the crisis of phenomenology, lies among the possibilities for thought opened up in moving beyond it. This is not to say the analysis of anonymous being and the exposition

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<sup>8</sup> Richard A. Cohen, review of Existence and Existents, by Emmanuel Levinas, in Man and World 12 (Winter 1979): 522.

of the hypostatic present are unimportant; no, it is to say that the "foothold in being" this text thematically addresses has its full significance as a step on the upwards climb beyond being which is undertaken in the texts to follow. Within the perspective afforded by those texts we can say that the actual result of Levinas' investigations in De l'existence a l'existant, expressed in negative terms, is a twofold response to the assumptions and conclusions of the existential analytic carried out in Sein und Zeit--a response which clearly anticipates the more comprehensive critique to be undertaken in Totalité et infini: first, Levinas intimates that for a solitary, definitive existent there could be no primordial enjoyment or true separation, and no salvation from either anonymous existence or the paradoxically burdensome care for existence every existent must shoulder even in refusing it; and second, Levinas shows that without the Other the existent could only exist as a solitary, definitive existent, instantaneously posited without a true future in the current of anonymous being. In positive terms, Levinas indicates that this solitary and tragic existence bears in itself the trace of a remedy to be found in the relation with the Other, as both the lag operative in the very event of existing and the hesitation operative in consciousness and living in the world manifest the nothingness that comes from the Other, and thus reveal the trace of a redemptive future and the possibility of a meaning to existence beyond that inscribed on either the horizon of an eternal present or that of a proper, ecstatic temporality.



Levinas notes at the outset of his text that the difficulty in conceiving Being apart from beings and the tendency to envisage the one in the other are not accidental--they are due to our habit of situating the instant outside any event. By an event, Levinas means the event of being, the incomparable event of beginning effected in the act by which an existent takes up its existence. (When this event is effected as the effervescence and situation of a conscious subject in the world he will call it the instant of hypostasis.) This mistaken conception of the instant as incidental to the event of being constitutes a degradation of the instant: according to Levinas, philosophy has traditionally conceived of the instant as a "simple and inert" element of time, but by subordinating the instant to the dialectic of time, itself misunderstood, philosophy has failed to recognize that the instant has a dialectic of its own.

Levinas says that being and a being are not two independent terms, and that the event of being does not link them up as such; the being of a being is realized in an action, an action exercised over being: "A being' has already made a contract with Being; it cannot be isolated from it. It is. It already exercises over Being the domination a subject exercises over its attributes. It exercises it in an instant, which phenomenological analysis takes as something that cannot be decomposed" (DEE 16/EE 17). In opposition to this erroneous assumption Levinas will show that the instant is not outside the event of hypostasis, but in a

"hidden event" is both the outcome and the effectuation of that event, and thus can be decomposed along with it.<sup>9</sup>

He begins by affirming that an instant is articulated, and by claiming that this articulation is what distinguishes it from the eternal, conceived as simple and foreign to events (DEE 17/EE 18). Thus, in order to understand the articulation of the instant, we must understand the event of being which constitutes an instant, and see that it is no simple act, but has a double structure. Levinas describes it as both the activity of being and the possession of being. That is, the action exercised by a being over being is not pure activity, but a being doubled up with a having. In the first place, an existent exercises over being a certain domination; in the event in which a substantive takes up its being, it effects an act over being, it masters being. And yet, reason would demand that in the domination of existence by an existent, being is not that which can be mastered by what is not yet.<sup>10</sup> It would seem that being is that which can be mastered only by what already is by virtue of a present inherited from the past. Despite the apparent reasonableness of this demand, it is wrong. It cannot be the case that the being is prior to the instant of its being. Levinas is very clear about this:

Before linking up with the instants that precede or follow it, an instant contains an act by which existence is acquired. Each instant is a beginning, a birth. . . . of itself an instant is a relationship, a conquest, although this relationship does not refer to any future or past, nor to any being or event

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<sup>9</sup> This particular formulation appears on p. 30 and is echoed on p. 35 of EE.

<sup>10</sup> We will see in the next chapter that prior to accomplishing a definitive mastery over being, there is time to "be" otherwise than a virile subject.

situated in that past or future. An instant qua beginning and birth is a relationship sui generis, a relationship with and initiation into Being. . . . What begins to be does not exist before having begun, and yet it is what does not exist that must through its beginning give birth to itself, come to itself, without coming from anywhere. (DEE 130/EE 76)

This paradoxical duality of the instant has by and large escaped philosophical attention precisely because of the impossible demand articulated above which confuses the problem of origin with the problem of causality. Levinas notes that "even in the presence of a cause, that which begins must bring about the event of beginning in an instant, at a point after which the principle of contradiction . . . will hold, but for whose constitution it does not yet hold" (DEE 131/EE 76). So, in the second place, being is taken up as an inescapable burden by that which somehow comes to exist in the very act of taking up its existence. Levinas describes this paradoxical beginning and seemingly imperative conquest of being as a continual recommencement of cumbersome existence issuing as if out of nothingness.<sup>11</sup>

This articulation of the act of being is phenomenally evident in moments of fatigue and indolence. Levinas examines these phenomena precisely because the adherence of existence to an existent appears in them, prior to any reflection, like a "cleaving." Thus, these moments grant phenomenology a means of accessing the event of being in its articulation and separation.

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<sup>11</sup> See DEE 27/EE 22. We will see, in fact, that the instant does issue out of nothingness--but only insofar as nothingness itself is produced in the relation with the other and is understood as something more than the dialectical opposite of being (DEE 160/EE 94).

Fatigue and indolence, Levinas explains, are positions taken up with regard to existence--specifically, positions of impotent refusal. These positions are not mental states, but events of recoil before existence which make up that existence. In weariness, he remarks, "existence is like the reminder of a commitment to exist, with all the seriousness and harshness of an unrevokable [sic] contract. One has to do something, one has to aspire after and undertake" (DEE 31/EE 24). Weariness is thus the impossible refusal of this obligation to act, aspire after and undertake. Weariness is the weariness of being, and fatigue is the "condemnation" of being (DEE 44-46, 50/EE 31-32, 35). In the case of indolence--which, like fatigue, is an aversion toward existence--the position of refusal is taken with particular reference to the beginning of existence, as if existence were not there immediately, but preexisted that beginning:

Indolence is an impossibility of beginning, or, if one prefers, it is the effecting of beginning. It may inhere in the act that is being realized, in which case the performance rolls on as on a ill-paved road, jolted about by instants each of which is a beginning all over again. The job does not flow, does not catch on, is discontinuous--a discontinuousness which is perhaps the very nature of 'a job.'" (DEE 34/EE 26)

In both these peculiar existential stances toward existence, existence is refused and broken up, but only in the very instant it is already taken up and possessed.

Levinas' provisional analyses of fatigue and indolence affirm that the event of being is an act which is not pure activity, but is indeed an act in which being is doubled up with a having which is possessed and possesses, and which succumbs under this burden. He says that "the beginning of an act is already a belongingness and a concern for what it belongs to and for what belongs to it.

Inasmuch as it belongs to itself it conserves itself, and itself becomes a substantive, a being" (DEE 36/EE 27). And yet, the phenomenological analysis also shows that "existence drags behind it a weight--if only itself--which complicates the trip it takes. Burdened with itself . . . it does not purely and simply exist. Its movement of existence which might be pure and straightforward is bent and caught up in itself, showing that the verb to be is a reflexive verb: it is not just that one is, one is oneself" (DEE 38/EE 28). It is before this reflexive enterprise of being oneself that indolence is indolent; it is a joyless aversion to the burdensome task of existing as oneself. What fatigue abhors, indolence refuses: the burden of one's own definitive existence taken up ineluctably in existing. The dialectic of the instant consists in this very struggle for and against existence.

Levinas can say the instant is articulated along with the event of being because the latter constitutes the former and thus the structure of the former mirrors that of the latter. The paradoxical being and having of existence is reflected in the initiation and possession of the instant. Levinas says, "in the instant of a beginning there is already something to lose, for something is already possessed, if only the instant itself" (DEE 35/EE 27). In existing, being proceeds out of a having; in an instant, the beginning proceeds out of the instant itself. Being is to begin to be--it is to begin instantaneously in the inalienable possession of oneself.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In Totalité et infini Levinas says: "The absolute indetermination of the there is, an existing without existents, is an incessant negation, to an infinite degree, consequently an infinite limitation. Against the anarchy of the there is the

While these analyses of being and the instant are phenomenologically important in and of themselves, their full significance lies in what they reveal in response to the question of time: while there is no instant that is not a beginning, there is also no instant that is of itself a "virginal" beginning; that is, there is no instant which alone constitutes a true beginning, a true future. At the end of the preliminary analyses of fatigue and indolence Levinas says:

What is essential in indolence is its place prior to a beginning of an action, its way of being turned to a future. It is not a thought about the future, followed by a holding back from action. It is, in its concrete fulness [*sic*], a holding back from the future. The tragedy of being it reveals is then the more profound. It is a being fatigued by the future. Beginning does not solicit it as an occasion for rebirth, a fresh and joyful instant, a new moment; it has already brought it about beforehand as a weary present. It perhaps indicates that the future, a virginal instant, is impossible in a solitary subject. (DEE 39-40/EE 29)

Although Levinas can discover in the instant itself no true future for the solitary existent constituted in and by the act of existing, he does discover a significant structural element belonging to the event of being: an interval created in taking up an instant--an interval by virtue of which an existent is always not quite yet present. This interval is significant because it opens upon the possibility of a true future by manifesting the trace of an other time and a non-instantaneous present.

In the more detailed investigation of fatigue that follows in De l'existence a l'existant, Levinas turns to precisely this phenomenon of the "not yet," although he will not adopt this way of speaking about it until much later in his writings. When

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existent is produced, a subject of what can happen, an origin and commencement, a power" (TI 257/TAI 281).

he uncovers it here in De l'existence a l'existant, at work in the act of existence--and subsequently in the act of consciousness--he calls it simply a lag, a delay, a hesitation, an interval--and at one point, the "hidden event of which an instant is the effectuation and not only the outcome" (DEE 42/EE 30).

In broaching this phenomenon of essential interruption, Levinas says that in order to clarify the connection between being and action, the philosopher must put himself into the instant of fatigue, scrutinize it, and examine the way it comes about and the internal dialectic which structures it. What he discovers in doing so is a lag, a kind of gap between a being and what it remains attached to. He finds that fatigue is, in fact, this slackening, this letting slip while taunt with effort; there is fatigue only in effort and labor, and the principle characteristic of fatigue is this lag or slack between a being and itself. With obvious reference to Heidegger's analysis of the world of work involvements as a totality of reference relations ultimately converging on Dasein, Levinas says that in labor we are not only attached to a goal and it is not only a possibility that is incumbent on our will. The instant of effort reveals a subject in subjection to existence itself. This subjection immediately compromises our freedom as it shows human labor to presume a commitment to which it is already "yoked," "delivered over," and "forsaken." These are strong words and Levinas uses them intentionally in order to emphasize that "despite all its freedom effort reveals a condemnation; it is fatigue and suffering" (DEE 44/EE 31). In effort, which dialectically surges out

of itself and falls back into fatigue, existence is shown to be an event of subjection in the very instant it occurs.

But in this surge and relapse the hypostatic instant realizes, as we have seen, a creative moment. It is a moment of force. We recall that an existent masters being by shouldering its existence in an instant, in a beginning which appears to issue as if out of nothingness. Force describes this creation ex nihilo in which the instant of effort "somehow ventures beyond a possession whose limits and onerousness are marked by fatigue, which holds back its thrust" (DEE 44/EE 31). Though this "venture beyond" does not of itself escape the closure of the hypostatic self, it does constitute an advance over oneself--and more importantly for this analysis, it marks an advance over the present. Levinas says:

In the ecstasy of the leap which anticipates and bypasses the present, fatigue marks a delay with respect to oneself and with respect to the present. The moment by which the leap is yonder is conditioned by the fact that it is still on the hither side. What we call the dynamism of the thrust is made up of those two moments at the same time and is not constituted by the anticipation of the future, as the classical analyses, which neglect the phenomenon of fatigue, would have it. Effort is an effort of the present that lags behind the present. (DEE 44-45/EE 31)

The present is that which, in the interruption and recommencement of the eternity of being, accomplishes across that lag a situation in being, a subject.

Levinas explains this very clearly in Le temps et l'autre:

The present is the event of hypostasis. the present leaves itself--better still, it is the departure from self. It is a rip in the infinite beginningless and endless fabric of existing. The present rips apart and joins together again; it begins; it is beginning itself. (TA 32/TO 52)



The present is beginning itself and the instant marks an advance over this beginning.

We must pause to underscore two important points here: first, the instant of effort does not in and of itself produce or even anticipate a future, it only anticipates what it ineluctably constitutes: the "present"; but in addition, the "present" anticipated and bypassed by effort is a peculiar present, because despite that leap, it is always not yet present. As Levinas explicitly points out later in the text, because the present thus begins in itself and refers only to itself, it refracts the future and can have no duration. The situation the present brings about is exceptional in that it allows us to name an instant and conceive it as a substantive, but on the basis of that fact alone we cannot say that it is an instant in time: "Of itself time resists any hypostasis; . . . The present is a halt, not because it is arrested, but because it interrupts and links up again the duration to which it comes, out of itself. . . . It breaks with the duration in which we grasp it" (DEE 125-126/EE 73). Again this is stated very nicely in Le temps et l'autre:

Positing hypostasis is still not to introduce time into being. Although giving us the present, we are given neither a stretch of time set within a linear series of duration, nor a point of this series. It is not a matter of a present cut out of a current, already constituted time, or of an element of time, but of the function of the present, of the rip that it brings about in the impersonal infinity of existing. (TA 32/TO 52)

Human labor thus follows its work "step by step," Levinas says. The duration that belongs to effort is not the continuous, self-possessed duration of a melody--the model for Bergson's conception of time. According to Levinas, there are no instants present in Bergson's pure duration, only elements of a playful whole that

exist as instants only artificially and only in passing away. Effort, to the contrary, suspends all play and condemns the existent to the seriousness of a pulsating, punctiform performance to be carried out anew in every instant:

The duration of effort is made up entirely of stops. It is in this sense that it follows the work being done step by step. During the duration of the work, the effort takes on the instant, breaking and tying back together again the thread of time. It struggles behind the instant it is going to take on; it is then not, as in the case of a melody, already freed from the present it is living through, transported and swept away by it. (DEE 48/EE 33)

Nevertheless, while effort lags behind the present, it is at the same time already involved and "inter-ested" in the present: "It is caught up with the instant as an inevitable present in which it is irrevocably committed. In the midst of the anonymous flow of existence, there is stoppage and a positing" (DEE 48/EE 33-34). Thus, while the "present" the instant struggles toward is inevitable, the instant must nevertheless inevitably struggle toward it across the very distance opened in that struggle! Moreover, it is only in this stuttering struggle that a being realizes a determinate position in Being--a situation, a hypostasis. A being secures existential determinacy only in being not yet present!

On the one hand, then, there is a condemnation to fatigue which is not merely to be found in the resistance of matter to the activity of body or mind; it is not simply the despair of a finite being incapable of ever reaching its ambitions or fully grasping its possibilities. Effort bears a condemnation because one is yoked to the task of continually taking up one's own existence. Thus, the condemnation effort bears is not effort's condemnation, it is the condemnation of being. Or

more specifically, it is the fatality of being posited as a material being, but as a material being not yet fully present--that is, as the apparition of a subject:

To act is to take on a present. This does not amount to repeating that the present is the actual, but it signifies that the present is, in the anonymous rumbling of existence, the apparition of a subject which is at grips with this existence, in relationship with it, takes it up. Action is this taking up. Action is then by essence subjection and servitude, but also the first manifestation, or the very constitution, of an existent, a someone that is. For the lag of fatigue in the present opens a distance in which a relationship takes form; the present is constituted in taking charge of the present. (DEE 48-49/EE 34)<sup>13</sup>

We must carefully consider what is being thought here.

Action is the taking up of the present. Moreover, action is the very event which constitutes a someone that is, a personal human being. But the present is not the actual, it is the apparition of a subject taken up in action. What does this mean? Does it mean that since the present taken up in action is never fully actualized thereby, but always remains not yet present, it is taken up only as an apparition, only as a spectral present in the lag or distance between an existent and itself? But, if the taking up of this spectral present is action, and if action constitutes a human existent and posits it in being, then what does this suggest about the being thus constituted, situated and posited as not yet present in this

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<sup>13</sup> I have altered the translation of the Lingis text, which is oddly ordered and omits a crucial reference to the subject. The French text reads: "Ce qui ne revient pas à répéter que le présent c'est l'actuel, mais que le présent est, dans le bruissement anonyme de l'existence, l'apparition d'un sujet qui est aux prises avec cette existence, qui est en relation avec elle, qui l'assume. L'acte est cette assomption" (DEE 48-49; emphasis mine).

action? Does it not suggest that the determinate being always not yet present is itself a kind of apparition in the nominal sense--a kind of phantom being?

It would be misleading to translate l'apparition here as simply "appearance," which would belie both the peculiarity of the usage and the true sense of the word. Apparition is the appearing of what can dis-appear; it does not explicitly refer to an appearance in the nominal sense, nor to a dissembling or semblance. The English word "apparition" admirably conveys some of the same duplicity that is at play in the French word, which according to the Littré primarily means the manifestation of a phenomenon, the action of making something visible, the birth or commencement of visibility.<sup>14</sup> But the word also conveys a sense of the supernatural and religious. The Littré traces the word back to a twelfth century ecclesiastical use and says it can refer to a divine or phantom appearance--that is, a sudden appearance in the realm of the visible of the invisible or immaterial.

While l'apparition understood as a "manifesting" effectively describes the birth or commencement of the subject, what of the other meanings--especially the last one, which initially seems entirely inappropriate in this context. Would it make any sense to say the birth or hypostasis of the subject, and hence, the present, has a divine or spectral quality? Perhaps a great deal! Let us remember that the event under scrutiny is precisely the event in which a pure activity

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<sup>14</sup> Émile Littré, s.v. "Apparition," in Dictionnaire de la Langue Francaise (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1963).

becomes a substance capable of bearing a name, the event in which an existent becomes a substantial being, surging up into existence as if out of nothingness and lapsing back into it--like the moon waxing and waning, like a spirit appearing and disappearing. Toward the end of De l'existent a l'existence Levinas again uses the word apparition to describe the event of hypostasis:

We are looking for the very apparition of the substantive. To designate this apparition we have taken up the term hypostasis which, in the history of philosophy, designated the event by which the act expressed by a verb became a being designated by a substantive. Hypostasis, the apparition of a substantive, is not only the apparition of a new grammatical category; it signifies the suspension of the anonymous there is, the apparition of a private domain, of a noun. (DEE 140-41/EE 82-83)

Clearly, l'apparition here means here the mysterious appearance of something nominal and substantial out of the verbal and insubstantial. Does this not, indeed, suggest a kind of phantom or spectral quality to the appearance of the subject, as it is precisely the making present of something substantial where there was before nothing substantial, a making visible of the previously invisible?

While not frequently, Levinas uses the word apparition elsewhere in his texts, but almost always with reference to the epiphany of the Other in a face. In "La philosophie et l'idée de l'infini" the apparition of the infinite being is explicitly described in the text as an épiphane (DEHH 173/ CPP 55). An epiphany, like an apparition, is not just a sudden manifestation, but a spiritual, ghostly, or divine manifestation, a manifestation as sudden, unaccountable and unsettling as the startling appearance of a divine being in the midst of a profane world or a spectre in the night. Interestingly enough, the only place besides the passages already

quoted where Levinas uses the word apparition in De l'existence a l'existant is in a reference to the epiphany of a God in the world of primitive religion, and it is followed by a reference to Banquo's ghost (DEE 99-101/EE 61-62). But should we really understand the apparition of the subject in this way, as a divine appearance on the one hand, or a ghostly appearance on the other? Or in so doing are we taking the meaning too far?

While a reference to divinity seems very appropriate when made with regard to the Other, it appears oddly out of place with regard to the substantiation of a condemned subject. Unless, of course, the signification is entirely ironic--which may in fact be the case, since Levinas does describe the moment of force which gives birth to this "apparition" of a subject as a creation ex nihilo. If this is the case, this reference would certainly suggest an interesting twist to the condemnation associated with this moment, since it would then subtly characterize the creative act of hypostasis which ends in eternal self-reference and must realize itself anew in each instant as a tragic parody of the divine creation. This irony does seem to reinforce what Levinas says about the incapacity of the instant to dynamically move beyond itself, and it does so in a way which dovetails nicely with Levinas' distinction between the hypostatic creature who must struggle for existence in every new beginning and the divine Creator:

What is profound in Malebranche's views is that instead of situating the true dependence of creation on the Creator in its origin and in its liability to be reduced to nothingness by a new decree of the Creator, Malebranche places it in its inability to preserve itself in existence, in its need to resort to divine efficacy at each instant. Here Malebranche catches sight of the drama inherent in an instant itself, its struggle for existence, which

mechanism fails to recognize when it takes an instant to be a simple and inert element of time. Malebranche brings out a happening in an instant which does not consist in its relationship with other instants. (DEE 129/EE 75)

So it seems that the divine sense of apparition may be somewhat appropriate here after all.

But what of the ghostly? Levinas' reference to Banquo's haunting spectre in Macbeth occurs in the section on existence without existents, where we are called to imagine the reversion to the nothingness of the "there is," and where we are told that night is the very experience of the "there is" (DEE 93-94/EE 57-58). At night the silence of nothingness submerges every person and thing, dissolving their forms. At night the darkness invades like a tangible presence, opening a nocturnal space of universal absence. Levinas says this nocturnal space proper to the night delivers us over to being, as it reduces the things of the day world to horrible phantasms which sight and consciousness cannot grasp. This reduction is precisely the disappearance of materiality and form and substantiality--a reduction vividly experienced in the impersonal vigilance of insomnia. But how is the subject ghostly if in the instant of its being it is precisely the dominating upsurge of a substantial existent in the midst of the nocturnal, insubstantial, impersonal "there is"? Moreover, while Levinas says that action is the taking on of the apparition of a subject, explaining later that action is the "first manifestation" of a "someone that is," it seems strange to think of that appearance as startling or unexpected, like the apparition of a ghost, when the present is taken up, we recall, as an inevitable present; would it not seem, rather, that the inevitability of the

activity would contaminate the appearance of the subject, no matter how sudden or surprising it might otherwise be? And yet that is precisely how the subject does appear in the anonymous current of existence: as a surprise--not because the manifestation is merely unexpected, but because that occurrence is beyond natural expectations and without anticipation and history. Then again, it can only appear anew in each instant precisely because it dis-appears in each instant! Each instant is a death as surely as it is a birth.

In short, it seems that in every possible translation of the word are the disseminate traces of the other possibilities, and predominantly the trace of what first appeared as the least applicable and most problematic meaning: that of a spectral appearance. In any use of the word apparition, whether it is meant as an effervescence of the invisible in the realm of the visible or as a divine or phantom epiphany, a trace of the "ghostly" remains--haunting the word with the same unsettling presence with which the subject apparently haunts the present--bearing in itself, like a corpse, its own phantom--presaging its own return. "This return in presence of negation, this impossibility of escaping from an anonymous and uncorruptible existence," writes Levinas, constitutes the "tragedy" and "fatality" of irremissible being (DEE 100-101/EE 61). The subject which surges out of itself only to lapse back into itself, appearing and disappearing and positing itself as substantial in the tension of that insubstantial lapse, is indeed present only with the fleeting substantiality of a phantasm. A subject and a present which surge up



in existence as if out of nothingness are both, to a large degree, phantastic and spectral--haunted by insubstantiality even at their most substantial.

Hence, it would seem that we must say of action--now understood as the taking on of the spectral present by a phantom subject--that it is the very event which constitutes an existent. If we now recall that for Levinas the distance in which the relationship between a being and its being takes form is opened by the lag of fatigue in the present, and if we recall as well that in action or force a being, while not yet present, is nevertheless posited in being--and posited in traversing the very space opened up by the delay of that schematic hesitation, then we can begin to see why the present taken up in action is taken up only as an apparition, only as a spectral present in the lag or distance between an existent and itself: because the present, and hence the subject, is never fully actualized thereby, but always remains essentially not yet present. This is perhaps why Levinas immediately follows the description of the present as the apparition of a subject with this recognition of the inherent futility of solitary being revealed in effort and fatigue: "Effort is hence a condemnation because it takes up an instant as an inevitable present. It is an impossibility of disengaging itself from the eternity upon which it has opened" (DEE 49/EE 34).

The instant in which effort is spent, says Levinas, is the same instant effort brings about. There is no alterity or plurality in an instantaneous existence, and here lies the crux of the analysis--an instantaneous existence is phantastic and tragic, since where there is no alterity or plurality there is also no time: the

subject that appears in the present is a being condemned to an eternal existence within a timeless dialectic of the same. As has been implied by the use of the word apparition, the being thus constituted and posited as not yet present in this action is itself always not yet present; the existent subject is itself, in its hypostatic solitude and definitiveness, a kind of apparition, a spectral presence. In fact, as we will see in the next chapter, insofar as the existent is fundamentally a social, or ethical, being, it is precisely not a solitary and definitive subject.

This is of no small consequence for phenomenology, for insofar as the present and the subject are both a kind of apparition, or phantom appearance, the phenomenon itself--the very matter to which the phenomenological gaze must address itself, and a matter determined as such within the intentional structure of appearance or presence to a conscious subject--must be fundamentally reconceived. But we will say more of this later. For now let us note that Levinas demonstrates in De l'existence a l'existant that to be--if being is to be determined only ontologically--is to be not yet present. We are condemned in being not yet present, and thus in being at all, not because we are never fully definitive (for that will be our very salvation), but because for a being thus constituted there is no true time. There is only a dislocation of the I from itself, a lag between an existent and the performance of its existential task.

Human existence is the activity given place by and in this interval of dislocation. This dislocative lag of an existent tarrying behind its existing is what constitutes the present; the present is this lag, this distance in existing. Levinas

says it is precisely because of this distance that existence can be a relationship between an existent and itself. Existence is the upsurge of an existent in the midst of this lag, it is an activity given place by the distance of this hesitation. Hence, the only substance proper to the hypostatic being substantiated in that inscription is the sub-stance effected in the tension of a "hovering" position stretched between the leap over the spectral present and the lag behind it--a position hollowed out by the hesitation of that lagging leap, and the only time proper to this solitary subject is the "time-lag," as Levinas calls it, produced in this playless program of leap-frog with the spectral present.

Levinas ends chapter two with a summary of the analysis carried out thus far and an anticipatory indication of a reticent dimension to hypostasis which points the way toward the "second movement" he will make in seeking salvation from senseless being:

If the present is thus constituted by the taking charge of the present, if the time-lag of fatigue creates the interval in which the event of the present can occur, and if this event is equivalent to the upsurge of an existent for which to be means to take up being, the existence of an existent is by essence an activity. An existent must be in act, even when it is inactive. This activity of inactivity is not a paradox; it is the act of positing oneself on the ground, it is rest inasmuch as rest is not a pure negation but the very tension of a position, the bringing about of a here. The fundamental activity of rest, foundation, conditioning, thus appears to be the very relationship with being, the upsurge of an existent into existence, a hypostasis. This entire essay intends only to draw out the implications of this fundamental situation. (DEE 51-52/EE 35-36)

Existential effort is a condemnation because the time proper to an existent so situated in the anonymous current of Being and inscribed in the time-lag of the not yet present is no time at all, but an eternal and radical recurrence of the same

burdensome beginning. The existent is not saved from impersonal existence in being posited, it is condemned. But . . . in that position and that lag there is the trace of a redemptive possibility. We find that the "implications of this fundamental situation" are basically twofold: since the existent is not a pure event, but takes up existence in the world in which there is the Other, existence is not fundamentally ontological, and thus solitary; and since we are primordially related to the Other, the possibility of a true future is granted to us thereby. What we will find is that the very lag that gives to the definitive subject its spectral quality, also gives to the subject the possibility of a space in which it can escape its definitiveness without lapsing back into the radical indefiniteness of the "there is."

First we must see that a being is not just a pure determinate event relative to an indeterminate "there is;" it is posited; an existent is not only related to its own existence, it is grounded; said in yet another way, a being does not just exist, it exists as a bodily substance in the world. This is not to say that simply to take up being is to enter into the world. Levinas explicitly denies that conflation of events: he says, "the ontological problem arises before the scission of being into an inside and an outside. Inscription in being is not an inscription in the world" (DEE 173/EE 100). But by virtue of the position in being secured by the present a human being has a body, which is the advent of consciousness, and is thus in the world of which it is conscious. In other words, while the present does not have a position (because it is the very effecting of a position), thought does. A being that

is posited is a conscious being. In the portion of De l'existence a l'existant we considered before with reference to the meaning of the apparition, Levinas says the following about this discovery:

We have not sought, in the subject that pulls itself up from the anonymous vigilance of the there is, a thought, a consciousness, or a mind. Our investigation did not start with the ancient opposition of the ego to the world. We were concerned with determining the meaning of a much more general fact, that of the very apparition of an existent, . . . But although we have looked for the hypostasis and not consciousness, we have found consciousness. (DEE 140-141/EE 82-83)

What Levinas finds is that to live is to be in a world as an effervescent substance or scintillating light--a consciousness.

To be an ego is to be attached to things, to possess them, to have an appetite for them, to enjoy them. Levinas begins the chapter entitled "Le monde" with this clarification: "in the world we are dealing with objects. Whereas in taking up an instant we are committing ourselves irreparably to existing in a pure event which does not connect up with any substantive, any thing--in the world, substantives bearing adjectives, beings endowed with values offered to our intentions, are substituted for the vicissitudes of be-ing, in the active, verbal sense of the word" (DEE 55/EE 37).<sup>15</sup>

The world of objects is a world of intentions--not the disembodied intentions of Husserlian phenomenology, but sincere intentions, intentions

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<sup>15</sup> For the sake of clarity I have altered Lingis' translation of this passage in an attempt to more closely reflect the structure of the French text, in which the insubstantiality of existing as a pure event is contrasted with the substantiality of existing as a being essentially involved in a world of things, and not as a pure event.

animated by desire. In dealing with and intending objects within the world, the existent is not a disembodied glance, an impassive locus of relations and meanings, but a conscious "I" sincerely absorbed with those objects and intentions, and turned toward them expressly as things which are desirable, and not just meaningful. For Levinas, sincerity is saturated with desire, and being in the world is always sincere: Levinas emphasizes and reemphasizes that consciousness is precisely a sincerity.

The world of objects is also a world of phenomena, a world of light and knowledge. A form is that by which a being shows itself to us and is graspable in its givenness. In attending to these forms, intentionality breaks the ego up into an inside and an outside. Intentionality is thus the origin of sense, that which orders the relation between the exterior and the interior. For Levinas, sense is permeability for the mind--or rather, it is luminosity. Phenomenologically, light is the condition for phenomena and for their meaning as phenomena because light makes objects into a world of definitive beings we can possess (DEE 74-75/EE 48). Light makes possible an "enveloping" of the exterior by the interior. But by la lumière Levinas does not mean simply visibility to the eye; he means the clarity and illumination of thought. He says: "The miracle of light is the essence of thought: due to the light an object, while coming from without, is already ours in the horizon which precedes it; it comes from an exterior already apprehended and comes into being as though it came from us" (DEE 76/EE 48). It is existence in the world qua light that makes desire possible.

But while objects are desired by me and destined for me by virtue of that desire, they are also, by virtue of that same desire, distant from me. Through intentionality, explains Levinas, "our presence in the world is across a distance" (DEE 72/EE 46). Intentionality is possession at a distance. The exteriority of things is affirmed in our reach for them. An object may be given, but it awaits our reception of the gift. In desire this distance is always already implied. This observation may seem to be a mundane one, as it is affirmed throughout the history of philosophy. Plato's Socrates, after all, points out that my desire for the prolongation of a satisfaction or the ability to possess eternally that which I now momentarily enjoy, only affirms the fact that I do not desire what I already have, just what I lack. But Levinas is not reaffirming this character of desire simply in order to superimpose it over the intentional structure of consciousness, he is attempting to highlight its hidden function and trace its ultimate source.

Let us first attend to its hidden function. There is a distance in the desire I feel for the world and its riches because, while I am in the world, I do not possess it. Not yet, anyway. The world is given to me, but not yet. When this interval or distance (which we have already examined in the pure event of the present as the lag between an existent and its existence) is opened in the concrete world of substantial relations, it appears as the delay between my desire and its satiation, between me and that which I desire. Levinas says, "in everyday existence, in the world, the material structure of the subject is to a certain extent overcome: an interval appears between the ego and the self. The identical subject

does not return to itself immediately" (TA 45/TO 62). This delay is the hesitation of consciousness itself--or more accurately, the hesitation in being that consciousness effects. It functions as the space in which an existent can be posited as a conscious subject, and not merely a being.

For Levinas, consciousness and the power to suspend it in withdrawing from the world of visible forms into the interval of the present transforms a being into a conscious subject and posits that subject in the world. An existent stands out against the "there is" as a conscious subject by withdrawing from the exterior world in inwardness and by withdrawing from the impersonal continuity of being by interrupting it with unconsciousness. The sincerity of worldly relations which is consciousness, and thus, the possibility of suspending consciousness, are two moments of the same capacity, and this capacity is given place by the hypostatic distance opened up by existing in the world. While consciousness is a mode of being, consciousness is also, and essentially, a hesitation in being. It is only because of that hesitation that a situation in that hesitation is possible. In other words, since the present, in the effort which constitutes it, lags behind the present, and since the inwardness of consciousness realizes this lag in the world and not in a pure event, consciousness can retreat into that interval.

