

THE ACOLYTES OF BEING: A DEFINITION OF “TRANSCENDENCE” IN GERMAN  
HISTORY AND POLITICS

by

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## ABSTRACT

Acting as my Senior Honors Thesis in the departments of History, Political Science, and University Honors, this project, “The Acolyte of Being,” aims to present an aesthetic history of twentieth century German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s concept of “*Da-sein*,” the “thereness” of Being (or existence) itself. Taking into account 2,500 years of Western metaphysics, my thesis begins by redefining one key philosophical term: transcendence, and in so doing revive four others as well: truth, beauty, freedom and the term metaphysics itself. As such, this work begins with a “Definition of Transcendence,” informing the following five chapters. These chapters, in keeping with the historicity of *Da-sein* as an aesthetic one, each name great works of art, opening of the oblivions of Being to man. Each of my chapters follow the guiding definition of “Transcendence” and correspond as well to one of five Wagnerian operas: *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walkyrie*, *Siegfried*, *Götterdämmerung* and, finally, *Parsifal*. This operatic chapter structure is linked as well to my the naming of my “Acolytes of Being:” Friedrich Nietzsche and his *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, Richard Wagner and his concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, T.S. Eliot and *The Waste Land*, and, finally, National Socialism—as an aesthetic, poetic politics. In constructing my argument in this manner, I am able to communicate that not only is history artistic, but that this aesthetic details the gradual return of metaphysics. With National Socialism acting as the final “Acolyte of Being,” the distinction between the ontic (things as they appear) and the ontological (things in themselves) is defaced and Being as such returns with force to the dwelling of man. With Heidegger himself offering up his ground breaking philosophy to the spiritual impetus of National Socialism we come before my chief question in this thesis: How did National Socialism pose the question of Being in the twentieth century? Certainly a troubling assertion we must also add: What can this mean?

To: My Parents, Rachel and James Long

My mentors, Dr. Michael C. Behrent and Dr. Nancy S. Love

“The world’s darkening never reaches  
to the light of Being.”<sup>1</sup>

—Martin Heidegger

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## Preface

*“We never come to thoughts. They come to us.”<sup>2</sup>*

*-Martin Heidegger*

This project, which has over the years come to be called “The Acolytes of Being,” is a work I began in the very early days of my freshman year at Appalachian State University, and now acts as my Senior Honors Thesis in the departments of both History and Political Science. Thought on this topic originally took shape during the weeks of my first trip to Berlin in October of 2009, when I was nineteen. In the months and years following the realization of my interest in the Third Reich, my thought on the topic solidified into, truly, a distressing question. It was only after my initial trip to Germany that I was introduced to Martin Heidegger’s thought and works by my long time mentor, Dr. Michael C. Behrent. I have never found any other idea more moving than that of Heidegger.

With Heidegger I found the words I was searching for in an attempt to put my troubling question to academic form. Reading Heidegger is an exercise in the most primal thinking and, truly, the most original poeticizing—but not only this. Reading Heidegger requires an openness in the reader, a resoluteness to break forth into the unsaid in a creative, primeval and at times even violent way. What I have found in reading Heidegger myself is that while I am “thinking,” this thinking becomes not simply a rigorous series of processes; rather, a truly artistic endeavor. In the openness of thinking as a primal poeticizing, we find ourselves *listening* to the low thunder of the giants, calling to one another across the great abyss of Being.

In this process of thinking as a paroxysmal poeticizing, much of my own work on Heidegger makes the attempt to “fetch back” concealed definitions of several key

metaphysical terms (including the term metaphysics itself). One such term I attempt to recover in this work is “beauty,” by which I mean: the first sight of existence as such. From this notion of the beautiful I make the effort to “fetch back” another term as well, which acts as the driving force of my argument. From Heidegger’s writings during his *Kehr* [turn], a notion of “transcendence” can be unearthed in harmony with his notion of the “being beyond beings.”<sup>3</sup> During the *Kehr*, Heidegger’s thinking of Being makes its return to the dwelling of man in an aesthetic, political landing. As such, my question in this work is this: How did National Socialism pose the question of Being in the twentieth century? Certainly a disquieting assertion we instinctively add: What can this mean?

Investigating National Socialism as an aesthetic, poetic politics bringing Being out of history into the world, each of my chapters corresponds to a different “great work of art” as well as an opera in Richard Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungens*. With this structure, I’d like to communicate that Being has a history, which has remained in the shadows of myth and legend at the periphery of metaphysics, scattered and divided in doubt. The question my thesis grapples with details this return. Opening up in the work of art, my chapter structure articulates the history of Being as the history of “the great work of art,” which allows man to glimpse “truth” in his given historical age. As questioned by Dr. Richard Wolin: “If Being has a history, might it not also have a politics?”<sup>4</sup> Making its resolute return in an aesthetic politics, I name National Socialism as (with the word Wagner used to describe his dramas, apart from any other) *ein Gesamtkunstwerk*—a total work of art, and the final “Acolyte of Being.” As Heidegger wrote, “Only a God can save us.”<sup>5</sup>

Thus, each chapter of this thesis tells of a different Acolyte on the way through Western history towards modern Germany. These Acolytes—a *Da-sein*, who, through a

great work of art, open the world to the light of Being—act as the guardians of the truth of Being in each appointed age. Beginning with Friedrich Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, on to Richard Wagner’s conception of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* itself in his own operas, and then to T.S. Eliot’s jarring modernist work *The Waste Land*, my thesis attempts to think Being in music and poetry—as the ontic within the ontological, teased out over time by, what Heidegger names “the coming preservers.” To make my connection of German myth and legend as told by *Der Ring des Nibelungens* clearer to readers, I have added appendices, which contain summaries of the Wagner dramas as written by Jessie L. Weston—whose book T.S. Eliot claims his most important poem, *The Waste Land*, is based.

In addition to the more literary elements of the structure of this work, I also want to make it clear to readers that the texts Heidegger used in this thesis are limited to “What is Metaphysics?,” “The Essence of Truth,” “The Origin of the Work of Art,” and “The Question Concerning Technology.” I selected these works in an effort to elucidate Heidegger’s thought during his *Kehr*, a time when his concept of *Dasein* made the turn to *Da-sein*, and the thinker began to think Being in a manner synonymous with the metaphysical hopes he attributed to National Socialism’s rise—a “fetching back into its essence” of Germany, of truth and of the question, which first founds all history. As an aesthetic, poetic, politics, National Socialism’s attempt to not only challenge modernity, but to dominate it signals, for Heidegger, *Poiēsis* reaching out to retake *technē* (art extending its hand to bring technology back under the primal sway of its Greek origin). At this critical moment in Heidegger’s thought, the very essence of his concept of *Da-sein* makes room for the return of Being to the world of man. It makes room for the appearance of a God.

For Heidegger, who hung all his metaphysical hopes on the “inner truth and greatness” of National Socialism’s potential, which threw itself against the bastion of the ontological difference. In this way, Heidegger’s notion of the *Seinsverlassenheit* [the abandonment of Being] is always already contained within the notion of a *Götterverlassenheit* [the abandonment of man by the gods].<sup>6</sup> With National Socialism corresponding to Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung*, we know from the legend that only one who foreswears all love can wield the power of the ring, and that only through love, the innocence of the gods can be restored. Thus, is it with *Da-sein*’s comportment of “care” that we find ourselves waiting for *Parsifal*—a pure fool, enlightened by compassion on his way towards Monsalvat, where he must pose the original question anew in order to heal the advanced decay of the spirit itself.

In addition to my own question: How did National Socialism pose the question of Being in the twentieth century? I want to add this: If the greatest philosophical mind of the modern age can commit to the truth he saw reflected in National Socialism’s “great destiny” it is imperative that we not attempt to bury the thinker along with the truth of Being, but, today even more so than ever before, resolve to “think with” Heidegger.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge that I did in no way arrive to this place alone. As such, I want to thank my parents, Rachel and Jim Long, for their unwavering support. In addition, I very much want to thank my academic mentors, Dr. Michael C. Behrent and Dr. Nancy S. Love, for their commitment to my thought and my academic hopes over the many years they have aided me in realizing this work. I would also like to thank Dr. Alexandra Sterling-Hellenbrand, Dr. James Barnes, Dr. Andrew Koch, Professor Ralph Lenz, John Fowler, Regina James, Hannah Malcolm and Grayson Bodenheimer.



## *Prelude: A Definition of Transcendence*

*“To think is to confine yourself to a single thought that one day stands like a star in the world’s sky”<sup>1</sup>*

*–Martin Heidegger*

“What is transcendence?” The question awakens expectations of a discussion about transcendence. This we will forgo. Instead we will take up a particular transcendental question. In this way it seems we will let ourselves be transposed directly into the transcendental. Only in this way will we provide transcendence the proper occasion to introduce itself.<sup>2</sup>

From where we stand, the world is divided into three broad periods of thought. Thus we can begin to think of our nearness to the concept of transcendence in two distinct ways: that of the dissemination of truth from God to man, and that of the ascent to knowledge from man to Reason. These two broad distinctions center on the occurrence of Enlightenment thought, belonging to thinkers such as Locke and Hobbes, in which man’s ascent to Reason is transcendence. Pre-Enlightenment thought, or religious thought, took shape in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas and Augustus. Here God’s dissemination of truth to man defines transcendence. What is so different about these two broad periods of thought? More so, where is the third?

### **Two Broad Distinctions**

It is apparent that there is an empty space in our modern definition of the term transcendence. From god to man and man to reason, transcendence occurs in that knowledge or “truth” is disseminated. What does truth mean here for each of our transcendental models? How does truth happen?

As in all metaphysical inquiries, the whole of metaphysics must be addressed. The same is then true for transcendence, since we are defining it here in consonance with the entire tradition of Western metaphysics. Transcendence is a metaphysical concept. Thus the entire historical path of transcendence must be brought into question at once with the questioners themselves. The original metaphysical enquiry can only be posited as a whole, which brings existence [*Dasein*] into its essential mode.<sup>3</sup> It is only with a preliminary sketch of both previous transcendental paths that we can seek to discover the lost definition belonging properly to Post-Enlightenment thought.

When questioning is posited as a whole, we begin to call into question beings as a whole [*Das Seiendes im Ganz*]. Such inquiry has for the past 2,500 years been the domain of science. “What happens when science becomes our passion?”<sup>4</sup>

The scientific fields begin their inquiry into the nature of beings [*Das Seiende*] by way of weights and measures. This is a proper investigation into the thingly characteristic of matter. By naming color and size and frequency of occurrence, science names beings as matter-formed. What is this “matter-formed”? What role does it play in our knowledge of truth?

When science analyses things as matter [*hyle, ὕλη*], the concept of form [*morphē, μορφή*] is already given.<sup>5</sup> You can see here that we have begun to use Greek. When science investigates beings as mere things it is speaking of formed matter.<sup>6</sup> Form means here the particular arrangement of the material parts of a thing, as such, its thing-structure as it exists in a spatial location.<sup>7</sup> Where this scientific structure becomes truly confusing is when it becomes clear that the shape of the form is not *a posteriori* vis-à-vis the matter that stands;

rather, the form determines the arrangement of the matter.<sup>8</sup> These forms, existing after or above matter where it dwells, constitute the realm of ideas.

In the course of this essay language will come to play a significant role. The Pre-Socratics spoke of *Alētheia* (ἀλήθεια) and the Sophists of *Veritas*. *Veritas* means: truth, sincerity, and integrity, with the added sense of “fact” and “correctness.” *Alētheia* means: truth, sincerity, and integrity; however, it also means “unhiddenness.” Roman thought, with truth dominated by sophistry, takes over the Greek word without any thought to the corresponding originality of Greek experience.<sup>9</sup> This is no innocent mistake: “The rootlessness of Western thought begins with this translation.”<sup>10</sup>

*In Greek truth means “unhiddenness.” In German “unhiddenness” or “unclosedness” is Entschlossenheit: resoluteness.<sup>11</sup>*

In much the same way that matter is in accord with its form, so too could one say is the truth of a statement in accord from subject to predicate. Fortunately, we have at hand a very good example: “*Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectūs.*”<sup>12</sup> From the Latin we take this to mean that truth [*veritas*] is the correspondence of matter [*rei*] to knowledge [*intellectūs*].<sup>13</sup> Here it is clear that *veritas* “conforms to,” and hence posits truth as correctness.<sup>14</sup> In German correctness is *Richtigkeit*. But to where have we strayed in our search for the lost definition of transcendence?

*Veritas*, in its propositional statement “*Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectūs,*” stands as the usual formula for conceptions of knowledge as scientific truth back to its most recent origin in medieval times.<sup>15</sup> Let us be quite clear that this does not merely imply the later transcendental conception of Kant—chiefly the basis of the subjectivity of man’s essence in so far as objects conform to man’s knowledge.<sup>16</sup> We return now to matter and

hence to the Christian theological belief that matter conforms, that is, “is created” [*ins creatum*] and *is* as such in its conformity to the *intellectus divinis*, the mind of God.<sup>17</sup> In this sense objects “measure up” to the idea (form) and only then are correct, thus, the truth. “The theologically contrived order of creation is replaced by the capacity of all objects to be planned by means of worldly reason [*Weltvernunft*], which supplies the law for itself.”<sup>18</sup>

In this way it seems we have returned to our two previous distinctions of Western thought that posit definitions of transcendence: that of truth as disseminated from God to man and that of truth as ascent to Reason by man. We have also approached the question of their difference and are now prepared briefly to answer it.

In both Enlightenment and Pre-Enlightenment thought the metaphysical term transcendence is defined by the relationship between man and knowledge. In Latin, the heretofore-reigning mode of thought, knowledge as truth is *veritas*. *Veritas* brings matter under the yoke of the form; in formed-matter truth as the subject of “correctness” is in accord with the predicate idea of the form.

The idea of creation in faith, and of the laws of reason, however, can lose their guiding power for knowledge of beings as a whole.<sup>19</sup> When we define these periods as predominantly scientific, we can begin to see that our essential grounding in the sciences has atrophied.<sup>20</sup> It is thus that we can say that the metaphysics of the modern age rests upon the form-matter structure of the Middle Ages, its thought only recalling the forlorn experience of *hyle* and *morphē*.<sup>21</sup> Thus we have learned that when science investigates things by means of this matter-form relationship, be these investigations medieval or Kantian-transcendental, it merely serves to look into the thingness of things and to hold them at a distance from the dwelling of man.

This “holding at a distance” has for 2,500 years defined the work of metaphysics and the status of transcendence. *Veritas* as correctness brings matter under the yoke of the form. In other words, thinking becomes scientific in the accordance [*homoiōsis*] of a statement [*logos*] with a matter [*pragma*].<sup>22</sup>

Thus far in our line of questioning we have discovered that transcendence seeks the truth and that in the Western metaphysical tradition “truth” has come to mean “correctness in accordance with.” This is the grammatical distance between God and man, between man and knowing. Posed briefly to answer our first question concerning the two preliminary distinction of Western thought that posit definitions of transcendence, we have come to the point of being able to say: They are hardly different at all. The metaphysical status of transcendence has, for 2,500 years, been held at bay, the phantasmic guardian of a great chasm...

### **The Lost Truth**

Did we not, however, name another word for truth? In pre-Socratic thought something slumbers... We recall that *Alētheia* (ἀλήθεια) means “unconcealedness.” We must then ask: How is it with the “unconcealedness?”

In seeking the lost definition of Post-Enlightenment transcendence we are looking to history. By looking to history we are always already within the realm of metaphysics, be it Kantian-transcendental or Platonic. As I suggested at the orient of this essay, transcendence is a metaphysical term. It has a claim to metaphysics and vice versa. Thus the entire historical path of transcendence must be brought into question along with the questioner. The original metaphysical inquiry can only be posited as a whole, which brings existence [*Dasein*] into its essential mode.

It is clear that we are traveling in a circle. This is no mistake. At this point in our search it has also become clear to that we must look into the essence of truth [*Alētheia*] as unconcealedness. What is “essence?” Moreover, who is this questioner of essence and why must he be brought into his essential mode in the original realm of metaphysics?