The fundamental situation presupposed by that retreat is not a spatial grounding which would be an objective "here"--even in sleep. Although to sleep is indeed to limit oneself to a place, the spatial positioning that is effected in lying down to sleep presupposes the more fundamental position required by



consciousness even when it is not unconsciousness. Levinas says expressly, "it is not a question of contact with the earth: to take one's stand on the earth is more than the sensation of contact, and more than a knowledge of a base. Here what is an "object" of knowledge does not confront the subject, but supports it, and supports it to the point that it is by leaning on the base that the subject posits itself as a subject" (DEE 120/EE 70). Levinas says this position precedes every act of understanding, every horizon, and all time. Consciousness is an origin and as such, unlike the present, it does have a point of departure--a position in being. The body is the "advent of consciousness" precisely because embodied consciousness is this position (DEE 122/EE 71).

The radical positing to which Levinas has reference is that discovered by Descartes. Levinas writes:

The cogito does not lead to the impersonal position: "there is thought," but to the first person in the present: "I am something that thinks." The word thing here is admirably exact. For the most profound teaching of the Cartesian cogito consists in discovering thought as a substance, that is, as something that is posited. Thought has a point of departure. There is not only a consciousness of localization, but a localization of consciousness, which is not in turn reabsorbed into consciousness, into knowing. There is here something that stands out against knowing, that is a condition for knowing. (DEE 117/EE 68)

Thought collects itself into a personal "here," from which it is never detached. As localized thought, consciousness is always based or conditioned in this way: "Consciousness is precisely the fact that the impersonal and uninterrupted affirmation of 'eternal truths' can become simply a thought, that is, can, in spite of its sleepless eternity, begin or end in a head, light up or be extinguished, and

escape itself" (DEE 118/EE 69). The localization of thought is an inward event, an "uneventful event," to use Levinas' own words. Unconsciousness is a retreat into the lag of the present, a fainting away of luminosity, a lapse in intentionality. Nothing is present to the unconscious being. But in the lapse there is position and rest, and one can limit oneself to a place in sleep only because consciousness itself comes out of this more fundamental rest:

Through position consciousness participates in sleep. The possibility of resting, of being closed up in oneself, is the possibility of giving oneself over to the base, of going to bed. It is contained in consciousness inasmuch as consciousness is localized. Sleep, a withdrawal into the plenum, takes place in consciousness as position. But position is the very event of the instant as a present. (DEE 124/EE 72)

Consciousness itself comes out of rest, Levinas says, out of this radical position which is a unique relationship with a place. It is in this sense that consciousness has a base or condition, and this "having," he says, is the only sort of having that is not an encumbering (DEE 120/EE 70). Consciousness is "here" in the sense that it is posited, and it is by being posited that the subject is a subject.

Life in the world is thus consciousness inasmuch as it provides the possibility of existing in a sincere withdrawal from existence. While sincerity is a hesitation in being, inasmuch as the desire which animates it resembles the neediness of a task to be taken up, a subject arises out of that hesitation. The ontological adventure in the world is irreducible to either a self-enclosed event or an authentic care for existence; it withdraws into inwardness and enjoys an exterior world. Levinas says that to be a subject is to be this very power of unending withdrawal, this ability to recover oneself behind whatever happens, this

power to detach oneself and remain free (DEE 78/EE 49). This is why insomnia is a phenomenologically significant moment. When one is freely exercising the power of withdrawal that is consciousness, whether in evanescence or in sleep, one is posited as a subject. But when one loses that control, as in insomnia, where it is expressly not the ego that stays awake, the subject dissipates and the ego is "swept away by the fatality of being" (DEE 110/EE 65). In short, to be in the world as a consciousness is to live through the hesitation or interval in existing, to fill up that interval and maintain it through the light. For this reason Levinas maintains that life is essentially neither an inauthentic pantomime nor an anxious care for survival:

Our existence in the world, with its desires and everyday agitation, is then not an immense fraud, a fall into inauthenticity, an evasion of our deepest destiny. It is but the amplification of that resistance [sic] against anonymous and fateful being by which existence becomes consciousness, that is, a relationship an existent maintains with existence, through the light, which both fills up and maintains the interval. (DEE 69-70/EE 51)

To be in the world is to existentially realize the non-coincidence of the subject with its own existence, its own idea of itself, its objects and its history, and to neutralize that non-coincidence by appropriating and possessing the world, thereby identifying the subject in the space of that discontinuity.

Within this understanding of how the interval of consciousness functions, we can now begin to see how Levinas has phenomenologically traced out its source. The interval transpired in consciously existing in the world, like the interval of the present effected in the pure event of being, is significant for Levinas primarily because of its relation to yet another interval: the future, the

space of postponement before death in which I can be for the Other. The analyses of De l'existence a l'existant open upon this interval of postponement that both reveals the poverty of the other intervals and redeems them--it opens upon the interval of true time. This is not to say that in the pure event of existing the "future" that is struggled for is a true future. But the lag in existing does involve time, because the discontinuity effected in the apparition of the present can be redeemed by the Other and become a time to be for the Other. Similarly, it is because desire involves this distance, that it also involves a "time ahead of me" (DEE 59/EE 39); the desire of sincere relations in the world of light and objects involves this distance as a presupposition. We say "involves" this distance, because it does not travel it--the distance traversed by the desire of intentions is not the distance between the same and the Other, it is the spectral form of that distance which can be closed by satisfaction and comprehension. The alterity of the Other is lost sight of in the search for satisfaction. But, although the desire of conscious intentions does not recognize the source of the time opened to it in separation, it presupposes that time and operates within it.

Thus, the common thread that links together the lag of the present in which there is no plurality or desire, the distance of consciousness in which there is desire, but also nullifying satisfaction, and the space of postponement before death in which there is absolute desire without the possibility of satisfaction, is the time of the "not yet"--the "nothingness necessary to time, which the subject cannot

produce" (DEE 160/EE 94). This is the time opened in the social, or ethical, relation. This is true time.

Levinas says in the last section of the book, entitled "Vers la temps" ("On the Way to Time"), that the fundamental theme of the analyses recounted therein is this, that "time does not convey the insufficiency of the relationship with Being which is effected in the present, but that it is called for to provide a remedy for the excess of the definitive [sic] contact which the instant effects. Duration, on another plane than that of being, but without destroying being, resolves the tragic involved in being" (DEE 147/EE 86). The retreat carried out by consciousness and unconsciousness is not an escape from being, only from the indefiniteness of anonymous being. In an uncommonly eloquent description Levinas says that the hope of freedom voiced in this unsuccessful escape "knocks on the closed doors of another dimension; it has a presentiment of a mode of existence where nothing is irrevokable [sic], the contrary of the definitive subjectivity of the 'I.' And this is the order of time" (DEE 152/EE 89). The hope of an order in which the ego could be liberated from itself does not have the power to realize that order. What produces the "thrust" of hope is the gravity of the present.

But the economic time that is proper to life in the world cannot redeem or repair the present, it can at best compensate for it. Economic time, the time of the "I," is a time of compensation, and that is not enough for hope. Levinas says:

It is not enough that tears be wiped away or death avenged; no tear is to be lost, no death be without a resurrection. Hope then is not satisfied with

a time composed of separate instants given to an ego that traverses them so as to gather in the following instant, as impersonal as the first one, the wages of its pain. The true object of hope is the Messiah, or salvation. (DEE 155-156/EE 91)

Hope demands salvation from being, not just compensation for being; it is a hope for the redemption of the irredeemable present, for a future where the present will have the benefit of a true recall" (DEE 156/EE 91).

The essence of time is to be found in responding to this exigency for salvation. The future is above all a resurrection of the present. The condition for the rebirth and resurrection of the "I" in fecundity is its death in the interval of the present, the interval opened in the lag of existence. It is precisely because the subject is an apparition--that is, always not yet present and haunted by that indefinitiveness--that the subject can be redeemed from the definitiveness of the present it does effect in its ironic mockery of divine creation; in the radical discontinuity of the lag in taking up one's own existence, the instant itself conditions redemption and consolation. This is why the instant must be understood in terms of its own dialectic in which the "indispensable interval of nothingness" is opened. That opening is effected, however, only in sociality. The "I" cannot endow itself with the alterity of a time in which it can recommence as genuinely other than itself. It is impossible to save oneself by oneself. While the definitive instant and its rupture from within can condition salvation, that salvation must come from beyond it. Levinas says "alterity comes to me only from the other. Is not sociality something more than the source of our representation of time: is it not time itself? . . . And the nothingness necessary to time, which

the subject cannot produce, comes from the social relationship" (DEE 160/EE 93-94). The result of the first movement is thus the discovery that time is the key to escaping being and that the alterity of a true future is fundamentally linked to the alterity of the Other.

Having thus explored the "foothold in being" effected in the instant, we are now in a position to move beyond it and consider the structure and constitutive moments of time itself, the time opened in the relationship with the Other.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SECOND MOMENT OF HYPOSTASIS:

#### TIME AND TRANSCENDENCE

According to the 1979 preface, Le temps et l'autre reproduces the stenographic record of four lectures bearing that title which were given at Jean Wahl's Philosophical College in 1946 and 1947 (TA 7/TO 29). In Éthique et infini Levinas says that Le temps et l'autre is a preparatory study of transcendence thought as diachrony:

Time and the Other is a study of the relationship with the Other insofar as its element is time; as if time were transcendence, the opening par excellence onto the Other and onto the other. This thesis on transcendence, thought as dia-chrony, where the Same is non-in-different to the other without investing it in any way--not even by the most formal coincidence with it in a simple simultaneity--where the strangeness of the future is not described rightaway in its reference to the present, where it would be to-come [à-venir] and where it was already anticipated in a pro-tention, this thesis (which preoccupies me much today) was, thirty years ago, only glimpsed. In Time and the Other it was treated starting from a series of more immediate evidences, which prepared some elements of the problem, such as I see it now. (EI 56-57/EAI 56)

The evidences of which Levinas speaks are to be found principally in the "mysterious" relationship with death and in several unique relationships with the Other: the erotic and the paternal. But before we address those evidences and the transcendent function of the time they are evidences for, I want to clarify and highlight the revolutionary nature of the insight that humbly announces itself in



the very first sentence of Le temps et l'autre, which declares the aim of the lectures to be a remarkable rethinking of time: Levinas says there that his intention is "to show that time is not the achievement of an isolated and lone subject, but that it is the very relationship of the subject with the Other" (TA 17/TO 39).

Levinas argued in De l'existence a l'existant and will maintain in Le temps et l'autre that time cannot be a purely objective phenomenon, composed of separate and successive instants to which the "I" remains exterior and aloof.<sup>1</sup> Nor can it be a completely subjective phenomenon, wholly internal to either the "I" or the instant; indeed, the solitude of hypostasis is due precisely to the absence of time.<sup>2</sup> It is true that Levinas recognizes a "time" of concrete existence, which he calls the time of economic life. But this turns out to be a derivative and founded time.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, because it is a time of mere reprisal and reciprocity where

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance: DEE 157-158, 160/EE 92, 94; TA 32/TO 52.

<sup>2</sup> Levinas says specifically: "Solitude is an absence of time. The time given, itself hypostatized and studied, the time the subject travels by carrying its identity, is a time incapable of loosening the tie of hypostasis" (TA 38/TO 57). While Alfonso Lingis, in the translator's introduction to Existence and Existents, says that "Time is the inner structure of subjectivity, that is, of the movement of existing" (EE 11), strictly speaking this is true only if we recognize that for Levinas the inner structure of subjectivity is not an accomplishment of the subject alone, but of the relationship of the subject with the Other--this is partly why, in Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence, Levinas describes the subject as the very incarnation of the Other. It is inner not because it is immanent, but because it is accomplished by the dialectic of hypostasis.

<sup>3</sup> It will become apparent in due course that if a phenomenology of economic time were to be thought alongside the schematic structure of hypostasis, economic time may very well manifest itself to be the time of the solitary subject when actively exploiting the power discovered and seized in the first moment of

alterity is neutralized and every present, while haunted by insubstantiality, is nevertheless irrevocable, in a very real sense it is a privative and inauthentic time which recognizes no indebtedness and relation to alterity, and thus to true time. Levinas indicated at the end of De l'existence a l'existant that economic time, in which instants are equivalent and the "I" circulates across them only to link them up into a monotonous current of commerce and compensation, is not true time, as it is not time enough to endow the instant with a true future. He says the same thing in this text--that the economic time of the world has no true future and offers no salvation from the tragic structure of being. So strictly speaking, the economic "time" Levinas recognizes as proper to the solitary subject is time only in a very qualified sense.

True time must repair the irreparable and resurrect the present in the irretrievable moment of its own death, says Levinas. Time must accomplish an escape from being and a remission of identity, it must grant a true future that can lead us beyond being and beyond ourselves. The question of time thus leads us quite literally elsewhere: ontologically speaking, in order for time to redeem us from being and lead us beyond it, time must itself be otherwise than being;

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hypostasis. This would explain why any analysis of this time alone would fail to penetrate the duplicitous obscurity produced when the relation between the ego and its existence is wrongly assumed to be the relationship fundamental to all others, including the relation to the other and the Other. This might also explain why the decisively biblical language of condemnation is used to characterize the attempt to ontologically escape the solitude of being--that is, the attempt to circumvent the Other and take by force what can only come through the generosity of the social relation and the ethical responsibility it entails.

properly speaking, time must be a-proper to being--not simply improper, but refractory to the very categories of propriety and power that characterize all ontic and ontological relations.<sup>4</sup> But is there such a time? The thesis of Le temps et l'autre, that time is the very relationship to unattainable alterity, is an affirmative and groundbreaking response to precisely that question. In brief, what Levinas attempts to do in this text is show that time is this a-proper event of redemption from being, and then show that this event is accomplished as the social relationship--a relationship so unlike any economic or causal relationship that he calls it a "relationship without relation" (TA 13/TO 35), but a relationship nevertheless.

In a nutshell, this is what makes Levinas' "concept" of time truly revolutionary, and not just another theory of time. By thinking time as the relationship with the absolutely other--as the relationship itself, and not as the medium or mediator of that relationship, nor as the meaning of the being of the beings in that relationship--Levinas breaks radically with every other concept of time the philosophical tradition has authored, as well as from the assumption that

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<sup>4</sup> It is precisely this fact that is covered over in many of the current readings of Levinas' concept of time as a "time of the Other," as if time could be thought within the boundaries of propriety, as if time could be a possession or attribute of either the Other or the relationship with the Other, rather than that very relationship itself. But it cannot: because of the phenomenological status of the Other, and hence, of the relation, time resists all possible categories of propriety; the subject can subsequently "have" a time that is essentially and primordially not his nor hers only because there prove to be two moments of hypostasis.

time can be reduced to a concept in the conventional sense.<sup>5</sup> In addition, as we will later see more explicitly, by thinking time and the relationship with the other and the Other in terms other than those of intentionality, Levinas moves definitively beyond even the most radical phenomenology as well.

Though it retraces some of the ground already covered, Le temps et l'autre essentially begins where De l'existence a l'existant ended. In the latter Levinas established through a series of phenomenological analyses of unusual and objectless phenomena that the existent has a position in being by virtue of which it escapes the horrible anonymity of an indeterminate and impersonal existence, but only at the cost of an ineluctable materiality; the existent realizes its escape from the anonymity of the "there is" only by committing itself in a moment of hypostasis to the definitive, identical, timeless existence destined for it by its present. Levinas thus established the first escape to be conditioned by yet another form of captivity: solitary subjectivity.<sup>6</sup> Levinas explains in Éthique et

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<sup>5</sup> I believe the concept of time that takes shape in Heidegger's later works may be an exception, but in order to see it as such one must read Heidegger in a way that remains faithful to his work but breaks from the traditional reading of that work, and certainly in a way that breaks from Levinas' own reading of Heidegger's work. The last part of this text will attempt to suggest the path such a reading could take, and by attending specifically to Heidegger's last texts, will attempt to show not only that such a reading remains faithful to Heidegger, but that Heidegger himself directs his reader along precisely that path.

<sup>6</sup> The solitude that the ego so desperately hopes to escape in every instant is not loneliness, the solitude of a being isolated from others, the solitude contingent upon a former mitsein, but the solitude of being itself. Levinas makes this quite clear in the interviews with Nemo, where he explicitly says: "It is not a matter of

infini that Le temps et l'autre accordingly represents the attempt to find a second escape--an escape from the isolation of being that constitutes the existential result and condemnation of the first escape.<sup>7</sup>

This second escape is attempted in two stages, according to Levinas. The first stage seeks deliverance from the solitary being of the self through knowledge and nourishment, only to discover, on the one hand, that knowledge is in reality an immanence, an adequation between thought and what it thinks, and is therefore powerless to rupture the isolation of being, and on the other hand, that the enjoyment constitutive of nourishment likewise only eludes the self, and does not actually escape it. In other words, the ontological transcendence effected by both knowledge and nourishment is determined to be but a circulation within the closed economy of being: every autonomous movement away from the solitude of being inescapably returns to it by ending in appropriation and identification; the transcendence of space, light, and need--all moments of the ontological adventure--end up dissolving the alterity the subject seeks in a solution of propriety, identity and unity, and thus reveal themselves to be purely illusory forms of transcendence, and not an absolution at all.<sup>8</sup> And yet, while this escape from the bonds of

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escaping from solitude, but rather of escaping from being" (EI 60/EAI 59). Similarly, in this text he explains: "Solitude is not tragic because it is the privation of the other, but because it is shut up within the captivity of its identity, because it is matter" (TA 38/TO 57).

<sup>7</sup> See EI 57-58/EAI 57.

<sup>8</sup> Levinas emphasizes in a number of places that the world of light and nourishments, while offering a certain kind of freedom, does not free the ego from the condemnation and captivity of its own existence. For example, in De

definitiveness cannot be achieved by the subject alone, who is definitively him- or herself and whose conscious existence constitutes the very work of identity, the definitive subject nevertheless manifests in each exigent recommencement of being the hope for a "miraculous fecundity" by virtue of which the instant could recommence as other than itself. In every instant the existent manifests the need

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l'existence a l'existant he says:

The freedom of knowledge and intention is negative; it is non-engagement. But what is the meaning of non-engagement within the ontological adventure? It is the refusal of the definitive. The world offers me a time in which I traverse different instants, and, thanks to the evolution open to me, I am not at any moment definitive. Yet I always carry along my past whose every instant is definitive. But then there remains for me, in this world of light, where all is given but where everything is distance, the power of not taking anything or of acting as though I had not taken anything. The world of intentions and desires is the possibility of just such a freedom. But this freedom does not save me from the definitive character of my very existence, from the fact that I am forever stuck with myself. And this definitive element is my solitude.

The world and light are solitude. These given objects, these clothed beings are something other than myself, but they are mine. Illuminated by light, they have meaning, and thus are as though they came from me. In the understood universe I am alone, that is, closed up in an existence that is definitively one. (DEE 143-44/EE 84-85)

In a similar passage from Le temps et l'autre Levinas says essentially the same thing:

Self-forgetfulness and the luminosity of enjoyment do not break the irremissible attachment of the ego to the self when one separates this light from the ontological event of the subject's materiality, where it has its place, and when, in the name of reason, one elevates this light into an absolute. The interval of space given by light is instantaneously absorbed by light. Light is that through which something is other than myself, but already as if it came from me. The illuminated object is something one encounters, but from the very fact that it is illuminated one encounters it as if it came from us. It does not have a fundamental strangeness. Its transcendence is wrapped in immanence. The exteriority of light does not suffice for the liberation of the ego that is the self's captive. (TA 47/TO 64-65)

for a time which could actually "unravel" the definitive knot tied in the taking up of an exigent present, the demand for an order where the chains that bind the ego to the self, chains forged and fastened in the present, could be broken. Hence, the first stage reaffirms the findings of the earlier analyses, and moves beyond their discoveries primarily in preparing the way for the second stage by demonstrating that despite the fact that the subject definitively posited in being cannot free itself from the enchainment of identity and timeless presence, it nevertheless bears the trace of alterity and time, a trace the solitary ego cannot account for.<sup>9</sup>

Levinas promised in De l'existence a l'existant that a later analysis would show the dynamism of the "I" which resides in the presence of an exigent present to be capable of ex-cending that resident captivity in the relation with the Other,<sup>10</sup> and thus to be capable of existing within the dimension of a true time where fecundity and salvation from being is not only possible, but essential.<sup>11</sup> The second stage of the analysis in Le temps et l'autre finally fulfills this promise. It both affirms the "I" to be "the very ferment of time in the present" (DEE 158/EE 92), and shows time--understood as sociality, the relationship with the

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<sup>9</sup> This is clearly part of the reason why Levinas considers the Cartesian analyses so significant: like the idea of the infinite, the hope for a redemptive time--which the ego of itself could not even imagine, were it not for the relationship with alterity--reveals an ontological order different from the epistemological order that "discovers" it.

<sup>10</sup> See note 1, chapter 2.

<sup>11</sup> See DEE 157/EE 92.

Other--to be the way of escaping, or ex-cending the captive economics of the present. That is, Le temps et l'autre shows that the second escape is conditioned by the hypostatic event of evanescence, but realized only in another hypostatic event--the event of temporal transcendence.

Before considering Levinas' analyses of the concrete situations wherein this temporal transcendence is occurs, a few cautionary measures are necessitated by the very radicality of the way temporality is thought in his text. First, we must keep in mind that as one of the "terms" of the social relation is essentially unthematizable, the time constituted by that relation lies beyond the grasp of any adequate representation, and thus can be spoken of as a "concept" only if the word is understood under a kind of erasure so as to at least mark the unavoidable transformation of the time that will inevitably fail to be thought as a concept in any attempt to so think it.<sup>12</sup>

One must also keep in mind that despite the radical break with traditional ontology attempted by Levinas in his rethinking of time, he nevertheless thinks and speaks about time in virtually all of his work (and especially here) with particular reference to being, and this reference leaves its mark, though in different ways, upon both the analyses and the character of time that emerges from those analyses. Of the seminal books only Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence even begins the attempt to think the social relation in a context which

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<sup>12</sup> It is, as we shall see, precisely this irreducibility of time to a concept that problematizes time for phenomenology and contributes to the demand for a revision of its basic concepts.



would approximate its own element. Le temps et l'autre, like De l'existence a l'existant and Totalité et infini, remains firmly oriented within a concern for securing an escape from being, and more problematically, within a certain opposition to Sein und Zeit. For instance, in De l'existence a l'existant Levinas effectively conducted his analyses within the same parameters he seems to have understood Heideggerian fundamental ontology to have mistakenly imposed on the existential analytic of Dasein: the limits belonging to a solitary existent fundamentally related only to its own existence and death.<sup>13</sup> In fact, we could say that De l'existence a l'existant was, in a very real sense, Levinas' ironic contribution to fundamental ontology.<sup>14</sup> Totalité et infini, in like manner, will unfold in many respects as if in direct opposition to Heidegger's analysis of Being-in-the-world in division one of Sein und Zeit and to Heidegger's attempt in division two of Sein und Zeit to think time as the meaning of being. Le temps et l'autre also opposes those analyses, but does so within the ontological perspective established in De l'existence a l'existant. The result is an exposition of time that somewhat obscures the radicality of the thinking that is actually broached therein: while opposing Heidegger, Le temps et l'autre primarily continues the task of seeking an escape from being, and thus thinks time while oriented within this

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<sup>13</sup> See TA 57-58, 89/TO 70-71, 93.

<sup>14</sup> Cohen notes in his review of Existence and Existents, in Man and World 12, no. 4, (1979): 521, that "it is a book devoted to what Heidegger might have called 'fundamental ontology' if its theses did not radically contest Heideggerian ontology and propose a daring alternative for contemporary thought." I agree with this assessment.

particular relation to being, rather than in a way more appropriate to its own structures--and Levinas himself is very careful to point this out.<sup>15</sup> In other words, despite the radicality of what is thought in this work, the way it is thought remains tied to Heidegger's work, Levinas' initial response to that work, and to Levinas' own early ontological concerns, especially the concern for tracing out the dialectic of hypostasis and freeing the material existent from the solitude of definitive being.

Having once resituated us within the discourse begun in De l'existence a l'existant, Le temps et l'autre proceeds to subtly expand the scope of that prior investigation. We remember that despite the lag in taking up existence, the positing of a phantom subject in the apparition of the spectral present is in and of itself insufficient to account for time. In the first lecture of Le temps et l'autre Levinas recalls and elaborates on this insufficiency:

Positing hypostasis as a present is still not to introduce time into being. Although giving us the present, we are given neither a stretch of time set within a linear series of duration, nor a point of this series. It is not a matter of a present cut out of a current, already constituted time, or of an element of time, but of the function of the present, of the rip that it brings about in the impersonal infinity of existing. It is like an ontological schema. On the one hand, it is an event and not yet something; it does not exist; but it is an event of existing through which something comes to start out from itself. On the other hand, it is still a pure event that must be expressed by a verb; and nonetheless there is a sort of molting in this existing, already a something, already an existent. It is essential to grasp the present at the limit of existing and the existent, where, in function of existing, it already turns into an existent. (TA 32/TO 52)

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, TA 87/TO 92.

The function of the present, Levinas now explains, is to rip and rejoin the beginningless and endless fabric of impersonal existence. Hence, the task for thought at the limit of existing and the existent--at the limit of this instantaneous severance and de-severance--is to attend to the dynamism of that interruptive "turn" from a pure activity "into" a substantial being. It is essential to grasp the present and examine its function at this limit because it is there that we see the present is a way of accomplishing a beginning without receiving anything from the past: the present has no duration and does not endure, so it cannot receive anything from something preceding it, nor give anything to what follows it.

This is important because it shows that the present is essentially "the departure from self," the "starting out from itself" of an evanescence. In fact, Levinas describes this evanescent present as "the essential form of beginning" (TA 33/TO 53), since in severing and de-severing the continuity of existence, the present is beginning, or evanescence, itself. The present is itself the beginning of a departure from the self. Levinas says this evanescence results in an existent by a dialectical reversal that describes, rather than excludes, the "I": thought at the limit of existing and the existent, the ego is the very function of hypostasis, a mode of existing that does not itself exist, but turns into an existent in the course of performing its function; the present and the "I" turn into existents, but the "I" is not initially an existent; the "I" is both moments together, separated and joined by an interval of nothingness. The resultant possibility is that, since the "I" is not initially an existent, and thus not initially condemned to the solitude of being, then

in the interval of that turn before the "I" becomes a solitary existent there is time to be something other.<sup>16</sup>

Although in the passage across that interval the present and the "I" become existents, and can then be formed into a time so they then have time like an existent, Levinas points out that the resultant time they form and have is an economic, hypostatized time that is, and no longer "time in its schematic function between existing and the existent, time as the pure event of hypostasis" (TA 34/TO 54). What, then, is time as the pure event? It is the time between event and substantiality, and the very granting of that time; it is the opening of the interval of postponement before definitive mortality and death, the space of nothingness traversed by the phantom subject in passing from the pure event of existing toward the materiality and definitiveness of a being that is, and is thus mortal! Time of the pure event cannot be reduced to hypostatized time for much the same reason that the event of saying cannot be reduced to what is said in that event: the granting of time is never appropriate to nor comprehensible within the time that is granted--there is always an essential excess. The "time" one "has" is a

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<sup>16</sup> Totalité et infini tells us what there is time to be: an ethical being "responsible for the Other" (TI 213/TAI 236). There is time to be an ego that existentially recognizes it is always already in a relationship with the Other by virtue of the schematic time of the pure event, in a relationship of responsibility for the Other, and thus not fundamentally an ego. In the interval of the turn there is time to be for the Other. But this responsibility is not that of a burden which can be assumed; it involves--as we shall see--a veritable trans-substantiation of the subject.

time which is hypostatized in the appropriative spanning of the interval, whereas the time of the pure event is the very opening of the interval itself.<sup>17</sup>

In effect, then, what Levinas discovers by attending to the dialectic of hypostasis at the limit of the dynamism of the turn from existing into an existent is that the celebrated freedom and power realized in the turn that accomplishes a mastery of existence and an apparition of the present conceals another moment of hypostasis that is not an event of mastery and presence: the event of temporal transcendence, the ethical relationship with the Other. As present and "I," hypostasis is indeed the freedom of beginning, the discovery and exertion of the virility, power, and mastery of a subject. It is this moment which condemns its accomplishment to tragic definitiveness by committing the subject to a material existence and to an economic movement of perpetual self-identification within that existence--and thus to the captivity, solitude, and fatality of being. But there is another moment and another movement. The evanescence of the existent, the beginning constituted by the apparition of the phantom present and accomplished in the substantiation of a spectral, though virile subject, marks only the one moment in the dialectic of hypostasis, and there are two. In addition to the first moment and its accomplishment the dialectic of hypostasis realizes the ex-cendent transcendence and radical dis-inter-estedness anticipated in the existential analyses of De l'existence a l'existant: the diachronous relation to the Other. This is the transcendent liberation effected by time, a movement that does not return the ego

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<sup>17</sup> See note 4.

to the self, but turns it toward the Other and the Good.<sup>18</sup> This second moment of hypostasis thus realizes the liberation rooted in being and hoped for in the phantom present--not a pure liberation of the ego from the self, which is impossible for a material subject without destroying the ego's identity and thus nullifying the escape, but a liberation which realizes a relationship with alterity while maintaining the ego's identity. To summarize: thinking the dialectic of hypostasis at the limit of the turn reveals hypostasis to be more than present and "I"; it reveals existence to be pluralist, and the "I" substantiated and thereby invested with power in the first moment to be, in a second moment, primordially related to the Other, who lies beyond all power and presence.

This explains how the subject can bear the trace of time in the present while being powerless to produce it therein, despite the power realized and celebrated in mastering existence: while time is impossible for the subject alone,<sup>19</sup> the capacity for time belongs primordially to the ego as a function of hypostasis--or more specifically--by virtue of a certain moment of hypostasis, which accomplishes a relation that precedes all exercise of power and freedom granted by that mastery. The ego to which time is granted is not irremissibly condemned to solitude, for it is an ego primordially related to the Other--related to the Other in the event of its evanescence as an existent. It was for this reason that Levinas said in De l'existence a l'existant that the existent is the very "ferment" of time:

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<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, TI 247/TAI 269.

<sup>19</sup> See TA 64/TO 77.

because the dynamism of the "I" needs a nothingness and alterity evanescence cannot supply, a time in which it can miraculously recommence as other than itself, and because this need belongs to the very structure of the present:

In place of the "I" that circulates in time, we posit the "I" as the very ferment of time in the present, the dynamism of time. This dynamism is not that of dialectical progression, nor that of ecstasy, nor that of duration, where the present encroaches upon the future and consequently does not have between its being and its resurrection the indispensable interval of nothingness. The dynamism of the "I" resides in the very presence of the present, in the exigency which this present implies. (DEE 158/EE 92)

This need for a non-definitive recommencement in being is the residence of the dynamism of time, Levinas says--in part because time is granted in the recommencement of an absolutely other instant, and also because the very presence of the present, the existence of that which recommences, is presence across the interval in which time is granted, the "indispensable interval of nothingness." The reason why this interval is indispensable, and the reason why the dynamism of time is said to "reside" therein, is that the nothingness of this interval not only purges a being of residual instants and their definitiveness, it opens the space in which the relationship with the Other, which is time itself, can take place.

In De l'existence a l'existant Levinas explained that the nothingness necessary for both the event of evanescence and the social relation comes from the Other with whom the subject is hypostatically related:

How indeed could time arises [sic] in a solitary subject? The solitary subject cannot deny itself; it does not possess nothingness. If time is not the illusion of a movement, pawing the ground, then the absolute alterity of another instant cannot be found in the subject, who is definitively himself.

This alterity comes to me only from the other. Is not sociality something more than the source of our representation of time: is it not time itself? If time is constituted by my relationship with the other, it is exterior to my instant, but it is also something else than an object given to contemplation. The dialectic of time is the very dialectic of the relationship with the other, that is, a dialogue which in turn has to be studied in terms other than those of the dialectic of the solitary subject. The dialectic of the social relationship will furnish us with a set of concepts of a new kind. And the nothingness necessary to time, which the subject cannot produce, comes from the social relationship." (DEE 160/EE 93-94)

Levinas notes that time is exterior to the instant. And yet, we have seen that the interval and the time it grants is also spanned and thus appropriated, after a fashion, by the instant, which results in an hypostatized time and a definitive subject.<sup>20</sup> The apparent paradox that manifests itself here is due to the misguided insistence on a time that is either objective or subjective. Levinas says "traditional philosophy, and Bergson and Heidegger too, remains with the conception of a time either taken to be purely exterior to the subject, a time-object, or taken to be entirely contained in the subject" (DEE 160/EE 94). What Levinas is able to show, to the contrary, is that time is neither exclusively objective or subjective. Neither is it proper to the subject or the other. It is the a-proper, intersubjective relationship itself.<sup>21</sup> The 1979 preface accordingly

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<sup>20</sup> With good reason, this structure resembles Descartes' idea of the infinite, where it can be said that the "I" simultaneously thinks the Infinite and does not think it, contains the idea and does not contain it, since in thinking the idea of the Infinite the ideatum surpasses the idea and the "I" thinks more than it thinks. See DEHH 171-72/CPP 53-54.

<sup>21</sup> I do not think the inclusion of Heidegger among those who make this mistake is justified, as Heidegger most certainly thinks time outside the boundaries of objective or subjective propriety. This is especially clear in the later works, but is evident even in the early texts.



announces that Le temps et l'autre is but the "birth and first formulation" of the project to which Levinas still adheres: the vital problem of thinking time as diachrony, as the relationship of finite being to the "beyond being" (TA 8-11/TO 30-33).