We must now take up the particular transcendental question we spoke of in order to be ourselves transposed directly into metaphysics, as the transcendental. In the Western intellectual tradition man—one being among others—has pursued science.<sup>23</sup> In this pursuit man irrupts into beings as a whole.<sup>24</sup> In this irruption into beings as a whole, beings break open, showing what and how they are in their particular mode of existing in a spatial location. But not only this: “The irruption that breaks open helps beings to themselves.”<sup>25</sup> How is it with these beings that are helped to themselves in the irruption into beings as a whole? Now we arrive at what is truly remarkable. At the precise moment when scientific man leaps forward to secure what is properly his, he finds himself speaking of something entirely different.<sup>26</sup>

What does scientific man investigate? He looks into the qualities and quantities of beings—and besides that, nothing. When matter is formed scientific man has the task of stretching it to reason—and besides that, nothing. In his irruption into beings as a whole he investigates how it is with beings—and besides that, nothing.<sup>27</sup>

To what odd end have we arrived in our strange circle? What is all this talk about nothing? In investigating beings, in irrupting into beings as a whole, the total aggregate of scientific knowledge has come to nothing.<sup>28</sup>

We must now press resolutely onward and ask: “How is it with the nothing?”<sup>29</sup>

Several clues quickly and clearly present themselves. It is clear that science does not investigate this nothing. It is clear that the nothing is not simply the totality of beings. But is this not how we arrived at the phantasm of the nothing in the first place? It is clear that scientific man irrupts into beings as a whole. What of this irruption? For the time being, this mystery remains veiled.

In its investigation of beings science gives up the nothing, as a void, as a phantom. Nevertheless we are resolved to coming before how it stands with the nothing; and yet, when this nothing is questioned the object is always already devoured by the subject.<sup>30</sup> For example, when one begins by making a hypothesis about this nothing, which we wish to investigate in our inquiry, one begins with “the nothing *is*.”<sup>31</sup> We are already lost in an inherent absurdity.<sup>32</sup>

However, we must not be discouraged by our apparent inability to question the nothing. Logic, whose methods we have thus far detailed, would suffice to say that the nothing is “not” this or that thing. Thus we now have the idea of the nothing as: “It is not.” Subject and predicate persist, signaling only some negated matter, harking to the great distance of knowledge, we have sunk ourselves into investigating only to arrive at nothing. At this point in our argumentation I must boldly assert that the nothing is far more original than that.<sup>33</sup>

Standing now as not simply a negated subjective matter, some nullity, a clearing arises. If this nothing is not simply this or that, yet still not nothing, persistently more original than a negation, “*We must be able to encounter it...*”<sup>34</sup>

In man’s irruption into beings as a whole he investigates all but nothing. This is the realm of discovery, of pure exploration, of the quest. Do we not know the nothing? Is it not

something we rap our fingers on or breathe in silently in the night... a thin veil of morning fog? The learned, familiar, taste of things, a word, a specter... But are we not still dealing with beings? With matter and things? A rap of fingers, the morning fog? Absolutely not. "For the nothing is the negation of the totality of beings; it is non-being pure and simple."<sup>35</sup>

Non-being. This certainly signals a frightful turning back and fleeing from the gaping jaws of what is clearly a phantom in our midst. How have we been drawn out into the realm of this empty, nihilating oblivion? We have questioned beings as a whole, their qualities and quantities across the earth; we have had them formed correctly into matter. And yet in standing before beings as a whole the nothing rushes up to meet us. But from where has it taken its origin? In the towering form of all matter pressing down on scientific man? [*Das Seiendes im Ganz*]. Indeed.

In the totality of beings' matter all gathers round, and the power of the nothing grows. Instead of thinking of beings as things in accordance with their ideas, the nothingness of their lost essence presses forward *most dangerously*. This is the profound anxiety.<sup>36</sup>

It is in the comportment of our human emotion that we are brought before this nothing for the very first time.

Let us make it clear that this original anxiety is not simply "fear for" or "fear in the face of" this or that particular thing.<sup>37</sup> This "fear for," however, remains in relation to the nothing. In our investigation we have insisted that, when posing transcendence as a metaphysical question, it is a requirement (of metaphysics proper, which we aim to rediscover here as well) that the questioner himself be brought into question along with the whole of metaphysics itself. Finally, who is this questioner? What profound anxiety grips him in the face of the nothing, and brings him to tremble before it?



We have established that the nothing is the negation of the totality of beings. It is nonbeing pure and simple.<sup>38</sup> In all our lives we are always already within it, even if only in some shadowy way. The nothing nihilates.<sup>39</sup> In this original nihilation, negating the totality of beings in the astounding presence of the pressing whole, anxiety grips us and in this profound anxiety we are thrown out into a primeval encounter with the nothing itself. “Anxiety robs us of speech... in the face of anxiety all utterance of the ‘is’ falls silent.”<sup>40</sup> Standing out in the nihilating oblivion of the original openness of the nothing: “pure *Da-sein* is all that remains.”<sup>41</sup>

In the original openness of this abyssal plain, the questioner, for the first time, comes forward into the totality of beings, and gazes long into the oblivion of existence itself. This being—one being among others, gazing long into the abyss of Being—is *Dasein*.

For *Dasein*, beings hide and show themselves, they glitter in the light they make and in the irruption of this unconcealing light, he sees them for the first time. In the emotion of anxiety, he is thrown out into the open region of their Being. In the emotion of love, he sees into the essence of beings, and in his comportment of care, he fears for them. This “fear for” the essential essence of beings, as beings and not nothing, is not the profound anxiety which first propels man into the nothing proper, it is, however, an essential mode of *Dasein* nonetheless. In the light of the open region *Da-sein* knows the original essence of matter and thing for the first time. Here *Da-sein* knows too the last things—death and judgment.<sup>42</sup> Authentic *Da-sein* turns resolutely to gaze long into the blinding light of Being.

“In the clear night of the nothing of anxiety the original openness of beings as such arises: that they are beings—and not nothing... The essence of the originally nihilating

nothing lies in this, that it brings *Da-sein* for the first time before beings as such”<sup>43</sup> and he is “held out” into their Being as well as his own...

*Da-sein* trembles on this precipice, breathless before the breaking of the world... In German *Das Da-sein* means: the there-Being. “*Da-sein* means: *Being held out into the nothing.*”<sup>44</sup>

At this point in our search each of us, as *Da-sein*, has always already been brought before the primary occurrence of the truth of *Alētheia*. This is the most original occurrence of beauty.

Holding itself out into the nothing, *Dasein* is in each case already beyond beings as a whole. This being beyond beings we call ‘transcendence.’ If in the ground of its essence *Dasein* were not transcending, which now means, if it were not in advance holding itself out into the nothing, then it could never be related to beings nor even to itself.<sup>45</sup>

“Without the original revelation of the nothing, no selfhood and no freedom.”<sup>46</sup>

## **Freedom**

We have thus returned to our origin. In being brought before the Being of beings [*Das Seiende des Seiendes*] we are held out into the nothing, the oblivion of Being itself. The primordial occurrence of this question, when man first seeks Being, was from the time of Plato and Aristotle originally called “philosophy,” and later “metaphysics.”<sup>47</sup> Metaphysics must think Being. Under the yoke of the form, in simple grammatical accordance with *veritas*, it has not. The question: “What is metaphysics?” here too receives an answer, which has been denied to its essence for centuries. Metaphysics means: transcendence.

Have we not then answered our original question? With regard to the first two broad distinctions of Western historical thought it has been said that transcendence was held at bay, safeguarding the bridge between man and the gods. But what is the third distinction? Is the

open region not the proper realm of the lost third distinction? Here the nothing as such was *there*, and *Dasein* held out into it. We have defined this moment of being beyond beings as transcendence—as authentic *Da-sein* holding itself out into the nothing.

Our circle draws tightly around itself once again. We have sought the questioner of essence and sent him resolutely on his heroic quest into the nihilating oblivion of Being. Yet we are still left questioning. In the abyss of the nothing we gazed into the essence of truth [*Alētheia*] as unconcealedness and the irruption of scientific man into beings as a whole [*Das Seiendes im Ganz*] throwing *Da-sein* out into the profound anxiety, where he loves and cares for the Being of beings in the open region of their glittering truth. We know that this is transcendence.

It has been said that without the original revelation of the nothing, as *Da-sein* transcends in his “being beyond beings:” “no selfhood and no freedom.”<sup>48</sup>

It is clear that man is always already *Dasein*, briefly glimpsing beings who hide and show themselves in everyday light. Is this *Dasein*’s selfhood? Is *Dasein* free? At this point in our search we are led to ask: What is freedom?

Being held out into the nothing, into the origin of metaphysics itself, and even the primeval resting place of something more original than that, transcendence reveals the blinding light of Being as such. We are now aware that without this original realization, no selfhood, no freedom. What of selfhood and freedom? As products of transcendence, it can easily be assumed that the original essences of these concepts have been lost to the ages. When we speak of *Dasein* transcending, we find ourselves making a resolute turn to the occurrence of truth. The thinking of Being, lost to the definition of metaphysics over the ages, seeks the truth of freedom.

When *Dasein* is transcending he is in the open region of truth as unconcealedness. This is the original glimpse of *Alētheia*'s veil, the atrium of the open region, where beings come to stand in the light of their Being.

The pre-Socratics used the word *Alētheia* to mean truth, yet in this meaning of truth we also know that *Alētheia* means “unhiddenness.” This original notion of *Alētheia* as unhiddenness speaks to the concealed purpose of metaphysics, when it once adhered, at the advent of Western historical thinking, in the strictest sense, to that which *is*.<sup>49</sup>

Coming into the openness of *Alētheia* to stand in the light of the Being of beings is only possible once *Dasein* is *free*. In the course of Western history, the essence of freedom has been mistaken and misconstrued in “negative” and “positive” freedom, in the equality of freedom, in freedom of speech and creed and taste and so on.<sup>50</sup> For too long we have thought of freedom as the property, the right, of humanity. At best, we will come to see, the opposite is true: “Freedom, ek-sistent, disclosive *Da-sein*, possesses man—so originally that only it secures for humanity that distinctive relatedness to beings as a whole as such which first founds all history.”<sup>51</sup>

The ek-sistence of *Da-sein*, which means here “the ecstatic character of freedom standing outside of itself”<sup>52</sup> is only set forth when the veil of *Alētheia* shimmers before him for the first time. It is here, at the advent of history, that man asks: “What are beings?”<sup>53</sup>

We come now to the breaking point, standing out in the nothingness of the original anxiety as ek-static *Da-sein*. When we ask: “What are beings?” and seek the truth of their Being in the open field we are at the very same time looking into the essence of *freedom*. To free oneself is only possible by being free towards the moment of unconcealedness housed in

*Alētheia*. When asked: “What is freedom?” We come now, through the circle, to our answer: “*The essence of truth is freedom.*”<sup>54</sup>

When we speak of existence, of Being, *Dasein*'s existence becomes ek-static, meaning here that in the moment of unconcealedness—when *Dasein* is beyond beings as a whole—the ecstatic character of freedom is standing outside of itself.<sup>55</sup> In this way too we recall that this being beyond beings we call “transcendence.”

Standing resolutely outside of itself, in the original open region of the oblivion for the first time, *Da-sein* is ablaze in the dawning light of Being. *Da-sein* is transcending.

*Da-sein* is free.

Freedom, standing now in its rightful place as the essence of truth, evokes the unhiddenness of beings as such when they come to stand in the light of *Alētheia*. Out in the open region, we see that “Freedom now reveals itself as letting beings be.”<sup>56</sup> This “letting be” is not simply some passive indifference. Letting beings be, in fact, requires that *Da-sein* turn towards the unclosedness of the open region and gaze into beings as such, letting them be in their Being.<sup>57</sup> In this way, historical *Dasein* takes up his fate and turns toward his destiny as “the coming preserver.”

Who is this coming preserver? Moreover, can he stand at all times held out into the nothing in daring? In speaking of the essence of truth as freedom, freedom to stand in the open region and reveal, we discover the overgrown path to our answer. If the essence of truth is revealing, and this is freedom, what then is the essence of untruth? (We can feel the circle shifting its weight.) Of the essence of untruth we must come to the conclusion that, when *Da-sein* “lets beings be,” there is at the same time a concealing that takes place.<sup>58</sup> But was this “letting beings be” not proper to the unconcealed freedom that possesses *Da-sein*?

In the ek-sistent freedom of *Da-sein* beings show themselves and how it stands with their Being. We recall that *Da-sein* knows beings as such, just as he knows the final things...

Concealment deprives *Alētheia* of disclosure yet does not render it *sterēsis* [privation]; rather, concealment preserves what is most proper to *Alētheia* as its own... The concealment of beings as a whole, untruth proper, is older than every openness of this or that being. It is already older than letting-be itself. What conserves letting-be itself, which in disclosing already holds concealment? This is nothing less than the mystery.<sup>59</sup>

In *Da-sein*'s freedom to "let beings be" in their unconcealedness, they always already are slipping away, swallowed back up into the sheltering earth and held therein. This is the forgotten mystery of Being, its essence proper to ecstatic *Da-sein*. If the essence of truth is freedom, then the essence of non-truth is mystery. Let us not be confused here in thinking that non-truth is something negative. It is simply a "pre-essential essence."<sup>60</sup> Both remain proper to the power of the goddess *Alētheia*.

Yet in this always already occurring concealment, *Da-sein* can become forgetful of the mystery he conserves all together; he sinks down into his own world, "...proposing and planning and creating standards..."<sup>61</sup> In his forgetfulness of the concealing mystery of *Alētheia*'s veil, he takes himself as subject, as standard, and begins again to seek the weights and measures of the beings at hand. When man takes up his standards and no longer gazes into the nothing that nihilates, humanity is turned away from the mystery of Being. We call this inauthenticity. Turning away from the mystery is "erring."<sup>62</sup> In German erring [*irren*] means: "to stray."<sup>63</sup>

In *Dasein*'s forgetting of the mystery we find the essential counter-essence to the pre-primordial essence of truth, not untruth, but erring as "straying." This erring however (as a most egregious form of inauthenticity) is, for *Da-sein*, a part of his world, for man knows the final things...

In the pre-primordial essence of truth, as untruth, there is concealment in which *Dasein* slips and always already strays off the path into erring.

What must *Da-sein* do?

When at the advent of metaphysics, when man first thinks Being, he is always already beyond beings as a whole, as ek-static *Da-sein*. He is transcending. He is free. This is the liberation that grounds all history.<sup>64</sup> Yet the primacy of this freedom as the essence of truth [*Alētheia*] takes its originality from the ever more primeval concealment of the mystery. Showing and concealing themselves, beings lead *Dasein* to the question of the Being of beings, out of errancy to turn resolutely towards the mystery [*Entschlossenheit zum Geheimnis*].<sup>65</sup> Here, authentic *Da-sein* resolutely holds himself out into the nothing. We have said that in “letting beings be” historical *Da-sein* stands in the open region and that here he turns towards his fate and joins destiny—taking up his historical task as the coming preserver.

Who is this coming preserver? In the whole history of metaphysical thought, does he come into question in his appointed age? It is clear that he arrives as ecstatic *Da-sein* in its unrepeatability.<sup>66</sup> It is also clear that he stands resolutely in the open region, holding out into the nothing, that he lets being be. *The coming preserver shines a light out of history.*

In order to comprehend this coming preserver we have taken up a particular metaphysical question that has transposed us into the realm of metaphysics itself. In our search we have encountered the whole of metaphysical inquiries, along with the questioner himself. This questioner is *Da-sein*. Out of the shadows cast by the unbroken distance between the essence of man and the essence of truth, historical *Da-sein* comes to stand in the blinding light of the Being of beings. He is always already transcending.

As the coming preserver, historical *Da-sein* has turned towards his fate to join destiny, which gathers. For 2,500 years metaphysics has been stretched to bridge the gap between man and truth while Being has slumbered in its origin, the dragon of the West.

### **Origin and Essence**

In the course of this essay we have spoken time and again of origin. It is time now for us to seek it. Origin means here: “that from which and by which something is what it is as it is.”<sup>67</sup> This already sounds strikingly similar to what we have heretofore called “essence” for *Da-sein*, as well as for truth and untruth. In our quest for the origin it is now essential to give an example: “The artist is the origin of the work of art.”<sup>68</sup>

We know that art, as a work of art, has a “thingly” character. We mean, of course, that it is a being. When we are faced with the great work of art (and such art is the only art under consideration here) we know that “there is something stony in the work of architecture, wooden in a carving, colored in a painting, spoken in a linguistic work, sonorous in a musical composition.”<sup>69</sup> In this way, the work in its thingly character brings to light something else as well in its composition: “it is an allegory.”<sup>70</sup>

But have we not once again become scientific in our use of metaphysics? Not at all. With the fabled thread of Ariadne *we are making our return*.

When Kant effected his Copernican revolution in philosophy his system named all the world, and even God himself, as a thing, more precisely, a “thing in itself” [*Das Ding an sich*].<sup>71</sup> Knowledge of things in themselves was, for Kant, always impossible. Things in themselves can never be known in themselves; rather, they are always mere things—from God himself to a stone in the Rhine. Nowadays airplanes and radios are among the closest things to us and even more so do death and judgment remain the final things.<sup>72</sup> We have said



that the work of art acts as an allegory of mere things, which are thus brought together with their Being [to bring together: *symballein* [συμβαλλειν]].<sup>73</sup>

On the whole here, as we have previously investigated, this word “thing” signifies what is not simply nothing, but a being.<sup>74</sup> In our discussions of Kant, Plato and Aristotle we have investigated metaphysics from the Prussians to the Greeks. In the expanse of this Western philosophical tradition it is only obvious that as soon as thinking sets about on its way to beings their mere thingness asserts itself time and again.<sup>75</sup> As such: “The thingness of things has since dominated the course of Western thought.”<sup>76</sup> At this point so much has already become quite clear. In our quest for the lost definition of transcendence, we have arrived at the Being of beings and now seek a tactile method for being transposed directly into the open region.