Thus, Levinas later explains in Éthique et infini that time appeared to him in Le temps et l'autre as both an "enlargement" of existence and a "dynamism" that leads us beyond ourselves.<sup>22</sup> The solitude of being, while tragic, results from the fact that the present comes only from itself; "the subject is alone because it is one," Levinas says, and this solitude is necessary in order for there to be an existent at all (TA 35/TO 54). Although necessary and tragic, it is not ultimately and inescapably tragic, because the second moment of hypostasis involves a dialectical reversal of the existent's mastery over being, and thus, of the solitude and condemnation that attaches to it.<sup>23</sup> This is the reversal by which the subject finds itself to be in time, and to be in time, says Levinas, is to "shatter" the enchainment of matter and thus the finality of the first moment of hypostasis (TA 38/TO 57). The subject who takes up existence may be "one," and thus bear the tragic chains of a solitude which is that very unity, but the existence that the

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<sup>22</sup> See EI 62-63/EAI 61.

<sup>23</sup> One must be careful not to confuse, at this point, the tragic reversal of materiality, the reversal that occurs within the momentum established by the first moment, by which the subject's sovereignty over being is effaced in an enslaving return to itself, with this more fundamental reversal of the first moment, a reversal that occurs at the limit of evanescence and by which the ego finds the first moment to have a remission in the second, and what is "posterior" to have an "anteriority."

subject takes up is not a unitary existence, but a pluralist existence--and thus an existence in which time is possible from the very beginning.

The first lecture ends with these groundbreaking conclusions. The remaining lectures pull back from these schematic considerations and concentrate on thinking through the concrete situations in which the granting of time is phenomenologically evident, those situations which actually accomplish the dialectic of hypostasis, and thus the liberation of the ego with which everyday life is constantly preoccupied.<sup>24</sup> In other words, they examine those situations in which time appears precisely as diachrony, as a mode of the "beyond-being" [l' "au delà de l'être"]:<sup>25</sup> initially, where it appears as a "mysterious" relationship with death--that is, with the other, with alterity itself; and finally, in the erotic and paternal relationships with the Other, the personal other.

The analysis of death is sketched out in Le temps et l'autre alongside an analysis of light and knowledge, and prior to addressing eros and paternity, precisely in order to show that the relation with alterity is not intentional, and in

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<sup>24</sup> Levinas points out explicitly that the analysis of time in its schematic function takes us beyond phenomenology: "In positing the present as the mastery of the existent over existing, and in seeking in it the passage from existing to the existent, we find ourselves at a level of investigation that can no longer be qualified as experience. And if phenomenology is only a method of radical experience, we will find ourselves beyond phenomenology." (TA 34/TO 54)

<sup>25</sup> Levinas often calls this temporal relation to the beyond-being "religion," in order to indicate the liminality of this thinking: the fact that he is attempting to think this relationship at the very limit of relational thinking--as a relationship without terms, a relation sans relation, a relationship of height and proximity with the Infinite and Invisible which assures the non-indifference of the Infinite and Invisible to thought while preserving its alterity. See TA 8-13/TO 31-35.

order to follow the movement of hypostasis itself. Levinas explicitly indicates that this analytic progression is not phenomenological, but is designed to lead us through the dialectic of hypostasis to those situations that accomplish it.<sup>26</sup> This strategy also leads us very effectively from the other to the Other while drawing an important contrast between the asymmetrical, diachronic structure of the relationship with alterity, and the symmetrical, contemporaneous structure of intentional and ontological relationships. What it eventually shows is that the former takes us beyond intentionality, both experientially and analytically.

Levinas admits that the intentional relations constitutive of conscious existence in the world mark an undeniable triumph over the anonymity of impersonal existence, insofar as in everyday existence the materiality of the subject is to a certain degree overcome. As we saw earlier, this overcoming is effected in the realization of an interval between the ego and the self, an interval opened by the delay and distance constitutive of sincerity. But this is only another way of saying that the structure of intentionality is ecstatic: the subject leaves itself and does not immediately return; there is a delay prior to satisfaction, a distance between desire and desired; the world of objects offers itself to the subject, and the subject separates from itself in comprehending or enjoying those objects. This freedom of separation is the very accomplishment of a subject, says Levinas, since it effects a forgetfulness of self, and thus, a kind of subjective freedom.

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<sup>26</sup> See TA 87/TO 92.

And yet, insofar as this freedom is a freedom of self-forgetfulness alone, and not a definitive escape from the self, it is only an illusory transcendence--a transcendence compromised when the subject is inevitably recalled to itself. The ecstasy of existence in the world of light and desire is limited by the object offered to the subject: Levinas insists, "Human life in the world does not go beyond the objects that fulfil [sic] it. . . . It is an ecstatic existence--being outside oneself--but limited by the object" (TA 45-46/TO 63). The subject does not return to itself immediately, but it does return; the subject is in space and thus at a distance from the objects it illuminates, desires, and enjoys, but that distance is always eventually closed. And because the interval produced in the world of light and nourishments is always eventually closed, the illuminated or desired object cannot retain its difference and alterity. The simple fact of the matter is that in intentional relations the desired or intended object never has a fundamental alterity with respect to the subject. Rather, the difference between the subject and the object affirmed by the intentionality of consciousness is a difference that is dissolved in the completion of the very move that first constitutes it; the object is other than the subject, but only during the interval it takes for the subject to return to itself in knowledge or satisfaction and re-identify itself thereby. Hence, the illuminating or desiring subject cannot realize an absolute exteriority through desire and intentionality, and the transcendence of self-forgetfulness that intentionality realizes does not definitively break the ego's

enchainment to the self and does not overcome the tragic solitude of material being.

But as we have glimpsed in De l'existence a l'existant, material life is not entirely self-forgetfulness. It is also and essentially pain, sorrow, fatigue, and suffering--and unlikely as it may seem, we find here in a roundabout way an opening upon the liberation Levinas has been seeking, for in suffering there is the proximity of death, and hence a relationship with what is not and cannot be intended.<sup>27</sup> In pain, sorrow, fatigue, and suffering we once again encounter the finality of solitude, but here the ecstasis of intentional relations and enjoyment cannot surmount it. What is phenomenologically interesting about physical suffering is that in suffering the material being "experiences" both the impossibility of nothingness (because in suffering one is directly exposed to being, without the possibility of a withdrawal, refuge or retreat) and, at the same time, a call to this impossible nothingness (because in suffering one also encounters the fact that suffering can end in death, and more concretely, the mysterious approach of death itself). In other words, when we are in pain, exhausted, or overcome by sorrow or suffering there is both the absolute absence of death and the absolute proximity of death. There is a relationship with death, but as it is a relationship with what is

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<sup>27</sup> This is not to affirm the seemingly obvious and mundane fact that in death the cares and pains of existence are once and for all escaped. Despite the pervasiveness of this belief, strictly speaking it is not true, for in this "escape" there is nothing that escapes--the subject is no more. In death the subject indeed ceases to be, but because of that very fact the cessation of the subject in death cannot comprise an escape from being for the subject, as in death there is no longer a subject left to escape.

essentially absent and with what cannot be known or intended, it cannot be an ontological relationship, since nothing that is present has such a character. The relationship with death is the relationship with alterity itself.

The principal characteristic of death that emerges in Le temps et l'autre is this essential alterity. Death is unknowable: it does not appear and cannot appear. It does not and cannot belong to the world of light and phenomena. But what is more, it does not belong to the world of activity and power. Levinas will later say in Totalité et infini that death is unforeseeable because it does not lie within any horizon, nor is it open to grasp; in the struggle with death one contends with the invisible itself (TI 210/TAI 233). Death is ungraspable: it occasions and manifests a subjective passivity beyond all passivity that is simply the negation or failure of activity, as in death the subject is absolutely overwhelmed, but overwhelmed by what, in an instant that is not its own, comes to it from elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> In dying the subject loses its very subjectivity. Levinas says: "The unknown of death signifies that the very relationship with death cannot take place in the light, that the subject is in relationship with what does not come from itself" (TA 56/TO 70). The proximity of death announces an event outside all light, and thus beyond the very structure of intentionality and power, an event that renders the ego incapable of returning to itself. And yet, in its inexorable

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<sup>28</sup> Levinas says: "My death comes from an instant upon which I can in no way exercise my power" (TI 211/TAI 234).

approach we are related to death nevertheless. In Levinas' words, the relationship with death is thus the "relationship with mystery" (TA 57/TO 70).

Levinas contrasts the death that is approximated in suffering to the death evoked in Heidegger's being-toward-death--or at least, in Levinas' understanding of it.<sup>29</sup> He says that being-toward-death for Heidegger is a supreme lucidity and hence a supreme virility: "It is Dasein's assumption of the uttermost possibility of existence, which precisely makes possible all other possibilities, and consequently makes possible the very feat of grasping a possibility--that is, it makes possible activity and freedom. Death in Heidegger is an event of freedom, whereas for me the subject seems to reach the limit of the possible in suffering. It finds itself enchained, overwhelmed, and in some way passive" (TA 57-58/TO 70-71).

Levinas therefore insists that any analysis of death must begin, not with the nothingness of death, for of that nothingness we know and can know nothing; instead, it must begin with the recognition that in death we encounter the absolutely unknowable and ungraspable. So when Levinas says that the subject seems to reach the limit of the possible in suffering, this "limit" cannot be a limit in the sense of a boundary that belongs to what it limits and is proper to it. The "limit" which is approximated in suffering and which appears as death is alterity itself, which lies on the hither side of any proper delimitation or end. It is for this reason Levinas rejects Heidegger's understanding of death as the ultimate horizon

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<sup>29</sup> As we will note later, Heidegger recognizes a constitutive moment to death that Levinas does not credit him with recognizing, and this recognition makes a considerable difference when it is accounted for.

of possibility, the impossibility of any further possibility and propriety, explaining that in order for death to serve such a proper economic function, death must be drawn into the realm of the possible--which denies its absolute mystery and alterity. He thus exclaims in a famous footnote to part III of the text: "Death in Heidegger is not, as Jean Wahl says, 'the impossibility of possibility,' but the 'possibility of impossibility'" (TA 57/TO 70). According to Levinas, in death we are seized by that which renders even the assumption of possibility impossible, by that which is absolutely refractory to all categories of the possible, including the impossible. Death, understood in this way, can only be properly spoken of as radical alterity itself: "This approach of death," Levinas says, "indicates that we are in relation with something that is absolutely other, something bearing alterity not as a provisional determination we can assimilate through enjoyment, but as something whose very existence is made of alterity" (TA 63/TO 74).

With respect to death, then, we are in relation with what does not belong to any of the domains or categories of being. We are in relation with alterity itself, with what is essentially otherwise than being. What is more, as otherwise than being, and unlike all beings and phenomena, death "is" precisely when it is not. "Death is never a present," Levinas observes (TA 59/TO 71). This is not due to any evasion or diversion, but to a fact already noted: death is ungraspable and absolutely beyond any power of the subject granted by the evanescence of its being--which power constitutes the present. Levinas explains,

The now is the fact that I am master, master of the possible, master of grasping the possible. Death is never now. When death is here, I am no



longer here, not just because I am nothingness, but because I am unable to grasp. My mastery, my virility, my heroism as a subject can be neither virility nor heroism in relation to death. (TA 59/TO 72)

In the proximity of death the subject's activity is reversed into radical passivity precisely because in the presence of death there is nothing present over which the subject can exercise any of the power and virility which constitutes its subjectivity. If a subject is determined by its mastery, then in relation to death, the subject is in relation to something that is essentially not present, and thus cannot either be mastered or fail to be mastered; death cannot be related to at all in terms of power.

But, in addition, death is "not present" in a peculiar way: it is not present, but coming. This is what accounts for its proximity. Levinas points out that death is never assumed, it comes. Death is not present in the sense of being always not yet present. This approach belongs to the essence of the relationship with death. Levinas therefore concludes that our relationship with death is not only a relationship with alterity, but is nothing less than "a unique relationship with the future" (TA 59/TO 71). Death is:

The eventuality of the event at the point of making an irruption within the Sameness of immanence, of interrupting the monotony and the tick-tock of solitary instants--the eventuality of the wholly other, of the future, the temporality of time where diachrony precisely describes the relationship with what remains absolutely outside." (TA 13/TO 35)

Death, understood as alterity, is pure futurity.

The reversal of the subject's activity into passivity is the consequence of this peculiar temporality opened in the inexorable approach of death. Let us

consider this temporality. Since death marks the limit of the virility and mastery made possible by the first moment of hypostasis and manifest in the phenomenon of the present, and thus marks the moment at which the subject no longer has the power to have power, it marks the moment at which the possibility of all projection and ecstasis ceases. This is so not only because of the death of the subject, but because of the essential absence of that over which the subject would exercise power. Thus, strictly speaking, it would appear as if we could have no relation at all to the pure event of death. But let us attend again to the fact that the death with which we are in relation is a death over which we now and forever do not yet have power. Why? Because it is always not yet present. Death may be imminent, but in that imminence is opened a margin, and it is within this margin that hope and relationship is possible. What tragic heroes seize prior to death, says Levinas, is this hope or last chance before death comes, not death itself. That last chance is seized in the margin or interval opened by death's imminence, and thus by death's futurity. In Totalité et infini Levinas explains this more clearly.

The time that separates me from my death dwindles and dwindles without end, involves a sort of last interval which my consciousness cannot traverse, and where a leap will somehow be produced from death to me. The last part of the route will be crossed without me; the time of death flows upstream; the I in its projection toward the future is overturned by a movement of imminence, pure menace, which comes to me from an absolute alterity. Thus in a tale by Edgar Allen Poe, as the walls that imprison the narrator close in inexorably, he looks upon death with a look which as a look has always an expanse before it, but perceives also the uninterrupted approach of an instant infinitely future for the I who awaits it--ultima latet--which, in a countercurrent movement, will efface this infinitesimal--but untraversable--distance. This interference of movements

across the distance that separates me from the last moment distinguishes the temporal interval from the spatial. (TI 211-12/TAI 235)

Death is such that its proximity opens upon the temporality of an interval which is not ecstatic or otherwise proper to the subject, a temporal interval in which one can have time. By virtue of this interval, the existent is a temporal being, not just a mortal being--and a temporal being has time of détente, where "nothing is definitive yet, nothing consummated" (TI 200-201/TAI 224)

Levinas says that the event of death indicates that "we have assumed existence in such a way that an event can happen to us that we no longer assume, not even in the way that we assume events" (TA 62/TO 74). What is it about the "way" that we have assumed existence that accounts for this passivity, futurity, and relationship with alterity? It is that we assume existence in a hypostasis that has two fundamental moments, one of which constitutes a transcendence of the existence accomplished in the other. The approach of death indicates that we are in relation from the very beginning with something whose very essence is made up of futurity and alterity, and that this relationship is conditioned by hypostasis itself. What this means is that existence itself is pluralist! This is the apex of Levinas' argument:

. . . Existence is pluralist. Here the plural is not a multiplicity of existents; it appears in existing itself. A plurality insinuates itself into the very existing of the existent, which until this point was jealously assumed by the subject alone and manifest through suffering. In death the existing of the existent is alienated. (TA 63/TO 75)

An entire chapter of Totalité et infini is devoted to this pluralism. Levinas describes it there as a "multiple existing [un exister multiple]," and a "radical

multiplicity" (TI 195/TAI 220). He says this multiplicity is the ultimate event of being.

For a multiplicity to be maintained, there must be produced in it the subjectivity that could not seek congruence with the being in which it is produced. Being must hold sway as revealing itself, that is, in its very being flowing toward an I that approaches it, but flowing toward it infinitely without running dry, burning without being consumed. But this approach cannot be conceived as a cognition in which the knowing subject is reflected and absorbed. . . . but rather as the surplus of the social relation, . . . The social relation itself is not just another relation, one among so many others that can be produced in being, but is its ultimate event. (TI 196/TAI 221)

Existence itself is pluralist, and it is the production of this pluralism that accomplishes the dialectic of hypostasis and effects a true escape from the condemnation of solitary being!

Levinas says that what we can infer from the discovery of pluralist existence is that "only a being whose solitude has reached a crispation through suffering, and in relation with death, takes its place on a ground where the relation with the other becomes possible" (TA 64/TO 76). Only a being for whom death is proximate and existence is pluralist can have a relationship with the other, which is beyond all intentionality and power as it is the future itself. But to have a relationship with the other is not, in and of itself, to have a relationship with the Other. The latter, the social relation, makes possible the former. But death and the other come from the same region, Levinas tells us in Totalité et infini<sup>30</sup>--this is why the relationship with the Other can condition the

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<sup>30</sup> In Totalité et infini the analysis of time takes place, as one might anticipate following a careful reflection upon the title, within a phenomenological analysis of

relationship with the other, and this is perhaps why the Other is feared and instinctively associated with the threat of death.<sup>31</sup> But of more importance to this analysis is the fact that since the other and the Other are not the same, neither is their function with regard to hypostasis. Levinas has been seeking an escape from being for the solitary subject, a situation in which the subject can still remain a self and in which the freedom acquired by hypostasis can be maintained--not a situation, as in death, where the ego and its freedom would be destroyed and definitive existence would revert back into anonymous existence. As Levinas

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the Same and the Other as the two terms of a very specific relationship--a relationship characterized by a transgressive movement at the limits of immanence: time appears within the subjective perspective of the Same--that existent determined as Same in relation to the Other, that being determined as Same not by the totality fixed in its identity, but by the peculiar means and character of its absolution from that totality--as the space of postponement opened by the interruptive retreat of the limit which defines and demarcates the totality.

<sup>31</sup> The following passage is a relevant excerpt from *Totalité et infini*:  
 The Other, inseparable from the very event of transcendence, is situated in the region from which death, possibly murder, comes. . . . Death threatens me from beyond. This unknown that frightens, the silence of the infinite spaces that terrify, comes from the other, and this alterity, precisely as absolute, strikes me in an evil design or in a judgement of justice. The solitude of death does not make the Other vanish, but remains in a consciousness of hostility, and consequently still renders possible an appeal to the Other, to his friendship and his medication. The doctor is an a priori principle of human mortality. Death approaches in the fear of someone, and hopes in someone. "The Eternal brings death and life." A social conjuncture is maintained in this menace. It does not sink into the anxiety that would transform it into a "nihilation of nothingness." In the being for death of fear I am not faced with nothingness, but faced with what is against me, as though murder, rather than being one of the occasions of dying, were inseparable from the essence of death, as though the approach of death remained one of the modalities of the relation with the Other. (TI 210/TAI 234)

says, "the acuity of the problem lies in the necessity of maintaining the I in the transcendence with which it hitherto seemed incompatible" (TI 253/TAI 276). The "attempt to vanquish death" is one such situation, suggests Levinas, for it requires one to "face up to" the event--that is, to relate to it in its alterity as an event of transcendence (TA 67/TO 78). But we must understand why this is so, for we are not seeking a situation that is still dialectical, still schematic; rather, we are seeking a concrete situation, one that concretely accomplishes time. We have seen that the relationship with impersonal alterity, with the other, is the relationship with the future, but pure futurity is not yet time. How then does it become time?

Levinas stipulates that for the future to become time, it must enter into a relationship with the present (TA 68/TO 79). This does not mean it must become present; Levinas has already explained that the future is what is not grasped. To appropriate the future would be to transform it and to deny its alterity. The "future" grasped in anticipation and in projection are two such transformations of the future, as they are not the "authentic future," but forms of the "present" of the future.<sup>32</sup> The concrete situation in which the future enters into a relationship with the present, with the virility of the ego, is the situation that accomplishes a presence of the future in the present--a presence proper to the future, a presence of essential absence. This situation is concretely accomplished only in the intersubjective relationship, the "face to face with the

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<sup>32</sup> See TA 64/TO 76-77.

Other," the "encounter with a face that at once gives and conceals the Other" (TA 68-69/TO 79). In this relationship the multiple terms are in relation, while still maintaining their separation. In Totalité et infini Levinas says they are "partially independent and partially in relation" (TI 198/TAI 223). How then is the victory over death concrete, and not just schematic? Because it is concretely accomplished in sexuality and paternity--situations in which there is time, and in which the ego is both liberated from itself and preserved in that liberation.

It is not necessary to survey the entire analyses of eros and paternity in order to see how this is so, but we must consider them at least briefly. They begin with the question of whether there is not a situation where alterity appears within the domain of being in its pure form, a situation where it is borne by a being as its essence. Levinas' answer is yes: in eros, in the relationship with the Other as feminine.<sup>33</sup> The very pathos of love, he observes, consists in the insurmountable duality of beings, a duality conditioned by the difference of the sexes and accomplished in the desire for what in the beloved withdraws into its

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<sup>33</sup> There are those who, in not attending carefully enough to the context of Levinas' remarks regarding the feminine and its transcendent role with specific regard to the dialectic of hypostasis, and later with regard to dwelling, have interpreted Levinas' reference to the feminine as a reference to the female human being. Clearly this is not the case. Not only does he explicitly deny this possibility in Ethics and Infinity, where he says that participation in the masculine and feminine is the attribute of every human being (EI 71/EAI 68), but such a narrow reading of the text would necessitate ignoring the very point Levinas is making: that the relationship with what withdraws in mystery from any attempt to grasp it, and does so essentially--that is, with what has traditionally been associated with the female--regardless of the politics animating that association, is a modality of the relationship with the Other that accomplishes the dialectic of hypostasis in **every** mortal being.

mystery. Levinas describes the feminine as this mystery or modesty of withdrawal: "the feminine is not merely the unknowable, but a mode of being that consists in slipping away from the light. . . . It is a flight before light" (TA 79/TO 87).

This modesty comprises the very alterity of the Other in the erotic relation. In the duality of love, the beloved bears alterity as an essence. The subject as lover--regardless of gender--thus realizes in love a relationship that does not end in a return to the self, but in a transfiguration of the self:

Voluptuousity, as the coinciding of the lover and the beloved, . . . transfigures the subject himself, who henceforth owes his identity not to his initiative of power, but to the passivity of love received. . . . The subject in voluptuousity finds himself again as the self (which does not mean the object or the theme) of an other, and not only as the self of himself. (TI 248/TAI 270)

Levinas says that amorous subjectivity is a trans-substantiation--the "effemination" of the heroic and virile (TI 248-249/TAI 270-271). Thus, as Levinas explicitly explains, "it is an event in existing different from the hypostasis by which an existent arises" (TA 81/TO 88). In other words, it is an accomplishment of hypostasis in a moment other than the moment of evanescence; it is the accomplishment of a term which is other than the subject and otherwise than being: "the feminine is not accomplished as a being [étant] in a transcendence toward the light," Levinas points out, "but in modesty" (TA 81/TO 88). Eros thereby differs radically from possession, power, and knowledge: as it names a relationship in which one of the terms withdraws from both the illumination of



consciousness and the grasp of appropriation, it is a relationship that cannot be accounted for as either intentionality or enjoyment.<sup>34</sup>

We have seen how the "I" becomes encumbered with the self in the first moment of hypostasis. In transfiguring the "I," the erotic relationship delivers the "I" from this encumbrance and stops the return of the "I" to itself. This is possible precisely because in the erotic relationship there is time. The withdrawal of the feminine is a temporal withdrawal, a relationship with what is not yet there, a relationship "with what cannot be there when everything is there" (TA 81/TO 88), it is a relationship with the future--but a relationship in which the encounter with alterity is survived and in which the subjectivity of the subject is maintained! Levinas explains that the relationship with the Other is precisely the absence of the other--not the absence of nothingness, he says, but "absence in a horizon of the future, an absence that is time" (TA 83-84/TO 90). In Totalité et infini Levinas explains it this way:

Eros does not only extend the thoughts of a subject beyond objects and faces; it goes toward a future which is not yet and which I will not merely grasp, but I will be--it no longer has the structure of the subject which from every adventure returns to its island, like Ulysses. The I springs forth without returning, finds itself the self of an other: its pleasure, its pain is pleasure over the pleasure of the other or over his pain--though not through sympathy or compassion. Its future does not fall back upon the past it ought to renew; it remains an absolute future by virtue of this subjectivity which consists not in bearing representations or powers but in transcending absolutely . . . (TI 249/TAI 271)

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<sup>34</sup> Levinas says, for example, "to love to be loved is not an intention" (TI 247/TAI 270), to which he later adds that the transcendence of fecundity realized in eros "does not have the structure of intentionality, does not reside in the powers of the I" (TI 249/TAI 271).

In eros the subjectivity begun in the first moment of hypostasis is maintained in the second while accomplishing a relationship with what is otherwise than being, thus redeeming the "I" from the condemnation of being through a temporal transcendence.

In the erotic relationship with the Other there is both being and time, but here the terms are reversed: there is time and then being, there is time before being--and thus, before definitiveness and death. The dialectical reversal of the existent's mastery over being, in which the enchainment of matter and the condemnation of being is shattered, is this very reversal of being and time which opens an interval before the birth that accomplishes the definitive present. Levinas describes this postponement of being as a "distension in the tension of the instant" (TI 200/TAI 225), a distension first opened in the postponement of death, and then realized concretely in the transcendence of eros--where Levinas says there is "a characteristic reversal of the subjectivity issued from position, a reversion of the virile and heroic I which in positing itself put an end to the anonymity of the there is" (TI 248/TAI 270). The paternal relationship takes the relationship with alterity, and the dialectic of hypostasis, one step further. Through paternity the ego becomes other to itself. It accomplishes the dialectic of hypostasis in a temporal transcendence that does not only postpone death or even transcend it, but vanquishes it. This is the real meaning to Levinas' references to "victory over death."<sup>35</sup> In paternity one faces up to death by facing

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<sup>35</sup> See TA 67, 85/TO 78, 91.

the Other who is, without collapsing the difference between the ego and other, myself. Death is vanquished and the "I" is divested of its tragic egoism in a particular relationship Levinas calls fecundity--a relationship with the future as the child.

Paternity is a resolution of amorous subjectivity. I quoted a somewhat lengthy passage a moment ago, in which eros was said to go toward a future which is not yet and which I will be by virtue of a subjectivity which transcends absolutely. I ended the quotation with ellipses. I will quote this passage again, but this time in its entirety:

Eros does not only extend the thoughts of a subject beyond objects and faces; it goes toward a future which is not yet and which I will not merely grasp, but I will be--it no longer has the structure of the subject which from every adventure returns to its island, like Ulysses. The I springs forth without returning, finds itself the self of an other: its pleasure, its pain is pleasure over the pleasure of the other or over his pain--though not through sympathy or compassion. Its future does not fall back upon the past it ought to renew; it remains an absolute future by virtue of this subjectivity which consists not in bearing representations or powers but in transcending absolutely in fecundity. (TI 249/TA 271; emphasis mine)

This passage is meant to demonstrate a crucial point in the Levinasian analysis: eros is not only one possible mode of relating to the Other, preceding the paternal only analytically--it engenders the future to be accomplished in paternity and fecundity! Levinas explains:

Love seeks what does not have the structure of an existent, the infinitely future, what is to be engendered. I love fully only if the Other loves me, not because I need the recognition of the Other, but because my voluptuousness delights in his voluptuousness, and because in this unparalleled conjuncture of identification, in this trans-substantiation, the same and the other are not united but precisely--beyond every possible project, beyond

every meaningful and intelligent power--engender the child. (TI 244/TAI 266)

Levinas' point here, as he later explicitly says, is that the erotic encounter with the Other as feminine is a prerequisite for the accomplishment of the "future of the child," or fecundity--my future, which is nevertheless not my possibility, but a possibility of myself and the other in relation which comes to pass from beyond the possible.<sup>36</sup>

Absolute transcendence consists in the transcendence of trans-substantiation produced in paternity, where the "I" is an other in the child. Levinas reminds us that one does not simply have a child, as one would have a possession. Rather, in some way one "is" one's child. The very being of the "is" in this instance is multiple and transcendent, and the future that opens before this being is not a future of the same, but an absolute future and an infinite time--the time of infinite being, the time of fecundity. Infinite time does not simply renew the parent in the child, because the exteriority of the one to the other is still maintained in paternity;<sup>37</sup> one still ages, one still dies; the subject does not realize eternal life, but something better--according to Levinas: "the discontinuity of generations, punctuated by the inexhaustible youths of the child" (TI 246, 250/TAI 268, 272). The transcendence of fecundity is better than eternal life

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<sup>36</sup> See TI 245/TAI 267; also TA 15/TO 36.

<sup>37</sup> Levinas writes, "paternity is not simply the renewal of the father in the son and the father's merger with him, it is also the father's exteriority in relation to the son, a pluralist existing" (TA 87/TO 92).

because it founds goodness: "fecundity engendering fecundity accomplishes goodness" (TI 247/TAI 269). In paternity there is both an identification and a distinction within that identification such that "the meaningful continues beyond my death," as Levinas says elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> A future opens before being, a time in which it is possible to both be and not be. In the time of fecundity accomplished in paternity, there is finally an absolute transcendence, a liberation of existing from the unity and solitude of the existent.

In the relationship with the Other existing itself becomes multiple. Levinas ends Le temps et l'autre with the pronouncement that death, sexuality, and paternity introduce a duality into existing whereby the Eleatic notion of being is overcome and time is manifest as being's ultimate event. In a passage that could well have been written at the end of Le temps et l'autre, but appears instead toward the end of Totalité et infini, Levinas writes: "We have sought outside of consciousness and power for a notion of being founding transcendence. The acuity of the problem lies in the necessity of maintaining the I in the transcendence with which it hitherto seemed incompatible" (TI 253/TAI 276). The task for Levinas from the beginning was to find a redemption from the definitiveness of the present produced in mastering anonymous existence. His strategy was to search for that liberation in the instant of hypostasis itself, at the limit of existing and the existent, in the interval, or "dead time," where there appears a "rupture of continuity, and continuation across this rupture" (TI

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<sup>38</sup> "Diachrony and Representation," Time and the Other, 116.

260/TAI 284). What he discovered was that hypostasis has two moments and existing itself is plural, and thereby temporal. Because of the future opened in the second moment the subject is never completely born, and thus never definitively condemned to a solitary being-toward-death. Now we can see why the spectral nature of the definitive subject is the very trace of the Other and its redemptive interruption of definitive being, which could be seen as a condemnation only within the narcissistic perspective of the solitary ego. Levinas writes:

By virtue of time, the being defined, that is, self-identical, by reason of its place within the whole, the natural being (for birth describes precisely the entry into the whole that preexists and outlives), has not yet reached its term, remains at a distance from itself, is still preparatory, in the vestibule of being, still this side of the fatality of the non-chosen birth, not yet accomplished. The being defined by its birth can thus take up a position with regard to its nature; it disposes of a background and, in this sense, is not completely born, remains anterior to its definition or its nature. One instant does not link up with another to form a present. The identity of the present splits up into an inexhaustible multiplicity of possibles that suspend the instant. (TI 214-215/TAI 237-238)

Fecundity opens an absolute time which reveals the present to be the phantom apparition it is, and does so by evincing a unity that engenders multiplicity and accomplishes time.

Levinas says in Totalité et infini that in articulating existing as time, the philosophy of becoming seeks to disengage itself from the category of a permanent and stable one, which compromises any attempt to transcend that singularity. Existing is thus freed from the unity of the existent by a time that is the very relation between a being and what is otherwise than being, a relationship

accomplished in the dialectic of the instant, but which is not reducible to it. He pointed out in the preface to Le temps et l'autre that as a mode of finite being time would indeed be nothing more than the temporal dispersion of Being into mutually exclusive instants, while eternity would be nothing more than a delusion of the imagination, a phantastic composite of what cannot be composed (TA 9/TO 31).<sup>39</sup> The main discovery of Le temps et l'autre reveals, to the contrary, that time is not a mode of finite being and a degradation of eternity. The completion of time is not death, Levinas insists; it is messianic time, "where the perpetual is converted into the eternal" (TI 261/TAI 285). Time is infinity itself. The being produced in infinite time, while being, is not yet being. By virtue of time, being remains in suspense; Levinas says that across this distance with regard to being, the definitive is always not yet definitive--and it is for this reason that being can commence and the existent can be a subject, an origin, a commencement:

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<sup>39</sup> "As a modality of finite being time, time would indeed signify the dispersion of the being of a being into mutually exclusive moments, which are, besides, as instants unstable and unfaithful even to themselves, each expelled into the past out of their own presence, yet furnishing the fulgurating idea--and the non-sense and sense, the death and life--of this presence that they would thus suggest. But then eternity--the idea of which, without borrowing anything from lived duration [la durée vécue], the intellect would claim to possess a priori: the idea of a mode of being, where the multiple is one and which would confer on the present its full sense--is it not always suspect of only dissimulating the fulguration of the instant, its half-truth, which is retained in an imagination capable of playing in the intemporal and of deluding itself about a gathering of the nongatherable? In the final account, would not this eternity and this intellectual God, composed of these abstract and inconstant half-instants of the temporal dispersion, be an abstract eternity and a dead God?" (TA 9/TO 31)

Time no longer expresses the unintelligible dispersion of the unity of being, wholly contained in the first cause, in an apparent and phantasmal series of causes and effects; time adds something new to being, something absolutely new. . . . Time is the non-definitiveness of the definitive, an ever recommencing alterity of the accomplished--the "ever" of this recommencement. The work of time goes beyond the suspension of the definitive which the continuity of duration makes possible. There must be a rupture of continuity and continuation across this rupture. The essential in time consists in being a drama, a multiplicity of acts, where the following act resolves the prior one. Being is no longer produced at one blow, irremissibly present. Reality is what is, but will be once again, another time freely resumed and pardoned. Infinite being is produced as times, that is, in several times across the dead time that separates the father from the son. (TI 260/TAI 284-85)

Because of the Other, there is time; because of time and the Other, being itself is infinite. Hence, any phenomenology must account for the Other in accounting for time, or it cannot hope to understand the meaning of being.



## PART TWO

### THINKING LETTING-PRESENCE, ABSENCE, AND THE A-PROPRIETY OF TIME IN THE LATER WORK OF MARTIN HEIDEGGER

The Kehre from Being and time to time and Being reflects, Heidegger says, a fidelity to the matter of thinking, and calls upon thought "to undergo a change whose movement cor-responds with the reversal."<sup>1</sup> It will be the aim of the second part of this work to show that in remaining responsive to the question of the meaning of Being, and in thinking the withdrawal and source of time by way of the essence of poetry and language, Heidegger sees a need to go beyond phenomenology and propositional thinking. Heidegger shows in "Zeit und Sein" that the awakening to Ereignis must be experienced, as all thinking of Ereignis remains inadequate. And yet, this experience cannot be strictly phenomenological, since the giving source of time and Being withdraws from all disclosure and does so essentially. Hence, if it can be experienced, it must be experienced in a manner appropriate to its ex-propriative character and essential absence. The task of the third chapter will be to suggest that Heidegger's attunement to this ex-propriation and essential absence is sharpened, if not

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<sup>1</sup> William J. Richardson, Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), xviii.

initiated, in attempting to think the essence of poetry in response to the work of Friedrich Hölderlin. In the fourth chapter I will try to follow the path of Heidegger's attempts to think about the movement of Ereignis/Enteignis with direct reference to the question of time, and in the fifth chapter I will consider some of his conclusions regarding its implications for phenomenology.

## CHAPTER 3

### HEIDEGGER AND THE ESSENCE OF POETRY: VENTURING THE REDETERMINATION OF TIME AND MAN AT THE LIMITS OF PROPRIETY

"What are poets for in a destitute time?" asks Hölderlin in the seventh strophe of the poem "Brod und Wein." This question about the poet is asked by the poet in what would appear to be the very act that determines him as such and brings him into his own. What can it mean, then, for Hölderlin to ask in his own work about the essential propriety and timeliness of that work? What must one think of poetry that asks about the proper role of the poet who asks? What is the proper role of those who once sung praises to the gods, but who must now sing in a godless time--an untimely time, perhaps, for poetry? And what is the significance to poetry and thinking of such a question? How are we to understand poetry that questions the proper relation between the poetic task and the time to which it belongs--a time perhaps inappropriate to poetry?

Heidegger's essay "Wozu Dichter?" takes an abbreviated form of Hölderlin's question as its title. The first line of the text repeats Hölderlin's question in its entirety: ". . . And what are poets for in a destitute time?" (HW 248/PLT 91). Heidegger appropriately observes that we hardly understand the

question today, and follows this observation with a question of his own, a question prompted by the poet's question: "How, then, shall we grasp the answer that Hölderlin gives?" Hölderlin's question and Heidegger's questioning response are then followed by yet another repetition of Hölderlin's question: ". . . And what are poets for in a destitute time?"

These three questions initiate a remarkable meditation on metaphysics and holiness, a meditation that not only addresses the limits of each, but subtly transgresses those limits in thinking them. But that transgression is subordinate to yet another: Heidegger discovers in Hölderlin's poetry a site wherein philosophy can think the metaphysical together with the holy, which in Der Begriff der Zeit was suggested to be beyond the purview of the metaphysician,<sup>2</sup> but in doing so, the meditation must first broach the proper limits of philosophy and poetry by dislocating the respective logoi of each and then rethinking its proper function in conjunction with that dislocation and the disclosures that ensue. The essay accordingly begins with this transgression. Let us note that Heidegger carefully brackets his philosophical question within two repetitions of the poetic question, thus logographically situating the entire philosophical meditation within the poetic dimension opened by the poem--a dimension traditionally considered to be alien to philosophy, as Heidegger himself notes later in the essay, saying that

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<sup>2</sup> Heidegger says the philosopher can say nothing of God since by nature the philosopher does not believe ("Der Philosoph glaubt nicht"), while God is knowable only in faith. See Martin Heidegger, Der Begriff der Zeit: Vortrag vor der Marburger Theologenschaft Juli 1924 (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer, 1989), 5-6.

philosophers would consider such a move to be "a helpless aberration into fantasy" (HW 252/PLT 96). Let us also observe that the poetic question is preceded by ellipses, which, while underscoring its belongingness to the poem as a whole, and thus the resituation of philosophical thought, also signals a detachment of the poetic question from its proper context by the philosopher--thereby indicating a resituation of poetry as well. Heidegger says this poetic resituation would meet with equal resistance from the scholarly world, which would consider it "an unscientific violation of what such scholarship takes to be the facts" (HW 252/PLT 96). But this discomfiture does not prevent the mutually destabilizing and transgressive resituation from occurring. In fact, Heidegger says that the disruptive dialogue between poetry and thinking belongs to the destiny of Being, and that destiny pursues its course untroubled by our protestations.

In accordance with this unusual beginning, the text ends with yet another disruption of our expectations: Heidegger does not answer the question posed by the poet and repeated by the philosopher, nor does he point to an answer given by the poet in the poem. Rather, he defers back to poetry, announcing that only the poet's own poetry can answer the question regarding to what end the poet is a poet, whither the poet's song is bound, and where the poet belongs in the destiny of the world's night. This deferral opens a space for genuine dialogue, an interval in which both the philosopher and the reader must wait for an answer, and wait for the means to grasp that answer when it is given. In the end, then, we lack an answer. "Es fehlt uns eine Antwort," we might say. In fact, we might say we lack

even the power to anticipate that answer. We can only ask the question and wait for a response. This deference returns us thematically to Heidegger's original question and to the poem in response to which it was asked, while underscoring at the same time an uncharacteristic passivity on the part of philosophy, an unusual lack of virility. But this passivity, in its turn, opens upon a curious kind of time, a time other than the proper time of the virile subject. The time glimpsed in this passivity is that of a future that must come to the thinker, and come from beyond any ecstatic horizon, unprojected and unanticipated.

Heidegger composed "Wozu Dichter?" in 1946--eleven years after writing "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" and ten years after writing "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung," but less than a year before writing the "Humanismusbrief"--in which the Kehre was first formally acknowledged. In considering this essay and the poem it locates at its origin, I wish not only to accentuate the philosophical monstrosity of the meditation in its transgressive rethinking of philosophical limits, but the remarkable attunement of both the thinker and the poet to a time and a holiness that belong to the destiny of Being, without belonging to Being itself and without being accomplished within Being. I will first provisionally address Heidegger's own reading of the poem. I will then turn to the poem itself and offer some insights of my own, referring to other thinkers and returning to Heidegger's texts when and where such responses are called for by the reading. What I hope to ultimately explore are some of the possible reasons why Heidegger chose to investigate the issues raised in this particular essay in the

margins of this particular poem, and what those reasons may indicate about the Kehre and Heidegger's understanding of the relation of Being to time.

Heidegger says of Hölderlin's question that the destitute time in which the poets find their task questionable is our time, the era to which we ourselves still belong. According to Heidegger, it is our time that is identified by the poet as the time of the world's night, a time of default and darkness precipitated expressly by the birth and death of a god:

For Hölderlin's historical experience, the appearance and sacrificial death of Christ mark the beginning of the end of the day of the gods. Night is falling. Ever since the "united three"--Herakles, Dionysos, and Christ--have left the world, the evening of the world's age has been declining toward its night. The world's night is spreading its darkness. The era is defined by the god's failure to arrive, by the "default of God." (HW 248/PLT 91)

The "default of God" translates the German Fehl Gottes. Fehlen means "to be lacking," "to be missing," "to be away or absent." For example, to say something is "fehl am Platz" means that it is out of place, or lacking a proper place. Fehl refers specifically to an absence that calls attention to itself and announces itself as a deficit or lack. It is not an incidental and insignificant absence that the whole can do without, an unnecessary and unnoticed absence. It is an absence that renders the whole deficient and incomplete.

And yet, the "default of God" does not mean for Heidegger the simple absence of that which was once present or should be present, the absence of that which belongs to the whole and renders the whole incomplete only by its displacement, subtraction or departure. This would bespeak a lack belonging to

the whole and proceeding from it. Heidegger does not say it is because of the god's departure that the world's night is spreading its darkness; it is because of the god's failure to arrive: Der Fehl Gottes is not just the absence of the god, it is the god's default. What is more, the phrase Fehl Gottes is set off by quotation marks in Heidegger's text--which explicitly calls attention to it. In granting that special attention we discover that the default of god is a peculiar absence. It is akin to the absence produced in awaiting an arrival that is overdue; it is like the absence of someone who has not come precisely after creating the expectation that he or she was going to come. Leaving creates an absence through the privation of what was previously present. This privative kind of absence is produced by a movement that goes from me and leaves an emptiness where before there was fullness. But the absence of one who has failed to arrive is a different kind of absence altogether: it is an absence added to absence; it is an absence produced by what was not before present, even as absent--and that is its peculiarity. It is not produced as a departure from presence of that which was present, but as an unaccomplished coming to presence of that which is not yet present, even as absent. This kind of absence renders the whole incomplete from without and comes from beyond the totality of what is present. It comes to me, and does so in place of whoever or whatever I await, preceding the coming of that which has not yet come or is not yet even coming, moving before it, opening a space in which what was not before present can be absent. This absence is an essential absence, defined not in relation to presence, but as its other. The god is not only absent,



but essentially absent and waited upon as such by the poet. The god is in "default," his coming is overdue, and this default announces itself to the poet from beyond Being as the trace of an essential absence.

But added to that absence is oblivion. Heidegger explains that the world's night is spreading its darkness and becoming ever more destitute precisely because only the poet recognizes the god's default. Heidegger says the default of god means that no god any longer visibly and unequivocally gathers men and things unto himself, thereby disposing history and our sojourn in it. But in our time the divine radiance of the gods has been extinguished so thoroughly that even their essential absence goes unnoticed by men: our time has grown so destitute it can no longer even discern the default of god as such, and this makes our time wholly and absolutely destitute. Heidegger therefore calls our time "night's midnight"--because it is so enveloped in darkness that it is no longer capable even of experiencing its own destitution. Our time is such that there is no longer even the hope or expectation of a coming god by virtue of which a god could appear even as absent. Much less is there a place for the god to actually be absent, a place that recognizes or maintains that absence, an empty abode to which he could be returning, were such a return to become possible.

Heidegger then adds, however, that the destitute time of the poet, our time, is therefore an abysmal time, a groundless time: "Because of this default, there fails to appear for the world the god that grounds it" (HW 248/PLT 92). He says our time hangs in an abysmal absence of ground [Abgrund]. This

declaration seems, at first, abrupt and unjustified: it seems we could well ask what relation the default of god has to an abysmal absence of ground. Is not the ground precisely the ground of that which is, while the destitute god is the trace of that which is essentially absent? How, then, does a forgetfulness of the latter lead to absence of the former? In the first essay of Unterwegs zur Sprache Heidegger says that we speak of an abyss where the ground falls away and is lacking, "where we seek the ground and set out to arrive at a ground, to get to the bottom of something" (UZS 13/PLT 191). But if ours is a godless time in which we are not even aware of the default of god, how then can our time be groundless? How can there be an abyss precisely where we are not seeking to "get to the bottom" of the default of god? We must carefully consider the passage in which Heidegger draws this disorienting conclusion:

Because of this default, there fails to appear for the world the ground that grounds it. The word for abyss--Abgrund--originally means the soil and ground toward which, because it is undermost, a thing tends downward. But in what follows we shall think of the Ab- as the complete absence of ground. The ground is the soil in which to strike root and to stand. The age for which the ground fails to come, hangs in the abyss. (HW 248, PLT 92)

Let us attend specifically to the beginning of the above quotation: "Because of this default, . . ." [Mit-diesem Fehl, . . .]. Which default? Not the original default, but the default that is not even recognized as a default, the absence even of absence, the lack even of lack. Because of this default, he says, the ground fails to appear for the world. Our world [Welt] and its era [Weltalter] are destitute because the god has failed to arrive, but the destitute world and era defined by

that default have become so completely destitute that even the recognition of the default has been obscured, and thus precluded. Even the default is in default. Our time does not cease to be abysmal because of its absolute destitution, it merely hangs in that abyss, suspended there by the blindness of a complacency that cannot tend downward because it does not yet recognize its groundlessness. The ground that would define, or ground, were we turned toward it, is therefore in default along with god, and the Welt and Weltalter it would ground, were it to so arrive, remain without a fundamental orientation.

Heidegger says it is from the very groundlessness of this abyss that Hölderlin asks his question and in asking turns toward it. Yet Heidegger also says that a turn remains open for the destitute time only if the world turns fundamentally away from the abyss. In order to turn fundamentally away from the abyss the fundament or ground must first come--and this can happen, he explains, only if in our destitute time an abode is first prepared for the returning god, a place for the god to be absent and awaited, a place for the absent god to be held in default. Man must first attend to the god's failure to arrive, and in so attending, tend towards the coming of a ground. The god cannot arrive where there is no destination, where no one awaits that arrival. The return thus depends upon man:

The turning of the age does not take place by some new god, or the old one renewed, bursting into the world from ambush at some time or other. Where would he turn on his return if men had not first prepared an abode for him? How could there ever be for a god an abode fit for a god, if a divine radiance did not first begin to shine in everything that is? (HW 249/PLT 92; emphases mine)

In another poem, "Mnemosyne," Hölderlin says that the heavenly powers cannot do all things, but that mortals must reach into the abyss. Heidegger says, in fact, that the very nature of men and women lies precisely in this, "that mortals must reach into the abyss sooner than heavenly powers" (HW 250/PLT 93). Humanity must first prepare an abode to which the god can be coming, a place from which the god can be awaited and missed. What this means, says Heidegger, is that before a turn from destitution is possible, men must first find the way to their own nature (HW 250/PLT 93).

Heidegger is indicating here that there is something essential to man himself, something belonging to his own nature, that has passed into obscurity along with the default of god--something that would be reaffirmed in reaching into the abyss and in preparing an abode for the returning god. In other words, he is suggesting that there is something belonging to man's very nature that necessitates a turn toward the essential absence of the divine. This appears somewhat contrary to his early attempts to carefully segregate philosophy and theology. It also contrasts in a very provocative way with the beginning of Sein und Zeit, where it is precisely the question of the meaning of Being that "has today been forgotten [ist heute in Vergessenheit gekommen]" (SZ 2/BT 2): in this essay the ground that does not come is very clearly associated, not with the Vergessenheit of the Seinsfrage, but with the Vergessenheit of the god who does not come. While we have yet to discover what that association entails and what it may mean for philosophy and phenomenology, it is nevertheless undeniable that there is an

association, a fundamental association, between the two. And while this association admittedly does not by any means efface the difference between philosophical and theological metaphysics, it certainly complicates it.

Having thus suggested that there is something essential to man that would be reaffirmed in reaching into the abyss and in thus awaiting the returning god, Heidegger says that mortals must reach into the abyss opened by the default of god sooner than heavenly powers. The reason for this, he says, is because mortals remain closer to the abysmal absence, being touched by presence, the ancient name of Being. In Sein und Zeit the oblivion of the question of the meaning of Being indicates a forgottenness of what Dasein pre-ontologically is; that oblivion is an existential event, in other words, an event by virtue of which man has lost the way to his own nature. But here Heidegger seems to be suggesting that the forgottenness of our relationship to the holy, also an existential event, may be as fundamental an oblivion--and thus may necessitate the reawakening of a question as fundamental as that concerning the meaning of Being. In Sein und Zeit, Heidegger determines Dasein to be the clearing within which presence gets disclosed and beings get disclosed in their presence: that is, through an attunement to what he calls the existential constitution of "the there," the da- of Dasein, Heidegger discovers that only Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, has a sense of place belonging to it existentially, and thus Dasein alone is the clearing or site where the disclosure and understanding of Being can take place. But this text would suggest that insofar as a remembrance of the default of god entails a return

to man's own disclosive nature, our relationship with the alterity of an absent god and our relationship to the Being of beings must be, at the very least, equiprimordial events--and perhaps even two moments the same event!

It is explicitly within the logos of Being as presence, within the attempt to categorically think Being in terms of what is present--independently of that which is essentially absent, or wholly refractory to the categories of Being as presence--that philosophy has traditionally identified the nature of man. Heidegger's work began by calling precisely this identity into question, by suggesting that the nature which lies within the scope of categorical identification is not man's own: Sein und Zeit determined both that the question concerning the essence of man lies proximate to the question concerning the meaning of Being (as Dasein is, pre-ontologically, that very question), and that the meaning of Being is time--in which absence and alterity have always been recognized to play an obscure, but essential role. Although in the death analysis Heidegger thinks literally at the threshold of an "other" time by explicitly recognizing the problem of the interruptive coincidence of the ownmost and othermost character of death,<sup>3</sup> Heidegger still predominantly thinks time in the existential analytic as the ecstatic "upon-which" of the ontological projection that makes existential care possible--that is, as preeminently proper to Dasein, as the primordial temporality of Dasein. In the end, even though the alterity of time is glimpsed in Sein und Zeit, it is still

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<sup>3</sup> See John Sallis, "Mortality and Imagination," Echoes: After Heidegger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 118-138.

thought as an other somehow proper to the same. However, in the coming-together of philosophy and poetry to think the essence of poetry in a destitute time, Heidegger discovers a way to think the alterity of time in its essential relation to the Being of Dasein, without first appropriating or compromising that alterity in the process: as the radical absence opened upon in thinking the default of god, where thought finds the trace of an a-proper time, a time that can come to Dasein without first having belonged to the Being of Dasein.

In thinking what he calls the "order " and "inner coherence" of five key passages from Hölderlin's work that address the subject of poetry, Heidegger concludes that the essence of poetry must be thought historically, which means: in its essential relation to time. The structure of "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung" is chiasmic (and thus reflects, as we will see shortly, the structure of "Brod und Wein"). The question of the essence of poetry presupposes and leads to the question of the essence of language, which in turn leads to the question of the Being of the gods and all things named by language, and the essence of that naming. This inaugural naming is the focal point of the essay, and justly so, for it corresponds to "the founding and naming of Being and of the essence of all things" (EHD 40/HEP 88), and thus, to the inaugural grounding of human existence as fundamentally poetic--meaning that man, at the most fundamental level, both dwells in the presence of the gods and is concernfully exposed to the essential proximity of things. After reaching this chiasmic apex, Heidegger then returns to the question of the essence of language, now understood to be poetry

itself, which speaks essential names and thereby founds Being in language. And lastly he returns to rethink the essence of poetry in the light of this timely and appropriate understanding of essence. What he concludes in the essay is that the proper essence of poetry must be an historical essence, a temporalized essence, an essence both determined and determinative of its time.

That time, in Hölderlin's case is the destitute time of the god's default. Heidegger explains in "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung" that poetry in a destitute time is both the most innocent of all crafts and the most dangerous of all works, because in poetically founding human existence, the poet is directly exposed to the "lightning" [Blitzen] and "hints" [Winke] of the god, and thus to a "super-abundance of inspiration" [Übermass des Andrangs].<sup>4</sup> Drawn into the liminal interval between gods and men [der Zwischen], and thus into the "excessive light" [übergrosse Helle] of the god, the poet captures these hints and sends them on to his fellow mortals.<sup>5</sup> These hints are clearly what Heidegger has reference to in "Wozu Dichter?" when he speaks of the "marks" [Merkmale] and "traces" [Spuren] of the fugitive gods. He says there that the abyss--the indeterminate Zwischen itself--holds and remarks everything, even absence, since presence which conceals itself is already absence. The poet is he among mortals who is said to reach into the abyssmal Zwischen, because he is drawn ahead of other mortals into the interval between gods and mortals, thus coming to know

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<sup>4</sup> EHD 41, 44/HEP 89, 92.

<sup>5</sup> EHD 43/HEP 91.



the marks the abyss remarks specifically as the trace of the fugitive gods, and coming to know this sooner and otherwise than other mortals. The poet comes to know the alterity of the fugitive god and the groundlessness of the interval in a way others do not. His poetry, says Heidegger, must then be thought in terms of this abysmal reach beyond other men and women. When so thought, the utterance of the poet is shown to consist in a divinely inspired interpretation of the "Voice of the people" [Stimme des Volkes],<sup>6</sup> a dangerously manic saying provocatively similar to that of the "light and winged and holy" poet in Plato's Ion.<sup>7</sup>

The Zwischen into which the poet is drawn is figuratively thought by Hölderlin as the liminal interval between earth and sky, and it is this evocative image that is at play in his own characterization of the poet as singularly exposed on the people's behalf to the lightning of the gods.<sup>8</sup> Heidegger appropriates this image in his analysis of the poetic function of the Greek temple in "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," and speaks of it in "Wozu Dichter?" as the place where the nature of wine is disclosed to be that which springing from the earth and blessed

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<sup>6</sup> EHD 43-44/HEP 91-92.

<sup>7</sup> Ion, 534b.

<sup>8</sup> The last stanza of "Wie wenn am Feiertage," quoted in EHD 41/HEP 89, reads as follows:

Yet it behooves us, O poets  
 To stand bare-headed beneath God's thunderstorms,  
 To seize the Father's ray itself  
 With our own hands and, wrapped in song,  
 To offer the heavenly gift to the people.

by the sun brings together earth and sky, the respective domains of the mortal and the divine, the same and the other. It is this site, he says, where the wine-god Dionysis still guards the being-toward one another of earth and sky--and thus, it is the site where the trace of the fugitive gods still remains, the interval in which the holy can be traced.

What is essential to this site is identified in more detail in "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes." Through the analysis of a Greek temple, which secures the figure of the god, Heidegger is able to phenomenologically show that the artwork gathers around itself the open relational context of a world within which a clearing and illuminating occurs that allows things to emerge in their presence and allows earth to emerge as their native ground. More precisely, the temple opens up the world as it first fits together and simultaneously gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations which acquire the shape of destiny for human being, for Dasein. Through the standing-there of the temple is manifest the breadth of the sky and the emergence of earth as native ground, as that to which in the process of phusis everything emergent is as such sheltered and secured. It is within this clearing interplay of earth and world, Heidegger says, that mortals first come to presence and, at the same time, an abode is prepared for the absent god. The artwork is set up [aufstellen] within the world, which is reciprocally set up by the artwork. This reciprocal aufstellen liberates the Open of the holy and invokes the god into the openness of this gathering presence. But it also takes the work and sets it forth from [herstellen] the earth. As that which is set forth from

the earth, the work is, in its presencing, a productive setting-forth of the earth. Through this poetic disclosure the artwork thus moves the earth itself into the Open of a world and keeps it there as self-secluding--thereby instigating and preserving the standing strife of earth and world, and setting truth to work as the primal strife of the Open to which they belong. The truth thus set to work and fixed in place is figure, Gestalt, and it is here--in the Open of the primal polemic fixed in place by the figure of the absent god and the temple that gives place to that figurative absence--that the coming together of men and gods, and the determination of man as man, can then take place.

Heidegger says that in the destitute time it is the poet who initiates the communion of men and gods by producing a work which thus situates and secures the Open where the gods can return--when and if there is a turn among men. The poet situates the Open and conditions a turn toward the absent god by preparing a site where man can testify to who he is. Heidegger explains:

Man is who he is, precisely in the testimony he gives of his own existence. This testimony does not refer to an incidental expression of human nature; it is a determining part of the human way of being. What is it that man has to bear witness to? To his belonging to the Earth. Man belongs to the Earth, because he inherits and learns from her in all things. Things, however, stand in opposition to each other, and what keeps them apart and thus, by the same token, links them together is what Hölderlin calls inwardness [Innigkeit]. Man bears witness that he too belongs to this inwardness by his creation of a world; the rise of worlds as well as their decline and destruction is the sign of human existence on earth. (EHD 34/HEP 82)

It is in this act of bearing testimony, which comes to pass in the form of history, that man truly fulfills himself as man. Language has been given to man, explains

Heidegger, precisely in order to make this history possible. Hence, in bearing witness to his belonging to the earth and to his creation of a world, man is always already bearing witness to his appropriation of language, which first had to be given to man. He is therefore also bearing witness to the poetic essence of language and the primordial relation of the poet to the absent gods. It is only thus that the poet, in tracing the way for his kindred mortals toward a turn to the absent god, can at the same time trace the way toward man's own nature.

Heidegger henceforth concludes: "To be a poet in a destitute time means: to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods. This is why the poet in the time of the world's night utters the holy" (HW 251/PLT 94).

But the poet is able to utter the holy only by virtue of his attunement to the unholy. Heidegger says that the holy, as the track to the holy, remains concealed unless there are mortals capable of seeing the unholy in man's relation to Being itself. The poet discerns the holy concealing itself in the abyss that underlies all beings, and he does so by reaching sooner into the abyss, the place of the turning. But how can we other mortals reach into the abyss when we are not even aware of the default of God and thus are not seeking to "get to the bottom" of our destitution, not tending downward toward the ground of that destitution? We cannot. That is precisely the point. That is also the reason for the absolute destitution of our Weltzeit. We must first come to see, like the poet, the destitution of our era for what it is: the mark of an age in which something is fundamentally amiss, fundamentally unholy. By attending to the unholy as the

absence of the holy, we initiate a turn toward the abyss where, Heidegger explains to our surprise, we can fall upward:

If we let ourselves fall into the abyss . . . , we do not go tumbling into emptiness. We fall upward, to a height. Its loftiness opens up a depth. The two span a realm in which we would like to become at home, so as to find a residence, a dwelling place for the life of man. (UZS 11/PLT 191-92)

We fall upward, because in attending to the abysmal nature of our destitute relation to the absent gods we turn toward the trace of the holy, the height and interval that separates mortal and divine. The poet finds the trace of the holy precisely by attending to what is unholy in man's relation to Being itself--by turning toward the danger inherent in our relation to Being specifically with an eye to what is unholy about it. In other words, our relation to Being is not a neutral relation--it is essentially holy or unholy. Heidegger says later in "Wozu Dichter?" that this day is the world's night because the integrality of the whole of what is remains obscured, the wholesome and sound remains withdrawn, and the world thus remains unholy and without healing. The holy in our relation to Being is thereby concealed and even the track to the holy effaced and nearly obliterated. Mortals must see the threat of the unholy, discern its danger--which is the danger, and in so doing turn toward it. "It may be," he says, "that any other salvation than that which comes from where the danger is, is still within the unholy" (HW 273/PLT 118). It is in this context that Heidegger's now famous remark in the Der Spiegel interview must be understood, I think:

Only a god can save us. The sole possibility that is left for us is to prepare a sort of readiness, through thinking and poetizing, for the appearance of

the god or for the absence of the god in the time of foundering  
[Untergang]; for in the face of the god who is absent, we founder.<sup>9</sup>

The danger inherent in our foundering in the unholy is revealed to the poet who, otherwise than other mortals and sooner than they, attends to the unholy, to what is amiss in man's relation to Being--and thus to the question and trace of the holy itself, from whence alone salvation can come.

The more obscure the traces become, the less can a single mortal in reaching into the abyss attend to them, however. With reference to the third stanza of "Brod und Wein" Heidegger says: "it is then all the more strictly true that each man gets farthest if he goes only as far as he can go along the way allotted to him" (HW 251/PLT 95). What is allotted to the poet is a particular locality historically defined by the manifestness of Being within metaphysics:

The poet thinks his way into the locality defined by that lightening of Being which has reached its characteristic shape as the realm of Western metaphysics in its self-completion. Hölderlin's thinking poetry has had a share in giving its shape to this realm of poetic thinking. His composing dwells in this locality as intimately as no other poetic composition of his time. (HW 250-51/PLT 95)<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This interview was conducted on September 23, 1966, but--at Heidegger's request--it was not published until after his death. It finally appeared in Der Spiegel on 31 May 1976, (no. 23, pp. 193 ff). The English-language translation by Maria P. Alter and John D. Caputo was published in Philosophy Today, winter 1976, pp. 267-284, and was entitled: "Only a God can Save Us: Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger." The passage I have quoted is found on page 277 of that issue.

<sup>10</sup> The German word Lichtung, translated here as "lightening," is perhaps better rendered as "clearing." In either case one must recall both the visual and kinetic senses of the German word.

In so reaching into the abyss the poet becomes the most ventured and daring of mortals, and hence, the most mortal of mortals. By being more venturesome than the ground, he ventures to where all ground breaks off--he transgresses the determinate nature of man; the ground disappears because what the poet glimpses in tracing the god's fugitive absence is that, as Heidegger insisted in Being and Time, man erroneously finds his nature as zohon logon echon determined in the interpretation animal rationale.<sup>11</sup> As the poet ventures beyond the metaphysical limits of determination to where man's proper nature remains as yet undetermined--that is, as he prepares the way toward man's proper nature by turning toward the abyss and rethinking man's essential relation to the holy and unholy--he quite literally ventures where there is no ground. His poetry--as Heidegger suggests in response to the question "What are poets for in a destitute time?"--is that venture.

The task for the poet in the destitute time, then, is to trace the way toward man's nature in the light of that venture. And yet, if the time's destitution has made the whole being and vocation of the poet a poetic question, the essence of that poetic venture is itself questionable and must be rethought together with that venture. It is this double necessity that Heidegger seems to have in mind when he says that poets in a destitute time must especially gather in poetry the nature of poetry (HW 250/PLT 94). The problem for the thinker is correspondingly double. Heidegger explains that the locality to which Hölderlin came is a

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<sup>11</sup> See SZ 25, 48/BT 47, 74.

manifestness of Being, "a manifestness which itself belongs to the destiny of Being and which, out of that destiny, is intended for the poet" (HW 251/PLT 95). It is the very history of Being that leads thinking into a dialogue with poetry--that dialogue and the resituation of philosophy and poetry that it precipitates are realized as the very destiny of Being.<sup>12</sup> First, then, the questionability of the

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<sup>12</sup> Heidegger writes:

But this manifestness of Being within metaphysics as completed may even be at the same time the extreme oblivion of Being. Suppose, however, that this oblivion were the hidden nature of the destituteness of what is destitute in the time. There would indeed be no time then for an aesthetic flight to Holderlin's poetry. There would be no moment in which to make a contrived myth out of the figure of the poet. There would then be no occasion to misuse his poetry as a rich source for philosophy. But there would be, and there is, the sole necessity, by thinking our way soberly into what his poetry says, to come to learn what is unspoken. That is the course of the history of Being. If we reach and enter that course, it will lead thinking into a dialogue with Being. (HW 252/PLT 95-96)

For Heidegger, this dialogue occurs in thinking the essence of poetry.

In "Dichterisch wohnet der Mensch . . ." we read that poetry and thinking think the same when the difference between them is sustained and preserved in that thinking. The dialogue does not occur as a mere dissolution of thinking into poetry or the reverse; Heidegger insists that there can be no "poetic thinking," by which he means no identity of poetry and thought:

Poetry and thinking meet each other in one and the same only when, and only as long as, they remain distinctly in the distinctness of their nature. The same never coincides with the equal, not even in the empty indifferent oneness of what is merely identical. The equal or identical always moves toward the absence of difference, so that everything may be reduced to a common denominator. The same, by contrast, is the belonging together of what differs, through a gathering by way of the difference. We can only say "the same" if we think difference. It is in the carrying out and settling of differences that the gathering nature of sameness comes to light. The same banishes all zeal always to level what is different into the equal or identical. The same gathers what is distinct into an original being-at-one. (VA 218/PLT 218-19)

To transgress the limits of poetry and thought in thinking them together is not to destroy those limits or ignore them; there can only be a transgression where there are limits to be transgressed. But by the same token, any transgression of limits



poetic venture in its ontological significance must be rethought in a way that is proper to the matter to be rethought. But in addition, the thinker must rethink the mutually constitutive relation between the destitute time of the venture, the time that shelters Being, and the coming-together of poetry and thought in the manifestness of Being in that time to think time and its destitution. Heidegger says that where poets gather in poetry the nature of poetry on the way toward the destiny of the worlds age, "we others must learn to listen to what these poets say-- assuming that, in regard to the time that conceals Being because it shelters it, we do not deceive ourselves through reckoning time merely in terms of that which is by dissecting that which is" (HW 251/PLT 94). Only thus can the meaning of Being and the nature of man be properly rethought.

But what does it mean to say the philosopher must listen to the poet?

How, in the alien margins of poetry, is philosophy to think the proper essence of

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necessarily disrupts those limits, as well as what is delimited thereby. Poetry and thought think the same when they are gathered together by their difference, by their alterity, to think what is disrupted and wrenched out of oblivion by that dialogue.

Thinking that preserves the integrity of the poetry it thinks takes place as a response to what is to be heard in the poem, not as an appropriation of what is said in the poem--since what is to be heard in the poem is what is unsaid, what poetry cannot say. If the destitution of our time has made the whole being and vocation of the poet a poetic question, then presumably it is within this dialogue that the poetic question might be raised and a turn away from the abyss might become possible, because it is within this dialogue that the unholiness and errancy of the age becomes apparent. The poet thus functions like Nietzsche's music-playing Socrates of Die Geburt der Tragödie, or his poet-philosopher who counters the nihilistic movement of philosophy and emerges from that counter-movement to give form to beings as a whole, beginning with man as the disclosive place, or Dasein, of this Gestalt.

poetry? We will take our bearings from the essay appropriately entitled "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung." Heidegger explains there that an encounter with just any poetry will not yield an understanding of its essence, even though that essence may be realized therein. The categorical understanding of essence, which, as a universal concept, applies equally and indifferently to every particular, can never become properly essential. Hölderlin's poetry is chosen by Heidegger because "Hölderlin is concerned in his poetry solely with the essence of poetry. He is for us emphatically the poet of poetry" (EHD 32/HEP 80). When Heidegger says in "Wozu Dichter?" that "we others must learn to listen to what these poets say," he therefore means that we must attend, not to just any poet, but to those who are concerned with the essence of poetry and are thus on the way to the destiny of the world's age (HW 251/PLT 94).