It is the great work of art that brings beings all the more to themselves in their Being. In the allegory of great art the darkness of the colors gazes out and we know that they want only to shine.<sup>77</sup> This shining of the *is* is no talk of aesthetics; rather, it is what we now call the beautiful. In the beauty of the great work of art *Da-sein* is brought before the open region and the work holds it open. In this sense no less is clear than that: “Art is truth setting itself to work.”<sup>78</sup>

If the origin of the work of art is the artist himself and in the work of art mere things come to stand in the light of their Being, *Da-sein* is then holding open the open region himself in the work.

Standing there, the landing of art, with the artist (*Da-sein*) at its origin, holds its ground before man and god alike. As a Greek temple stands in stony defiance on the rocky edifice, its columns make evident the sculpture of the god within in such a way that the

marble itself is the god as such, in all his presence and terrible glory. In resolution he weathers all the ages and so first makes the storm that rages against his temple manifest in its violence.<sup>79</sup>

In the great work of art, *Da-sein* makes manifest the oblivion of Being.

Concealing and revealing, the great chasm of the open region undulates within the world of man, and Being as such was *there*, and is *won*. In our thinking of Being at the origin of metaphysics, and over the long years of its life thereafter, we know that in Greek *physis* means that mere thing which sets himself forth.<sup>80</sup> Not only this, but it names also the dwelling of man—his home in the *earth*.<sup>81</sup> Earth means here: “that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises as such.”<sup>82</sup>

It is in the world that man dwells on this earth: “the *world worlds*.”<sup>83</sup> By world we mean here that: “World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse, keep us transported into Being.”<sup>84</sup>

Towering up within the earth, the world thunders the majesty of the storm.

In the work of art, the artist as its origin sets up a world, which the work holds in force. This “setting up a world” is the first essential feature of the work of art. The second essential feature is this: “The work in its essence is a setting forth” [*physis*, φύσις] [*Herstellung*].<sup>85</sup> Setting up and setting forth, the work of art opens up a world and grounds it in the earth. It is in the world that historical man dwells on this earth. “The work lets the earth be an earth.”<sup>86</sup>

As such, the work of art “...moves the earth itself into the open region and keeps it there.”<sup>87</sup> In the open region, which we have now seen into before, we come face to face with the Being of beings, their oblivion and our own. We have called this clearing the beautiful.

We have said that “art is truth setting itself to work.”<sup>88</sup> And in the totality of our search we have found that “this being beyond beings we call ‘transcendence.’”<sup>89</sup>

The work of art holds open the open region as the earth settles back into its essential self-seclusion and the world towers up within it. One in the same, as is the Being of beings, world and earth are eternally at odds, which binds them together.<sup>90</sup> As with the Being of beings—who time and again refuse themselves to us, the earth seeks to draw the world into itself and seclude it therein.<sup>91</sup> This is the original strife [*Der Kampf*]. It is the realm of the mystery of concealment, at the same time as much on the precipice of the open region as it is always already beyond it. “The essence of truth is, in itself, the primal strife in which the open center is won within which beings stand and from which they set themselves back into themselves.”<sup>92</sup> As we have said: “the nothing itself nihilates.”<sup>93</sup>

In our search for the lost definition of transcendence we have raised too the lost definition of metaphysics and found contained within it the forgotten essence of truth as *Alētheia*, of this truth as the essence of freedom and of the view of the open region as the beautiful. In coming to face all of these questions as a whole the questioner himself, too, came into question. Winning his selfhood and freedom, historical *Da-sein* now resolutely holds open the open region as the coming preserver.

How is it that truth as unhiddenness sets itself to work in the great work of art? Which now means to say: “How does truth happen in the instigation of strife between world and earth? Is it only a curiosity or even the merely empty sophistry of a conceptual game, or is it—an abyss?”<sup>94</sup> A revival of Greek philosophy here is neither necessary nor possible. In the grand metaphysical tradition, beginning with the Greeks and working towards Kant, truth as *Alētheia* did not define the task of philosophy.<sup>95</sup> In this way, “...the essence of truth that

is familiar to us—correctness in representation [*veritas*—stands and falls with truth as unconcealment of beings.”<sup>96</sup> Thus at this point in our questioning the circular motion of our thought, always already on its way to the open region out of the truth of history, is won:

As the fundamental theme of philosophy Being is not a genus of beings; yet it pertains to every being. Its 'universality' must be sought in a higher sphere. Being and its structure transcend every being and every possible existent determination of a being. *Being is the transcendens pure and simple*. The transcendence of the being of Da-sein is a distinctive one since in it lies the possibility and necessity of the most radical individuation. Every disclosure of being as the *transcendens* is *transcendental* knowledge. *Phenomenological truth (disclosedness of being) is veritas transcendentalis.*<sup>97</sup>

For the first time in 2,500 years of Western thought the third distinction wins for itself a definition of transcendence—as a holding open of the open region by the coming preservers who gaze long into the oblivion of the Being of beings and so too into themselves. Out in the nihilating nothing, *Da-sein* knows selfhood; *Da-sein is free*.

But how long can he “hold out?” Contrary to our two previous periods of thought the realm of the third knows transcendence as *being there*.

We know that just as beings hide and show themselves that the earth swallows up the world, which towers up within it, and that this is the essential strife, closely akin to the mystery. What is so essential in the eternal strife of opposites, which are intimately crucial to one another? “In essential strife... the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their essential natures. In strife each opponent carries the other beyond itself.”<sup>98</sup> Carried beyond itself in the essential strife, we find the open region held wide open, already transcending. We have said that the two first essential features of the work of art are setting up a world and setting forth an earth. This is the instigation of the primal strife in the work of art, as the open region is held open in unconcealment, where the truth of Being is won.<sup>99</sup>

Setting up, setting forth and preserving are all fundamental characteristics of the essence of truth as freedom setting itself to work in the work of art, bringing about the original experience of the beautiful. Holding itself out into the nothing *Da-sein*, possessed by freedom, is “letting beings be.” Yet we know that here there is also concealment. “Through Being there passes a veiled fatality that is ordained between the godly and the counter godly.”<sup>100</sup>

What is this “veiled fatality?” If we look back to the original strife in the world of Greek thought we could see that between Plato and Aristotle art’s philosophical status constituted a point of contrition. For Plato, art was a representation of a representation and consequently worthless. For the Greeks, who knew few things about works of art, the word, *technē* [τέχνη], was given to both craft and art.<sup>101</sup> The Greek *technē* means not to create or to build but “to know.” In Greek thought, the essence of this knowing that belongs to *technē* is held too in *Alētheia*.<sup>102</sup> Which means that the knowing of the work is unhidden in the thinking of Being. As *Alētheia* consists in the veil, the moment of transcendence, so does *Technē* consist of the “bringing forth” of beings out of concealment into unconcealment: together *Alētheia* and *technē* set up an earth and bring forth a world.<sup>103</sup>

In our search for the lost definition of transcendence proper to the modern age we have posed a metaphysical question bringing into question the whole of metaphysics, along with the questioner himself. If the Greek *Physis* [φύσις] (understood in accordance with metaphysics [μεταφυσική]) is understood as the arising of something from outside of itself, it is also a “bringing forth.”<sup>104</sup> “Bringing forth” in Greek, however, is properly: *Poiēsis* [ποίησις]; *it is something poetic*.<sup>105</sup>

While *Alētheia* as truth was hidden in the shadow of truth as correctness [*veritas*] through the ages, *technē* gave its name to technology. Against *technē* as a knowing proper to *Poiēsis* as a “bringing forth,” technology is based on modern physics as a calculable science. When science becomes our passion, the revealing that rules modern technology becomes not the artistic “bringing forth” proper to *Poiēsis*, but a *challenging* [*Herausfordern*].”<sup>106</sup> In the technological age man is challenged forth into revealing in a particularly striking manner; a manner that brings the strife of world and earth before us in nothing less than the Battle of the Giants Concerning Being [].<sup>107</sup>

Yet when the mystery persists, concealment and unconcealment as the original strife of world and earth remain proper to one another. Contained in *technē* and *Alētheia* as property of *Poiēsis*: “The essential unfolding of technology harbors in itself the possible rise of the saving power.”<sup>108</sup>

In *Poiēsis*, the proper poetic heart of “bringing forth” the Being of beings, there slumbers too a great *destining*. We know that the essence of truth as *Alētheia* is freedom, open to the blinding light of the open region and for the first time transcending. In the bringing forth of *Poiēsis* as also a *destining*, transcendence becomes the destiny of the coming preservers, that is, of an historical group of men. This *destining* is also endangering, challenged forth in the modern age the *destining* of revealing hails the return of Being to *Da-sein* in nothing less than *the most extreme danger*.<sup>109</sup>

In the modern age, as we quest for the lost definition of transcendence “Art and technology draw past each other like two stars in the course of the heavens—the stellar course of the mystery of their essences as the unveiling, i.e., of truth.”<sup>110</sup>

The violent one, the creative one who sets forth into the unsaid, who breaks into the unthought, who compels what has never happened and makes appear what is unseen—this violent one stands at all times in daring... thus the violence-doer knows no kindness, no appeasement and mollification... for such a one disaster is the deepest and broadest 'yes' to the overwhelming pallor... this constantly pressing ensnarement in the everyday of custom.... This decided setting out upon the way to the 'Being of beings,' moves humanity...<sup>111</sup>

—Martin Heidegger

## *A Review of the Literature*

*“...there is no room for political philosophy in Heidegger’s work...the room in question is occupied by the gods...”<sup>1</sup>*

*-Leo Strauss*

Posing the historical questioning of the compassionate *Dasein* in the twentieth century, the critical ontology of Martin Heidegger sought to facilitate the return of “Being” to a world thrown headlong into the chaos, struggle and cultural nihilism of modern Europe. Spirited debates have since taken shape around not only the posing of Heidegger’s earth shattering question, but the manifestation of such a question, the question of first philosophy, that of “Being” itself, in its politics. Such debates have grappled with the obvious rift between the undeniable beauty of Heidegger’s work and the violence of such a beautiful proposition in the anxious, aesthetic and fatefully ferocious “Metapolitics,” the *katharsis* unbound: National Socialism.

It has been written that Heidegger was duped into following the flag, that he saw an opportunity to seize power *...den Führer führen...* and ascend to the status of “philosopher king...” Or that he was simply an unrepentant Nazi, and little more—his truly “transcendental” philosophy banished to the trash heap of history. The scramble to “place” Heidegger here or there has come to form across the Western world. Recent scholarship, however, edges closer to answers concerning what Richard Wolin aptly names “The Politics of Being,” as thinkers from Pierre Bourdieu to Slavoj Žižek turn to gaze long into the abyss of Heidegger’s philosophical commitment to the spiritual impetus of National Socialism. Arguably the greatest philosophical mind of the modern age, Heidegger shatters 2500 years



of Western metaphysics in a resolute turn to the most reviled political movement in history. The thread has been woven, and stitched into an historical destiny. What must we do? In the days and years after the fall of the Third Reich, burned in its own hot flame, the great philosopher of Being faded into a mystical *Gelassenheit*, and was never again political. In the resounding words of his infamous *Der Spiegel* interview, telltale of a Wagnerian *leitmotif*, the secret king of thought lifted his leveling gaze: “Only a god can save us now.”<sup>2</sup>

The question of Heidegger’s Nazism sent shivers across the intellectual world almost immediately postwar. In France, in Germany, and even in the United States the troubling question of Heidegger and National Socialism made waves—those willing to offer the philosopher up to the fires of Nazism and those struggling to shield him from such an irredeemable fate went to battle in public forums, newspapers, and academic journals alike. In readying the way for a discussion of Heidegger and a discussion of his National Socialism, it is truly a German perspective that is vital to the first account of such a perplexing and precarious history. The occurrence of the *Historikerstreit* situates the debate over what must be done regarding the “Past that will not Pass”<sup>3</sup> of National Socialism in its German context, bringing with it the age old question: *Was ist Deutsch?*

Carried out in German newspapers, the *Historikerstreit* spanned the course of the 1980s, as German historians, philosophers and thinkers of caliber began to grapple with the question—the horror—of their National Socialist past. In the words of German historian and philosopher Ernst Nolte, a student of Heidegger himself, this is truly, “The Past that will not Pass.” Taking strong stances, the Germans split definitively into two camps. On the one hand the “revisionist,” with Ernst Nolte at the helm and thinkers in the vein of Stürmer, Fest, and Hildebrand at his side, wrote for the *Frankfurter Allgemeiner Zeitung*. On the left,

thinkers, chiefly Jürgen Habermas, wrote in *Die Zeit*. Oddly, those on the right leaned heavily on arguments of totalitarianism when seeking to place Nazism while those on the left split looked to the ever-controversial *Sonderweg* thesis. In this thesis, I intend to return these sadly confused positions to their rightful owners. With this historical and ideological confusion the question of “What is to be done with Martin Heidegger?” comes to the forefront, especially for giants Nolte and Habermas. Heralded as a critical theorist, sociologist and philosopher in his own right, Jürgen Habermas addressed the Heidegger question in the context of the *Historikerstreit* in his 1989 essay “Work and *Weltanschauung*: The Heidegger Controversy from a German Perspective.”

The solemn, almost reverent tone taken by Habermas in his questioning of Heidegger should be mentioned and commended. Though deeply troubled in the face of the “Politics of Being” (the forward to the essay collection *The New Conservatism* by the eminent Richard Wolin), Habermas ventured to write (even in light of Heidegger’s Nazism) that “From today’s standpoint, Heidegger’s new beginning still presents probably the most profound turning point in German philosophy since Hegel.”<sup>4</sup> He insists that, “Illumination of the political conduct of Martin Heidegger cannot and should not serve the purpose of a global depreciation of his thought.”<sup>5</sup> What is the interest in Heidegger’s political/philosophical past (from a German perspective) today? What does Heidegger’s Nazism say about the questioning question *Was ist Deutsch?* In Habermas’s view, Heidegger remained convinced of the world-historical importance of the metaphysical meaning of Nazism to the bitter end<sup>6</sup>—a fate from which it seems unlikely that Habermas (or anyone) is capable of saving him. And yet, for Habermas (as for so many great thinkers), Heidegger’s monumental thought cannot be forsaken.

Habermas points to Heidegger's trouble with the technologization of totalitarianism, a trouble that deeply informs not only the struggle of National Socialism with "bourgeois nihilism," pointed out by a number of authors including Pierre Bourdieu, Emmanuel Faye and Slavoj Žižek, but also the impending encounter between modern man and technology—the metaphysical troubles that this thesis will address. As Habermas writes of Heidegger's National Socialism, it is "Only in the final phase of working through his disillusionment does the concept of the history of Being take on a fatalistic form."<sup>7</sup>

The stage of the *Götterdämmerung* has been set... For Heidegger, the victors of the Second World War were American and Russian, "alike in their essence"—thus nothing critical concerning the return of Being had been decided after all. As Habermas (and others, namely Richard Wolin) point out, Heidegger's turn in the 1930's was not a true change in standpoint from *Being and Time* (a troubling claim for many). It becomes apparent at the end of the long 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Dasein*, in resolution, is gathering. Talk of a German *Dasein* insists that one turn towards his fate [*Das Schicksal*], to join the greater destiny. It is here that *Dasein* must "chose its hero."<sup>8</sup> In Heidegger's thought, it is in the "middle realm of demi-gods" that the creative leaders are poets and thinkers... he describes Hitler's withdrawal of Germany from the League of Nations as: "The highest free decision (*Die Entscheidung*) of all... whether the entire *Volk* wants its *Dasein* or not."<sup>9</sup>

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1986, German historian Ernst Nolte, a chief defender of Heidegger and a "revisionist" scholar in the context of the *Historikerstreit*, penned his infamous "The Past that will not Pass: A Speech that Could be Written but not Delivered." In keeping with a discussion of Heidegger's commitment to the "Metapolitical" cause of National Socialism, it is pertinent to compare these positions from Nolte, and Heidegger himself, on the topic of

this “Past that will not Pass.” Of German guilt, Nolte writes, “The talk about ‘the guilt of the Germans’ all too blithely overlooks the similarity to the talk about ‘the guilt of the Jews,’ which was a main argument of the National Socialists.”<sup>10</sup> Returning to meditations posited on the topic by Habermas in the same debate, it is noted that Heidegger too falls on this side.

On the question of his position with regard to the Nazi mass crimes, Heidegger never, then or later, gave any answer... He would only reply in abstract essentialization... Under the leveling gaze of the philosopher of Being even the extermination of the Jews seems merely an event equivalent to many others... Annihilation of the Jews, expulsion of the Germans—they amount to the same.<sup>11</sup>

On the topic, Nolte continues, insisting that “To intentionally ignore truths may have moral reasons, but it also violates the ethos of the discipline [history].”<sup>12</sup> As someone embracing a “revisionist” stance, Nolte and others such as Fest, Stürmer, and Hildebrand, hope to see Germany recovering from the blow of defeat and the shock of the Holocaust. Habermas, writing to bring Nazi history to a swift trial, even concedes that, “Heidegger’s entanglement with National Socialism is one thing, which we can safely leave to the morally sober historical judgment of later generations...”<sup>13</sup> Yet he does go on to puzzle over Heidegger’s refusal to leave Nazism’s graveside. “Quite another is Heidegger’s apologetic conduct after the war, his retouching’s and manipulations, his refusal to detach himself from the regime to which he had publically adhered.”<sup>14</sup> For Germany, as well as for its philosopher of Being, it holds true that, “Hedging the authority of the great thinker—only he who thinks greatly can err greatly—can only serve to inhibit the critical approach of his arguments in favor of merely socializing people into an unclarified language game.”<sup>15</sup> The language game here acts as a thin veneer veiling deep-seated fear of a terrible truth. Such a game, in the case of Heidegger’s transcendental philosophy, has been played out of fear of his National Socialism for far too long. What does it say when arguably the greatest mind of the modern age

promised his beautiful truth to the most reviled political movement in world history? Here we will play these language games no more.

*The German Heidegger Debate*, as I have tacitly approached it in the broader context of the *Historikerstreit*—as to elucidate the interweaving of such talk of Heidegger together with his Nazism—can be safely classified as an entirely different “field” than the occurrence of *The French Heidegger Debate*. Subsisting on Heidegger’s 1947 “Letter on Humanism” for well over a decade, Germany’s western neighbors were somehow shocked by news of Heidegger’s undying commitment to the invading power. Almost immediately, spirited debates broke out in Parisian coffee shops and intellectual brawls saw seven books on the sizzling topic in under a year. Setting the tone in many ways for *The French Heidegger Debate* was the 1987 book of Chilean scholar Victor Farías, *Heidegger et le Nazisme*. Based on the 1962 Guido Schneeberger texts Farías’ thesis reads as follows:

When Heidegger decided to join the NSDAP, he was following an already prepared path whose beginnings we will find in the Austrian movement of Christian socialism, with its conservatism and anti-Semitism, and in the attitudes of his native region... By considering the historical context and the texts he wrote in his youth, we can see the progressive connections in a thought process nourished in traditions of authoritarianism, anti-Semitism and ultra-nationalism that sanctified the homeland in its most local sense. The sacralizing tendency was closely tied to a radical populism and carried strong religious connotations. From a systemic point of view this development is linked to Heidegger’s reflections in *Sein und Zeit*—on historicity, ‘authenticity,’ being-in-community, and his links with the people, the hero, and the struggle—and his own rejection of democratic forms of social life... Heidegger’s decision to join the NSDAP was in no way the result of unexpected opportunism or tactical considerations.<sup>16</sup>

A disgruntled one-time student of Heidegger, Farías mostly highlights his own communist political affiliations in his ragged critique of the great philosopher of Being. In later years, the eminent Richard Wolin will call the book “rather prosecutorial”<sup>17</sup> and levels the critique that such claims about Heidegger’s Nazism are so stereotypical and over inclusive that they

amount to anti-Europeanism and certainly anti-Germanism. The Farías book, however, sparked a flood of French proliferation on the topic of Heidegger—who until that time had taken the place of Sartre in the French philosophical pantheon. Postmodern philosopher Jacques Derrida, a great French disciple of Heidegger’s, positioned himself against the argument of Farías, yet conceded that Heidegger’s Nazi proclivities can perhaps be attributed to his continued attachment to metaphysics!<sup>18</sup> (This struggle, for Heidegger, is almost certainly tied to critiques of Nazism’s inability to overcome its own ‘bourgeois nihilism’).

Love for Heidegger in France was deeply shaken by the revelation of his unwavering political commitments. French philosopher Emmanuel Faye points out that (much like the German *Historikerstreit*) French positions on Heidegger fall on the side of either “necessary” or “contingent,” highlighting, again, a sharp divide.<sup>19</sup> Many still unpersuaded French defenders of Heidegger, for example Jean Beaufret—to whom the “Letter on Humanism” was addressed—paled in the face of Heidegger’s politics, denying the Holocaust and curiously turning to refuge in the extreme right, specifically branches of the *Action Française*—posited by German historian Ernst Nolte as the home of the European fascist “thesis” in his landmark text *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (1990).

Yet such a love for Heidegger is certainly not universal, not even in France. In his 2005 text, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1934*, Faye calls for little less than the banning of Heidegger’s dangerous, politically motivated philosophy, (harking to the Nazi book burnings of 1933). Situating itself as the “final word” on the Heidegger debate in France, Faye’s book boasts an omniglot perspective, far more capable than others of extracting the true racist core

of Heidegger's thought. His thesis reads as follows: "From very early in his career, before he wrote *Being and Time*, Heidegger was committed to principles in the air at the time, principles that were also basic to then nascent Nazism."<sup>20</sup> The fervor of Faye's argument quickly trails off and becomes little more than a Nazi hunt. He angrily bandies about the "absolute disrespect for the human individual" and the "evacuating of any hint of the possibility of morality" while willfully ignores his nation's quick conversion to collaboration, calling for watchful eyes to remember that the intellectual war is still on.

Situating his book in conversation with the texts of Hugo Ott, Richard Wolin and even Viktor Fariás, Faye details his investigation of the *Gesamtausgabe*, a collection of Heidegger's hitherto unpublished lectures and seminars from 1933-1934. (Interestingly, Thomas Rockmore, author of the forward to Faye's book, wrote the forward to Victor Fariás' book as well. Such a position was originally to be held by the aforementioned text of Jürgen Habermas published as part of the *Historikerstreit*, but, curiously, this did not come to pass). Pointing a finger to the biologism and "racism of the *Geist*" that taints Heidegger's philosophical project, Faye insists that such primary documents (reminiscent of the 1962 Guido Schneeberger texts on which Fariás builds his poorly executed critique) are the "smoking gun" needed to eternally banish Heidegger's truth. (A sentiment not at all far removed from the reaction of many to the heavily anti-Semitic contents of Heidegger's recently released *Schwarze Hefte*). Dropping the axe, Faye writes:

Not only do the classes and seminars of these years confirm the radical nature of his allegiance to Hitler, they reveal the degree to which the 'philosophical' and the 'political' become one in his mind and the fact that it is at the heart of the 'philosophical' that Heidegger situates the political, understood in its most radically Nazi sense.<sup>21</sup>

*Den Führer führen* indeed... Faye, however, is not the only one who feels this way or who confronts the housing of the political at the heart of the philosophical to launch an assault on German thinking, German society, and even German history.

Over a decade prior to the book of Emmanuel Faye, French sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) writes of the “politics of Being” in his *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (1991) that, “A philosophical strategy is at one and the same time a political strategy at the heart of the philosophical field.”<sup>22</sup> Born to a poor postal worker and his wife in Denguin, Bourdieu rose through French academia to study at the *École Normale Supérieure* alongside such titans as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. A brilliant and very powerful thinker in his own right, Bourdieu will launch a stratified and culturally relative assault on the thinker he once called his first philosophical love.

Claiming to bring an end to The French Heidegger Debate, Faye in many ways builds on the sociological framework of Bourdieu. In his system, Bourdieu sketches a stratification of not only social class but also the walls of academia. His core concepts of “habitus,” the “field” and “frames” place the interdisciplinary, to say the least, at serious odds with thinking. In Bourdieu’s thought the human “habitus” (social lifestyle values and disposition) is cultivated in the “field” of current discourse (as water to a fish tank). Within the “field” (in this instance academia) frames exist as epistemes in solitude. When working with Heidegger’s thought, Bourdieu crafts his condemning argument by accusing Heidegger of taking the “tools” of politics to the “frames” of academia within the “field” of the late 1920’s German university—convinced (along with the rest of German society) of some dark impending struggle clouding the horizon.<sup>23</sup>



Compounding his academic assault with threats of “aristocratism,” Bourdieu accuses Heidegger and National Socialism both of being guilty of the very “bourgeois nihilism” they struggled to overcome—a most debilitating blow. Coming at Heidegger’s philosophical politics from both social and scholarly angles, Bourdieu is clearly intent on taking Heidegger down with everything he has. At the close of his first chapter, “Pure Philosophy and the *Zeitgeist*,” Bourdieu lowers his maiming blow: “There is a clear line running from the repressed aristocratism of *Sein und Zeit* to the philosophical assimilation of Nazism, which becomes as it were banalized in terms of a paroxysmal manifestation of one stage in the development of the essence of technology.”<sup>24</sup> A damning critique, this is an assault launched on Heidegger’s fateful commitment to the dashed hopes of Nazism by numerous scholars—especially those closest to Heidegger’s crippling truth (most notably Richard Wolin and Slavoj Žižek). Bourdieu lowers the ax on Heidegger’s ontological dream of a National Socialist confrontation with “the Being of beings” as he continues,

Nazi nihilism, being a heroic attempt to overcome limits, in Jüngerian fashion, and overcome the very nihilism of which is the most extreme form, constitutes the ultimate affirmation of the ontological difference: all that is left is to resolve to confront the separation, this insuperable dualism which lies between Being itself and the actual entities from which it is forever separated.<sup>25</sup>

National Socialism’s fateful struggle with the encounter between global technology and modern man was indeed betrayed by Western capitalism (understood as “bourgeois nihilism”). This failure to assault the ontological difference constructs a powerful critique of the “Metapolitical” heart of Nazism that Heidegger once wistfully referred to as the movements “inner truth and greatness” as Being and time are ripped helplessly out of balance. However, Bourdieu, like many in the French Heidegger debate (Faye included)

attempts to trap German history, society, art, politics, poetry and thinking in frames that never stood in *Mitteleuropa*.

Thus, Bourdieu's critique of Heidegger cannot stand. This flattening reproach of Heidegger's philosophy for opening the history of Being to the history of the German people, in a fluid German way towards the twentieth century, cannot be confined to French Enlightenment fetters. The *Kultur* of the *Volk*, by its very definition, stands in sharp contrast to the *Zivilisation* of the bourgeoisie, the *citoyen*. *Wir sind das Volk*. The *Volk* is high art, in language and poetry, literature, music and painting, opera, politics and philosophy, at the heart of one another, welled up from the mythic memory of the *Geist*—breaking all bonds. It is precisely at the moment that Bourdieu attempts to tame the German spirit with his French system that a claim to any shared history of Being slips through his fingers. Seemingly thinking on his first love, however, Bourdieu writes, "...The academic and political reverberations of Heidegger's pure thought were never muted, whether in the philosophical field or beyond it..."<sup>26</sup>

Turning now beyond the philosophical "field," it is necessary to recall that these German histories are indeed wound together, by force of destiny. As the *Historikerstreit* grapples with reflections on Heidegger's Nazism (as seen in Habermas and Nolte's work in the great debate) so too must such debates struggle with the political and philosophical history of National Socialism itself. A glance at ideology as mythical aesthetic reveals the eventuality of National Socialism as fascism, as German ideology—as "the barbarians of the twentieth century."<sup>27</sup>

Several books are of key importance to the interplay between Heidegger's first philosophy and the roots of the German fascist synthesis. Addressing *Völkisch* ideology, the

aesthetic and historical peculiarities of fascist culture, and the dialectical process of European fascism, three texts are clearly exemplary. A staple of German history, George L. Mosse's *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (1964) stands head and shoulders above all others. On the merits of this text, as well as his *The Fascist Revolution: Towards a General Theory of Fascism* (1999), Mosse takes his place in my own personal pantheon. His *Sonderweg*-style argument in *The Crisis of German Ideology* deeply investigates the *Volk* and its *Geist* in a way that leads myth, language and culture towards, what he deems, the "virtue of ferociousness,"<sup>28</sup> on its way to the becoming of National Socialism, struggling violently with industrialized modernity. Paired with *The Fascist Revolution*, a collection of intellectually creative essays concerning the more romantic peculiarities of fascist culture, Mosse's work on the topic is entirely indispensable.

Alongside Mosse's texts, we situate the 1963 text of Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism*. Building a dialectic process of fascist consciousness, Nolte investigates the political, ideological, social and phenomenological coming to be of fascism as it learns itself in a traditional abstract-negative-concrete model. Nolte's book carries on throughout its argument a discussion of both "immanence" and "transcendence," positing Nazism as resistance to "practical transcendence," or modernity, and a struggle with "theoretical transcendence," loosely understood as "ultimate reality." Coupled with Mosse's discussion of the German *Geist* of the late nineteenth century, National Socialism's struggle with modernity, the encounter between modern man and global technology, (and the shredding of the fabric of *Being and Time* itself) can indeed be understood as resistance to "practical transcendence" in this way. Offering National Socialism a philosophical status, Nolte suggests that this struggle with

theoretical transcendence, “ultimate reality,” was a philosophical confrontation addressed by National Socialism itself<sup>29</sup>—perhaps independent of its thoughts on Heidegger’s lofty hopes for metaphysics’s radical yet fundamental extremes.

In his 1990 book, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger*, distinguished historian Richard Wolin provides a most searing account of Heidegger’s philosophical intoxication with the spiritual impetus of National Socialism. Written, even so, as “the philosophical complement to the book of Bourdieu,”<sup>30</sup> Wolin’s study arrives at the heart of the matter concerning Heidegger’s existentialist politics. Though certainly no longer a Heideggerian himself, Wolin expertly assesses the situation. Leveling his own critique of Bourdieu (and Victor Fariás as well), Wolin insists that so many critiques of Heidegger could be directed at the whole of German conservative thinkers (Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, Oswald Spengler and Moeller van den Bruck included).<sup>31</sup> In the same vein as Bourdieu, Wolin writes that Heidegger’s weakest point is the grounding of his philosophy in the basis of *Überwindung* and his radical breaking with “tradition” in academic, systemic and philosophical thought. (Seemingly a critique of the very power of Heidegger’s heralding in of the return of the question of Being...) Yet, contrary to Bourdieu, Wolin points to the depths of Heidegger’s own thought for his answers. Having shielded Heidegger from the fires of National Socialism until his encounter with the *Der Spiegel* interview of 1986, Wolin launches a full-scale investigation of the secret king of thought.

From the standpoint of the Rector’s Address of 1933, Wolin argues that Heidegger’s pristine first philosophy underwent a formidable transformation to *Weltanschauung*. The turn in Heidegger’s thought, beginning arguably as early as 1930, poses questions for many about the connection of Heidegger’s more Nazi-oriented work to his magnum opus, *Sein und*

*Zeit*. Wolin forges the schism with ease, asserting “For Heidegger the fact that Being comes to presence over time means that *Being has a history*.”<sup>32</sup> Such a history and “becoming of Being,” Wolin suggests, causes a “partial eclipse” of *Sein und Zeit*, and authentic Dasein is increasingly a result of some surreptitious “fate” [*Seinsgeschick*] that has been *decreed by Being itself*. Wolin asks, “If Being has a history, according to Heidegger, might it not also have a politics?”<sup>33</sup> Such politics is not a politics of man; “Humanism,” for Heidegger, is not a humanism of things, but must be turned resolutely towards the service of Being, and measured by man’s nearness to Being. “Could it be...” writes Wolin “...that the existential framework of *Being and Time* may have provided a type of ‘transcendental grounding’ for Heidegger’s political conduct in the 1930s?”<sup>34</sup> Already it becomes clear that in the turn of the early 30s, Heidegger’s thought, as directed by Being itself, was ready to “chose it’s hero.”<sup>35</sup>

In his own words “the philosophical complement to the book of Bourdieu” Wolin’s argument chafes against the French position profoundly. Thinking with Heidegger and the Germans (despite his ultimate moral afflictions), Wolin writes, “One of the keys to understanding the historical determinacy of Heidegger’s early work is the entrenched antimodernism of the German intelligentsia—manifesting in a diehard ‘apoliticism.’”<sup>36</sup> Once again, the fields and frames of Bourdieu begin to tremble. Asserting a heavily *Sonderweg* style argument (perhaps despite himself—and in the leftist vein of thinkers such as Habermas who cling to the *Sonderweg* theory as a smoking gun for National Socialism—but in incredible keeping with Heidegger’s own thought), Wolin continues, “This ‘apoliticism’ is a product of German national development and the power of the Reichs over the lands—this is highlighted by the contrast between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*.”<sup>37</sup> This *Kultur/Zivilisation* distinction is truly vital not only to an overcoming of Bourdieu’s French fetters, but to the

understanding, through this overcoming, of our readiness to pose the question: “What is *Deutsch?*” Of the *Kultur/Zivilisation* distinction, Wolin writes, “. . .the former connotes the sublimity of spiritual cultivation and the latter signifies the superficial materialism of the decadent, capitalist (industrialized and modernized) West.”<sup>38</sup> Sketching the stark distinction between Germany and Western Enlightenment thought (soon to be followed by industrialized modernity), Wolin insists that “With the Napoleonic conquests, *Zivilisation* became permanently associated in the German mind with France, and those ‘outward trappings of social refinement;’ whereas *Kultur* ‘signified the profound spiritual superiority of German *Innerlichkeit* (inwardness).”<sup>39</sup> As Jena falls and Hegel looks out upon “that world-soul,” modern Germany is born. In *Sturm und Drang* against the cultural imperialism of the Enlightenment, Germany *lives*. “This rejection of the ethos of *Zivilisation* rapidly translated into a dismissal of the Western Political values: liberalism, individualism and democracy were all dismissed as alien to the German spirit—they were essentially ‘*undeutsch*.’”<sup>40</sup> As such, we must pose the question of Being along with the question of “What is *Deutsch?*” In the face of a hard apoliticism resisting modernity and the outwards trappings of the West, what can now be said for Being that has a history, a people and a politics? What is this “apolitical politics” thrown into the world by National Socialism?