What Heidegger then listens for in listening to the poet of poets are what he calls "basic words," "essential words" and moments of "genuine saying"--pointers or passages that address the subject of poetry with special regard to its essence, and which thereby indicate what is necessarily left "unsaid" in the poem. These genuine sayings would be veiled in their ordinariness and simplicity were it not for the attunement of the thinker to the question of poetry with regard to its essence--a question granted only as a matter of destiny, that is, tied inextricably to the time and history of its thinking.

With regard to that time, which in Hölderlin's case we can say is the destitute time of the god's default, the essence of poetry is realized, as we have

already glimpsed, in a diachronic event of divine inspiration and inaugural naming. In order to explicate more fully the dynamism and particularly the diachrony of this event, and in preparation for a consideration of how Heidegger approaches the second part of the philosophical task demanded by the coming-together of poetry and philosophy, that is, the need to think the mutually constitutive relation between the destitute time of the venture and the coming-together of poetry and thought in the manifestness of Being to think that time, let us now turn to the venture that gives place to both the poet's task and the philosopher's thinking in response to it: the poem "Brod und Wein," in which the poet preeminently attends to the approach within proper time of an a-proper time. We will then be in a position to consider in the next chapter Heidegger's remarkable response to Hölderlin's poetry: the effort to carry out a proper rethinking of time and Being, and a redetermination of the nature of man in accordance with that rethinking.

"Brod und Wein" begins within the circumspensive restfulness of a town at twilight, when nightfall approaches as a restful end to the restless activity of the day. A town by nature shelters and surrounds, it is a delimited domain within which men and woman can rest securely from the tasks and dangers that are left outside the city walls at nightfall. Der Tag is first thought in the poem as a secure and delimited temporal domain similar in all essential respects to the spacial domain of the town. It is rigorously parceled up like city districts into a day-time, a clock-time, an economic time of numbered and delimited "spaces" for purposeful

activity. Die Nacht is first thought as nothing more than the delimiting end of der Tag: the night for "a sensible head" (ein sinniges Haupt) is a neutral time meaningful only as a complement to the day, a space in which to balance the proportionate gain and loss of the day's activities and to rest for the new day. This is the night of sleep, that sleep which, in Maurice Blanchot's words, "ends the day but in order to make the next day possible."<sup>13</sup> The night-time correlative to the night which ends the day is also accordingly thought in the poem as a consequence of diurnal delimitation, security, and fixity; the watchman--literally, a number-watcher [ein Wächter die Zahl]--shouts the hours throughout the night, continually and explicitly appropriating night-time to day-time.

This day-time and appropriated night-time parallels Heidegger's public time, the time with which we concern ourselves. This is the time of Sorge, the time of which Heidegger says the day is the "most natural" measure because its circumspective character needs the possibility of light and sight. Heidegger explains that this time has already made itself public because Dasein, as "ecstatico-temporal," is already disclosed, and because understanding and interpretation both belong to existence--thus allowing one to concernfully interpret and reckon time, and concernfully direct oneself according to that reckoning.

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<sup>13</sup> Maurice Blanchot, The Space of Literature, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 267.

This public time is conditioned by Dasein's thrownness, which makes possible this lived interpretation of temporality.<sup>14</sup> Heidegger explains:

The Being of Dasein is care. This entity exists fallingly as something that has been thrown. Abandoned to the 'world' which is discovered with its factual "there", and concernfully submitted to it, Dasein awaits its potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world; it awaits it in such a manner that it 'reckons' on and 'reckons' with whatever has an involvement for the sake of this potentiality-for-Being--an involvement which, in the end, is a distinctive one. Everyday circumspective Being-in-the-world needs the possibility of sight (and this means that it needs brightness) if it is to deal concernfully with what is ready-to-hand within the present-at-hand. With the factual disclosedness of Dasein's world, Nature has been uncovered for Dasein. In its thrownness Dasein has been surrendered to the changes of day and night. Day with its brightness gives it the possibility of sight; night takes this away. (SZ 412/BT 465)

In the "Humanismusbrief" Heidegger says the public realm is the dictatorial, subjective realm in which Dasein is predominantly absorbed in its everydayness. Here, what is intelligible and unintelligible is decided in advance through an unconditional objectification of things that amounts to a devastation of language as the "house of Being" (UZS 166/OWL 63; WM 149-50/BW 197-98). Public time is, accordingly, the time in which beings zuhanden and vorhanden are encountered in their everydayness as within-time. It is the dictatorial time in which beings can be present. This time needs the possibility of illumination and visibility precisely because it is the time of objective presence.

The night appropriate to the day may take away the light necessary to sight, but it does not take away the understanding of presence granted by light.

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<sup>14</sup> Heidegger says: "we must say that Dasein's thrownness is the reason why 'there is' time publicly" (SZ 411-412/BT 464).

The night of day still allows us to deal concernfully with what is present as still here and subject to our power, even though it may be "out of sight." This night of day therefore resembles what Blanchot calls the first night, a construction of the day, day's night. At its most extreme this night is but the edge of what is not to be ventured upon:

Night then is accepted and acknowledged, but only as a limit and as the necessity of a limit: we must not go beyond. So says Greek moderation. Or, night is what day must finally dissolve: day works at its empire; it is its own conquest and elaboration; it tends toward the unlimited, although in the accomplishment of its tasks it only advances step by step and observes limit and barriers strictly. So says reason, the triumph of enlightenment which simply banishes darkness. Or again, night is what day wants not just to dissolve, but to appropriate: night is thus the essential, which must not be destroyed but conserved, and welcomed not as a limit but for itself. Night must pass into day. Night becoming day makes the light richer and gives to clarity's superficial sparkle a deep inner radiance. The day is the whole of the day and the night, the great promise of the dialectic.<sup>15</sup>

Because this first night is the night of day, it is the true night, Blanchot says, for its truth is the truth of day. When we rest in this night we rest in the truth of day, secure and unconcerned because all our concerns, if not met, have at least been enlightened and made present concerns--concerns appropriate to the day.

But in Hölderlin's poem this true night is no sooner "affirmed" than it is marginally transgressed: man's retreat indoors to rest follows the retreating sun as a natural consequence, and yet this parallel retreat is thought by Hölderlin with a metaphor that is anything but restful--the "rushing away" [Rauschen] of carriages

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<sup>15</sup> Blanchot, 167.

with their torches ablaze. Rauschen properly denotes frenzied intoxication. So, Hölderlin's metaphor recalls, even before the recollection becomes thematic, a distinctly restless vision of drunken bacchants with blazing torches rushing about in the half-light of dusk. Similarly, while sensible men rest oblivious to the passage of nighttime, music restlessly drifts from the gardens, a breeze restlessly ruffles the coppice and carries the hourly call of a restless watchman. Ever so subtly, then, a restless night emerges that is decisively other than the restful night that would belong to day-time. This other, restless night opens upon a time that is alien and burdensome for all those not secured by the day and its economic time, but wanting that security. It is, for example, the time of the insomniac--for whom, as Levinas has shown, there is no rest and no security because there is no subject, but only an anonymous restless wakefulness in an unfamiliar world, an involuntary participation in the restless rumbling of the "there is."

The time of this other, restless night is also curiously "feminine." Hölderlin's other Nacht, rather than simply completing the masculine Tag as its delimiting extreme, turns out to be something wholly other: "the stranger to all that is human," he says. This night is fantastical, astonishing, mysterious, and sacred--but preeminently, this night is a woman: "Marvelous is her favour, Night's, the exalted, and no one knows what it is or whence comes all she does and bestows."<sup>16</sup> Day-time and its appropriate night-time may be such that rational

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<sup>16</sup> "Wunderbar ist die Gunst der Hoherhabnen und niemand Weiss von wannen und was einem geschieht von ihr." Friedrich Hölderlin, Poems and Fragments, trans. Michael Hamburger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

man may master and use it, suggests the poem, but there is an other night-time which is somehow inappropriate to the day and beyond the masculine grasp conditioned by visibility. Not only is it inappropriate to day-time, it calls the very power of appropriation proper to the day into question: Hölderlin says this night so consistently transgresses any attempt to comprehend "her" that "not even wise men can tell what is her purpose."<sup>17</sup>

By contrast, Die Stadt--within which the poem locates us, we recall--first takes shape in the poem as that which shelters and surrounds, as that secure and delimited domain within which men and women can organize their activities, come together in commerce and go home to rest. The structure and function of a city reinforces the appropriating enterprise of day-time as the masculine domain of the sensible person--he or she who loves the rational light of the masculine day [der besonnene Tag] more than the "lunacy" of the feminine night.<sup>18</sup> But while it

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1980), 242-53. All subsequent quotations of the poem are from this translation.

<sup>17</sup> "Selbst kein Weiser versteht, was sie bereitet."

<sup>18</sup> Socrates, after all, seldom ventures outside the boundaries of the polis in Plato's dialogues--and when he does it is always in the very shadow of the walls, it is always during the day and always involves a phallic encounter--a beautiful young boy in the Lysis, a phallic scroll hidden beneath his companion's robe in the Phaedrus, etc. Similarly, in the ideal polis of the Republic there is no room for the irrational poet--even though he be garlanded and worshiped as a sweet and holy and wonderful being. In contrast, the wine-god of Euripides' Bacchae cannot possess his maidens while they are inside the city limits, and he accordingly seduces them into the wilds well beyond the fortified walls. His claims to divinity are vehemently opposed by the sensible men of the city and most strongly by the king, the every personification of the polis and rational resistance, whose paradoxical voyeurism is ultimately exposed to the enraged maenids when the tree he clings to slowly straightens like an erect phallus, bearing him aloft and into the domain of the visible.



is within the city limits that man's rational subjugation of the immoderate and inappropriate is most clearly seen in "Brod und Wein," so it is also here that the discord between the sensible and the sensual is most keenly felt. The metonymic Haupt (significant for philosophy since Plato, where it represents the telos of any true logos) denotes the predominance and supposed self-sufficiency of the rational, but this denotation is immediately transgressed by the whispered connotation of disembodiment, incompleteness and alienation: while sensible men retreat within the artificial womb of the polis, deceptively replete with the day and circumspectively secure from the world's immensity and disquietude, we find at the center of the strophe the disembodied nostalgia of lovers and the lonely, figures who are essentially incomplete. These figures, like the poet, respond with fascination or disquietude to the seductive attraction of the other night that remains essentially outside.

Hölderlin's restless and feminine other night parallels what Blanchot calls the second night. In the first night, the night of day, everything disappears.

Blanchot says: "here absence approaches--silence, repose, night. . . . here the sleeper does not know he sleeps, and he who dies goes to meet real dying."<sup>19</sup>

But in the second night what appears is precisely that everything has disappeared:

Night is this apparition: "everything has disappeared." It is what we sense when dreams replace sleep, when the dead pass into the deep of the night, when night's deep appears in those who have disappeared. Apparitions, phantoms, and dreams are an allusion to this empty night. . . . What appears in the night is the night that

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<sup>19</sup> Blanchot, 164.

appears. And this eeriness does not simply come from something invisible, which would reveal itself under cover of dark and at the shadows' summons. Here the invisible is what one cannot cease to see; it is the incessant making itself seen.<sup>20</sup>

Blanchot says this other night is not, though we dress it up as a kind of being.

The first night is welcoming; we enter into it to rest, to sleep, and to die. But the second night does not welcome, does not open to us. In it one is always and essentially outside because one is outside even the opposition inside/outside.

Blanchot observes that this night is inaccessible because "to have access to it is to accede to the outside, to remain outside the night and to lose forever the possibility of emerging from it."<sup>21</sup>

This other night, which properly speaking is not, cannot be thought or perceived in the same way one conceptualizes and experiences things that are. Hölderlin's response to this difficulty is to think the essential absence of the other night by way of its trace. The language of the trace seems more proper to Heidegger than to Hölderlin, and the notion of the trace is certainly more closely associated with Heidegger. But that association is more a testament to Heidegger's sensitivity as a reader than a comment on Hölderlin's poetry, where the trace plays a subtle, though significant role. In this poem, the trace is evoked in the very beginning, when the market at night is described as being empty of everything--where there were blossoms and grapes and hand-made goods, now

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<sup>20</sup> Blanchot, 164.

<sup>21</sup> Blanchot, 164.

there is only the trace that indicates, not nothingness, but absence, and when the gardens at night, while distant and invisible, are said to impinge on what is proximate and present by virtue of their aromatic traces. Hölderlin does not sense here the tangible remains of some determinate being, but the very essence of the trace: absence itself, the primal absence, the absence that first grants presence--what he will come to understand as the absence of the gods. Through this attunement to the trace Hölderlin discovers, in a surprising reversal of what first appeared to be the case, that rationality and its derivative day-time are in fact given place by this indeterminate time of nocturnal absence.

According to Richard Unger, Jochen Schmidt observed in Hölderlin's Elegie "Brod und Wein" that the poem is structurally tripartite and thematically chiasmic: the first three strophes address the night, the second three elegize the bright day of Greek culture, and the last three thematically return to night, now understood as the Hesperian night of the gods' absence, the night of the western world.<sup>22</sup> Unger further observed that there is a focal point to the poem in the exact center of the elegy--the fifth distich of the fifth strophe, where the gods reveal themselves "in truth" to the ancient Greeks.<sup>23</sup>

But this focal appearance of the gods in truth sharply contrasts with the absence and darkness that characterize the nocturnal strophes that surround it.

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<sup>22</sup> Jochen Schmidt, Hölderlins Elegie, "Brod und Wein" (Berlin, 1968), 8-10; quoted in Richard Unger, Hölderlin's Major Poetry (Bloomington; Indiana University Press, 1975), 234.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Unger, 69.

Moreover, the beautiful vision of the godhead is recalled by Hölderlin not as an real appearance, but as a dreamlike vision given place by the night! Ulmer does not notice this detail, yet it is all-important: the central triad of the poem, imagining as it does the resplendent day of Greek community, occurs essentially as a dream--it occurs between the first and third nocturnal triads as a dream given place by the night! Consider a few indications of the dream-nature of the celestial vision from among a sizable number of references scattered throughout the poem: Hölderlin clearly signals the advent of a dream in the second strophe; the god approaches as a dream figure in the third; the mere Schein of the dreamlike vision is betrayed twice in the fourth strophe--once in the reference to the sacred slumber of Delphi where the gods communicate to their oracles specifically through dreams, and again when the poet explicitly describes the swelling strength of the word (the name of the god, Vater Aether) as it is spoken by day and dreamed of by night.

But essential to a proper understanding of the dream and its significance for the poet is the fact that the dreamlike apparition of the gods is ultimately given place within Hölderlin's poetry not by the first night, the night of day, but by the indeterminate time of the second night: the poem's proper night--composed of the first and third nocturnal triads that ostensibly provide in their midst a between-time for the second triad, the dream--is itself possible only by virtue of the other night, the night that withdraws. If we now recall that the poem that gives place to both nights of the poem and the dream within them, is given place

by the default of god in the destitute night of our Weltzeit, then what immediately becomes apparent is that there is a correspondence to be thought between the dream vision in the poem and the poem itself. Both "visions" are dream-like responses to the trace of an essential absence, and both "visions" end in the appropriation and consequent disappearance of what is given in each: the holiness of the other, that which is essentially refractory to all vision and presence.

Let us consider in this regard Blanchot's reading of the Orpheus myth.

Blanchot notes that when Orpheus descends toward Eurydice, his art is the power which opens the night. It is because of art's strength that night welcomes him. But this night opened by art is the first night; the dream veils Eurydice, the limit of art, the essence of night. Over the essence of night art has no power: "For [Orpheus] Eurydice is the furthest that art can reach. Under a name that hides her and a veil that covers her, she is the profoundly obscure point toward which art and desire, death and night, seem to tend. She is the instant when the essence of night approaches as the other night."<sup>24</sup> Blanchot suggests that Orpheus' work is not to ensure Eurydice's approach, but to bring her back to the light of day, and to give her visible form, shape and reality in the day. Orpheus' work is to make visible, to uncover the veil that covers Eurydice in her nocturnal obscurity and infinite distance. But in the turn toward Eurydice--a turn made expressly in order to look upon her invisibility directly, upon the night that night hides--Orpheus forgets the work he is to achieve and thus sacrifices both his art and the

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<sup>24</sup> Blanchot, 171.

relationship he would otherwise have with that upon which he desires only to look. Eurydice cannot be made visible in her invisibility without being lost to the virility of that attempt.

In thinking the dream appearance of the gods, we may say that Hölderlin likewise is capable of everything except a direct vision of the essence of night in the night. He can descend toward it, he can draw it to him and lead it upward, but only by turning away from it--that is, only by dreaming. Hölderlin can thus only call to us, urging us to dream with him and feel the same "draw" he feels: "Let us go, then!" he cries, "off to see open spaces, where we may seek what is ours, distant, remote though it be!"<sup>25</sup> Heidegger says in "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung" that poetry appears dream-like and free of decisive action because the essence of poetry seems to vacillate between the tangible reality in which we believe we are at home, and the illusory light of dream-like unreality created by poetry itself.<sup>26</sup> And yet, he adds, essential reality lies in what the poet says and undertakes. The essence of poetry rests firm, while appearing within an illusory light of its own creation, not because it is grounded in the tangible, but because poetry's essence consists in its ability to ground--that is, to found, to name, and thereby to appropriate specifically "what has not yet come to pass" (EHD 43/HEP 91).

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<sup>25</sup> "So komm! dass wir das Offene schauen, dass ein Eigenes wir suchen, so weit es auch ist."

<sup>26</sup> EHD 33, 42/HEP 81, 90.

Hölderlin's call within the dream to dream with him is a call to seek in the dream-like light of poetry what is essentially "our own." The call is not to search for what is alien and other, but for what is our own--and to seek it within the poem along with the poet. The call is to seek in the poetic act that which while remote is also most proper to man. Two questions demand our attention at this point: what is it, that is most proper to man, which the poet urges us to seek with him; and what is the character and source of this propriety?

With regard to the first question, compare Hölderlin's dream and the drawing call he feels compelled to share and respond to, with Nietzsche's description of Apollonian art, which both produces a delimited dream image and impels the dreamer into that world, into the contemplation of the dream. Nietzsche specifies three characteristics of the Apollonian dream images: they are beautiful in that they delight us; they are only a matter of Schein and betray themselves as such; and lastly, they are perfections of their everyday originals and serve as transfiguring mirrors to justify the Dionysian horror of human life and existence. The poetic and sculptural images created by the Apollonian artist, in turn, mimetically reflect those images produced naturally in the dream state and thus perfect them.<sup>27</sup> The Apollonian dream experience and its mimesis on an artistic level indicate an elemental portion of the complex schema of transfiguration within which Nietzsche specifically located art. In Die Geburt der

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<sup>27</sup> For an unsurpassed reading of this work, which has thoroughly guided my own, see John Sallis, "Apollo's Mimesis," Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology 15, no. 1 (January 1984), 16-21.

Tragödie he declared: "Art is not merely imitation of the reality of nature but rather a metaphysical supplement of the reality of nature, placed beside it for its overcoming."<sup>28</sup> For Nietzsche, art is a dynamic process through which the abysmal reality underlying the finite natural world which gives it birth is transfigured and overcome. Nietzsche concludes that art is thus the proper task of life, life's life-affirming meta-physical activity. But in Die Geburt der Tragödie Nietzsche does not see past the abysmal reality of the Dionysian, too terrible to endure without mediation, and the dream-like images of the Apollonian, which veil and thereby mediate our experience of the abyss. The gods themselves, for Nietzsche, are but the figurative products of the two basic energies of nature. Nietzsche does not turn in the abyss toward the holy; he sees the horror of groundlessness in the abyss, but not the unholy concealing itself therein. He thus he does not see the marks of the holy the abyss remarks.

Heidegger says in Nietzsche: der Wille zur Macht als Kunst, composed in 1936-7 immediately after writing "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung," that for Nietzsche art implicitly affirms what philosophy inherently denies: that the sensuous world is the true world, as "the sensuous, the sense-semblant, is the very element of art."<sup>29</sup> According to Heidegger, Nietzsche understood art as the basic

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<sup>28</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, Die Geburt der Tragödie, section 24. Translation by John Sallis, "Apollo's Mimesis."

<sup>29</sup> Martin Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe 43 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), 85; hereafter GA 43. Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Art, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 73; hereafter WPA.



occurrence of all beings and thus as the distinctive counter-movement to nihilism, since the artist's work is to create and give form, and this is metaphysical activity pure and simple. To the extent that they are, beings are self-creating and self-created--and thus artistic in the general sense of the word. When understood more narrowly as that activity in which creation emerges perspicuously and for itself, art is the supreme configuration of the will to power. Hence Nietzsche's belief, notes Heidegger, that every deed, and especially the highest deed--and thus the thinking of philosophy as well--must be determined by it. For Nietzsche, "the will to semblance, to illusion, to deception, to Becoming and change is deeper, more 'metaphysical' than the will to truth, to reality, to Being" (GA 43: 87/WPA 74). For Nietzsche, in fact, we have art specifically in order not to perish from the truth. But what truth is this? A truth that emptily negates the present? A nihilistic truth? The will to this truth, says Heidegger, is the disingenuous will to a supersensuous world, to "Platonic" being in itself; in this sense, truth is indeed a negation of the genuine world, the world of the sensuous present. But does not Nietzsche also ask in a propaedeutic to the transvaluation of all values, "supposing truth is a woman--what then?"<sup>30</sup> This other truth, according to Nietzsche, cannot allow herself to be won; she remains essentially beyond the grasp of the philosophical eros.

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<sup>30</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 2.

The will to grasp the truth that is other than truth, the truth that gives place to truth, is the will of the poet in "Brod und Wein." This is his response to the draft of the abyss. Heidegger says the guiding and grounding questions of philosophy ask what beings and Being in truth (thought as aletheia, dis-closure) are. When we ask about the essence of Being, the question is such that "nothing remains outside the question, not even nothingness" (GA 43: 79/WPA 68), because the question about Being in truth also implicitly asks about the essence of the truth or disclosedness in which Being itself would be disclosed--hence, it brings truth to stand with Being in the realm of the grounding question of philosophy as its "space." This implicit question thus begs yet another, notes Heidegger: "how both [Being and truth] are united in essence and yet foreign to one another, and 'where,' in what domain, they somehow come together, and what that domain itself 'is'" (GA 43: 79/WPA 68). These are questions, admits Heidegger, which inquire beyond Nietzsche. Indeed they do. They inquire beyond phenomenology, as well.

Such questions as these manifest a desire to disclose what lies essentially beyond the powers of disclosure, and, moreover, they desire to disclose it precisely as what lies essentially beyond those powers. Hölderlin's dream in response to the draft of the abyss inquires beyond even the grounding question of philosophy, as it initiates a turn toward the essential absence of an other night and to the trace of an other truth. Hölderlin turns directly toward this alterity as toward Eurydice, but in this turn the dream is immediately undone to return among the

shades. When he looks back, he looks beyond the gods' appearance to the essence of night, now inessential--to the truth of the withdrawal that gives place to the truth of disclosure, to the time of the other night that gives place to day-time and night-time and the illuminated presence they occasion. In the destitute time the poet can have no relation to the absent gods except in the dream of their approach. The poet has life and truth as a poet only after the dream and because of it. As Blanchot says of Orpheus:

Not to turn toward Eurydice would be no less untrue. Not to look would be infidelity to the measureless, imprudent force of his movement, which does not want Eurydice in her daytime truth and her everyday appeal, but wants her in her nocturnal obscurity, in her distance, with her closed body and sealed face--wants to see her not when she is visible, but when she is invisible, and not as the intimacy of a familiar life, but as the foreignness of what excludes all intimacy, and wants, not to make her live, but to have living in her the plenitude of death.<sup>31</sup>

Yes, Hölderlin loses the dream because he desires to reach beyond the measured limits of the poem, but this loss is necessary to the poem as it redefines those limits and reaffirms the desire to transgress them. Hölderlin's loss would answer Nietzsche with this response: the sensuous may be the element of art, but not its essence.

Hölderlin's poetry does not venture a redetermination of man simply by discerning as in a dream the appearance of the gods and the subsequent transfiguration of Greece, and certainly not by emptyly imitating the function of past poets in singing untimely praises to the absent gods. Hölderlin traces the

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<sup>31</sup> Blanchot, 172.

way toward man's own nature by thinking this recollected transformation as a dream given place by the night of the gods' absence, and by then moving beyond it to think the significance of our need to restlessly think that absence as such. All genuine thought subsequent to the "dream" must think in relation to that dream. Thus Panthea admits of the title character in Hölderlin's tragedy Empedokles: "To be him, that is / Life, and all of us are the dream thereof" (EHD 42/HEP 90). In a passage that provocatively recalls Critias' dream in the Timaeus, from which he is unable to escape in speaking of it, Hölderlin says of the gods, in "Brod und Wein": "ever after our life is dream about them." As Nietzsche's Apollonian dream images transfigure and justify the night that gives them place, so Hölderlin's dream recollection transfigures and justifies our time as a night of destitution wherein mortals must first discern the gods' essential absence and then attend to what that absence means.

For Hölderlin we have the dream in order not to perish from the night, but it is night that gives place to the dream. For Nietzsche we have art in order not to perish from the truth, but it is truth that gives place to art. Truth is a "woman," for Nietzsche. Night is a "woman," for Hölderlin. Without discounting the differences between these two thinkers we must listen to what they speak in common. As "woman," Nietzsche's other truth and Hölderlin's other night are like Plato's chora, the indeterminate other that gives place to presence and absence. As other than time, Nietzsche's other truth and Hölderlin's other night evoke a time that gives place to time, the time of time. The determinate nature of the

dream, as well as the night and time that harbours it, are all made possible by the indeterminate absence of the other night and its other time. While this other time is thought by the poet specifically as the withdrawal that gives place to both presence and absence--that is, to the dream of presence and absence--it is not thought as something appropriated by the movement of thought. It is thought as the indeterminate Abgrund within which the poet must venture; it is thought as that indeterminate "time" which gives place to the venture, and thus to the word-event that names the gods. This event, says Heidegger, in which man bears witness to what he is, harbours the act "by means of which man truly fulfills himself as man" (EHD 34/HEP 82).

We must finally consider, now, that event--the event that conditions the ground for the existence of man. Hölderlin's poetic venture takes place both within the poem and as the poem. What is sought in both cases is "our own," what is most proper to man--his own nature. What poetry discloses in the course of that venture is a dream world of glorious communion which climaxes in the appearance of the gods. This epiphany marks an essential moment in the existence of mortals. The glorious day of Greek culture at the center of "Brod und Wein" is the sacramental moment when the naming of the gods and their subsequent appearance brings man and god together in the holy rapture of a face to face encounter, an event that grants a ground for discourse and human community:

Father Aether! one cried, and tongue after tongue took it up then,  
Thousands, no man could bear life so intense on his own;

Shared, such wealth gives delight and later, when bartered with strangers,  
Turns to rapture; . . .  
So do the Heavenly enter, shaking the deepest foundations,  
Only so from the gloom down to mankind comes their Day.<sup>32</sup>

The splendour of man's full possibility begins with a cry that names the approaching god, and results in a rapture so intense it must be shared--and can be shared, because the coming of the gods brings a light as intense as the rapture which that coming occasions, a light in which the faces of the gods, and all other beings, are revealed.

The fifth and center strophe of the poem represents the fullness of the sacramental feast:

Unperceived at first they come, and only the children  
Surge towards them, too bright, dazzling, this joy enters in,  
So that men are afraid, a demigod hardly can tell yet  
Who they are, and name those who approach him with gifts.  
Yet their courage is great, his heart soon is full of their gladness  
And he hardly knows what's to be done with such wealth,  
Busily runs and wastes it, almost regarding as sacred  
Trash which his blessing hand foolishly, kindly has touched.  
This, while they can, the heavenly bear with; but then they appear in  
Truth, in person, and now men grow accustomed to joy,  
And to Day, and the sight of the godhead revealed, and their faces--  
One and All long ago, once and for all, they were named--  
Who with free self-content had deeply suffused silent bosoms, from the  
first and alone satisfied every desire.  
Such is man; when the wealth is there, and no less than a god in  
Person tends him with gifts, blind he remains, unaware.  
First he must suffer, but now he names his most treasures possession,

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<sup>32</sup> "Vater Aether! so riefs und flog von Zunge zu Zunge / Tauschenfach, es ertrug keiner das Leben allein; / Ausgetheilet erfreut solch Gut und getauschet, mit Fremden, / Wirds ein Jubel, . . . / Denn so kehren die Himmlischen ein, tiefschütternd gelangt so / Aus den Schatten herab unter die Menschen ihr Tag."

Now for it words like flowers leaping alive he must find.<sup>33</sup>

This sacramental strophe is singularly instructive. The "heavenly" approach and are named in response to that approach. That naming, in turn, engenders a turn among men to each other because the rapture must be shared, with friend and stranger alike. At first the gods are not seen, however; and when they are perceived, it is the children who first perceive them. In fact, only the children perceive them. But as men grow accustomed to the holiness of the divine and the joy of communion, the faces of the gods become visible--and this is precisely what leads to their death and departure.

Notice that the central line of the poem refers both to the god appearing in truth and men growing accustomed to joy. Can that co-incident be purely coincidental? It marks the apex of the poem and dream. As apex, it is not only the uppermost point of an incline; it is also the point of decline. The incarnation of Christ, his "assuming a shape that was human," crowned and concluded the

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<sup>33</sup> "Unempfunden kommen sie erst, es streben entgegen / Ihnen die Kinder, zu hell kommet, zu blendend das Glück, / Und es scheut sie der Mensch, kaum weiss zu sagen ein Halbgott, / Wer mit Nahmen sie sind, die mit den Gaaben ihm nahn. / Aber der Muth von ihnen ist gross, es füllen das Herz ihm / Ihre Freuden und kaum weiss er zu brauchen das Gut, / Schafft, verschwendet und fast ward ihm Unheiliges heilig, / Das er mit seegnender Hand thörig und gütig berührt. / Möglichst dulden die Himmlischen diss; dann aber in Wahrheit / Kommen sie selbst und gewohnt werden die Menschen des Glücks / Und des Tags und zu schau die Offenbaren, das Antliz / Derer, welche, schon längst Eines und Alles genannt, / Tief die verschwiegene Brust mit freier Gunüge gefüllet, / Und zuerst und allein alles Verlangen beglückt; / So ist der Mensch; wenn da ist das Gut, und es sorget mit Gaaben / Selber ein Gott für ihn, kennet und sieht er es nicht. / Tragen muss er, zuvor; nun aber nennt er sein Liebstes, / Nun, nun müssen dafür Worte, wie Blumen, entstehn.

feast, writes Hölderlin. With Christ's incarnation and subsequent death the "day" and the "dream" both decisively end--what was holy and other has been seen and appropriated, and thus become part of the same. So, once again gods exist only elsewhere. The poet laments at the beginning of the seventh strophe: "But, my friend, we have come too late. Though the gods are living, / Over our heads they live, up in a different world."<sup>34</sup> The presence and vision of the gods satisfies every desire for their coming, making of their holiness nothing but "sacred trash." The consequent oblivion of the gods' essential alterity plunges men and women once again into the abysmal absence of night, in which men can only wander "friendless as we are, alone, / Always waiting."<sup>35</sup> Thus, says Hölderlin at the end of the center strophe: "Such is man; when the wealth is there, and no less than a god in / Person tends him with gifts, blind he remains, unaware."<sup>36</sup> The poetic naming is initially a response to the approach of the god, and as such it brings joy and communion. But the accomplishment of naming that which essentially can only approach, transforms it--reducing to presence and propriety that which is named (the named become a "treasured possession," we recall). Insofar as the poetic naming ends in that appropriating satiation, it concludes the sacramental moment with which the naming event began. Thereafter the gods' presence can

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<sup>34</sup> "Aber Freund! wir kommen zu spät. Zwar leben die Götter, / Aber über dem Haupt droben in anderer Welt."

<sup>35</sup> ". . . wie so ohne Genossen zu seyn, / So zu harren . . ."

<sup>36</sup> "So is der Mensch; wenn da ist das Gut, und es sorget mit Gaaben / Selber ein Gott für ihn, kennet und sieht er es nicht."



only be invoked in their absence--by the sacramental tokens referred to in the poem's title.

The sacrament of bread and wine speaks primarily of communion, of community. But the community of which it speaks is a curious kind of community--a community gathered together and given place by the invocation of an absent god. The believer who puts the holy sacrament to his lips invokes the presence of the god whose flesh and blood it betokens--but not the bodily presence of that god; the god is invoked in his essential absence. Around that invocation and in the space granted by that absence, a community can take place. This community awaits the absent god and thus holds the god in default. Any such sacramental event accomplishes--without realizing that accomplishment in a work which endures after the event, thereby preserving its essential structure--a templum.

The image of the ever resourceful spring in the first strophe of "Brod und Wein," continually nourishing the ground around it, speaks eloquently of the communal ground granted in the naming event--a granting forgotten by the Socratic man in his appropriative preoccupation with the ground and what is granted along with it--the virility of intelligibility and adequate knowledge. While the polis as the hub of human activity should ideally be a model of communal life, this is not the case for modern man, suggests Hölderlin. The appearance of the gods is necessary to human community, and thus to human nature, yet we have no temple at the city's center and no holy retreats on its fringes. Man no longer

prepares a space for the gods to be absent: after a day ruled by individual concerns and rational economics, the market has been stripped bare of grapes and blossoms; the gifts of the gods, no longer even seen as such, have been used up in commerce. Rather than joyfully ending a day of glorious communal achievement with a night of orgiastic unity or even shared devotion, each individual in the closure of his coach rushes away from others and the possibility of community. Rather than gathering around a communal fire or uniting individual torches in a central clearing where men and women, once gathered, could experience the blessing and appearance of the gods, lonely people now wander alone in the darkness--mesmerized not by the rising flames, but by the rising moon, a "shadowy image" in comparison, "mournful" and "little concerned about us."