In the wake of World War I, Heidegger and the Nazis turned resolutely towards a mysterious fate—dictated by Being itself. On the dead plains of the wasteland, the ontological difference trembled before the “coming preservers.” Wolin writes:

*Being and Time* effectively communicated to a wide public something of the new spirit that had engulfed philosophy as a result of the convulsions of World War I. More than any other, this event seems like a Nietzschean prophecy come to pass: the conformation of his thesis concerning the disqualification of all inherent Western values and the final triumph of nihilism. *Being and Time* is a study in ‘fundamental ontology, ‘hermeneutical phenomenology,’ ‘existentialist philosophy’ and so on, but

it is also emphatically something else: an attempt, based on a re-posing of the ‘Question of Being’ to suggest a path of deliverance from the contemporary cultural crisis—*The Decline of the West*.<sup>41</sup>

The “politics of Being,” now, can be understood as a timely struggle for the triumph of *Kultur*—a battle to stave off the gathering dark of the *Götterverlassenheit*.

Early in his text, Wolin nods to the words of German philosopher Leo Strauss, who warns “...there is no room for political philosophy in Heidegger’s work...the room in question is occupied by the gods...”<sup>42</sup> Slowly, it becomes apparent that the *Seinsverlassenheit* (abandonment of Being) simultaneously signifies the *Götterverlassenheit*—the abandonment of man by the gods. Of this abandonment Wolin writes, “‘Forsakenness’ has become the distinguishing feature of the modern age: an age that is irredeemably suspended in the no man’s land between ‘the no-longer’ of the gods that have fled and the ‘not-yet’ of the god to come.”<sup>43</sup> Thus a humanistic political reflection on what would constitute the best “polity” pales before the severity of the *Götterverlassenheit*. In turn, the die-hard “apoliticism” and deeply entrenched scorn of *Zivilisation* in the German people must turn resolutely towards a paroxysmal confrontation with the modern world. Welded together by the firebrand of Being itself, the *Da-sein* that has a history, becomes not only a German *Dasein*, but a European *Dasein*. Out of the land in the middle, “Total mobilization is an exercise in active nihilism” heralding the return of Being itself... as *Dasein* is “on the move.”<sup>44</sup>

More recent scholarship on the topic of Martin Heidegger’s commitment to Nazism is once again on fire. In an article published in 2007, Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (1949-present) takes a radical approach to the still burning political question of the great philosopher of Being. In immediate condemnation, Žižek writes

There is something profoundly symptomatic in the compulsion of many liberal-democratic critics of Heidegger to demonstrate that Heidegger's Nazi engagement was not a mere temporary blunder, but in consonance with the very fundamentals of his thought: it is as if this consonance allows us to dismiss Heidegger as theoretically irrelevant and thus to avoid the effort to *think* with and through Heidegger, to confront the uneasy questions he raised...<sup>45</sup>

At once an assertion that liberal-democratic thinkers make the relatively easy step of ontologically connecting Heidegger's work with the spiritual impetus of National Socialism, such a statement also insists that this is not at all enough. We must endeavor to think through what this uneasy connection between the greatest mind of the modern age and the most reviled political movement in history can truly mean—a daunting task that has yet to be taken up in any way—a task I intend to take responsibility for in this thesis. Žižek daringly asserts, “The difficult truth to admit is that Heidegger is ‘great’ not in spite of but because of his Nazi engagement.”<sup>46</sup> A haunting echo, must we now endeavor not only to “think with” Heidegger, but also to “think with” National Socialism?

Žižek proposes the breaching of such a schism in an interesting way:

Though one does not discuss the ‘Really-Existing fascism’ as one might discuss the ‘Really-Existing Socialism’ ...Heidegger is nonetheless a philosopher who *did* engage in a kind of critique of ‘Really-Existing Nazism’ on behalf of its true potentials (its ‘inner truth and greatness’) betrayed by its racist-technological nihilistic reality.<sup>47</sup>

It is true that National Socialism did not live up to the great philosopher's expectations of ushering in a new age of Being. However, his engagement with the movement as, as Žižek deftly puts it “Really-Existing Nazism,” is still there. As aloof as Nietzsche's Blonde Beast, National Socialism did not in fact care for the return of the question of Being and may in fact have fallen prey to ‘bourgeois nihilism’ and an ontic racism. However, was the abyss of Being as such not truly *there*? And did National Socialism not indeed “hold out” into it? Throwing the modern Europe, and the world, into the oblivion of Being Heidegger himself



was of the opinion that: “National Socialism was the proper course for Germany; it only had to ‘hold out’ long enough.”<sup>48</sup>

Even in his radical assertion that we must think with Heidegger in the profundity of his commitment to National Socialism, Žižek will keep with many of the standing philosophical critiques of the movement, and pose his own. As such, he points to the position of Hannah Arendt, Heidegger’s near life-long love, who reflects that “The true problem of Nazism is not that it went ‘too far’ in its subjectivistic-nihilistic hubris of exerting total power, but that it *did not go far enough*...”<sup>49</sup> A radical position: what does “did not go far enough,” mean? In keeping with the critique of National Socialism as incapable of extracting itself from petty “bourgeois nihilism,” Žižek is ready to bring the critiques of Bourdieu, Faye and Wolin towards National Socialism’s confrontation with the ontological difference. This is what Žižek calls “Heidegger’s Ontological Violence,” in the profound close of his article. Standing out above and beyond all critiques and assaults, Žižek boldly states, “...Heidegger—in his Nazi engagement, was not ‘totally wrong’—the tragedy is that he was *almost right*...”<sup>50</sup>

Following the long gaze of the philosopher of Being, Žižek turns to look back to the Greeks. Heraclitus once wrote: “War is both father of all and king of all: it reveals the gods on one hand and the humans on the other, makes slaves on one hand and the free on the other.”<sup>51</sup> In Germany, Carl Schmitt writes: “War, the readiness for death of fighting men, the physical annihilation of the other men who stand on the side of the enemy, all that has no normative, only *existential* meaning.”<sup>52</sup> Derrida chides Heidegger for his continued attachment to metaphysics, Bourdieu rebukes National Socialism, for its inability to surmount “bourgeois nihilism.” Hoping to bring National Socialism to swift trial in

Germany, yet reluctant to bring the ax down on Heidegger, Habermas writes of the secret king of thoughts fateful commitment: “World historical tragedy alone sounds the hour for the overcoming of metaphysics.”<sup>53</sup>

As *Dasein* is “on the move” in twentieth century Europe, Heraclitus’ prophetic, metaphysical claim rings true. Violence alone will break all bonds. Of the relation between ontic and ontological violence Žižek asserts:

This is an inversion of the religious vision of the universe. God or Zeus is replaced with *kampf*—it is now not a hierarchic whole but struggle (as unhiddenness [*Alētheia*, ἀλήθεια]) as ultimate reality—the process out of which all entities (and their temporality) occur. Thus othering... and the confrontation with the ‘other’ unveils...<sup>54</sup>

Buried deep in the mythical past, the Wagnerian bellow of the king of the gods can be heard, as the titans collide—Being and time, ripped miserably out of sacred balance... Finally elucidating the discord of this difference, understood as the eternal separation of Being and the entities to which it belongs. Žižek writes, “But what if there is a fundamental discord between ontological and ontic, so that, as Heidegger put it, those who reach ontological truth have to err in the ontic? What if, if we are to see with the ontological eye, our ontic eye has to be blinded?”<sup>55</sup> In the twilight of the Gods, we must hold ourselves out, resolutely into the abyss of a blind ontic violence, reminiscent of the King of the gods, Wotan—his eye traded a drink from Mimir’s well, the waters of unfathomable knowledge. It is thus “... where Heidegger erred most (in his Nazi engagement), he came closest to Truth.”<sup>56</sup> Accomplished by poets, thinkers and statesmen... such violence occurs in the realm of the demi-gods...

Žižek writes that, for Heidegger, “An apology, even, would publically diminish the radicality of his thought and constrain him to the petty humanitarian political concerns he so bitterly despised.”<sup>57</sup> When thinking with Heidegger (when thinking with National

Socialism), the fetters of frames, the gathering dark of *Zivilisation*, gripping National Socialism in “bourgeois nihilism” must not be forgotten and dismissed as damning critiques but taken *most seriously*.

## *Das Rheingold*

*“Only image formed keeps the vision. Yet image formed rests in the poem”<sup>1</sup>*

*-Martin Heidegger*

When attempting to conceive of the rise and fall of nations, empires, or legacies, the spirit of a process of historical world consciousness, it is not nearly enough to rely only upon the rationality of the factual. Reading between the lines of the age, reaching towards the more irrational tendencies of the human condition over time and space, offers a new perspective on the process of doing history. Here literature and legend arise from the thick fog of myth to encounter the philosophy of Being.

Thus far we have taken the breadth and depth of the Western metaphysical tradition and brought it before what science has heretofore offered up as “nothing,” which we now properly name Being. In our definition of transcendence, we spoke of a great German destiny turning towards the oblivion of Being as it makes its return in the twentieth century. We have asserted that Being has a history, and that historical *Da-sein* makes a resolute turn towards its renewal. The thick fog of myth and legend lurking in Germany history secures the destiny of Being.

So too, one could say, does this fog gather, darker even in recent days, around Heidegger. But we have now, as *Da-sein*, been brought before the dawning light of Being, and found it beautiful. We know that when we gaze long into the oblivion of Being that we see also into the essence of the Being of beings—and so too into ourselves. We know that in this moment of Being beyond beings that *Da-sein* is transcending: we know that we are *free*.

To this primeval place we have followed Heidegger's legendary thread. For 2,500 years the veil of *Alētheia* has remained in shadow, and in doubt. We now turn to gaze back into the mist to begin our quest for the Acolytes. Who are those we now readily name "the Acolytes?" Surely some veiled phantoms, lurking surreptitiously in the murky twilight. As suggested in our search for the lost definition of transcendence, we must first turn to art for a clue, which, like the fabled thread of Ariadne, will descend through the mist of a mythical past—a place where ontic and ontological eye alike keep wary watch in the primordial haze.

We have made the decision to turn towards art in the thick fog of the primordial myth. In this ancient place the gods still walk tall among man. So too in our quest thus far has it been mentioned that there is in fact no need to affect a revival of Greek thought, for the Greeks cared little for the light of *Alētheia*, and knew less still of great works of art.<sup>2</sup> And yet deep in the West their temple stands for the first time in the ek-static violence of the storm, when man kneels before the god made manifest within its walls and thinks the question that first grounds all history...

A building, a Greek temple, portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley. The building encloses the figure of a god, and in this concealment lets it stand out into the holy precinct through the open portico. By means of the temple, the god is present in the temple. This presence of the god is in itself the extension and delimitation of the precinct as a holy precinct...  
...Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground. This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the obscurity of the rocks bulky yet spontaneous support. Standing there, the building holds its ground against the storm that rages above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence. The luster and gleam of the stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, first brings to radiance the light of the day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible space of air. The steadfastness of the work contrasts with the surge of surf, and its own repose brings out the raging of the sea.<sup>3</sup>

Make no mistake: in this place we seek the gods. If in our previous quest for a definition of transcendence—which led us to an abyss—we achieved such a blinding sight

for the first time by thinking in a circular motion, can we not apply this same process to our search in this place? Indeed. For here there is no other way to travel.

As we fold history over on itself, in a dialectical process of world historical consciousness, several critical points come into view out of the fog: We are once again working in a circle, for this is the only way to travel here. In accordance with what we have learned about the great work of art, we are now propelling that circle by way of struggle—which brings world and earth into a setting-forth [*Herstellung*] of their essential essences standing outside of themselves. For ek-static *Da-sein*, freedom is standing outside of itself, always already transcendental, originally possessing man. This is truly the first sight of the spirit of Being. In German we think the idea of “spirit” as *der Geist* (a truly untranslatable term corresponding roughly to “ghost,” “mind-spirit”). The great nineteenth century German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel also followed this dynamic thread into the past and found himself at the orient of all the world. From this static orient, his system of thought (named properly phenomenology: the study of the process of consciousness), the spirit that moves world history came to roost in Ancient Greece.<sup>4</sup>

This we already know. Yet we have said that the Greeks knew nothing of great works of art, and art is what we seek. Is this then some mistake in our process? No. Have we then been led to the advent of metaphysics to ground all art in what we will henceforth hail as its most genuine origin? Yes.

When coming before the Being of beings and being “held out,” transcending beyond them, we reached to the great work of art to bridge the gap between the abyssal plane of the nothing—nihiliating into space and time in the world of the gods—and the dwelling of man on this earth. At the outset, we set up a world with three distinctions, placing God and reason

at a distance from man and explaining that this distance had once been called “transcendence.” As art bridges the gap between Being and beings, we come face to face with the primal strife set up in the work. Though Heidegger keeps his comments on art fairly focused on what we can easily imagine is his most beloved painting (Vincent Van Gogh’s 1886 oil *A Pair of Shoes* by Vincent Van Gogh) his chief artistic interest leads him to the linguistic work, poetry. Hailing the work of Friedrich Hölderlin, Heidegger writes “all art is in essence poetry... as long as we mean that those arts are varieties of the art of language...[for] language alone brings beings as beings into the open for the first time.”<sup>5</sup> By naming beings, language puts to form the tones of their essence.

What is this putting to form of tones? It is as irrational as a soul. After all, Being takes its shape in *Da-sein*; Being “towers up” within *Da-sein*, and sings the unconcealing truth through the human instrument. Are we not here in danger of losing the metaphysics we’ve worked to restore? Not at all. In his critical essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger writes of the Greek dramatic genre tragedy: “In tragedy nothing is staged or displayed theatrically, but the battle of the new gods against the old is being fought.”<sup>6</sup> Nothing less than the rare Dionysiac twilight of this teleological battle is what we seek.

In this way it seems we have made our return to ancient Greece and discovered a particular “great work of art” to investigate in more detail. As in the origin of our quest, we know still that language is critical—indeed, indispensable, to our task. As such the phenomenon of tragedy can initially be conceived by contemplating the use of the word itself in contemporary language. The word tragedy, most would agree, is reserved for situations of great suffering and calamity.<sup>7</sup> To call something a “tragedy” is to imply mourning, the revealing of some “veiled fatality.”

When we have previously spoken of this “veiled fatality,” we have spoken too of the original strife [*der Kampf*] between world and earth as beings hide and show themselves (most notably in the great work of art). Scholars suggest that we must usually distinguish between the ordinary use of the word “tragedy” and the name of the dramatic art form,<sup>8</sup> though for our ontological purposes we know that the strife occurring in art brings about a veiled fatality as proper to the final things as it is to the openness of Being. Here the Battle of the Giants Concerning Being [*Gigantomachia peri tes ousia*]<sup>9</sup> plays out and takes the form of the battle of the old gods against the rising order of the new, throwing Being into the world of *Dasein*.

Already, a forming of the ancient dramas properly referred to as tragedy comes to stand in the light of its Being. Once again, however, we think of the importance of language and halt at the use of “form.” As has been discussed, the primal strife of the origins of metaphysics in ancient Greece occurred between teacher and student, Plato and Aristotle. In another great work of art this original metaphysical strife brings to bear its beautiful conflagration. Raphael’s famous 1509 fresco *The School of Athens* towers up on the walls of the Vatican in Rome, setting up and bringing forth the original strife of world and earth in a way more original than any other work of its kind. This strife first grounds the impending disaster of all metaphysics in the origin an alienating dualism.