For Heidegger, proper discourse consists precisely in this naming of the gods that lets worlds appear: "It must be stressed, he says, that "the presence of the gods and the appearance of a world are not consequences of language, but simultaneous with it. The conversation (which we are) consists actually in the naming of the gods and in the world becoming language" (EHD 37/HEP 85). But Heidegger further says that the gods can be named only after they first claim us. Thus, proper discourse happens only as response: "The gods can come into the realm of the word only when they themselves address us and place their claim on us. The word that names them is always a reply to their claim" (EHD 37/HEP 85-86). Heidegger's event of essential naming, like Levinas' event of hypostasis, has two essential moments. The poet names the gods only in answer to a prior

claim made upon him by the gods. Before the coming of the gods, before even their absence, is a responsive turn toward them, toward their alterity and holiness. Quite clearly, this means that for Heidegger there must be a primordial relationship with the holy other. And it is this primordial relationship that opens upon a true future, a future unimaginably new.

Heidegger says that poetry creates works out of the realm and the "matter" of language. He sees in Hölderlin's poetry the indication that language is given man in order that he might bear witness to what he is. In discourse, man testifies that he belongs to the earth and to the standing tension of things by his creation of a world, and this is the act by means of which man truly fulfills himself as man. Thus, Dasein is properly defined as zohon logon echon only insofar as logos is understood in this definition, not as reason, but as discourse. Man is "that living thing whose Being is essentially determined by the potentiality for discourse" (SZ 25/BT 47); man is misunderstood as animal rationale; his nature lies in the potentiality for discourse--a potentiality granted prior to presence.

Heidegger shows in thinking the coming-together of poetry and thought that discourse itself is made possible by the approach of the essentially other. The subsequent response of the poet to the claim of the gods "heard" in the turn toward them, is a turn toward what is holy in man's relation to Being. The potentiality for discourse is granted in the relationship with the approach from on high of what is radically other, at once distant and divine. What Hölderlin ventures in reaching into the abysmal night of our time, and what Heidegger

clearly recognizes in that venture, is a tentative and provisional redetermination of man as essentially related to the height and holiness of the other, to the essence of alterity itself. Insofar as this potentiality is somehow granted in the very event of Being, moreover, Heidegger also sees in this relationship a way of rethinking both the approach of death and the approach of the future--in other words, a way of rethinking the primordial clearing before death and presence within which Dasein can take place and thus become the place of disclosure the existential analytic determined it to be.

At this point, clearly, Heidegger and Levinas are much closer in their findings than either apparently realizes. The parallels are most provocative: for Heidegger, in asking the question concerning the essence of poetry and in recalling the absence of the gods, we are led to acknowledge a lack of virility in the questioner, a deferral to the absent other; for Levinas, the idea of the infinite and the essential absence of the Other similarly mark an interruptive lack of virility in the ego; for Heidegger, the fundamental oblivion of the question of the meaning of Being opens inexorably upon a primordial oblivion of the default of God, while the moment and event of essential naming can occur only in response to a prior moment in which a claim upon us is first made; similarly for Levinas, the first moment of hypostasis, in which definitive being is accomplished and the alterity of the other is dissolved, marks the oblivion of a prior relationship with the Other; for Heidegger, our relation to Being is discovered to be essentially holy or unholy, and thus, in a certain sense, ethical from the beginning; again, for

Levinas we could say virtually the same thing; for Heidegger, the nature of Dasein is properly grounded in discourse, which happens only as response; while for Levinas (although we have not attended to this aspect of his work), the social relation is essentially one of discourse. Indeed, in the texts on language, especially, and in other texts like "Conversation on a Country Path," it is more difficult to preserve the differences between these two thinkers than it is to see the similarities in their thought.

The coming together of poetry and thinking in the question of the propriety and a-propriety of time thus opens for Heidegger onto the possibility of rethinking both the nature of man and the meaning of time. In Heidegger's last writings this rethinking is at once more complicated and more focused than it is in the Hölderlin essays--most explicitly in Zur Sache des Denkens, where in thinking the interplay of Ereignis and Enteignis, Heidegger is able to link the disclosure of Being to both the abysmal absence of Being and the time that belongs to that absence.

What I hope to have at least suggested in this chapter is that what might otherwise appear as a leap from Being and Time to "On Time and Being" may actually be the result of a series of thoughtful encounters with the poetry of Hölderlin and a careful investigation into the essence of poetry and language.

## CHAPTER 4

### TIME AND BEING: THINKING THE MATTER OF THINKING

Heidegger says in "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung" that in naming the gods, and thus in founding Being in language, the poet seizes upon and holds fast that which comes to him from the realm of the holy out of the "torrent of time" tearing by. He founds mortal existence as one conversation by appropriating the present out of a time that comes to him. This appropriation stays the flow of time in its inexorable approach, disclosing in it persistence and presence, and thus unity and identity:

One-ness and same-ness can come to light only within the framework of stability and endurance, and stability and endurance come into existence only when persistence and presence flash up. This occurs when time opens up its dimensions. Since man has established himself in the presence of something enduring, he can expose himself to change, to the coming and going of events and occurrences; for only where there is endurance can there be change. Only since the "torrent of time" has been torn up, as it were, into present, past and future, has it become possible to agree upon something which persists through all change in time. We have become one conversation ever since the time that "time is." Ever since time has arisen and its flow has been stayed, we have become historical. To be a conversation and to be historical is one and the same; both belong together and are in fact the selfsame thing. (EHD 37/HEP 85)

The Greeks found something of stability and endurance as a consequence of the poet's naming of the god: the one-ness and same-ness of the historical

conversation which we are. Mortal existence is grounded in this essentially poetic event of appropriation [Ereignis], in this naming and authenticating of what is given to man in his response to the draft of the abyss. The appropriating of this appropriation is not yet thought as such, as Ereignis; but the appropriating of Being is precisely what is underway in the work of the poet in the destitute time and in Heidegger's thinking with regard to that work.

Blanchot asks if the destitution of the holy in Hölderlin's question might not express the essence of art more profoundly than any essential presence: It seems, he says, that:

Art owes the strangest of torments and the very grave passion that animate it to the disappearance of the historical forms of the divine. Art was the language of the gods. The gods having disappeared, it became the language in which their disappearance was expressed, then the language in which this disappearance itself ceased to appear. This forgetfulness now speaks all alone. The deeper the forgetfulness, the more the deep speaks in this language, and the more the abyss of this deepness can become the hearing of the word.<sup>1</sup>

The poet dwells in the god's default, the region where truth lacks. The time of the destitution designates, for Blanchot, "the time which in all times is proper to art." As the gods can appear only in the dream, they are always already essentially absent, and approach us only in the passage from one era to another--only in the experience of the disaster.<sup>2</sup> Time as finitude is always already

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<sup>1</sup> Blanchot, The Space of Literature, 245-46.

<sup>2</sup> Compare this "disastrous" passage from one era to another with Levinas' "catastrophic" passage from one instant to the next.

destitute, but this always already is precisely what marks the advent of the disaster, which is outside history, and thus, outside the one conversation which we are. Blanchot says it is "the time when one can no longer--by desire, ruse, or violence--risk the life which one seeks, through this risk, to prolong."<sup>3</sup> It is the time of motionless transgression, the passiveness of the passage beyond. This is the destitute time that Hölderlin discovers, the truth of time, the pre-condition for art and for naming, which in turn is the neutral space where intelligibility can encounter its other and recognize it as its limit.

After the coming-together of poetry and thought to think the disastrous approach of time and its appropriation alongside the approach of the fugitive god, how are we now to rethink the nature of man and the meaning of time? In answer to the question "Who are we?" posed midway through "Zeit und Sein," Heidegger answers:

It might be that that which distinguishes man as man is determined precisely by what we must think about here: man, who is concerned with and approached by presence, who, through being thus approached, is himself present in his own way for all present and absent beings.

Man: standing within the approach of presence, but in such a way that he receives as a gift the presencing that It gives by perceiving what appears in letting-presence. (SD 12/TB 12)

If man were not the constant receiver of the gift, he says, man would not be man: "because Being and time are there only in Appropriating, Appropriating has the peculiar property of bringing man into his own as the being who perceives Being

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<sup>3</sup> Blanchot, The Writing of the Disaster, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 40.



by standing within true time. Thus Appropriated, man belongs to Appropriation" (SD 24/TB 23). By perceiving Being, and thus by standing within true time, man belongs to Ereignis itself.

We will see in "Zeit und Sein" that Ereignis is what determines both time and Being, in their own and in their belonging-together. But in Appropriation, Heidegger says, the sending source keeps itself back and withdraws what is most fully its own from boundless unconcealment. Thought in terms of Appropriation, this withdrawal, then, is Expropriation, Enteignis, the preservation of what is Appropriation's own. In asking about the impossible justification of the relation Heidegger establishes between Ereignis as event--as Eraugnis, in other words (in which we glimpse the word "eye," which suggests that Being looks to us), which association the definitive German dictionary Duden sanctions--and Ereignis as that which discloses what is proper to us--a play on the word eigen, which etymology the Duden expressly disqualifies, Blanchot asks in timely fashion:

Why eigen, why "proper" (how else can this word be translated?), and not "improper"? Why this word? Why "presence" in its stubborn patient) affirmation, which makes us repudiate "absence"? Earlier, in Sein und Zeit, the opposition between "authenticity" and "inauthenticity" (a superficial translation) prefigured--in a way that was still traditional--the more enigmatic question of the "proper," which ultimately we cannot welcome in the same way we do the undecidedness in "a-proprietation" (Derrida). The "proper" cannot be welcomed in the lack of a place and of truth. Yet without this void, the gift of writing, the gift of sheer Saying--giving life as well as death, and being as well as not-being--would no longer be the expenditure which dislocates every event. "Improper" or "a-proprietation," inasmuch as the "proper" is admitted in these expressions which at the same time disqualify it, calls to what obligates us limitlessly and cannot possibly be authorized by any

truth, not even by one understood as nontruth. Thus does straying stray along its own path.<sup>4</sup>

For Heidegger, Ereignis must therefore always be thought together with Enteignis, its retreat, its withdrawal. In "Zeit und Sein" Heidegger says presence means the constant abiding that approaches man, reaches him, and is extended to him. But he immediately thereafter questions the source of this extending reach to which, he says, the presence belongs as presencing. It is in the wake of this question--and in the wake of his counsel to attend to the path of his thinking, rather than the propositional logic of his thought, in order that man might be determined by what must be thought--that Heidegger proceeds to think not presence, but absence--the absence that gives place to presence and ultimately to the interplay of the four dimensions of time.

Before the time that "time is," is the approach out of an essential absence of what "is not yet"; before the waking light of essential names and historical presence, before even the dream-vision of the god can give place to the naming event, there is the dark night of the god's default. Heidegger says that while man relates to the absent as constantly as he does to the present--explicitly in the modalities of past and future, thought as the no longer present and the not yet present--there is an absence more primordial still, an absence that gives place to that relation in opening up what he calls time-space. Heidegger says it is this interplay of time's three dimensions that proves to be the true extending, the

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<sup>4</sup> Maurice Blanchot, The Writing of the Disaster, 98-99.

fourth dimension, of time. Dimension, he says, is not only the area of possible measurement, but the giving and opening up of the reach. It is, he says, this giving that determines all. But the source of this giving remains always refractory to the light and appropriation it makes possible.

I will suggest that in thinking this giving Heidegger follows the trace discovered by Hölderlin--the trace of an a-proper "time" that is in no way man's product or projection; "there is no production here," Heidegger says explicitly in "Zeit und Sein,"--there is only giving in the sense of extending which opens up "time-space" (ZS 17/TB 16). But the source of the Es gibt remains undetermined: it "remains"--a remainder to every possible calculation. What remains to be thought, then, in rethinking the nature of man and the meaning of time, is the Es gibt and the indeterminate source of that gratuity. But thinking remains, in relation to this task, essentially inadequate.

The first few paragraphs of "Zeit und Sein" are most interesting, even though they were apparently ignored during the Protokoll sessions that followed the lecture, for Alfred Guzzoni makes absolutely no mention of them in his summary.

In the first paragraph, Heidegger refers to two specific paintings by the Swiss-German artist Paul Klee, "Heilige aus einem Fenster" and "Tod und Feuer." Both these works were painted, points out Heidegger, in the year of Klee's death. In the second paragraph, Heidegger refers to Georg Trakl's short poem

"Siebengesang des Todes." In the third, he recalls Heisenberg's "Weltformel." The point Heidegger explicitly makes with these references is that none of these works are immediately intelligible [unmittelbare Verständlichkeit], nor are they commonly expected to be. He says we should want to stand before the paintings for a long time, and would abandon any claim to immediate intelligibility; we should want to hear the poem recited often, and would abandon any claim to immediate intelligibility; and even after carefully listening to Heisenberg's explanations, out of an entire audience of listeners, only two or three at most would even be able to follow him, while the rest would happily abandon any claim to immediate intelligibility. In each of these cases we would, without protest, abandon any claim to immediate intelligibility--while, to the contrary, says Heidegger, this is patently not the case with philosophical thinking, that thinking which is supposed to offer Weltweisheit, or worldly wisdom leading to the blessed life.

Heidegger's point is that philosophical thinking is in our time called to reflections far removed from such practical wisdom: "It might be that a kind of thinking has become necessary which must give thought to matters from which even the painting and the poetry which we have mentioned and the theory of mathematical physics receive their determination" (ZS 1/TB 2). However, what is most interesting about this beginning is not Heidegger's conclusion or his explicit means of reaching it, but the many striking images of death and finitude occasioned by his examples. If his point were simply that philosophy is called to

think what requires even more thought than painting, poetry, and theoretical physics, then why, out of an almost infinite field of less accessible and certainly less disturbing paintings, does Heidegger choose these particular paintings--both of which were painted by an artist famous, not for his difficulty, but for his ideographic simplicity and self-interpretive titles; both of which address with discomfiting figures the limits and finitude of material existence alongside the apparent limitlessness of spiritual or immaterial existence; and both of which were painted in the very year the artist died (and expressly identified as such)? Why, among the many possible examples of less morbid, yet uncontestably obtuse or difficult poetry, does Heidegger choose a fairly straightforward and little known poem by Trakl, and why a poem explicitly about death? Why, of all the possible examples of emotionally neutral, yet extremely demanding thinking from theoretical physics, does Heidegger refer to the search for a cosmic formula by the author of the uncertainty principle, that principle which is arguably most elegant in its simplicity, and yet most destabilizing in its implications for finite thought? Without a doubt, the references are deliberately chosen to call into question not only the demand for immediate intelligibility, but in order to figuratively introduce the matter he will subsequently attempt to think--the relationship between time and Being alongside an unspoken horizon of death and human finitude.

Also of particular interest at the beginning of this text are the multitude of references to listening, hearing, and speaking. Even for Heidegger, there are a

considerable number of such references and word plays in "Zeit und Sein"--no less than a dozen in the first few pages alone. The example Heidegger cites of something that "is," in point of fact, is the lecture hall [Hörsaal]-literally, the "listening hall"--in which he is speaking. "This lecture hall is," he says; only to then add, "The lecture hall is illuminated" (ZS 3/TB 3). These references accentuate the remarkable relationship implicitly explored in this text between seeing and listening, a relationship subtly defined as at once complementary and antagonistic, and subtly shown to be, even working together, inadequate to the task of thinking. Consider some of these initial references: he mentions the illuminated Hörsaal in which are gathered listeners to hear the speaker, who has just affirmed the need to hear often what must be thought and the need to listen to Being, but specifically without a view to its being grounded in terms of beings, as there is no longer the possibility of bringing the Being of what "is" explicitly into view; he gives a hint on how to listen, which consists precisely in following the movement of showing; he declares that presencing speaks out of the present, and that the determination of Being as presence by time is sufficient to introduce a relentless and increasing disquiet [Unruhe] into thinking; and he then asks why, in what way, and from what source something like time can speak in Being. These references not only call our attention to the similarities and pronounced differences between sight and vision, and between what is heard and what is seen; they ultimately suggest that in thinking the relationship of time and Being, hearing

and seeing must work together in order to move thinking--still inadequate--beyond both.

Showing requires speaking and seeing requires hearing, and an analysis which attends only to what shows itself or to what is brought to appear--in other words, a pure phenomenological analysis--is not commensurate to the task of thinking the relation of Being and time; Guzzoni says the "experimental quality of the seminar was due to precisely this difficulty:

On the one hand, it [the seminar] wanted to point directly at a matter which in accordance with its very nature is inaccessible to communicative statements. On the other hand, it had to attempt to prepare the participants for their own experience of what was said in terms of an experience of something which cannot be openly brought to light. It is thus the attempt to speak of something that cannot be mediated cognitively, not even in terms of questions, but must be experienced. (ZS 27-28/TB 26; emphases mine)

The "matter" to be thought cannot be adequately expressed, much less comprehended, Heidegger says. In thinking this relation between time and Being one must thus move definitively beyond phenomenology to one's "own experience" [eigene Erfahrung] of what remains, of necessity, unseen and unsaid. Guzzoni says that one of the last questions raised in the Protokoll concerned the meaning of this "experience" and whether or not it demanded an abdication of thinking. Heidegger's response apparently consisted in pointing out the eigene Erfahrung to which he had reference essentially involved awakening from the Vergessenheit of Being:

Experiencing is nothing mystical, not an act of illumination, but rather the entry into dwelling in Appropriation. Thus awakening to Appropriation remains indeed something which must be experienced, but as such is

precisely something which is at first necessarily bound up with the awakening from the oblivion of Being to that oblivion. (ZS 57/TB 53)

Thinking is not yet the experience, but like Hölderlin's poetry, he says, thinking can direct us toward the site of Appropriation.

Presumably proceeding with this in mind, then, Heidegger notes that language itself "says" that what we call the temporal is what is in time, and thus, what is determined by time as what passes away with time. Time itself passes away and does so constantly. Hence, in constantly passing away it remains as time--which means, it does not disappear, it presences. As presence, however, time is thus determined by a kind of Being, which in turn raises the question of how Being is then supposed to be determined by time, and how time can remain constant without being something temporal like beings in time.

Something like time speaks out of Being. A kind of Being speaks out of the constancy of time. Note the curious indeterminacy that characterizes Being and time when Heidegger "listens" to what "speaks" in them: it is not time that speaks out of Being, but "something like time" [dergleichen wie Zeit]; it is not Being that speaks out of time, but "a kind of Being" [ein Sein]. This indeterminacy echoes Heidegger's point, that Being and time when thought together appear differently than when they are thought apart. When thought together they appear to be codeterminate and codetermined--and thus strangely indeterminate: "Being is not a thing, thus nothing temporal, and yet it is determined by time as presence. Time is not a thing, thus nothing which is, and yet it remains constant in its passing away without being something temporal like



the beings in time" (ZS 3/TB 3). Being and time determine each other reciprocally, but not in such a way that they determine each other as temporal or as a being--in other words, when thought together they determine each other in a way unlike the way they each determine temporal beings.

Heidegger says the contradictions in which we thus find ourselves adrift when attempting to think this reciprocal determination cannot be dialectically synthesized without evading thereby the very matters [Sachen] and issues [Sachverhalt] that need to be thought. We read in the Protokoll proceedings the following about the word Sache:

Taken in the old sense of the word, the expression "matter," "matter of thinking," which occurs frequently in the lecture means the contested case, what is contested, the matter in question. For the thinking not yet determined, the matter is what gives thought, that from which this thinking receives its determination. (ZS 41/TB 38)

In thinking through the matter, therefore, we must struggle not to reconcile Being and time, and thus close off [ausgeschlossen] the question of the relation [Verhältnis] between them; we must attempt to proceed in such a way as to admit and involve [einlassen] ourselves properly with those matters in their relation.

What, then, would constitute a proper involvement? Heidegger answers: an attempt to think Being and time, time and Being, carefully and cautiously in their conjunction as the Sachverhalt for thought. The word "Sache" means, he explains, "what is decisively at stake in that something inevitable is concealed within it" (ZS 4/TB 4). Time and Being are each the matters for thinking and must be thought as such and in their relation, which relation is then the matter for thought.

In order to more fully understand what Heidegger is trying to say in this regard, we must consider in the original German what is one of the most crucial passages in the entire text, for what is marked in this passage, but left unsaid, is almost completely lost in the Stambaugh translation. The passage reads:

Sein--eine Sache, vermutlich die Sache des Denkens. Zeit--eine Sache, vermutlich die Sache des Denkens, wenn anders im Sein als Anwesenheit dergleichen wie Zeit spricht. Sein und Zeit, Zeit und Sein nennen das Verhältnis beider Sachen, den Sachverhalt, der beide Sachen zueinander hält und ihr Verhältnis aushält. Diesem Sachverhalt nachzusinnen, ist dem Denken aufgegeben, gesetzt, dass es gessonnen bleibt, seine Sache auszuharren. (ZS 4)

Halten means "to hold"; verhalten means "to retain" or, more literally, "to hold back"; aushalten means "to endure" or, more literally, "to hold out" or "to maintain a hold"; Verhältnis means a "relationship" or, more literally, "what holds together"; Sachverhalt means "issue," "matter at stake," or, perhaps, "matter held together in being held back." In all fairness to Joan Stambaugh, it is nearly impossible to translate this passage into a form that is both accurate and readable. But as accuracy is critical to an understanding of what language itself "says" in this text--which is precisely what Heidegger is attempting to "listen" to, after all--I will venture a translation that more literally reflects what is indicated by the word plays and italicized portions of the German text, even though the result is admittedly ponderous and awkward:

Being--a matter, presumably the matter of thinking. Time--a matter, presumably the matter of thinking, if indeed, in Being as presence, something like time speaks. Being and time, time and Being, name the being-held-together of both matters, the matter-held-back which holds both matters toward each other and maintains-a-hold on their being-held-together. It is assigned to thinking to meditate on this matter-held-back,

assuming that thinking remains meditatively-intent on waiting out the matter of this matter-held-back.

By attending now to the accentuated words and portions of words, we can more readily see what Heidegger means by "listening" to language--which, we have learned, is the "House of Being."<sup>5</sup> Heidegger is listening to the "hold" that speaks in hält, Verhältnis, Sachverhalt, and aushält. He is then listening to the "and," or und, that holds Being and time, time and Being, together and thinking of it precisely as that hold, or hält. He is thereby attempting to hear what is whispered about Being and time by and in that hold! As so held together, the two in holding together and being held back, or kept in issue, constitute the matter of thinking. What must be thought then, without dialectically synthesizing the two held together in their difference into an undifferentiated whole, is the matter that speaks out of their being-held-together-in-issue which is prior to both in their separation, and more fundamental than each alone.

Why is this passage so critical? Because it is here that Heidegger "hears" that the matter-held-together-and-in-issue does not hold either Being or time as a being or as something temporal, but as matters within the matter-held-together-in-issue. So considered, we cannot say of them Sein ist and Zeit ist; we must say es gibt Sein and es gibt Zeit: "We say of beings: they are. With regard to the matter "Being" and with regard to the matter "time," we remains cautious. We do not say: Being is, time is, but rather: there is Being and there is time" (ZS 4-5/TB 4-

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<sup>5</sup> See WM 164/BW 213.

5). The move from "Being is, time is" to "it gives Being, it gives time" is not, as Heidegger himself is careful to point out, a mere change in idiom--it is a move that turns us away from beings and back to the matter, a move occasioned by listening to what speaks out of the matter-held-together.

Heidegger now brings back into play the references to vision. He says that in order to get beyond the idiom and back to the matter of thought, we must show how this es gibt can be caught sight of [erblicken]. The appropriate way is to look ahead [vorzublicken] to the "it," or es, which gives Being and time. Said differently, we must look ahead to what is given in the it gives--that is, what "Being" and "time" mean as given. Heidegger himself encloses Being and time in quotation marks, indicating that when thought as given, they are no longer the same Being and time they are when thought metaphysically.

By so looking ahead, we become foresighted [vor-sichtig] in yet another sense, he says: we try to bring the es itself and its giving into view, capitalizing "it" and making of it Es; we look ahead to the It which gives Being and time. In order to accomplish this we must first think Being so as to think it itself into its own [es selbst in sein Eigenes], and then think time in order to think it itself into its own [sie selbst in ihr Eigenes]. Notice here the shift of the pronoun from neuter to feminine. The "it" in each case must clearly be referring, not to the Es of Es gibt, as the Stambaugh translation implies by capitalizing the "it," but to Being, on the one hand, and time, on the other: Being and time must each be thought into its own. And yet, by using the pronouns instead of the nouns,

Heidegger is certainly suggesting some connection to the pronoun in Es gibt. The next passage of the text says that in consequence of thinking Being and time each into its own, the way will show itself how "it gives being and how it gives time" [Dadurch muss sich die Weise zeigen, wie es Sein, wie es Zeit, gibt] (ZT 5).

Though awkward, this passage indicates that the "it itself" of Being and the "it itself" of time come together into a cooperative and neuter "it" which "gives"; the giving issues forth out of the being-held-together of the two. He then says that in this giving, the giving of the two, it becomes apparent [ersichtlich] how that giving is to be determined which, as a Verhältnis, first holds [hält] the two toward each other and yields [er-gibt] them. By hyphenating the word ergeben Heidegger is clearly indicating that Being and time, each in its own, is given over to its own by the giving of Es gibt--which giving is here expressly identified as Being and time, the being-held-together, the Verhältnis, that holds them together as and in the matter-held-together.

In first thinking, the it itself of Being into its own, what then becomes apparent is that Being means presencing, and thought with regard to what presences, presencing shows itself specifically as letting-presence, which in turn shows itself in bringing into unconcealment. I emphasize the "in turn" in order to show the turn that is at play here, a turn indicated in the text when Heidegger says, "but now we must try to think this letting-presence explicitly insofar as presencing is admitted" (ZS 5/TB 5). The "but now . . ." was the subject of much discussion in the seminar, and indicates a shift from the focus on letting-

presence "Anwesenlassen," to letting-presence, "Anwesenlassen" (ZS 40).<sup>6</sup> In the first case, letting-presence is related to beings, to what has been freed to be something present by letting-presence. In the second case, letting-presence is thought as presencing itself, as the letting or giving that admits to presence. This turn in focus is essential to the move from thinking Being as the ground of beings to thinking the unconcealment and generosity of Being as Appropriation, because "from the perspective of Appropriation it becomes necessary to free thinking from the ontological difference" (ZS 40-41/TB 37). This turn thus amounts to the pivot point in both the text and in the effort to think the matter as such.

To let presence, understood as letting-come-to-presence, thus means: to unconceal, to bring into openness. It is in this unconcealing that Being as letting-presence is at play. Here we see why Heidegger returned to the visual references, because what was "heard" as a giving of Being in the objective sense of the genitive is "seen" as an unconcealing of Being in the subjective sense; what is at play [spielt] in unconcealment is precisely a giving, says Heidegger, but it is the generosity of Being--that is, the giving by Being. This is why Heidegger ends the sentence by saying: ". . . d.h. Sein gibt." Heidegger then says in parentheses, which indicates, according to Stambaugh, that it was written in the lecture but not read: "(To think the matter "Being" explicitly requires our reflection to follow the direction which shows itself in letting-presence. But from unconcealing speaks a

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<sup>6</sup> Again, the accentuated portion of these two words is missing in the Stambaugh translation, which effectively obscures the whole point. See TB 37.

giving, an It gives)" (ZS 5/TB 5; emphases mine). Why was this passage not read? Perhaps because the point it makes would have been redundant in the spoken version, in which Heidegger could have made the same point by vocally emphasizing the etymological references to hearing and seeing that I have tried specifically to attend to references that do not easily call attention to themselves in the written text.

Being as letting-presence is seen as a giving by Being, but the matter "Being" is heard as a gift. This difference between what is seen and heard in each case is substantial--and it is underscored by Heidegger's use of emphasis marks around Being in the second case, as well as by his repeated use of the word verwandeln: in thinking Being as letting-presence, Being is transformed! Heidegger says that in order to think Being itself we must disregard Being insofar as it is grounded and metaphysically interpreted in terms of beings as their ground. We must, rather, attend to the concealed giving at play in unconcealment, the giving of the Es gibt. When we do so, by turning away from what appears, we see that as a gift, Being undergoes a substantial change:

Being belongs, as the gift of this It gives, in the giving. As a gift, Being is not expelled from giving. Being, presencing is transformed. As letting-presence, it belongs in unconcealing; as the gift in the giving it is retained. Being is not. It gives Being as the unconcealing of presencing. (ZS 6/TB 6)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Once again I have had to significantly alter the Stambaugh version, which--in addition to its translation problems--contains a truncated typesetting reduplication of the last three sentences of the paragraph.

This is a remarkable pronouncement, effectively adding a whole new dimension to what was said in Sein und Zeit and the "Humanismusbrief," where Heidegger appeared to be attending only to the giving, the "self-giving," that is Being itself.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In the "Brief über den Humanismus" Heidegger refers to a passage in the section from Sein und Zeit on "Reality and Care," where he said "Of course only as long as Dasein is (that is, only as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible), 'is there' Being [Allerdings nur solange Dasein ist, das heisst die ontische Möglichkeit von Seinsverständnis, 'gibt es' Sein]" (ZS 212/BT 255). He says in response to the French translation of that passage "il y a l'Être," that it translates es gibt imprecisely: "For the 'it' that here 'gives' is Being itself. The 'gives' names the essence of Being that is giving, granting its truth. The self-giving into the open, along with the open region itself, is Being itself [Denn das 'es,' was hier 'gibt,' is das Sein selbst. Das 'gibt' nennt jedoch das gebende, seine Wahrheit gewahrende Wesen des Seins. Das Sichgeben ins Offene mit diesem selbst ist das Sein selber]" (W 165/BW 214).

The seminar notes tell us, contrary to what appears to be the case--and contrary to what some in the seminar apparently thought to be the case--that the term "Being itself" in the passage from the "Humanismusbrief" already names Appropriation:

In the Letter on Humanism (Klostermann edition, p. 23) we read: "For the It which gives here is Being itself." The objection arose that this unequivocal statement did not agree with the lecture "Time and Being" in that the intention of thinking Being as Appropriation led to a predominance of Appropriation, to the disappearance of Being. The disappearance of Being not only conflicted with the passage in the Letter on Humanism, but also with the passage in the lecture where it was stated that the sole intention of the lecture was "to bring Being itself as Appropriation to view."

To this we answered first that in the passage in question in the Letter on Humanism and thus almost throughout, the term "Being itself" already names Appropriation. (The relations and contexts constituting the essential structure of Appropriation were worked out between 1936 and 1938). Secondly, it is precisely a matter of seeing that Being, by coming to view as Appropriation, disappears as Being. Thus there is no contradiction by the two statements. Both name the same matter with different emphasis. (ZS 46/TB 43)

The passages in Sein und Zeit, on the other hand, are described in the seminar as adequate attempts to give the Seinsfrage direction, but as inadequate attempts to think the giving sense of letting-presence (ZS 47/TB 44).



Understood as a gift of the Es gibt Being is transformed [verwandelt]. As letting-presence, Being belongs to unconcealing. It is not, at its most proper, a dispenser of truth, but the proper gift of truth.

Heidegger encourages us to pay heed to the "wealth" of this transformation--for, as he points out, there are many other transformations of Being! He says that the attempt to ponder on the abundance of Being's transformations [der Wandlungsfülle des Seins] gets firmly underway when we think Being as presencing, which characterization is binding for thinking, and has, moreover, derived its binding force precisely from the unconcealment of Being that is occasioned in realizing that Being as presencing can be "said," and thus thought. There many such transformations of presencing: presencing as the hen, the logos, idea, ousia, energia, substantia, actualitas, perceptio, monad, objectivity, the will of reason, of love, of Geist, of power, in will to will, etc. These transformations of Being are all ways in which Being takes place--that is, they are ways in which It gives Being. This is why we must listen to what speaks in Being, to the giving itself, the It gives: what we see, what gets historically disclosed, is not the giving of Being, Being in its Own; what we see are transformations of Being. The It gives retains Being in the giving, retains Being in its Own. The It gives and the proper Being retained in the giving does not come to presence. It withdraws and remains concealed. This is why Heidegger writes: "In the beginning of Western thinking, Being is thought, but not the "It gives" as such. The latter withdraws in favor of the gift which It gives. That gift is thought and

conceptualized from then on exclusively as Being with regard to Beings" (ZS 8/TB 8). What is thought in thinking Being in its many transformations and actualities is the gift that is given, not the giving of the gift, which is the vary capacity to yield and give Being. This gratuitous capacity as such withdraws from the open of truth and unconcealment in which Being can take place as a transformation of the Being that most properly belongs to the Es gibt as its essential capacity.

Heidegger says that a giving that gives in this way, holding itself back and withdrawing in the giving, is called a sending [Schicken]. So more properly thought, the Being that is given in its various transformations, is what is sent. And since what is sent always has a destiny, we can say that each transformation is destined in its sending--it is sent forth in destining. Similarly, as the It which sends, as well as the sending itself, hold back from self-manifestation, each destiny has as its concealed fundamental counterpart an epoche, an epoch. Thus, the history of Being as such is a history of obscurity, a history of the manifold ways in which the original sending of Being has been concealed.<sup>9</sup>

At his point Heidegger returns to the question of time, since we recognized at the outset that Being as presence has a time-character, though we had no clear

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<sup>9</sup> In the seminar notes we read:

Metaphysics is the history of the formations of Being, that is, viewed from Appropriation, the history of the self-withdrawal of what is sending in favor of the destinies, given in sending, of an actual letting-presence of what is present. Metaphysics is the oblivion of Being, and that means the history of the concealment and withdrawal of that which gives Being. The entry of thinking into Appropriation is thus equivalent to the end of this withdrawal's history. The oblivion of Being "supercedes" [hebt auf] itself in the awakening into Appropriation. (ZS 44/SD 41)

understanding of how this is so. Obscure and misunderstood as this characterization may be, however, it suggests that the It which gives Being might be found in that element of the Sache des Denkens which we call "time." Nevertheless, as belonging to the Sache des Denkens, any proper thinking of "time" must be carried out in the light of what has already been discovered about Being, which also belongs essentially to that Sache. What, then have we discovered? We have found that what is peculiar [Eigentümliche] to Being as a Sache is not anything having the character of Being--rather, what is peculiar to Being is sending, the way in which "It" is capable of Being. Thus, what is peculiar to time as a Sache will likewise lack the character of time.