There is no need to make any sort of return to a discussion of Plato’s theory of forms. We know that since the master raised his hand to the heavens, indicating the realm of ideas (or forms) that matter has been in predicate accord with the form after or above it and that this distance defined transcendence. Yet in ancient Greece, we are certainly in no position to close the gap. This, however, is no mistake—no tragedy.



Famously at philosophical odds, Plato and Aristotle differ greatly on the philosophical status of art and the “art form” tragedy comes to the fore. As a philosopher of essences, Plato is dismissive of art on a grand scale. Famously, Plato contends that all art is a representation of a representation, thus of little consequence—a simple imitation of physical reality, which is itself always already simply lurking in the shadows of the cave, impervious to the light of Being.<sup>10</sup>

Holding his hand firmly out over the earth, Aristotle believes that tragedy brings to light general truths and becomes *even more philosophical than history*. (Recalling the course of our path to this point, we know that the original strife of art throws the question of Being into the world of man and so grounds in the earth all history).<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Aristotle goes as far as to claim a philosophical status for tragedy in flagrant opposition to Plato. What is this philosophical status offered to tragedy that transcends the severity of history? More so, that grounds history in the question? In his *Poetics*, Aristotle claims that tragedy affects a great “*Katharsis* [κάθαρσις]” in the spectator—a sensation of “wringing out” in the *polis*.<sup>12</sup>

A dance of struggle and sublimation between the passionate emotions of the Dionysian impetus pressed into artistic form by the rigidity and structure of the Apollonian force, proper tragedy provides form to the irrational truths of the human condition. Between Dionysus, the god of wine and the oppressed, lord of the dithyramb, and Apollo, god of the sun and the state, a secret lies. A secret only whispered through the musical rhythm of an art “formed.” Caught in the profound intimacy of opposites, Apollo and Dionysus raise one another to the self-assertion of their essential essences. Crashing down through the mountains as thunder rolling across the theater, this original strife bridges the gap between man and the gods.<sup>13</sup> As such, we name tragedy as an art form, the first “Acolyte of Being.”

Yet have we not said that such a bridge was hopelessly forlorn in the ancient world? Yes and no. What is this pervasive, halting, power of the Acolyte? Traditionally, an Acolyte is an aid in a holy procession, as such, a guardian of some irrational truth. History itself is, in many ways, such a procession.

We have said that we will continue to employ a circular method of questioning in order to arrive at the answers we seek. This circle takes on a necessarily dialectical form when moving backwards through history, turning back Hegel's phenomenological wheel. Following the trail of the *Geist*, Hegel writes that from the Greek world, the spirit rushes onward into the Latin one and its centrifugal moment of Roman thought. Thus we have moved rather quickly from thesis to antithesis.

To give a brief example, we already know that the translation of Greek to Latin, with no thought given to the original Greek experience of words, first marks the rootlessness of all Western thought.<sup>14</sup> We first experienced this malicious translation in our previous talk of *Alētheia* and *Veritas*, consequently, the goddesses of Truth in Greek and Roman thought respectively. We know that *Alētheia* means truth as unhiddenness or "unclosedness" and we have said that in German, this unclosedness is *Entschlossenheit*: resoluteness. Thus we have followed the language of truth through a dialectical process in the traditional abstract-negative-concrete model—or, in Hegelian terms—thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

It can be seen that we have broadened our gaze to a widening view of the grand historical tradition of the hiding and showing of gathering essences as "spirit" on their way through the world. At this point a brief examination of this grand process becomes helpful.

Hegel says that the orient of the world lost its essence as the *Geist* shifted its weigh to ancient Greece. A thesis acts as the proposition of the idea, which as it learns is negated

through the antithesis and only then comes to know itself, through struggle or strife, in the form of the synthesis.<sup>15</sup> This we all know. Where such a rewriting is necessary is to the folding over of twin histories by way of a dialectic process—the essences of a gathering spirit that we see into in the great work of art. We are speaking, of course, of *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*.

The first (and by our definition most “beautiful”) text of Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* was first published in 1872 when the young philologist was only 27. Detailing the transcendental genius of the art form tragedy, Nietzsche’s premier text sought a philosophical status for tragedy in much the same manner as Aristotle. (Here, Aristotle would say that the “transcendental genius” of tragedy is owed to his concept of “*katharsis*”). For Nietzsche, the authors of tragedy must be “poets in their souls,”<sup>16</sup> and in their dramas must remain true to the delicate balance between the Dionysian and Apollonian elements, which in the manner of strife between world and earth, offers tragedy its titanic philosophical status.

Like Aristotle, Nietzsche agrees that tragedy affects a *katharsis* in the spectator, wringing out the soul of the *polis*. In the great work of art we have said that in setting up a world and setting forth an earth the original strife occurs—and that this is *the most extreme danger*. Indeed, *the danger*.<sup>17</sup> In Greek tragedy, we come to see that in the manner of the tempest manifest in its violence against the temple of a god, Apollo and Dionysus drive one another to self-assertion beyond themselves, sublimating in the open region as the first understanding presents itself to the spectator—a *kathartic* abyss. In this way it must have already become clear that by *katharsis* we mean transcendence.

But have we not already insisted that this bridge between man and the gods has not been forged in the ancient world? This confusion persists. When we spoke of transcendence the distance between man and the gods wrote the prevailing status of the transcendental until reason made an appearance in the early eighteenth century. How then are the bonds being broken? In the nihilating abyss of the most extreme danger what *katharsis* wrings out the soul of man and sets it forth?

Nietzsche writes that tragedy was initially the celebration of the god Dionysus and that this celebration took the form of a dancing and singing procession—the dithyramb. This procession of dancing and singing was the origin of all drama. And yet the dithyramb progresses in a somber and even chant—quite the opposite of any Dionysian drunkenness! In the somber rhythms of the Dionysus’ songs the sublimation of the Dionysian and Apollonian in tragedy was revealed: the chorus is an interpretation of Being that plays with appearances—it is, *an Acolyte*.

Much in the way we have discussed the holding open of the open region that occurs in the origin of the work of art, music too puts irrationality to form and we are transposed into beings as they are, feeling the silky texture of their essences. The chanting of the Dionysian chorus, put to somber Apollonian rhythm, acts in much the same way.<sup>18</sup> Thus the chorus acts as a critical balancing point between the Apollonian and Dionysian, opening the soul to an abyss of understanding that propels him into the now almost tactile experience of truth. But what has happened here? We have seen “put to form” at work. But isn’t it the other way around? Have we not said that matter comes under the yoke of the form when Plato lifts his gaze to the realm of ideas in banishment? Here quite the opposite is at work.

Through the sublimating spirit of the beauty of music the gods descend to the dwelling of man.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche asks: why did tragedy disappear so quickly? Affecting a *katharsis* and “wringing out” of the polis, tragedy must have occurred at an historical moment of terrible strife. Thus the need for civic cleansing of the soul by pure tragedy, generally held to have died at the end of the fifth century, coincides with the Persian Wars (490-480 BC). Written initially to propose an answer to the enigma of the birth of Greek tragedy (specifically the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides), Nietzsche finds its death already upon him. Beginning sometime in the sixth century, pure tragedy has “died by suicide”<sup>19</sup> before the end of the fifth and we as spectator are left wondering over the relationship between ontological and ontic strife.

But what do we mean by “pure tragedy?” Those who know their ancient history will be ready to assert that tragedy continued well into the early Hellenistic period. Nietzsche disagrees and offers an answer: it lost the music. The chorus became obscured. The *katharsis* was lost. For Nietzsche, tragedy lost its point. In the wake of the Persian wars the gathering of the chorus was broken down and transformed into a dialogue-like individuation, disrupting the essential essence of the original oneness.

Who is guilty for the murder of Dionysus? Throughout Greek history, Dionysus comes and goes, the only god to die and be reborn... In ancient mythology Dionysus enters the city with wine in times of strife, only to be chased out again when his irrational drunkenness is no longer needed to console the *polis*... The proverb “nothing to do with Dionysus” results, suggesting that in later times the plays called tragedies had little or nothing to do with the god at all.

According to Nietzsche, the murderer is none other than Euripides.<sup>20</sup> Writing his tragedies in flagrant violation of the oneness of the Dionysian chorus sublimated into Apollonian meter, Euripides is responsible. The death of tragedy and Nietzsche's quarrel with Euripides results from this end. Of the destruction of the poetic heart of pure tragedy, Nietzsche despairs: "Once it was no longer begotten by music, in the mysterious Dionysiac twilight, what form could drama conceivably take?"<sup>21</sup> In a rage, Nietzsche turns on Euripides furiously: "Euripides' basic intention now becomes clear as day to us: it is to eliminate from tragedy the primitive and pervasive Dionysiac element, and to rebuild the drama on a foundation of non-Dionysiac art, custom and philosophy."<sup>22</sup> The tragedy of Euripides builds on reason and rationality in the vacancy of the beautiful. This is nothing less than a turn to the Socratic world.<sup>23</sup>

Here our original purpose returns. When we spoke of the shift from Greek to Roman thought we named the Pre-Socratics and the Sophists as champions of *Alētheia* and *veritas* respectively. This is *The Essence of Truth*, which, in many ways, has its landing in *The Origin of the Work of Art*. No longer begotten by the music, tragedy loses its point as Dionysus is chased from the city, leaving only Apollo to rule. In the absence of truth as *Alētheia*, understood here as the Dionysian impetus, truth as *veritas* reigns, understood in tragedy as the structuring power of the god Apollo. In the death of tragedy we have experienced first-hand the scientific turning away from the open region of *Alētheia*, of *Da-sein's* forgetting.

In many ways we see this death of Dionysus in fifth century Greece as the primary occurrence of the *Götterverlassenheit* [the abandonment of man by the gods], which, we have said, corresponds to the *Seinsverlassenheit* [The abandonment of man by Being].

As militarism and nationalist fever (Apollonian sentiments) are on the rise in the face of the Persian war, so too is a grave cultural crisis, gathering man before the precipice of *the most extreme danger*. As Persian autocracy clashes with the Athenian notion of the *polis*, these opposites rise to meet one another in strife, as warring gods in the course of the cosmos. Gathering in the sunset of this cultural strife, a Greek collective consciousness is reflected in the oneness of the chorus. The dichotomy of visceral responses to such pressure brings about in the *polis*, as we have said, a need for a transcendental remedy for the ailments of the soul. This is the *kathartic* resolve of pure tragedy. Of the effects of the Persian invasions it can be said that the development of democracy and the defeat of Persia were contemporaneous events.

At the end of the Persian wars, when this oneness began to subside in its wake, pure tragedy, no longer a necessary remedy (like Dionysus himself), fell apart in the hands of Euripides. Nietzsche laments the death, writing, “Greek tragedy perished in a manner quite different from the older sister arts: it died by suicide, in consequence of an insoluble conflict, while the others died serene natural deaths at advanced stages.”<sup>24</sup> Committing suicide, Nietzsche acknowledges that it was killed from within, by Euripides. And yet this death was self-selected and self-inflicted by the genre... as if it knew its moment had come and gone... Dionysus, the god who dies and is reborn, is once again chased from the city...

As we have said, Nietzsche makes the claim that Euripides brings about the suicide of pure tragedy by individualizing the chorus and wreaking havoc on the irrational truths sublimated by the original strife of its collective chants. We can imagine Odysseus bound to the mast of his ship, struggling to be free towards the incandescent song of the Sirens, and, what would be his impending death. In his *Hippolytus* (429 BC) and even in *The Bacchae*

(405 BC) (generally considered his least egregious offense to the genre), Euripides departs from the traditionally collective chorus. Opting for two choruses in conversation with one another, a “Leader of the Chorus” and single members stepping forward to speak as characters enter into the dialogue.<sup>25</sup>

Poetically, Nietzsche writes: “the mystery doctrine of tragedy: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness.”<sup>26</sup> For Heidegger, far away on a single star in the unified Germany of the future, this moment marks nothing less than the *Kehr* in his thought—as *Dasein* turns towards his fate to join with the historical destiny of the West—which is gathering in the darkness of a saving power and is now named *Da-sein*.

In his radical individuation of the chorus in his tragedies, Euripides poisons the genre from within—affecting its young suicide. Apollo and Dionysus, bound together by the fire-brand of metaphysical truth in the work of art, fall out of their self-asserting struggle into silence. Here we have come to the original occurrence of the *Götterverlassenheit*, truly the *Seinsverlassenheit*, in Western history. Admonishing Euripides, Nietzsche writes, “And even as myth, music too died under your hands; though you plundered greedily all gardens of music, you could achieve no more than a counterfeit.”<sup>27</sup> Delivering his leveling blow, he continues: “And because you had deserted Dionysus, you were in turn deserted by Apollo.”<sup>28</sup>

Widely recognized as the god of light and the god of the sun, Apollo is also heralded as the god the state. However, Apollo can be interpreted (and has been by Nietzsche) to also embody reason and individualism. The last god to be accepted onto Mt. Olympus, Dionysus, on the other hand, is taken by Nietzsche to embody passion and the intensity of emotion in



the fearless loss of the self in the “other.” As Nietzsche aggressively charges Euripides with the murder of Dionysus he asserts that the tragedian has put the task of the thinker above the task of the poet.<sup>29</sup> As such, paradoxical thoughts replace Apollonian contemplation, bringing rhetorical sophistry to dominate over care. Of such a betrayal, Nietzsche writes that this is “The conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation maybe broke in augury of a restored oneness.”<sup>30</sup> By this oneness, Nietzsche means nothing less than “the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent...” Such is, in our talk, the profound anxiety affecting *Dasein* when he is brought before beings as a whole.

In the dialectic process of world historical consciousness, belonging properly to Hegel, we have begun to fold twin histories over onto one another. Who are these fateful twins? Is it not already clear as day?

It is none other than the tragedian Aeschylus (525/524 BC-455/456 BC), writing during the Ripe Archaic period, who will bring Dionysus and Apollo together in the struggling sublimation of the chorus during what Nietzsche calls the “Tragic Age.” Though scholars continue to debate the exact years of Aeschylus’s work (480-410 roughly), our reasoning here is quite simple: before the dramatic choruses of Aeschylus we have no complete tragic chorus at all.<sup>31</sup> Born in 480 BC, the tragedies of Euripides follow the law of Socratism, which, according to Nietzsche, reads: “whatever is beautiful must also be sensible.”<sup>32</sup> In this way we can once again see the long limb of our circle as the young German philologist parallels Euripides and Socrates with the pitfall of rationality in his sights. This turn towards the Socratic maxim spells the death of tragedy in the same manner as Euripides’s individuation of the chorus.

*The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* famously establishes the twinning parallel we have heretofore sought. As the Persian Wars raged in fifth century Greece, affecting a dramatic “othering” Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1872, as war with the French brings the loosely collected German lands to their feet. History folds over as the world towers up within the earth: it becomes clear that we seek the German Aeschylus.

Tragedy transforms the human condition as the songs and dances of the chorus reveal the cruelty of Being, affecting the *Katharsis*. As in Aristotle’s theory of tragedy the spectator does not fall into the shadow and doubt of suffering, but is *purified*. Dionysus towers up within the Apollonian structure of the chorus, and we are first brought before the fearful experience of the most extreme danger—and see that it is indeed the truly beautiful.

The hero, and through him the spectator, is compelled to experience the true nature of the cosmos, which is terrible yet joyful: will, blind energy, everything in flux but at the bottom indestructible. Here at the precipice of this insight man trembles, he is in danger of being petrified by the vision of the primordial conflict.<sup>33</sup>

Aristotle suggests that this is a fundamental experience of pity and fear. We understand this “fear for” or “fear in the face of” as related to the profound anxiety in a way that brings *Dasein*’s comportment of care to the fore.