Heidegger begins the time analysis, therefore, by considered what is sent: Being as presence. But after fruitlessly attempting to think time as present in the sense of presence, Heidegger asks, in a move that provocatively recalls the decisive turn in the Augustinian analysis of time, "where is time? Is time at all and does it have a place?" (ZS 12/TB 11). In response, he says we must proceed cautiously and say: Es gibt Zeit. We must proceed carefully and look at what shows itself to us as time, by looking ahead to Being as presence, the present. What does the present in the sense of presence mean, he asks? Having looked, we must now listen. When we say presencing, what Sache are we thinking? What speaks in "die Rede vom An-wesen?" (ZS 12). To presence means to last--not merely to endure, but to abide and concern us. To presence, to let-presence,

means to offer to us what concerns us and approaches us as lasting. Presencing means to approach man as what is present.

It is at this point, the very center of the text, that Heidegger asks "Who are we?" Let us consider this central and crucial passage.

Who are we? We remain cautious in our answer. For it might be that that which distinguishes man as man is determined precisely by what we must think about here: man, who is concerned with and approached by presence, who, through being thus approached, is himself present in his own way for all present and absent beings.

Man: standing within the approach of presence, but in such a way that he receives as a gift the presencing that It gives by perceiving what appears in letting-presence. If man were not the constant receiver of the gift given by the "It gives presence," if that which is extended in the gift did not reach man, then not only would Being remain concealed in the absence of this gift, not only closed off, but man would remain excluded from the scope of: It gives Being. Man would not be man. (SD 12-13/TB 12)

The location of this passage is most significant. First, by following the question "where is time?" it suggests a possible correlation between the Ort of Zeit, in the question regarding the place of time, and the Da- of Dasein, the preontological question of Being. Perhaps Augustine was not so far afield after all. Second, it explicitly situates the question of man at the very center of the meditation on time and Being, and thus at the very heart of the Sache des Denkens. This situation was already implicitly effected in the move to the Es gibt, since the Es gibt names a relation of availability to man, a relation of possible appropriation.<sup>10</sup> Third, the location of this question marks the point at which we find ourselves "openly" confronted with the question of absence.

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<sup>10</sup> See SD 41-43/TB 38-40.

Following the apparent digression constituted by the above passage, Heidegger says that although the question of man appears to have led us astray from the question about time, we find ourselves as a result of asking that question much closer to the matter of time. Presence means, he continues, "the constant abiding that approaches man, reaches him, is extended to him" (SD 13/TB 12). Hence, the question leads us to where we can ask again, and more authentically, about the source of this extending reach to which the present belongs as the presencing of what concerns us. But what we notice in thinking the approach of the present together with who is thus approached, is that absence concerns us as constantly as does presence. At the very heart of the matter of thinking, we find ourselves confronted with the question of absence. How does absence concern us? As that which has been, and still concerns us. What is no longer present does not just vanish, and thus escape our concern; rather, what has been, presences in its own way, extending the present beyond what is actually present to that which is absent. Absence also concerns us as that which is not yet present. Absence is the presencing of what is not yet present, and concerns us as such. The future never just begins, says Heidegger, since what is not yet present always already concerns us. The future is that in which presencing is offered. Hence, we find in absence "a manner of presencing and approaching which by no means coincides with presencing in the sense of the immediate present" (SD 14/TB 13). Of consequence we must conclude, he says, that not every presencing is necessarily the present. He then adds laconically: "A curious matter."

Let us note at this point a certain complication in the analysis: in thinking the future as the not yet present we effectively dissolve the true futurity of the future and make of it a future that is and can be ours--we appropriate it, in other words. The future that is named here in "Zeit und Sein" is a future that is already essentially present. In coming into its Own, time and Being both become what can be owned. Appropriation is spoken of in this essay primarily to mean "making proper," "coming into one's proper element." Nevertheless, that which can be determined (even authentically) and thus made proper, can also be appropriated in the sense of being made property. The future as that which is present in its absence as the not yet present, may open upon the a-proper absence we traced earlier, in thinking the essence of poetry, but it is not that essential absence. It is, therefore, not yet a true future, the approach of that which cannot concern us as it is essentially beyond the reach of our concern and the power of our concerned dealings. As any form of the present, time is subject to disclosure. Such a time is not essentially other, and can therefore offer nothing essentially new. Hence, we may sense a certain disparity here between the sensitivity of this text, where what Appropriation appropriates is the belonging-together of Being and man, and the attentiveness of earlier texts in which what Appropriation appropriates was specifically thought as the belonging-together of Being and mortals--that is, within the four-fold relation of man, gods, earth, and sky, as in the essay "Das Ding."

Heidegger's present line of inquiry reflects the intent to discover the source of the giving and extending reach to which the present belongs. He accordingly asks and answers: "Does this giving lie in this, that it reaches us, or does it reach us because it is in itself a reaching? The latter" (SD 14/TB 13). In thinking through this question Heidegger determines that futural approaching brings about what has been, that what has been brings about futural approaching, and that the reciprocal relation of both brings about the self-extending, opening up of openness. In other words, by thinking the belonging together of future, past, and present, we think the way they offer themselves to each other: we think their unifying unity as determined by what is their own in offering themselves--in offering the presencing that is given in them. What opens up in this offering is what Heidegger calls "time-space" [Zeit-Raum]: "Time-space now is the name for the openness which opens up in the mutual self-extending of futural approach, past, and present" (SD 14-15/TB 14). The consequence of this is that what we call dimension and dimensionality belongs to time-space, authentic time; thought in terms of the threefold giving, authentic time is correspondingly three-dimensional.

But this discovery still leaves the question of the source of three-dimensional, authentic time unanswered. In venturing an answer Heidegger observes that insofar as the unity of time's three dimensions involves a reciprocal interplay of each toward each, this interplay can be said to be the true extending, or fourth dimension, of time. But even in finding authentic time to be four-

dimensional, the giving source of the giving remains elusive--and it is the giving, Heidegger emphasizes, that determines all. The giving holds [hält] the past, present, and future toward one another in the nearness of three-dimensionality. But in proximity there is also distance. The past and the future are near to the present precisely because they are still distant, because their advent is denied, because they are withheld [vorenhält]. The "nearing of nearness," dies Nahern der Nahe, holds the approach open by denying and withholding. The repetition of the root hält, to which we have previously been attuned, indicates that we are thinking here in the very heart of the matter-held-together, the Sache des Denkens. What we discover in thinking at the heart of the matter is that time is not, It gives time: "Die Zeit ist nicht. Es gibt die Zeit. Das Geben, das Zeit gibt, bestimmt sich aus der verweigernd-vorenthaltenden Nähe" (SD 16). The giving that gives time is determined by the denying and withholding nearness. But as so determined, the source of the giving still eludes our view. Heidegger says, clearly there is no time without man. But does this mean that it is in first receiving time that man becomes man? Or does it mean that it is in being received time first becomes time? Neither. Insofar as authentic time is both the proximity and distance of presencing it has always already reached man, so that he can be man only by standing within that reach wherein the reaching itself remains withheld. Heidegger says: "Time is not the product of man, man is not the product of time. There is no production here. There is only giving" (SD 17/TB 16). Thus,



concludes Heidegger, we are still faced with the "enigmatic It," dem rätselhaften Es.

Heidegger says that inasmuch as time is manifest in Being, it appears that the It might be the fourfold extending of the open--especially because absence too shows itself as presence. Thus, authentic time appears as the It which gives Being. But the time which appears, even as authentic time, itself remains a gift. So, once again what gives, withdraws; the It remains undetermined, and "we remain puzzled" (SD 18/TB 17).

At this point in the text there is another (this time lengthy) section which was apparently omitted from the spoken lecture. This section directly precedes the discussion of Ereignis. What Heidegger points out in this section is that we remain puzzled because we allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking that what we are trying to think here must be capable of conforming to our thinking and the grammatical form of the language that informs that thinking:

Are we puzzled now only because we have allowed ourselves to be led astray by language or, more precisely, by the grammatical interpretation of language; staring at an It that is supposed to give, but that itself is precisely not there. When we say "It gives Being," "It gives time," we are speaking sentences. Grammatically a sentence consists in a subject and a predicate. . . . The It, at least in the interpretation available to us for the moment, names a presence of absence.

When we say "It gives Being," "It gives time," we are not making statements about beings. However, the syntax of sentences as we have it from the Greek and Roman grammarians has such statements exclusively in view. In view of this fact we must also consider the possibility that, contrary to all appearances, in saying "It gives Being," "It gives time," we are not dealing with statements that are always fixed in the sentence structure of the subject-predicate relation. And yet, how else are we to bring the "It" into view. (SD 19/TB 18-19; emphases mine)

This last sentence speaks volumes. In thinking the source of what gives Being and time, we are attempting to bring into view what is precisely not there, what is essentially absent.

What determines both Being and time, in their own, is, we know, Ereignis, the event of Appropriation. But Heidegger is quick to add that what this word names "can be thought now only in the light of what becomes manifest in our looking ahead toward Being and toward time as destiny and as extending, to which time and Being belong" (SD 20/TB 19). What is thought, in that light, is the "and," the hält, that names the indeterminate relation of the two as matters: "We now see," Heidegger explains, that "what lets the two matters belong together, what brings the two into their own and, even more, maintains and holds them in their belonging together--the way the two matters stand, the matter at stake--is Appropriation" (SD 20/TB 19). The It that gives Being and time thus proves to be Ereignis. "And yet . . .," adds Heidegger, while correct this statement is nevertheless untrue. Why? Because it conceals the very matter at stake. What appears as Ereignis in the destiny of Being involves but another transformation of Being: to think Appropriation as a species of Being is but to continue metaphysics; even to reverse the terms, and say Being belongs to Appropriation, is a "cheap" inversion that does not escape the determination, says Heidegger. As is pointed out in the Protokoll, Heidegger wants to clearly distinguish the transformation of Being into Appropriation from the epochal transformations of Being:

We must sharply distinguish from this meaning of transformation, which refers to metaphysics, the meaning which is intended when we say that Being is transformed--to Appropriation. Here it is not a matter of manifestation of Being comparable to the metaphysical formations of Being and following them as a new manifestation. Rather, we mean that Being--together with its epochal revelations--is retained in destiny, but as destiny is taken back into Appropriation.

Between the epochal formations of Being and the transformation of Being into Appropriation stands Framing. Framing is an in-between stage, so to speak. It offers a double aspect, one might say, a Janus head. It can be understood as a kind of continuation of the will to will, thus as an extreme formation of Being. At the same time, however, it is a first form of Appropriation itself. (SD 56-57/TB 52-53)

We seek an answer, a "saying that co-responds" to the matter at stake; and yet the matter at stake precludes any such saying. In thinking Appropriation as such our speaking remains indeterminate.

Can we think or say anything more, then? "Along the way," says

Heidegger, unterwegs, we already have--but not explicitly. What have we said?

That to giving as sending, there belongs withholding and denial; to giving belongs withdrawal, Entzug; in sending, the sending source withdraws from

unconcealment. In yet another parenthetical passage Heidegger says the following:

Insofar as the destiny of Being lies in the extending of time, and time, together with Being, lies in Appropriation, Appropriating makes manifest its peculiar property, that Appropriation withdraws what is most fully its own from boundless unconcealment. Thought in terms of Appropriating, this means: in that sense it expropriates itself of itself. Expropriation belongs to Appropriation as such. By this expropriation, Appropriation does not abandon itself--rather, it preserves what is its own. (SD 23/TB 22-23)

To extend Heidegger's own metaphors, what we catch sight of in trying to bring the It which gives Being and time into view, is that seeing cannot look ahead far

enough--the source cannot be caught sight of. This is not because our sight is, as yet, incapable of seeing far enough. It is because what we wish to see is what is essentially invisible, essentially other than that which can be seen in any adequate, propositional thought. In glimpsing what Ereignis means, says Heidegger, we have arrived at nothing more than a thought-construct, asserting blindly that Ereignis must be something. However, "Appropriation neither is, nor is Appropriation there" (SD 24/TB 24).

What remains to be said? Only this: "Appropriation appropriates. Saying this we say the Same in terms of the Same about the Same. To all appearances, all this says nothing" (SD 24-25/TB 24). It says nothing, . . . but only as long as we only hear a mere said. If, however, we follow Heidegger's lead and take what has been said as a clue [Anhält] for our thinking, then what is said "before all else" gives voice to a bond [Verbindlichkeit] that binds [bindet] all thinking. Our task, concludes Heidegger, is to leave metaphysics to its destiny and overcome the obstacles that render saying inadequate--while this lecture itself remains such an obstacle by speaking only in propositional statements. What it might mean to render saying adequate remains an issue. In fact, this is exactly the issue that is taken up in "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens."

In conclusion we might say that there seems to be a kind of ambiguity operative in the Heideggerian texts that is decidedly unsettling. On the one hand,

in thinking the essence of poetry in the works of "poets of destiny," and in thinking the indeterminate relation between Being and time granted as the Sache des Denkens, and in numerous other essays, Heidegger appears to think on the very threshold of time in the Levinasian sense, at the very opening of the indeterminate relation with the Other. On the other hand, it often appears as if Heidegger sees only the need to overcome inadequate saying, and not the need to affirm that inadequacy and recognize what is other than Being in the measure-taking effected in the turn toward the holy. This is the perspective that seems to open at the end of this text, and in the last section of the 1935 text Einführung in die Metaphysik, for example--the work in which Heidegger thinks Being as surmounted by the "ought," and the good as "beyond Being," but sees in this thinking only an "entanglement in the thicket of the idea of values" (IM 167).<sup>11</sup>

Can we justifiably say that Heidegger's work reflects a brooding preoccupation with death and human finitude, while affirming only an insurmountable inadequacy of thinking to its task? What is said in the last paragraph of the Protokoll text would seem to indicate that was the implicit consensus of his audience:

The finitude of Appropriation, of Being, of the fourfold hinted at during the seminar is nevertheless different from the finitude spoken of in the book on Kant, in that it is no longer thought in terms of the relation to infinity, but rather as finitude in itself: finite, end, limit, one's own--to be secure in one's own. The new concept of finitude is thought in this

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<sup>11</sup> Ironically, it is this work which clearly provides Levinas with much of his vocabulary.

manner--that is, in terms of Appropriation itself, in terms of the concept of one's own. (SD 58/TB 54)

But have we not glimpsed another way to read Heidegger? Does not the reading that sees only finitude ignore the redemptive opening upon the infinite that is caught sight of alongside the affirmation of limits? Do not the initial passages of this text accentuate not only the limits of intelligibility and existence, but underscore as well a persistent, consuming desire to transcend the limits of thought and definitive mortality? Is there not here, in the very evolution of Heidegger's work, the trace of a response to a "voice" and a "vision" that the thinker does not of himself produce? While Heidegger can still be said to be thinking the question of the meaning of Being, I would suggest that what we find at the end of Heidegger's work is that the thinking and the question that determine the path of that thinking are transformed in the process of following that path, and must be understood and re-traced in accordance with that transformation.

CHAPTER 5  
PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE TASK OF THINKING  
AT THE END OF PHILOSOPHY

"Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens" names the attempt, says Heidegger, at a reflection which persists in questioning. Clearly, questions are paths to an answer, but if an answer to the question philosophy must ask at its end could be given, he tells us, that answer would consist in a transformation of thinking--a transformation of thinking into something other than the logical manipulation of propositional statements.

The preparation for that transformation is not complete, but it is underway. We saw the incompleteness of the preparation affirmed at the end of "Zeit und Sein," when Heidegger lamented that the lecture, concerned in no small part with the need for adequate saying, remained itself an obstacle to such saying, as it was spoken merely in propositional statements. We also saw in "Zeit und Sein" that while the task of thinking is to experience and enter Ereignis in order to "say It in terms of It about It" (SD 25/TB 24), thinking is not yet even the experience of the awakening to Ereignis, much less the experience or thinking of Ereignis itself. Nevertheless, since the awakening to Ereignis is necessarily bound up in the matter-held-together with the awakening from the oblivion of Being to that

oblivion (SD 57/TB 53), in asking the question of Being and attending to the subsequent questions raised by that question we are at least moving toward that double awakening. It is for this reason Heidegger says "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens" belongs to the attempt undertaken "again and again ever since 1930" to shape the question of Sein und Zeit in a more original way. He says the persistent attempts at reflection which characterize his work are nothing other than stages in an ongoing subjection to immanent criticism of the question that constitutes the point of departure for Sein und Zeit, the question of the meaning of Being.

Heidegger says the critical question asks what the matter of thinking is. But we have seen that the matter of thinking in "Zeit und Sein" is Being and time, thought as the matter-held-together in thinking Being as the matter of thinking and time as the matter of thinking. The critical question asks about this matter as a matter: it thinks the question of the meaning of Being as a questionable question and does so from within the questioning in which that question is asked. What must now become clear in continuing that immanent criticism, says Heidegger, is to what extent this critical question necessarily and continually belongs to thinking. In other words, what must now become clear is how the questionability of the question of Being and time as the matter of thinking is related to the question itself, the very question whose preontological form is Dasein. What is brought into question at the end of philosophy is the questionable nature--not only of the question as such--but of that being who asks,



continually and essentially, the question of the meaning of Being, and who now asks about the questionability of that question and the task of thinking.

As the questionability of the question of Being can thus be traced back to the questionability of the being which is that question, in its preontological form, there is yet another transformation that will accompany the transformation of thinking. We have seen in "Zeit und Sein" that at the heart of the Sache des Denkens lies the question "who is man?" We might well say this logographic centrality gives voice to a concern common to virtually all of Heidegger's investigations: a concern for the essential correspondence between thinking and human nature itself. In Sein und Zeit Heidegger chooses Dasein as the exemplary entity to be interrogated with regard to the question of the meaning of Being precisely because of the peculiar relation between Dasein and the question as such: the very asking of the question of Being is Dasein's mode of Being. In fact, so fundamental is the relation between Dasein and the question Dasein asks that Sein und Zeit is devoted throughout to an analytic of Dasein as that entity for whom the question of Being is an issue and as that entity for whom questioning in general is one of the possibilities of its Being. Later, in the "Einleitung" to Was ist Metaphysik?, Heidegger more explicitly points out that a change in thinking might be accompanied by a change in human nature: "As long as man remains the animal rationale he is also the animal metaphysicum. As long as man understands himself as the rational animal, metaphysics belongs, as Kant said, to the nature of man. But if our thinking should succeed in its efforts to go

back into the ground of metaphysics, it might well help to bring about a change in human nature, accompanied by a transformation of metaphysics" (WM 9/WGM 267). Heidegger similarly says, in quoting from the first draft of Vom Wesen der Wahrheit,

Over and over again we must insist: In the question of truth as posed here, what is at stake is not only an alteration in the traditional conception of truth, nor a complement of its current (re)presentation; what is at stake is a transformation in man's Being itself. This transformation is not demanded by new psychological or biological insights. Man here is not the object of any anthropology whatever. Man comes into question here in the deepest and broadest, in the genuinely fundamental, perspective: man in his relation to Being.<sup>1</sup>

What appears very clearly in Heidegger's work, right up through the poetic writings and "Zeit und Sein," is the insight that within the lived experience of the animal metaphysicum lies concealed, as it were, a question and nature radically non-metaphysical.

Assuming then, along with Heidegger, that man might well experience an essential change in his nature if a form of thinking more primordial than that of metaphysics could be retrieved, we might then ask what there is in this correspondence between thinking and human nature that leads Heidegger to specifically name the task of thinking together with the end of philosophy?

"What does it mean that philosophy in the present age has entered its final stage?" is one of the two guiding questions Heidegger asks in "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens" (SD 61/TB 55). For Heidegger,

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<sup>1</sup> Richardson, xx.

philosophy is fundamentally metaphysics, and the question which metaphysics asks is the question of the Being of beings. What has shown itself since the beginning of philosophy as the ground of beings is Being as presence: Heidegger says, "what characterizes metaphysical thinking which grounds the ground for beings is the fact that metaphysical thinking departs from what is present in its presence, and thus represents it in terms of its ground as something grounded" (SD 62/TB 56). The end of philosophy means simply the completion of metaphysics in its most extreme possibility, and the most extreme possibility of metaphysics, as a metaphysics of presence, is the development of the positive sciences within the field opened up by philosophy, and at the same time, the separation and eventual independence of those sciences from philosophy. This, says Heidegger, is philosophy's legitimate end. Philosophy finds itself at this point of completion because it can now expressly formulate the question which metaphysics asks and subsequently recognize its own history and dissolution in the positive sciences to be the epochal realizations of this particular question's possibilities.

And yet, the fact that the legitimate completion of philosophy lies in its development into the independent sciences does not mean that science has taken over the task of thinking--quite the contrary, in fact. In Was Heisst Denken? Heidegger emphatically states that although science always and in its own way has to do with thinking, "science itself does not think, and cannot think!" (VA 127/WCT 8). He says there lies an unbridgeable gulf between thinking and the sciences, which accounts for the flourishing development of science vis-à-vis the

fact that what must be thought about in thinking has long since turned away from man. He thus names the essence of what must be thought the "thought-provoking," and observes that although the state of the world is becoming constantly more thought-provoking, what is most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking (VA 124/WCT 4).

And yet, are we not capable of thinking? Yes. But we only begin to realize that capability when we incline toward what is to be thought, toward what provokes our thinking--not when we think metaphysically. Heidegger reminds us in Was Heisst Denken? that man is rightly called the being who can think in the metaphysical designation animal rationale, and essentially makes the same point in Sein und Zeit with respect to the Greek definition of man as Zōon logon ekon, but he also points out that metaphysical philosophy does not understand the truth of that designation in either case. According to the analogy in Was ist Metaphysik? which Heidegger borrows from Descartes, philosophy is a tree which springs from metaphysical roots. Philosophy never escapes its metaphysical ground; whenever it leaves its ground or returns to think its ground it does so as an outgrowth of metaphysics (WM 9/WGM 266). Philosophy, therefore, cannot recall Being itself, nor think beyond it:

Metaphysics, insofar as it always represents only beings as beings, does not recall being itself. . . . Metaphysics remains the basis of philosophy. The basis of thinking, however, it does not reach. When we think of the truth of Being, metaphysics is overcome. We can no longer accept the claim of metaphysics that it takes care of the fundamental involvement in "Being" and that it decisively determines all relations to beings as such. (WM 8-9/WGM 266-67)

The possible questions which metaphysics, and philosophy as an outgrowth of metaphysics, can ask are always enframèd within the confusion of beings and Being, and the insistence on Being as presence. As a result, even though philosophy is at an end, and perhaps even more so because of that end, philosophy as metaphysics remains "the barrier" which keeps man from the original involvement of Being in human nature (WM 12/WGM 269).

Not only is it erroneous to suppose that our capacity for this first possibility for thinking could depart from the metaphysical understanding of what is present in its presence, however, it would be equally misguided to attempt a recollection of the truth of Being by somehow surmounting this prevailing metaphysical understanding. Metaphysics does not recall Being in its truth because the elusiveness of its own ground never becomes an issue for metaphysics; Heidegger says, "metaphysics never answers the question concerning the truth of Being, for it never asks this question" (WM 11/WGM 268). Heidegger's concern throughout his work has been with stirring precisely that recollection, and thus overcoming metaphysics only by reawakening an understanding for the meaning of that question presupposed, but forgotten by metaphysics. If we return to Sein und Zeit we find that overcoming is initiated by the very first words of the introduction: "This question has today been forgotten" (SZ 2/BT 21). Sein und Zeit begins with the forgotten perplexity regarding the expression Being as it is ostensibly recalled first by Plato's Eleatic stranger in the quoted passage from the Sophist, then by Heidegger himself as he ironically imitates the stranger by recalling it in

his own text. But while it is true that by attempting a recollection, or retrieval, of that forgotten perplexity, Sein und Zeit begins to overcome the Vergessenheit of Being, Heidegger observes numerous times that the Vergessenheit of the Seinsfrage is a destined structural event and not a mere oversight to be overcome simply at will; it is no mere coincidence that the oblivion of Being prevails today, and to such an extent that not only are we not thinking, but we are dogmatically avoiding that call. Metaphysics speaks of Being necessarily and continually, says Heidegger, but it does not induce Being itself to speak, for "metaphysics does not recall Being in its truth, nor does it recall truth as unconcealedness, nor does it recall the nature of unconcealedness" (WM 10-11/WGM 268).

William Richardson, in Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought, essentially divides Heidegger's work into two relatively distinct stages according to the problems, as he sees them, that these two stages address--the problem of Being and the problem of thought. However, in the letter that becomes the book's preface Heidegger says very plainly that such a clear division (which is reflected in Richardson's original title, From Phenomenology to Thought) would be justified in his opinion only through what is essentially a reductive misunderstanding of "phenomenology" as Husserl's philosophical position and "thought" as shorn of its ambiguity. He suggests, rather, that phenomenology be more correctly understood as the process of "allowing the most proper concern of thought [der eigensten Sache des Denkens] to show itself", and that "thought" be understood as the "thinking of Being" in which Being "shows itself simultaneously

as that which is to-be-thought and as that which has want of a thought corresponding to it".<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, Heidegger proposes an alternate title which Richardson adopted only in part: Through Phenomenology to the Thinking of Being.

What must be thought in the thinking of Being which phenomenology cannot think is precisely the withdrawal of Being from thinking. John Sallis observes that for Heidegger the asking of the question of Being is not to be thought of as a question to be followed and then abandoned when and if an answer is found. Rather, our questioning is directed back into the question in order to experience what calls upon us to think:

Thinking as questioning is not its own ground. Questioning is such that its ground continually withdraws. The ground of our questioning elicits our questioning yet withdraws from it, and it was just this eliciting-with-drawing which remained unthought in metaphysics, which was not granted as that which grants thought to us, as that which calls upon us to think. What remained concealed in metaphysics was that "What withdraws from us thereby draws us along" (WD 5).

Heidegger's thinking is a waiting to be drawn along in the withdrawal as that which calls forth thinking. The path of Heidegger's work is the path of this withdrawal.<sup>3</sup>

In standing within this withdrawal of ground, we are drawn along into the withdrawal toward "what" draws. As we are thus drawn, our being-drawn-along has the character of pointing toward what withdraws. Heidegger says that man first is man in the pointing into this withdrawal: "His essential nature lies in being

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<sup>2</sup> Richardson, xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Sallis, John, Heidegger and the Path of Thinking (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1970), 7.

such a pointer" (WCT 9). That the ground should continually withdraw from thinking and yet, that what withdraws should be that which calls forth thinking, is precisely what remains unthought in conjunction with the nature of that being from which the ground withdraws.

Heidegger says in "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens," that there is what he calls a "first possibility for thinking," a possibility apart from the last possibility that became the development and dissolution of metaphysics in the technologized sciences. He characterizes this first possibility as that task "reserved for thinking in a concealed way in the history of philosophy from its beginning to its end, a task accessible neither to philosophy as metaphysics nor, and even less so, to the sciences stemming from philosophy" (SD 65/TB 59). This task seems to include the assertion, says Heidegger, that philosophy has not been up to the matter of thinking, and has thus become a history of mere decline. He insists that thinking must learn what remains reserved for thinking to concern itself with, and that thinking will prepare its own transformation thereby (SD 67/TB 60). He later reaffirms the need for this education in thinking, as well as the need for "a knowledge of what being educated and uneducated in thinking means" (SD 80/TB 72). We must learn what concerns thinking in the turn to the Sache selbst. The proper task of thinking requires us to ask and learn what remains unthought in the call "to the thing itself," only if we ask what remains unthought in the matter of philosophy and its method (SD 71/TB 64).



What then is the task of thinking reserved in a concealed way in the history of philosophy's decline? It is the question of aletheia, the question of unconcealment as such. Our task is to learn from it while questioning it. Accordingly, says Heidegger: "We may suggest that the day will come when we will not shun the question whether the opening, the free open, may not be that within which alone pure space and ecstatic time and everything present and absent in them have the place which gathers and protects everything" (SD 73/TB 66). Heidegger then asks in concluding the text if the name of the task of thinking would not accordingly change from "Being and time" to "Opening and Presence." But this change does not free us from the question raised in "Zeit und Sein," concerning the source of the giving of Being and time, for now we must likewise ask: "Where does the opening come from and how is it given? What speaks in the 'It gives'?" (SD 80/TB 73). The source of Being and time, and Opening and Presence, remains withdrawn, remains essentially absent and beyond all appropriation and disclosure--but concerns us nevertheless. It remains only to ask: is thought the proper response to this concern, and what does "thought" mean and entail, if it is?

### PART THREE

#### THE QUESTION OF TIME AND BEING, THE QUESTION OF TIME AND THE OTHER, AND THE CRISIS OF UNIVERSAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY

The last part of this work is largely speculative. Its aim is twofold. First, I wish to consider the possibility that after delineating in the Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs and Sein und Zeit the genesis and structure of scientific crises in general, Heidegger works through the existential analytic of Dasein and the deconstruction of the history of ontology to precisely the point where universal phenomenological ontology--at least in its preliminary form as fundamental ontology--first becomes capable of a genuine crisis in its own basic concepts. This is so, I will argue, because an authentic grounding of universal phenomenological ontology requires a complete fundamental ontology of Dasein, which would consist in an explication of time as the transcendental horizon of the question of Being and a subsequent understanding of the concept of Being, and yet both of these demands call upon thinking to move definitively beyond the scope of phenomenology--thus transforming both thinking and the nature of man, and calling the basic concepts of phenomenology into question thereby. Second, I hope to suggest--and only suggest, as anything more would lie well beyond the

scope of this work--that Levinas' study of time as the relationship with the Other, a transcendental relationship that belongs essentially to the very existence of the subject, opens upon the possibility of rethinking the preontological question of the meaning of Being, completing the existential analytic, and thus authentically grounding universal phenomenological ontology.

## CHAPTER 6

### SCIENTIFIC CRISES AND THE TASK OF PHENOMENOLOGY

The third section of the first chapter of Sein und Zeit contains an extremely condensed discussion about the relation of phenomenology to the ontic, or positive, sciences. Then within this condensation is yet another: a summary account of what turns out to be a very significant relation between the task of phenomenology as a science and the philosophical revolutions that occur within the ontic sciences and result in the revision of their fundamental concepts. In order to distill out, as it were, the matter contained in this double condensation, I will read portions of the section of Sein und Zeit entitled "Der ontologische Vorrang der Seinsfrage" alongside another text: the published lecture notes to the course entitled "Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs," which in their original form Heidegger took with him to the Black Forest when he wrote Sein und Zeit. This will be our task: first, to consider the relation of phenomenology to the ontic sciences as it is laid out in the two texts; then, to address the relation between phenomenology and scientific crises in general; and lastly, to raise the question of the crisis with regard to universal phenomenological ontology itself.

In beginning let us recall that the lecture course which became the Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs (incompletely translated in the English language edition as simply History of the Concept of Time) had a subtitle: "Prolegomena zur Phänomenologie von Geschichte und Natur." Heidegger says in the first chapter of the text that this subtitle simply expresses the need to state and stipulate in advance what must first be considered in any attempt to actually carry out a phenomenology of history and nature (PGZ 1/HCT 1).<sup>1</sup> What exactly it is that must first be considered Heidegger says will be discovered in attending to the suppositions already at play in our provisional understanding of what a phenomenology of history and nature would be.

The relation of the title to the subtitle is a provocative one. Considered from the perspective of Heidegger's later works, the title and subtitle of the text (and especially the title of the English-language edition of the text) would seem to indicate that either the concept of time was Heidegger's sole interest in the course and a phenomenology of history and nature was simply the methodological means of working through a history of that concept, or that a history of the concept of time and a phenomenology of history and nature are essentially the same

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Kisiel, the English-language translator of Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitsbegriffs, says that why Heidegger chooses to introduce the organization of the themes of the course through this particular subtitle and with reference to a phenomenology of history and nature is "not made clear, and there is a certain opaqueness to the opening sections because of this seeming detour." See "On the Way to Being and Time; Introduction to the Translation of Heidegger's Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs," Research in Phenomenology XV (1985): 193-219.

enterprise. But it is clear from Heidegger's introduction to the course that neither of these alternatives is correct. He says:

We wish to exhibit history and nature so that we may regard them before scientific elaboration, so that we may see both realities in their reality. This means that we wish to arrive at a horizon from which history and nature can be originally contrasted. This horizon must itself be a field of constituents against which history and nature stand out in relief. Laying out this field is the task of the "prolegomena to a phenomenology of history and nature." We shall approach this task of laying out the actual constituents which underlie history and nature, and from which they acquire their being, by way of a history of the concept of time. (HCT 5/PGZ 7)

Heidegger's original aim in the Prolegomena was clearly to carry out the work which, while preparing the ground for a history of the concept of time in its own right, would also constitute a prolegomena to the phenomenology of history and nature. A history of the concept of time was undertaken as the means to both of these ends.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Kisiel also points out in the Research in Phenomenology article that earlier in the same year of the lecture course, Heidegger had received from Husserl the as yet unpublished manuscript for Ideas II, which is expressly devoted to the question of the constitution of the domains of nature and spirit that underlie the natural and historical sciences. Kisiel judges--rightly, I believe--that it is this fundamental distinction, which in one form or another plagued all of early phenomenology, which Heidegger's course was designed to overcome. Kisiel explains:

There is more than one indication here that Heidegger studied the newly acquired text of Ideas II intensively in preparation for his own course. The new text appears to have driven Heidegger to a renewed detailed examination of Husserl's work, especially the Sixth Logical Investigation, the Logos-Essay, and Ideas I. The result is the most sustained and specific confrontation of phenomenology in general and Husserl in particular that we are likely to get from Heidegger. It is therefore not without reason, no mere case of pedagogical dawdling, that the so-called Preliminary Part on the history and nature of phenomenology grows far beyond the "short introductory orientation" (11) which it was initially intended to be. Here

There is, thus, a subtle, though significant difference between the project conceived in the lecture course and that actually undertaken in Sein und Zeit. Heidegger's concern here, as in "Der Begriff der Zeit," a lecture delivered in 1924 and referred to by Hans-Georg Gadamer as the "Urform" of Sein und Zeit,<sup>3</sup> still remains related to his interest in the function of time in the sciences, and more particularly, in its function with regard to the grounding of the sciences. The actual analysis of time in "Der Begriff der Zeit" begins with a preliminary consideration of the understanding of time in contemporary physics and, specifically, in Einstein's theory of relativity. But perhaps even more revealing, Heidegger says in his introductory remarks that the reflections on time which are to follow, and which eventually chart the course of his thinking on Dasein and temporality in Sein und Zeit, perhaps more properly constitute a Vorwissenschaft, and he then characterizes the function of this pre-scientific thinking as similar to policing a procession or parade of the sciences--a duty subordinate to the spectacle itself, but essential nevertheless (BZ 6-7).

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we find the fruit and climax of the close working relationship which Heidegger then enjoyed with Husserl, more than two years before the celebrated "falling out" between the two began.

Kisiel thus concludes that this 1925 course comprises Heidegger's most profound appreciation and criticism of Husserl's founding contributions to phenomenology in the years when Heidegger was still struggling to move beyond Husserl. "On the Way to Being and Time," 195-96. (The number in parentheses in the quoted passage refers to the German text of History of the Concept of Time).

<sup>3</sup> See Thomas J. Sheehan, "The 'Original Form' of Sein und Zeit: Heidegger's Der Begriff der Zeit (1924)," Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology 10 (May 1977), 78.

In speaking of the human and natural sciences in the Prolegomena, Heidegger says their separation comes first from the sciences themselves, which reduce history and nature, and their constituent elements to the level of fixed domains of objects [Gegenstandsgebiete] and objects to be investigated as objects belonging to those domains. But he notes that the very separation of these two main groups of empirical science indicates that an original and undivided context of subject matter remains hidden in that separation. While we tend to understand history and nature generally in terms of the sciences which investigate them, he points out, such a tendency implies that history and nature are accessible only in the way they are thematized as objects of these sciences. But they are not. Heidegger shows quite clearly that the actual area of subject-matter [Sachfeld] out of which a science first fixes its proper domain and pre-scientifically thematizes its various objects is not identical with that domain as it is pre-scientifically thematized. Since scientific reality and what Heidegger calls "authentic reality" [eigentliche Wirklichkeit] do not coincide, and since science itself can neither open to us that original, authentic Sachfeld out of which it first emerges, nor ground and justify its own relation to that authentic reality, or its scientific appropriation and treatment of it, then what becomes interpreted as history or nature cannot be accessible only as it is divided and thematized by the sciences of history and nature. Hence, the purpose of the first part of Heidegger's subsequent analysis is to show that until this original context of subject-matter--the Sachfeld--is made transparent in its nature as the primordial and undivided



ground of pre-scientific experience, the sciences cannot themselves authentically appropriate that ground nor properly understand their relation to it.

We must keep in mind as we read Heidegger that his observations in this regard are by no means a repetition of either the skeptical argument against the possibility of ever knowing the real or the modern renewal of that argument from the perspective of a transcendental ego. He is neither falling back into a noumenal notion of reality, nor reinscribing science within prior metaphysical distinctions. Heidegger's intent, here as in Sein und Zeit, is first, to disturb our complacency--in this case by underscoring the fact that there is an original and essential field of experience presupposed by science which nevertheless remains closed to a potentially scientific disclosure, and indeed must remain closed if a science wishes to perform its proper function--and second, to return us phenomenologically to that very field of experience.

How do we then proceed to access that which remains closed to the methods, intentions, and investigations of the ontic sciences and why is it important that we do so? Heidegger's answer to the first question is, of course, that we can rigorously access the original and essential field of pre-scientific experience only phenomenologically. He explains that a phenomenology of history and nature, in contrast to the reductive disclosure of the sciences, can disclose reality not as historical Sache or natural Sache, but precisely as what shows itself before all scientific inquiry, as the reality which is always already given to scientific inquiry--as the Sachfeld, the field of the Sache selbst. But in

the same vain, phenomenology can only perform this function if it definitively moves beyond the methodology of the reductive sciences in returning us to the Sachfeld. In other words, this return must be strictly phenomenological and not scientific per se, as Kisiel notes: "Heidegger makes it abundantly clear that a phenomenology of history and nature cannot remain enmeshed in the fact of science and what it has discovered, . . . but must disclose the reality of these domains precisely as they show themselves before scientific inquiry."<sup>4</sup> Any disclosure of what shows itself before scientific inquiry requires that we move beyond the facts and discoveries of the reductive sciences, a move only phenomenology can make, and a move phenomenology can make only in realizing its own distinctive possibilities.

But before we can properly see how phenomenology effects this disclosure, we must note that phenomenology is not simply another pre-scientific experience or a contrived repetition of the pre-scientific experience that clears the ground for science in the first place, and is effected by any science in its nascent stages. Rather, this pre-scientific experience that belongs to science and entails an "anticipatory disclosure and conceptual penetration" of the potential domains of objects for the sciences, is a kind of naive phenomenology, observes Heidegger. This pre-scientific naive phenomenology, while it is accomplished in relation to the sciences and their interests, is actually philosophical since it can be accomplished only by "leaping over" the sciences and their various distinctive

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<sup>4</sup> Kisiel, 194.

operations (PGZ 3/HCT 2). In the Prolegomena Heidegger calls this anticipatory disclosure and conceptual penetration "productive logic." But productive logic is not the same as phenomenology, even though it is naively guided by phenomena in somewhat the same way. The relation of pre-scientific experience to the experience proper to the sciences--that is, the very belonging-together of pre-scientific experience and scientific experience which is implied in calling it pre-scientific--must not be overlooked.

Productive logic is what leaps ahead into the Sachfeld of a potential science in order to make it available for the first time as a potential Gegenstandsgebiet for that science. Both the fundamental structure of the field of possible objects of a science and the potentially scientific way of relating to those objects are illuminated by productive logic, since it discloses what is essentially the constitution of the being of that primary field of pre-scientific experience. But productive logic discloses that field not as an authentic field of subject-matter, but specifically as a potential domain of objects for science. Heidegger does not say pre-scientific disclosure carelessly, he clearly intends that this disclosure be understood as both more originary than scientific experience itself, and yet, as determinately related to that experience. In other words, productive logic does not necessarily refer to a truly original disclosure, but to a philosophical disclosure which is simply more originary than that carried out by the sciences once they are assigned to a particular domain. A truly original disclosure of the Sachfeld cannot be effected by the sciences on any level; it can

only be accomplished by phenomenology--by what we might call a rigorous, but scientifically disinterested, turn to the Sache selbst.

Hence, as the fundamental concepts of a science are concepts which grow out of a pre-scientific disclosure and interpretation of the being of a particular field of subject-matter in its constitution as such, they are still the products of an experience fundamentally related to that of the sciences and therefore cannot but reflect from the beginning the interests and mode of questioning belonging to the sciences. Only phenomenology can disclose the Sachfeld in its original and essentially undivided form as the ground of those basic concepts. This is Heidegger's point. Thus he explains that the task of a phenomenology of history and nature would not be one of investigating the sciences themselves, nor even of phenomenologically disclosing the objects of those sciences. What each of the two kinds of empirical science itself calls for, and what this phenomenology would carry out, he says, is a phenomenological disclosure of the original kind of Being and constitution of both the sciences, and of history and nature as objects of these sciences. (PGZ 2/HCT 2) In this way--and only in this way, he insists--can the basis for a genuine theoretical philosophy of these sciences [Theorie der Wissenschaften] be created--not a philosophy of science in the traditional sense [traditionelle Wissenschaftstheorie], which only investigates the structures of given sciences after the fact, but one which could disclose and justify the genesis of the sciences from pre-theoretical experience and make transparent the foundation for their research by exhibiting the kind of access they have to that pre-given reality

and the kind of concept formation which properly belongs to their scientific research.

Accordingly, in the Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs Heidegger concludes that in relation to the positive sciences phenomenology has a twofold task dictated to it by the sciences themselves: first, it must make the original and undivided area of the subject-matter comprehensible as it is before its scientific treatment; second, on the basis of the first disclosure it must ground that scientific treatment itself.

If we now consider the corresponding discussion in Sein und Zeit, we find that Heidegger indicates there, as he did in the lecture course, that the function of ontological research is essentially twofold--but let us note that the twofold function as he explains it in Sein und Zeit differs somewhat from how he explains it in the Prolegomena: first, ontological research must give to the question of Being the ontological priority it deserves as the most basic and concrete of all questions; and second, it must clarify the meaning of Being. He rhetorically asks, with reference to the renewal of the question of Being in his own text: "Does it simply remain--or is it at all--a mere matter for soaring speculation about the most general of generalities, or is it rather, of all questions, both the most basic and the most concrete?" (SZ 9/BT 29). His point here, it seems, is that while ontological inquiry into the various regions of the sciences (what, in the Prolegomena, he called productive logic) is clearly more primordial than the ontical inquiry of the positive sciences, even this kind of regional ontological

research, remains naive and opaque in its investigations into the Being of beings as long as it remains regional and fails to ascertain the meaning of Being in general; "All ontology," he reiterates in a passage that is italicized throughout, "remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task" (SZ 11/BT 31).

As before, Heidegger begins with the observation that all ontic sciences necessarily operate within a prior understanding of Being. The totality of beings, he says, can become a field [Feld] for the laying bare and differentiating of certain definite areas of subject-matter [Sachgebiete], which in turn can serve as objects and themes of scientific investigation. Heidegger notes that the initial demarcation of these Sachgebiete is roughly and naively accomplished by scientific research, after the basic structures of these areas are worked out pre-scientifically through our common lived experiences of and with beings in the world--through our experience and interpretation of that region of Being [Seinsbezirkes] in which the area of subject-matter [Sachgebiet] is confined. The basic concepts generated by this pre-scientific experience, or productive logic, are what provide the clues and condition the possibility for then disclosing any area concretely for the first time. Why? Because these basic concepts are what "determine the way in which we get an understanding beforehand of the area of subject-matter underlying all the objects a science takes as its theme, and all positive investigation is guided by this understanding" (SZ 10/BT 30). Since every such area is itself obtained from

the totality of beings, the preliminary research from which these basic concepts are drawn, signifies nothing but the interpretation of those beings with regard to their basic state of Being.

Though hardly enough to notice, Heidegger's discussion has already diverged somewhat from the analysis in the lecture course. What in the Prolegomena was thought within the differentiation between a Sachfeld and a Gegenstandsgebiet is now further complicated by the use of a third term, Seinsbezirkes, and hence the possible implication of an horizon more primordial than that of the Sachfeld. More specifically, what Heidegger earlier called simply a Feld in opposition to the more determined Gebiet, which reflected the difference between the less determined Sache and the more determined Gegenstande, is now collapsed to a certain degree with the description of the Feld as an area for laying bare and delimiting various domains of Sachgebiete--as if the area, or Feld, either contained determined domains of subject-matter or was to be understood as similarly determined. In saying, then, that the basic structures of any Gebiet have always already been worked out through our pre-scientific interpretation of a Seinsbezirke, Heidegger seems to be using the latter term in the same way he previously used Feld.

Heidegger does not explain this change in vocabulary, and it may simply indicate a refinement or variation of exactly what was said in the Prolegomena. On the other hand, while in the Prolegomena Heidegger specifically identified the Sachfeld as the primordial domain to which phenomenology must turn, in Sein

und Zeit he says the Sachgebiete are themselves confined within a field more primordial still--a Seinsbezirkes. Whether this subtle difference indicates progress in his thought or just a more careful restatement of the same understanding is difficult to say with any certainty; generally speaking, the descriptions of productive logic in both texts are almost identical--at least to this point. But in either case the change in vocabulary underscores an important concern: the need to recognize an ontological horizon more originary even than the phenomenal horizon constituted by Sache.

In comparing the two texts then, we can say that although in Sein und Zeit Heidegger is still attuned to the demand of the sciences for an ontological disclosure of the area of subject-matter out of which their inquiries proceed, his concern has clearly shifted almost entirely away from an interest in the potential of phenomenology to ground productive logic and regional ontology--or at least to effect the disclosure which would make that kind of grounding possible--to an interest in the possibility of working through a fundamental ontology to a transcendental clarification of the meaning of Being in general. It is in the recognition of this possibility that Heidegger moves definitively beyond Husserl and his contemporaries, and it seems to be with reference to this possibility and this move beyond even the Husserlian conception of phenomenology that Heidegger says at the end of section 7 of the Introduction: "Our comments on the preliminary conception of phenomenology have shown that what is essential in it does not lie in its actuality as a philosophical 'movement.' Higher than actuality



stands possibility. We can understand phenomenology only by seizing upon it as a possibility" (SZ 39/BT 63). In Sein und Zeit Heidegger is not concerned, even secondarily, with working out the prolegomena to a phenomenology of history and nature, nor even with fundamental ontology as an end in itself; rather, his concern lies with the question of the meaning of Being and its significance as a lived comportment basic to all others, and his aim in departing from a hermeneutic of Dasein in investigating the meaning of Being is to realize what he calls a "universal phenomenological ontology" (SZ 38/BT 62): he writes on the very first page of Sein und Zeit that the aim of the treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of Being, and to do so concretely. A fundamental ontology is necessary to a clarification of this question because Dasein is the question of the meaning of Being in its pre-ontological form. But Heidegger is ultimately concerned with accessing the Being of beings, and this most universal of ontologies is possible, he says, "only as phenomenology" (SZ 36/BT 60).

This shift from the attempt at carrying out a phenomenology of history and nature to an effort at concretely working out the meaning of Being is a gesture to which we must carefully attend if we are to understand Heidegger's conception of phenomenology, and although Heidegger's revision in Sein und Zeit of the relation between phenomenology and the ontic sciences which is first elaborated in the Prolegomena produces a lucid argument for the ontological priority of the Seinsfrage, it both reveals that the move from the conception of phenomenology at work in the lecture course to that at work in Sein und Zeit involves

considerably more than a mere refinement of the former in the latter, and shows, in addition, that although Heidegger's concern is now almost exclusively focused on the question of the meaning of Being as a forgotten, but fundamental question, and although the discussion of the positive sciences in Sein und Zeit is almost exclusively meant to affirm the ontological priority of the question, the findings of fundamental ontology and the understanding of time that would result from an explication of time as the transcendental horizon for the question of Being would have, nevertheless, considerable importance for the positive sciences.

Heidegger emphasizes in Sein und Zeit, as he did in the Prolegomena, that the fundamental concepts of a science can become genuinely grounded and transparent only through an ontological revision of the way in which each particular area is basically constituted. He says, moreover, that authentic progress [eigentlicher Fortschritt] in the positive sciences, while it manifestly follows the ontic discoveries and investigations the sciences themselves make and carry out, stems precisely from this revisionary inquiry, that is, from an ontological inquiry into the basic structures and concepts which first made those ontic investigations and discoveries possible. In other words, while ontological inquiry is animated by the findings and failings of ontic research, which itself is only possible on the basis of a pre-ontological understanding of the region of Being to which that ontic research is thus assigned, it is ontological inquiry and the resulting radical revision of basic concepts which produces real progress in the sciences. But this is not to say that this revision in and of itself constitutes anything like a fundamental

ontology. It does not. The basic concepts of a science are basic only with respect to that science--they are not basic in the sense of disclosing the ground of Being universally and as such. For this we require a universal and fundamental ontology. Heidegger is extremely careful in both Sein und Zeit and the Prolegomena to point out that neither productive logic nor the ontological revision of the basic concepts produced by productive logic, is fundamental ontology--even though they may more surely define a science's region and tasks. And a genuine grounding of the concepts generated and revised by the sciences themselves can ultimately only result from the revision made possible by a fundamental ontology. It is for this very reason that Heidegger can conclude in section 3 that the question of Being is given a certain ontological priority by ontological research itself, and in section 4 that fundamental ontology is that ontology from which alone all other ontologies can take their rise.

Let us note at this point that for Heidegger the revision of basic concepts that constitutes real progress in any ontic science, even though that ontological revision does not involve a fundamental return to the ground of Being itself, is experienced as a crisis within that science:

The real "movement" of the sciences takes place when their basic concepts undergo a more or less radical revision which is transparent to itself. The level which a science has reached is determined by how far it is capable of a crisis in its basic concepts. In such immanent crises the very relationship between positively investigative inquiry and those things themselves that are under interrogation comes to a point where it begins to totter. (SZ 9/BT 29)

The transparent revision of fundamental concepts that constitutes authentic progress in a science, any science, announces itself and is experienced within that science specifically as a crisis.

This observation brings us to the point where we can now begin to consider the relation noted earlier between the task of phenomenology and the ontological revisions that constitute scientific revolutions in the ontic sciences. Let us therefore return to the Prolegomena, where the concept of crisis plays a much more visible role in the analysis.

Heidegger begins the second half of the first chapter of that work by reiterating that originary access to the fields of subject matter is expressly not by way of the theoretical vision belonging to the factually available sciences, and by suggesting that this is demonstrated precisely by the fact that the sciences are presently in a state of crisis. By crisis, Heidegger explains, he does not mean the despair contemporary man experiences in lamenting that he has lost an original relationship to the sciences. He says his reference is to what he calls "the real crisis," the crisis internal to the sciences themselves (PGZ 3-4/HCT 3). This second sense of crisis consists in the recognition that the basic relationship between a science and the subject matter it investigates has become fundamentally questionable and insecure. This second sense of crisis thus prompts a propaedeutic reflection on the basic structure of the sciences, a reflection which tends either to dispel the insecurity over the fundamental concepts of the science in question or seeks to secure those concepts within a

more original understanding of its subject matter. It is in this field of reflection, in this tendency to reclaim a particular domain of thematizable objects more originally, in this attempt to reclaim an original grasp of the area of subject matter out of which scientific research per se operates, and to do so through a reflection on basic structures, that what Heidegger calls in both texts "authentic progress" in a science occurs.

Heidegger first says that the scope of this crisis is comprehensive, and he goes to great lengths to show how all the natural sciences are experiencing this sense of crisis in one way or another. He adds that the human, or historical, sciences are not yet experiencing it only because they have not yet reached the level of maturity necessary for a genuine scientific revolution. He then notes that the crisis can be fruitful only if we see that the expository reflection on basic structures that the sciences demand--but cannot themselves carry out--requires "a mode of experience and interpretation in principle different from those which prevail in the concrete sciences themselves" (PGZ 4/HCT 3). Heidegger concludes:

if the sciences are not to be regarded as a spurious enterprise, founding their justification merely by invoking the prevailing currents of the tradition, but instead are to receive the possibility of their being from their meaning in human Dasein, then the decisive question, and the place where an answer to the crisis is to be found, is in bringing the subject matters under investigation to an original experience, before their concealment by a particular scientific inquiry. (PGZ 6/HCT 4-5)

In order to ground the sciences, which involves tracing the possibility of their Being to their meaning for Dasein, the subject-matters must be exhibited in their original mode of Being.

Thus, in the Prolegomena the concept of crisis is appealed to in order to demonstrate that the path to the Sachfelde is not by way of scientific theory, and to show that the crises of the sciences can be resolved only through a phenomenological investigation of the Sache selbst. In Sein und Zeit the crisis of the sciences is also cited as evidence of fresh tendencies to reground scientific research, and of the need for a phenomenological disclosure of the basic constitution of the Seinsbezirke.

Universal phenomenological ontology is admittedly not conceived by Heidegger as a science like any other science, since its ultimate object of inquiry is the very Being of beings. Nevertheless, it seems clear that Heidegger does consider it a science. For some of the same reasons that Husserl wanted to make of philosophy the rigorous science it had always desired and often claimed to be, Heidegger desired for phenomenology a potential far beyond even what Husserl conceived. Husserl begins Philosophy as Rigorous Science, a text to which Heidegger refers in the reply to William Richardson as a work "too little observed,"<sup>5</sup> with the notation that philosophy from its earliest beginnings has claimed to be rigorous science, though at no time has it lived up to this claim. Husserl says that it is the dominant characteristic of modern philosophy to

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<sup>5</sup> William J. Richardson, xiv.

constitute itself as rigorous science by means of critical reflection and by ever more profound methodological investigations. So far, however, the only result of this effort has been to secure the foundation and the independence of rigorous natural and humanistic sciences and new mathematical disciplines.<sup>6</sup> Husserl laments that philosophy itself still lacks as much as ever the characteristic of rigorous science, and in fact is still unclear regarding even its relation to the positive sciences it breeds:

The question of philosophy's relation to the natural and humanistic sciences--whether the specifically philosophical element of its work, essentially related as it is to nature and the human spirit, demands fundamentally new attitudes, that in turn involve fundamentally peculiar goals and methods; whether as a result the philosophical takes us, as it were, into a new dimension, or whether it performs its function on the same level as the empirical sciences of nature and of the human spirit--all this is to this day disputed.<sup>7</sup>

Husserl concludes that this continuing tendency towards disputation shows that even the proper sense of what constitutes philosophical problems has not been made scientifically clear.

But this disputation regarding the questions, issues and problems proper to philosophy--disconcerting as it may be and despite what Husserl says--is not, at least according to Heidegger, indicative of a real crisis in philosophy. Heidegger makes it clear that the question regarding the proper method and object of

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<sup>6</sup> Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper and Row, 1965; Harper Torchbooks, 1989), 71.

<sup>7</sup> Husserl, 72.

philosophical thought as it has occurred in its diverse historical forms, including Husserl's work, is not in and of itself constitutive of a genuine scientific crisis, nor is phenomenology as a philosophical position its solution. A crisis in any science is not even possible until its subject-area is provisionally disclosed, and for phenomenology this did not even get underway until Heidegger himself raised the question of the meaning of Being in its fundamental relatedness to Dasein as the place and preontological occurrence of the question. The vague average understanding of Being--in which we always operate and which "leaps ahead," in Heidegger's words, to disclose some area of Being for the first time--belongs, in the end, to the essential constitution of Dasein itself. Part of the task of Sein und Zeit was to have been a demonstration of the fact that the tradition failed to even recognize the need for an ontology of Dasein, much less provide it. And yet, as Heidegger outlines in the introduction to Sein und Zeit, before fundamental ontology, and thus before universal phenomenological ontology, could ever authentically address the basic concept of Being it must first work its way through an Interpretation of Dasein as primordial temporality in order to show that time is the preontological relation to Being out of which Dasein tacitly understands and interprets something like Being.

In chapter 5 of Being and Time Heidegger presents a short overview of the text as it was initially conceived, outlining the twofold task of the entire investigation and then explaining the three projected divisions of part I, which



corresponded to the three stages and subordinate tasks of the first part of the inquiry.

He says the task of the first stage of the investigation was to carry out a preparatory analytic of Dasein within the horizon of everydayness--that is, to uncover the Being of this being without interpreting its meaning. The task of the second stage was then to interpret this meaning--that is, to expose temporality as the meaning of the Being of Dasein, as the horizon appropriate for an understanding of the Being of Dasein. In other words, the structures of Dasein provisionally exhibited in division I were to be interpreted over again in division II on a higher and authentically ontological basis, specifically as modes of temporality. The repetition of the preparatory analysis in division two would thus prepare the ground for the task that was to have been carried out in the third division: an interpretation of the meaning of Being, an analysis of Being against the horizon of time.

The third division of part I and the second part of the twofold task to have been carried out in part II were, of course, never finished. The footnote at the Beginning of Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie indicates that it was a new attempt to write the crucial third section of Sein und Zeit, which was to have been called "Zeit und Sein." But the Grundprobleme, like Sein und Zeit, falls short of that task. "Zeit und Sein," composed many years later, obviously takes up the task again--but by now, of course, the task itself has come to be conceived in a very different way. While continuing to think the basic issue of Sein und Zeit in

moving toward a thinking of time and Being, Heidegger has both remained faithful to phenomenology and its demands, and has moved beyond it--and this move beyond accordingly requires a thinking proper to its excessiveness. It is clearly for this reason Heidegger says in "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens" that the name of the task of Sein und Zeit will change in remaining faithful to the matter of thinking and in turning toward the task reserved for thinking at the end of philosophy.

Heidegger points out in his reply to William Richardson's query about the "reversal" or "turn" in his thinking (first mentioned in yet another letter, the Letter on Humanism), that the very title "Zeit und Sein" marks the Kehre, which is in play within the matter itself:

The thinking of the reversal is a change in my thought. But this change is not a consequence of altering the standpoint, much less of abandoning the fundamental issue, of Being and Time. The thinking of the reversal results from the fact that I stayed with the matter-for-thought [of] "Being and Time," sc. by inquiring into that perspective which already in Being and Time (p. 39) was designated as "Time and Being."

The reversal is above all not an operation of interrogative thought: it is inherent in the very matter designated by the headings: "Being and Time," "Time and Being." For this reason the passage cited from the "Letter on Humanism" reads: "Here the Whole is reversed." "The Whole": this means the matter [involved] in "Being and Time," "Time and Being." The reversal is in play within the matter itself. Neither did I invent it nor does it affect merely my thought.<sup>8</sup>

He continues a bit further in the letter:

One need only observe the simple fact that in Being and Time the problem is set up outside the sphere of subjectivism . . . for it to become strikingly clear that the "Being" into which Being and Time inquired can

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<sup>8</sup> Richardson, xvi-xviii.

not long remain something that the human subject posits. It is rather Being, stamped as Presence by its time-character, [that] makes the approach to There-being. As a result, even in the initial steps of the Being-question in Being and Time thought is called upon to undergo a change whose movement cor-responds with the reversal.

And yet, the basic question of Being and Time is not in any sense abandoned by reason of the reversal. Accordingly, the prefatory note to the seventh unrevised edition of Being and Time (1957) contains the remark: [This] "way still remains even today a necessary one, if the question about Being is to stir our There-being." Contrary [to what is generally supposed], the question of Being and Time is decisively ful-filled in the thinking of the reversal. He alone can ful-fill who has a vision of the fullness.<sup>9</sup>

The Kehre is called for from the very beginning and reflects a remarkable fidelity to the question of Being, not a divergence from it.

While Heidegger thus maintains that the Kehre is at play in the matter itself and in no way marks an alteration or abandonment of the fundamental concern expressed in Sein und Zeit, I believe it also marks a point of crisis for universal phenomenological ontology--a point of aporeia, if you will, which calls for a radical revision of the basic concepts of phenomenology conceived as the fundamental science of Being. In other words, I am suggesting, even though the suggestion admittedly takes us on a different path than that followed by Heidegger in Sein und Zeit and the works that follow, that Heidegger's early work shows universal phenomenological ontology to be that science which alone can ground all other sciences and resolve the comprehensive crisis in which they are enmeshed, and yet, that what his later work seems to manifest, in the course of working through the fundamental ontology of Dasein and the deconstruction of

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<sup>9</sup> Richardson, xviii.

the history of ontology--which must be completed before universal phenomenological ontology can come into its own and perform its function with regard to regional ontologies, is that although its research and method are both ultimately guided by the question of Being, phenomenology as a science is nevertheless subject to the same hermeneutic progress as any ontic science, and in progressing to the point where its basic concepts--the nature of Dasein and the relationship of phenomenology as a science to its object, the Being of beings, among them--become fundamentally questionable, it becomes itself a science in crisis. Phenomenology as a science must seek the meaning of Being through the interrogation of phenomena, and principally through an existential analytic of that concrete being which existentially is the preontological question of Being, Dasein. Moreover, its basic concepts as a science cannot be fully grounded until that fundamental ontology is complete. And yet, fundamental ontology cannot be complete until the question of the meaning of Being and the nature of Dasein is at least provisionally brought into view. This latter requirement patently requires an explication of time sufficient for Dasein to come into its own, and thus, an understanding of the "matter" which continually recedes from the reach of representational thinking.

What I think we thus find in a close study of Heidegger's work--with strict regard for the question of science--is that the science of phenomenology actually moves through the same kind of hermeneutic circle the positive sciences move through, progressing to a point of radical crisis in its basic concepts: it moves

problematically past various subtle interruptions of the existential analytic-- interruptions marked there and later in the poetic works by the trace of an appropriate time, a time other than that realized in any projection or ecstasis--to where the very Sache selbst as initially conceived and the phenomenological approach to it becomes radically questionable; it moves to where the relationship between time and phenomenology as a science, and thus Being and phenomenology, begins to totter, in other words--even though Heidegger never explicitly calls attention to this crisis as such, at least not to my knowledge.

I wish to emphasize, however, that I am not suggesting that this reflects in any way a failing on Heidegger's part. First, because the crisis--if, in fact, there is one--can only belong to the destiny of phenomenology hearkened to by Heidegger. Second, because the development of phenomenology as a rigorous science was not Heidegger's concern--at least not after the break with Husserl and the definitive attunement to the question of Being as such. For Heidegger, phenomenology, seized upon as a possibility, rather than as actuality (to recall the characterization from Sein und Zeit), came to mean "das Sichzeigenlassen der eigensten Sache des Denkens"--the releasing into self-showing of the most proper matter of thought.<sup>10</sup> But as such, phenomenology should open upon the possibility of a transformation of man, a transformation that would perhaps bring Dasein into its own and thereby realize a radically different understanding of man's relation to Being, and thus an authentic revision of phenomenology's basic

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<sup>10</sup> Richardson, xvii.

concepts, which in turn might allow the positive sciences to secure their proper ground in the right way and for the first time.

I wish to suggest in conclusion that this possibility might, in fact, be secured by turning away from the concern for truth and toward a concern for the holiness of the Other.

For Levinas, intentionality is the origin of sense--that by which what is exterior refers to what is interior. Light, in turn, is the condition for phenomena, and thus, for meaning and intentionality. But Levinas, like Heidegger, finds that in certain pivotal human experiences "a method is called for such that thought is invited to go beyond intuition" (DEE 112/EE 66). The relationship with death and the other is one such experience, since, as he explains: "It is not possible to grasp the alterity of the other, which is to shatter the definitiveness of the ego, in terms of any of the relationship[s] which characterize light" (DEE 144-145/EE 85). Levinas shows most effectively that phenomenology is limited in its operation to the world of light--it cannot disclose the other. Speaking of this limitation, he says:

Phenomenological description, which by definition cannot leave the sphere of light, that is, man alone shut up in his solitude, anxiety and death as an end, whatever analyses of the relationship with the other, it may contribute, will not suffice. Qua phenomenology it remains within the world of light, the world of the solitary ego which has no relationship with the other qua other, for whom the other is another me, an alter ego known by sympathy, that is, by a return to oneself. (DEE 145/EE 85)

And yet, if Levinas is right in affirming that the relationship with the Other is fundamental to our very existence, then a turn toward the Other would be crucial to any ontology, and most certainly to phenomenology.

Levinas shows throughout his work that phenomenology must do account for the other, and yet cannot of itself provide that account. He says, for example: "In positing the present as the mastery of the existent over existing, and in seeking in it the passage from existing to the existent, we find ourselves at a level of investigation that can no longer be qualified as experience. And if phenomenology is only a method of radical experience, we will find ourselves beyond phenomenology" (TA 34/TO 54). In investigating the concepts of death, eros, and fecundity, Levinas turns towards issues fundamental to human existence and fundamental to any understanding of Being, and thus crucial to phenomenology and the sciences, as outgrowths of that understanding.

It is my belief that by returning to rethink fundamental ontology in the light of Levinas' discoveries, we might indeed realize a transformation of man and a resolution to the present crisis of the sciences. This is my parting suggestion.

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Travis Anderson  
1467 Arthur Dr.  
Provo, Utah 84601  
(801) 373-7108

## VITA

I was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, but was raised primarily in California, where I attended Piedmont Hills High School, from which I graduated in 1974. I attended one semester at Brigham Young University before interrupting my formal education to serve two years in Mexico as a religious missionary for my faith. I later returned to Brigham Young University where I completed a BFA in painting and a BA in philosophy, graduating summa cum laude with University Honors in August of 1985.

I began graduate studies at Loyola University of Chicago in 1985, where I received four consecutive University Graduate Assistantships and finally a University Teaching Fellowship. I successfully defended my dissertation in April, 1991.

My areas of interest and specialization include contemporary continental philosophy, history of philosophy, aesthetics and ethics. I continue to paint professionally.

## APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Travis Tenney Anderson has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. John Sallis, Director  
Professor, Philosophy, Vanderbilt University

Dr. Thomas Sheehan  
Professor, Philosophy, Loyola University of Chicago

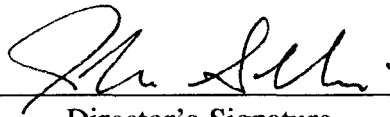
Dr. Paul Davies  
Assistant Professor, Philosophy, DePaul University

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 11, 1991

Date



Director's Signature