In this misty twilight we draw around again, tracing our historical progression in a romantic key. Our path has taken us on a mysterious journey through both the metaphysical, artistic and musical past of what we are now well aware is a German twin history. Returning in our circle to the answer, posited by Nietzsche in the first few pages of his text, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* is dedicated to none other than the romantic composer, the German Aeschylus, Richard Wagner:

... I imagine the moment when you, my honored friend, will receive this essay. How you, perhaps after an evening stroll in the winter snow, will consider the Prometheus Unbound on the title page, read my name, and be immediately convinced that,

whatever this book may contain, the author has something serious and urgent to say, and also that he was communicating with you as the ideas came to him, as if you were a real presence, and was only able to write what was appropriate to your presence... anyone who thought that this book reflected the contrast between patriotic excitement and aesthetic indulgence, between courageous seriousness and cheerful play, would be mistaken: were they really to read this essay, they would be astonished to discover the seriously German problem that we are dealing with, a vortex and a turning point at the very center of German hopes... if they can see art as nothing more than an entertaining irrelevance, an easily dispensable tinkling of bells next to the 'seriousness of life:' as if no one was aware that this contrast with the 'seriousness of life' amounted to. Let these serious people know that I am convinced that art is the supreme task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life in the sense of that man, my noble champion on that path, to whom I dedicate this book.<sup>34</sup>

It is in the land of the Germans that we will seek our second acolyte of Being. Having named tragedy the first, we know that the Acolyte, as work of art, holds open the open region. We also know that in this holding open of the open region *Da-sein* sees into the essence of beings, and so to into himself. He is transcending. He is free. Aeschylus, whom we hardly spoke of, collected the Greek chorus and first set Dionysus free to tower up violently within Apollo in self-assertion. The putting to form of tones occurs in a linguistic work, as with the collective chanting of the chorus. This chanting of the human instrument is music in its most basic, "beautiful," sense. Thus we travel onward to meet with Richard Wagner.

## *Die Walküre*

*“We are too late for the gods and too early for Being. Being’s poem, just begun, is man.”<sup>1</sup>*  
*-Martin Heidegger*

At the conclusion of our previous discussion, it became quite clear where our talk of the ancient Greek art form tragedy was leading. Out of what we called a “primordial haze,” where the gods walked among men, we came into the light of the open region, a clearing, to put tone to form and met with the German Aeschylus: Richard Wagner.

In the manner of both Nietzsche and Aristotle we have claimed a philosophic status for tragedy as an “art formed”—but only as an art so formed by wonderful hands. In the hands of Euripides, the gardens of music perish and Dionysus lies dead in the yellow coils of their wilting enclosure. With Aeschylus he had risen to assert his godhood on Mt. Olympus, brought to his most essential essence together in strife with Apollo. We thus named tragedy as the first Acolyte of Being. Art is the weapon of strife, this much is clear. But can a man be an Acolyte? For now this question, posed for the first time, remains in shadow...

Yet we have followed the young Nietzsche through his quarrel with Euripides, and have been brought before Richard Wagner, our German Aeschylus. Whatever might not be clear about these Acolytes, be they men or masterpieces, we can perhaps make clear by way of a different sort of inquiry for the time being.

We have wandered through the mist of a primordial place, and now tread north before the dawn, past the shores of the Bodensee onto the soft banks of the Rhine. We have in no way, however, passed from the land of myth and music. On the contrary, we have entered into the most magical of forests.

I need to take a moment here to make very clear that our quest for the lost definition of transcendence does not part in any way from a physical or geographic quest—selfhood and freedom grow deep roots. With two feet now we are treading the line between ontic and ontological. In the fertile ground we drag the thread of our circle.

As for geography meeting with myth and music to take up a transcendental question, no, a transcendental quest, we have arrived at the edge of the legendary Odenwald.

Out of ancient Greece we have traveled to the eastern bank of the river Rhine and have come to stand before the mighty darkness of a most cosmic place. Time is all a blur. The land is waking as the sun's soft morning light draws back the veil of night and, stretched out tight across the sky, lets beings come to stand in the light of their Being.

Should we scan the trees for any sight of a Roman standard? None seem to stand any longer. If we remember the dialectic process we spoke of when founding ancient Greece at the thesis of Western thought we recall that the *Geist* moved antithetically through ancient Rome and out into the far reaches of her empire. I will not grip too firmly the softened binding of the *Germania*. Though her words are beautiful and her thoughts are pure, those weathered pages bring to light only that which is *antithetical by nature*.

In his text from 98AD, Tacitus credits the German tribes with primitive but wholesome virtues: they are tall and they are handsome, chaste, vigorous, warlike, and keenly jealous of liberty.<sup>2</sup> As an ethnographic work, the *Germania* details the Germanic tribes existing outside the empire and begins with descriptions of the lands and customs of the Germans followed by a description of individual tribes (from the Ingeavenes to the Herminones and the Istaevones), from those closest to Rome herself to those at the furthest reaches of the empire in the Baltic regions.<sup>3</sup> It has been duly noted that Tacitus himself never

traveled in the land of the Germans or beheld their fabled and primitive beauty for himself. Though this fact has been held up decade upon decade, it carries little weight for our purposes here; for, as we have said, what is most critical about this text is its antithetical quality, its place as “negative” between the abstract and the concrete. For Tacitus, these beautiful and virtuous Germans stood in negative power against the vain luxury of the Roman aristocracy, having atrophied and fallen into an empty repose.

Tacitus describes German governments as merit-based, with punishments carried out by priests.<sup>4</sup> He even details a “[v]olk assembly” called together for decision making.<sup>5</sup> Holding up German purity and morality, Tacitus gives the examples of chivalry and monogamy (adultery was exceptionally rare) accentuating the similarity of German and Roman virtues while lambasting the Roman elite for their debauchery and excess. Though Tacitus notes that the Germans drink too much and that for Baltic Germans (Scandinavians), women are in almost all regards held up as the ruling sex, his text makes many attempts at painting the Germans as everything Romans once were.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout Tacitus’s writing, he is preoccupied with Senatorial power in Rome and the tyranny of the Emperors.<sup>7</sup> Often hailed as writing a “psychology of political power,” Tacitus regards his own approach to history in the first pages his *Annals* (AD 14-68): “My purpose is to relate... without either anger or zeal, motives from which I am far removed.”<sup>8</sup> Hardly hiding his hatred of Nero, Tacitus is well known for a hatred of tyranny, yet believes the Senators to have squandered their cultural inheritance, and fears Rome will collapse in the absence of virtue and virility.

Though *Germania* is later misinterpreted, coveted and even treated as a talisman of sorts, its status as a marker of the stark differences between Germans and Romans aids our

dialectic process. The transformation of this fabled history (which we all know only too well) harks to the essential feel of a certain antique texture—which we seek when thinking the history of Being, of *Da-sein*.

Returning to the dynamic drive of our dialectic process, we must know that this method of thinking phenomenologically calls for, in Hegel's thought, a reconciliation of reason and faith in addition to a presupposed notion of human consciousness—provided by God. Early on we made it clear that the first two transcendental distinctions we named (that of God to man and man to Reason) were in fact not different at all from one another with regard to the status of transcendence as it is “held at bay.” With Hegel, however, a reconciliation of reason and faith is achieved in his dialectic system and the spell of Kant's inseparable dualism is bent by the augury of some restored oneness. The spell Nietzsche said tragedy was responsible for breaking in its own time.

Mediated by the thought of Ludwig Feuerbach and the young Hegelians, Marx crafts a dynamic dialectic process on the phenomenal side of Kant's dualistic system. Built on base and super structure and propelled by the flow of capital, Marx's dialectic asserts that consciousness is achieved by human activity. Seemingly at irredeemable odds with Hegel's noumenal (metaphysical) system, Marx's process crosses an unexpected boundary. With Kant *Das Ding an sich* could never be known—for this knowledge was too far out in the noumenal realm. Marx, however, approaches “essences” from within the phenomenal world. Between Hegel and Marx, tugging at each end of Kant's dualistic system, we experience a struggle, what Heidegger might call “strife” in the work of art, which results in an opening, and a setting-forth.

Stepping out into the noumenal and phenomenal in strife, these dynamic systems merge out two transcendental paths, *and ground them*. Thus the ontic holds the ontological, and keeps it there. What do we mean here by *ground*? We are speaking, of course, of the *earth*.<sup>9</sup>

When thinking phenomenologically in the land of the Germans we are setting up a world on this earth. Hegel's phenomenology effects the reconciliation of opposites, as the opening of truth in the work of art requires the strife occurring between world and earth to hold open the open region.<sup>10</sup> Language, we have noted, is one way we can see into this powerful sublimation. Here it is no different. We have said that the word we need, and will always need in the land of the Germans, is *Der Geist*. Synchronously, another word we cannot go on without in this outpouring landscape is *Das Volk*.

Even as students, Hegel and the poet Hölderlin dreamed of a new popular religion or *Volks-religion*, crafted for the *new age of freedom*.<sup>11</sup> Hölderlin, Heidegger's most beloved poetic mind and a close personal friend of Hegel's, knew that only poetry could heal the rift between reason and faith. With a profound knowledge of the Greeks, Hegel and Hölderlin sought to heal Kant's splitting of the truth, thus overcoming the Enlightenment. As school friends Hegel and Hölderlin shared the motto: "Monotheism of reason and heart, polytheism of imagination and art."<sup>12</sup>

Famously, Heinrich Heine would write of Kant's critical philosophy, "Our German philosophy was nothing but the dream of the French Revolution... Kant was our Robespierre."<sup>13</sup> In essence, Hegel would ultimately intellectualize Romanticism, just as he would spiritualize the Enlightenment. Belonging to a generation of German romantics, the path from classic Enlightenment rationalism to German post-Enlightenment Romanticism



can be traced in Napoleon's rise and fall. For these German romantics, the *Volk*, as it had been with the Greek *polis*, was a kind of religion, and the basis of all spiritual commitments. The rift affected by the Enlightenment was one that, for the romantics, only poetry could heal.

Grounding the reconciliation of reason and faith, the land, the *earth*, itself is imbued with some holy gift and begins, once again, to *world*. "The world worlds."<sup>14</sup> It is in this way that ontic and ontological belong to one another, in the intimacy of opposites.

In the history we have heretofore amassed (the previously named periods of man's assent to knowledge or "truth" where he is, as such, transcending—be they by way of gods dissemination of truth to man or man's assent to knowledge by way of reason) man, both in society and in himself, has been left alienated, "held at bay." In the thought of intellectuals ranging from Alexis de Tocqueville to Karl Marx, man finds himself everywhere in the chains described by Jean Jacques Rousseau. Herded into the crowd in his stupefying bewilderment, man is "held at a distance" from his essence. He is "held at bay," left to his own devices to calculate and plan and create standards. Thus the human condition was left with a cursed and inseparable dualism, and man forgets. Only in his participation in society, as he prepares and enforces his standards, could man, in his dwelling on this earth, find some "universal identity"—a higher reality which was once called "transcendence."

But what about in the land of the Germans? It is clear here that we are speaking of Enlightenment thought and man's "transcendence" (as it was so called) into society by way of contracts asserting the assumption of free will as property, no, *right*, of man. Everyone knows that in their lands and principalities, medieval Germans participated in religious ideas of transcendence. But we think, then of Martin Luther—his *Ninety-Five Theses* brazenly

assaulting this insurmountable distance, and we are brought before a rather uncomfortable question.

Are we suggesting, then, that Germany was impervious to the Enlightenment? It is absolutely not as simple as this. Then again, neither is the true outcome of the French Revolution. In their standard shape such arguments have taken, our ontic standards begin to outweigh our ontological commitments. Yet have we not said that we travel here with both feet on the ground, in a geographic place where ontic and ontological come to meet one another in an historical landscape? Yes. Thus, with an eye to the ontic we may proceed ontologically, with language in mind.

On the fourteenth of October 1806, during the wars of liberation, Napoleon made twin assaults on the German towns Jena and Auerstädt, and Hegel's *Geist* first spread its wings, alight in the struggle. Finishing the final pages of his famous *Phenomenology of Spirit* [*Phänomenologie des Geistes*] as Napoleon's armies bore down on the city, Hegel ensured his manuscript to a young messenger, who rode through the lines in the night—the winged spirit of Germany in his safe keeping. In the face of a decisive French victory, it was at the battle of Jena-Auerstädt, on the plateau west of the river Saale, that Prussia set out on its way towards modern statehood, which would be achieved almost seventy years later in 1871. As such, the land of the Germans is “on its way,” thrown headlong towards nationhood by the explosion of the French Enlightenment.

I am aware that it must be mentioned, here and elsewhere, that the concept of *Geist* is being used in a most fluid sense. Previously it was noted that the German *Der Geist* is a nearly untranslatable term, having no true equivalent in the English language. We can go a long way towards rendering its meaning by saying “ghost, mind-spirit,” which carries both

mystical and cosmological connotations as well as phenomenological ones. Another way to understand this word, however, is as the “living force.”

As the Enlightenment bears down on the land of the Germans we recall this notion of *Geist*, its first ride through Napoleon’s lines and its metaphysical powers of affecting a reconciliation of reason and faith. It is only in the pantheistic perspective of the German romantics that a “living force” is sought—a direct, individual, connection to the eternity of the cosmos.

We turn now to yet another historical group of men. In our definition of transcendence we spoke of an historical group of men as “the coming preservers.” Contemporary of thinkers such as Hegel, we name these historical men Schiller, Goethe, Fichte and Herder. In consonance with *Der Geist* we spoke of *Das Volk*. More translatable than *Geist*, *Das Volk* means: *the people*. But did Heidegger not detail these coming preservers as preservers of the great work of art? Yes. For they hold open the open region.

At the hands of men such as Fichte and Herder, the *Volk* is conceived of in romantic, indeed heroic, terms. With the *Volk*, reason and faith, man and society, indeed Apollo and Dionysus, are returned to one another and set up a *world*, which is grounded in the *earth*. Setting up an earth and setting forth a world is the ontological vocation of the great work of art.

When we first spoke of this *Volk*, we did so as a word we say in German that is intimately related to the word *Geist*, which we have, to the best of our linguistic abilities, defined. But we have not spoken directly about their relation. In order to reach some clarity, we now seek a definition for the word *Volk*:

Idealized and transcendent, the Volk symbolized the desired unity beyond contemporary reality. It was lifted out of the actual conditions in Europe onto a level

where both individuality and the larger unity of belonging were given scope. The Volk provided a more tangible vessel for the life force that flowed from the cosmos; it furnished a more satisfying unity to which man could relate functionally while being in tune with the universe. Völkisch thought made the Volk the intermediary between man and the “higher reality.”<sup>15</sup>

For the *Volk*, the landscape [*Landschaft*] was filled with this “life force” by way of which the German became, for lack of any more beautiful word, “transcendent.” Such a landscape was native, known to the senses and passion in *Sturm und Drang*, as well as to history. Here, the *Volk* would find a self-expression of his innermost individuality. By way of the landscape, the *Volk* was tied directly to the cosmos, to a “universal identity.” Here, in the land of the Germans, the *Volk* cultivated a transcendent soul.<sup>16</sup>

In this transcendental landscape the woods which stood forth from the trees sheltered the whisper of the wind, who brought to human ears the crispness of rushing water, the sweetness of birdsong and the rhythm of the changing seasons therein, the *Volk* cultivated its essence, its *Geist*. It was in the age of the “New Romanticism” that Eugene Diederichs would style the *Geist* as “the longing of the soul towards unity,”<sup>17</sup> an idea which took its origin from fifteenth and sixteenth century German humanists, such as Dürer and Paracelsus, who first set German “mysticism” on its way to fruition,<sup>18</sup> as a gathering, a *grounding*.

In all this talk of the land of the Germans, their landscape, language and their origin, we have come to several points, which are critical for our task—indeed our quest for the Acolytes of Being. We know that within the ontic there is the ontological, and it is held therein. We know that the coming preservers are an historical group of men and that they hold open the open region of the great work of art. In detailing the procession of the history of Being we have sought a *grounding*, which is coming to fruition in a *landing*.

In Greek tragedy we saw first-hand the interplay of gods and men on the stage as well as their ontically occurring synthesis as reflected in the oneness of the chorus. So too now can we see such a relation between the romantic *Volk* and its *Geist*. In search of German legend, we once again turn back to myth, to the world of the gods. From the most beloved *Nibelungenlied* back through the *Thiedrik-Sage* and the *Volsung-Sage* we find ourselves gazing long into the past of the gods.

We have been promised a meeting with Richard Wagner, our German Aeschylus. Responsible for the augury of restored oneness in the tragic chorus, Aeschylus brought Dionysus to Apollo, and kept him there, holding open the open region in this original, beautiful, strife. It was only on the basis of German music, then, that the young Nietzsche began any discussion of a “German spirit,” as if it were only beginning to stand in the light of its Being for the first time under the spellbinding sway of these romantic tones. In Germany’s romantic struggle...

...I have learned to think hopelessly and mercilessly enough about that ‘German spirit,’ and likewise about contemporary German music, which is romantic through and through, and the most un-Greek of all possible art forms... —And yet—apart, of course, from all impetuous hopes and applications to contemporary issues with which I spoiled my first book, the great Dionysiac question mark remains, also as regards music: how would a music be that was not romantic in origin, as German music is—but *Dionysiac*?<sup>19</sup>

At this point we are coming towards the point where we must engage in our own struggle with Nietzsche. (Let me be quite clear; I have no interest—at any moment in this text—in taking “responsibility” for Nietzsche. It is entirely possible to both love and hate Nietzsche at once. As such, the Nietzsche I take responsibility for in this text will always already have been brought under some sort of control by either Wagner or Heidegger.) Frustrated with contemporary German music in all its romantic fervor, Nietzsche will soon attempt an assault

on his most “honored friend.”<sup>20</sup> Slandering (he thinks) contemporary German music as “the most un-Greek of all possible art forms,”<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche’s own definition of the “Dionysiac,” in relation to his remarks about the romantic origins of German music, makes his assault on Christian morality as constituting a...

Hatred of the ‘world,’ the condemnation of the emotions, the fear of beauty and sensuality, a transcendental world invented the better to slander this one, basically a yearning for non-existence... So then, with this questionable book [*The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*], my instinct, an affirmative instinct for life, turned against morality and invented a fundamentally opposite doctrine and valuation of life, purely artistic and anti-Christian... —with the name of a Greek god: I call it the Dionysiac.<sup>22</sup>

We must ask ourselves, are these frustrated assaults of any real merit here? Yes and no. Moreover, are they in fact Christian at all? Perhaps this is another question for another time, however, it must at least be raised. But if Dionysus stands in utter opposition to everything he deems Christian, then does it not hold true that Apollo must stand in utter opposition to all that is pagan? And because you abandoned Apollo, Dionysus died to under your hand... though you plundered all the gardens of poetry, you received only a counterfeit... It is thus that Nietzsche turns his back on Wagner.

In speaking of great works of art, we have already said that a return to Greek thinking is neither necessary nor possible. It passes for a well-known fact that Nietzsche’s first book was written less for Aeschylus and the Greeks than for Wagner and “the seriously German problem that we are dealing with, a vortex and a turning point at the very center of German hopes...”<sup>23</sup>

Near the end of his sane life, in 1888, he [Nietzsche] wrote in *Ecce Homo*: ‘I offer all my other human relationships cheap; but at no price would I relinquish from my life the Tribschen days, those days of mutual confidence, of cheerfulness, of sublime incidents—of *profound* moments... I do not know what others may have experienced with Wagner: over our sky no cloud ever passed.’ What he felt he had found in Wagner—and what he later vehemently denied was there to be found—was a

reincarnation of the genius of Greek tragedy... However strong, independently of Wagner, Nietzsche's interest in Greek tragedy, its rise and decline, may have been, it was impossible for a person of his cast of mind to see the matter as one of purely historical investigation. It follows that the whole idea of the book [*The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*] must always have been permeated by Wagnerian influences, even if he wrote earlier versions of it—as he did—in which Wagner is not directly involved.<sup>24</sup>

In tandem with Wagner, Nietzsche sought a *kathartic* remedy for German anxiety, challenged forth by Napoleon, “that world soul.” First performed in 1876 at the Bayreuth *Festspielhaus*, Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* brought German myth to the stage in song. Six years later, in 1882, Wagner would see the premier of his final work, the *Bühnenweihfestspiel* [A Festival Play for the Consecration of the Stage], *Parsifal*. Heralded as “the great Christian opera,” it is *Parsifal*, which affects the original rift between Nietzsche and his German Aeschylus.

Thus, it is in the romantic world of the nineteenth century where the origin of our ancient answers takes root. Sharply characterized by the advent of modernity (as brought about by the industrial revolution) and the artistic age of romanticism (a disillusionment with Enlightenment values and eighteenth century rationality) the nineteenth century becomes nothing less than an ontological battleground. Both Nietzsche and Wagner hoped to sink into the mythic past in order to bring an artistic and philosophical rejuvenation to the present, under grave threat. Seeking a transcendental remedy, we can name this spiritual, dynamic force now as both *Katharsis* and *Geist*. Coming in waves, this shadowy past—standing out beyond the veil—is both near and distant, both ontic and ontological.

For Richard Wagner, this past is the very past that lies in the soil under his feet. As we have mentioned, *Völkisch* thought or *Völkisch* Ideology is born in the nineteenth century from a rural and spiritual connection of the individual to his native landscape—imbibed with

the *Geist*. For the *Volk*, the ontic holds the ontological, not only this, but the ontological *Geist*, is cultivated by *Da-sein*.

Written in *Mittelhochdeutsch* in the thirteenth century, the original story of *Parsifal* in Germany was told by the German poet, knight and *Meistersinger* Wolfram von Eschenbach in his romantic poem, *Parzival*. A *Völkisch* work in many ways, Eschenbach's poem *Parzival* tells the story of the Arthurian knight *Parzival* who seeks the Holy Grail [*heilige Gral*]. A sixteen-book poem, each book is composed of sections containing thirteen line stanzas written in rhyming couplets—a helplessly classical style.<sup>25</sup>

First written in France during the latter part of the twelfth century as *Percival* from Chrétien de Troyes, the work, styled as part of the Arthurian legends, was left unfinished. Born in Germany as a poem, *Parzival* becomes far and away the most beloved work of Wolfram von Eschenbach and endures well into the eighteenth and nineteenth century as a *Volkslied* [literally a “folk song” or “people’s poem”]. Carrying in its pages the story of the grail, the poem also harbors within its folds a more secret, veiled, message enclosed in its language and literary style (Apollonian elements).

It was in the nineteenth century that beloved poems like *Parzival* and the *Nibelungenlied*, under cultural pressure, were in dire need of being decked out anew. *Parzival*'s Dionysian transformation from *Volkslied* to *Gesamtkunstwerk* [literally “total work of art”—a term specific to Wagner's operatic works] by way of Wagner's *libretto* as poetry put to the irrational beauty of music, connects nineteenth century German hopes to an artistic impetus. Through Dionysus, and only him, Wagner brings *Parsifal* to the music.

In order to approach the “inner truth” of this romantic, indeed, Dionysiac, transformation from *Volkslied* to *Gesamtkunstwerk*, it is first necessary to take yet another



step back into the past in search of illuminating clues. Here our circle begins to learn the steps to a dance.

Beginning in Italy in the seventeenth century with Jacopo Peri's *Dafne*, the art form of opera collected drama, poetry, myth and music into truly a "total work of art." The Italian word "opera" derives from the Latin "*opera*," which means "work" in both the sense of "labor done" and the "work of art" resulting—(linguistics being truly vital to the artistic status of the genre opera).

The first opera, *Dafne*, was nothing less than an attempt to revive classical Greek drama and the art form tragedy, as we now understand it, gifts its essence to opera. Members of the Camerata considered that the chorus of Greek tragedy was originally sung (a Dionysian Dithyramb), putting irrationality to form. Thus, opera was originally conceived as a way of restoring this situation through language (Apollo) put to music (Dionysus). In the nineteenth century, both Italy and France saw a "golden age" of opera, characterized by enduring works from *La Bohème* to *Carmen*. Yet this "golden age" would be dominated not by French or Italian composers, but by a new comer to the stage—our German Aeschylus, Richard Wagner.

As the "golden age" of opera dawned in nineteenth century Europe, Wagner irrupted onto the scene with an overpowering fervor. His early opera's included *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser* (in which Wolfram von Eschenbach himself appears as a character) and *Lohengrin* (heralded as the precursor to his final opera *Parsifal*). Even in Germany, French and Italian had linguistically dominated the genre, with composers such as Mozart writing music for an Italian *libretto* set to a French plot—such as in his *The Marriage of*

*Figaro* [*Le Nozze di Figaro*]. Here, however, Apollo and Dionysus still remain out of touch. But why?

The first “German” opera, *Die Dafne* composed by Heinrich Schütz in 1627 was styled as a revival of Jacopo Peri’s *Dafne*. Much like the original *Dafne*, the musical score was lost but the *libretto*, by the poet Martin Opitz, survived—and was written, not in Italian, but in *German*. The majority of German composers writing opera (be it in the fifteenth of the nineteenth century), however, chose to write their *libretti* in Italian and not their native German. (Mozart is, once again, a prime example). Our German Aeschylus was among the first and the few who, in the nineteenth century, chose to write his *libretti* in his native German—but not only this.

In contrast to Italian and French opera, which was composed by and large for the aristocratic classes, Wagner consecrated German opera as decidedly not aristocratic or bourgeois. This new German opera was composed for the *Volk*.

Beginning his study of opera under the influence of the German composers Weber and Meyerbeer, Wagner gradually evolved a new conception of opera, which departed from all others. The idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*—a fusion of music, poetry, drama myth and legend belongs solely to Wagner. Though, almost by definition, all opera is *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Wagner’s cultivation of this term as applied to his own work departs in that from the beginning the composer decidedly wrote his own *libretti* in intimate connection to the writing of the musical scores, sometimes even working on both side by side and weaving music and poetry together.

In fact, Wagner was among the very few composers to write his own poetic *libretti* at all. As such, Wagner brought a new, ontological, dimension to opera, which opened up in

his work in a most original way. Based on German and Arthurian legend (which, we will learn, bleed into one another) the *Gesamtkunstwerk* is decidedly a *Völkisch* work. Bringing together language in his own poetic *libretti* with powerful musical scores rooted in *Völkisch* myth, the young Wagner was already on his way to revitalizing spirituality and romanticism in the young, backwards looking nineteenth century Germany—seeking the grail itself.

In the course of our backwards-looking romantic endeavor the lost grail has been traced through young Germany, into its spiritual roots, all the way back to ancient Athens by way of the art form tragedy, which Wagner's opera frenetically seek to revive in the gathering dark of the nineteenth century. Until this point, we have engaged Nietzsche, Hegel, Herder, Eschenbach, Wagner and even the *Geist* of the German *Volk* itself. Between these figures, these attendants of Being, we have spun the story of a *Geist*, a *katharsis* and a grail.

We have suggested that the *katharsis* and the *Geist* are one in the same. How can this be? Moreover, we have seemingly set out on our way on a grail quest, which terrorizes all rational thoughts and peoples.

This question will be addressed, at present, by poetry as the linguistic work of art put to music. Those who read Wagner's *libretti* today can hardly succeed in separating the verse rhythm from the accompanying musical rhythm. Sitting there, within the violence of the orchestra, the fabricated texture and weight of the intangible manifests in velvety *leitmotifs*. In Wagner's operatic works the poetic text of the *libretti* was imbued with the *Geist* of each *Völkisch* character's romantic song, a restored oneness.

On the nature of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* as largely a work of poetry, we can understand that since musical rhythms are by their very nature quantitative as well as

accentual it is entirely possible to describe them in poetic terms and vice versa. In Greek tragedy lyrical structure was written as strophe, which was followed by antistrophe and epode. As John Milton wrote in the preface to *Samson Agonistes*, “strophe, antistrophe and epode were a kind of stanza framed only for the music.”<sup>26</sup>

As our dialectic will insist, Greek lyrical rhythms gave way to Roman verse (a domination of Apollonian structure and sophist argumentation). Recalling that opera itself was originally conceived as a means of restoring the Greek chorus in tragedy, “There are some resemblances between typical Greek lyrical rhythms and Wagner’s musical rhythms (experienced in his prolific use of *leitmotif*) that produce similar effect to those produced by Aeschylus (particularly in his famous trilogy of Greek tragedies *Oresteia*).”<sup>27</sup> *Oresteia*, however, was not a trilogy and actually contained four pieces, similarly to Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungens*. The final play, however, was lost. It is truly in his use of *leitmotif* that Wagner makes the most unique revival of the katharsis of Greek tragedy in his *Völkisch* operas—not only the legend, *but the language itself*, was decked out anew.

Other Greek lyrical rhythms used by Wagner are iambic in nature (—/u—/u—), making a nod to more contemporary poetry as well as Roman verse. These rhythms only come to light when the poetry of the *libretto* is sewn into the conflicting orchestral rhythms of the music—effecting what is truly an Apollonian and Dionysian struggle between world and earth as a singular totality.

Wagner himself, in much the same vein as Heidegger, claims that language has indeed lost its original metaphysical roots. Consequently, language begins to atrophy, taking with it our ontic experience of reality—hence the vitality of music into young Germany’s

romantic expression. Of this vital importance of language to the music, which escapes from poetry's lips, Wagner writes in his 1861 letter entitled "*Zukunftsmusik*:"

The metaphysical necessity of the discovery of this entirely new means of communication precisely in our own time seems to me to lie in the ever more conventional forms taken by modern verbal languages. When we look more closely at the developmental history of these languages we hit, in the so-called roots of words, even today on a primal origin that clearly reveals how the formation of the concept of an object corresponds in the first beginnings almost completely to the subjective feeling engendered by it; and the assumption that the first speech of human beings must have had a likeness to song may not appear entirely ludicrous. From what was in any case an entirely sensuous, subjectively felt meaning of words human language became ever more abstract, so that in the end only a conventional meaning of words remained, and thus all share in understanding has withdrawn from feelings.<sup>28</sup>

For Wagner the poet could select to continue in one of two ways, toward "an inner fusion with music," or further into "the field of the abstract." It was only an inner fusion with the music that would satisfy Wagner artistically and metaphysically. For the poet who chose the latter path abandoned Apollo, and so too was deserted by Dionysus.

For Wagner "the lost paradise of primal poeticizing"<sup>29</sup> was of constant concern. In an essay on Beethoven, he writes of music's duty to poetry: "language, which was until then taking shape, as if it were alive, in a steady process of crystallization; the poetic art becomes the art of decking out the old myths, now no longer to be invented anew, and ends at rhetoric and dialectic."<sup>30</sup> Reaching back into the linguistic, poetic origin of the work of art, Wagner hits upon a clue, as a note or syllable, an irrational elixir, which he draws forth and presses into the shape of its history, by means of the German language itself.

For Nietzsche, Wagner had "forced language back into a primal state, where it hardly thinks in terms of concepts, where language is itself poetry, image, feeling... Anyone else would have failed, for our language seems almost too old and worn out for such a demand."<sup>31</sup>

In our search to this point we have named an historical group of men, and continue to seek the “coming preservers.” A coming preserver is one who preserves the truth that is happening in the work—who holds open the open region brought before us by the work of art. In his *Wille zur Macht als Kunst* Nietzsche touches on similar ideas, but, for Heidegger, falls short. For Nietzsche, as we have seen in his definition of the Dionysiac, art is expected to happen as stimulating and resulting from lived experience. This “lived experience” for Nietzsche is a form of ek-static authenticity in Heidegger. Standing outside of itself, ek-static authenticity is ek-static freedom. As such, art has an ontological vocation; it holds open the open region and sets freedom on its way. For Heidegger, *Da-sein* is authentic when he turns to gaze into the open region. Art is authentic when it affects an encounter with the Being of beings.<sup>32</sup> That is, art is authentic when *Da-sein* is transcending.

Both Nietzsche and Heidegger share a similar hatred of modern art. Nietzsche, with his diabolical wit, famously refers to modern art as: “*L’art pour l’art*, the virtuoso croaking of shivering frogs, despairing in their swamp.”<sup>33</sup> Weber too gives a classic and disparaging definition of modern art as “aesthetic modernity,” which accuses modern art of encouraging the pitifully privatized, inward, lewd, and fearful. Heidegger too sees such art as promoting nothing less than an “enfeebled cult of inferiority.”<sup>34</sup> More than this, however, Heidegger sees modern art as destructive and dangerous for man’s relation to Being. “Preserving the work does not reduce people to their private experiences, but brings them into affiliation with the truth that is happening in the work.”<sup>35</sup> *Im Gegenteil* to Nietzsche’s thought of true art as a willing, Heidegger asserts that, on the contrary, it is a “knowing” which brings man to stand in the open region of the work. “Preserving the work, as a knowing, is a sober standing-within the awesomeness of the truth that is happening in the work.”<sup>36</sup>

“It is said by many men, that on his tomb there are written these words: Here lies Arthur,  
The once and future King”<sup>1</sup>

-T.H. White

At this point, we have made our way through the centuries; detailing the ontic and the ontological, we have remembered that the *earth* draws the *world* to it, and holds it tightly therein. So it is with our German *Geist*. Let us not forget, that in this process of unveiling the history of Being in the West that we carry with us the lost definition of transcendence, belonging properly to the Post-Enlightenment world. Open to the open region of *Alētheia*, we know that the great work of art sets up a *world* on this *earth* and that at its origin is *Da-sein*, who, by holding open, keeps us transposed into the mystery of metaphysics—keeps us held out and transcending. In strife, the *world* towers up within the *earth*, the ontological within the ontic.

It is thus the great work of art that we have sought on our quest for the “truth” of metaphysics as the transcendental. We have named these great works of art as the Acolytes of Being. Out of the orient, into ancient Greece, we named tragedy as the sublimation of the Dionysian and the Apollonian in the dithyramb and, sailing up the river Rhine, found our German Aeschylus, his music reviving the primal poeticizing of language.

It seems, however, we are continuously making a return to the Greeks, when we have already said that this return is neither necessary nor possible. If art is what we seek, our Acolyte, then this is certainly a serious mistake, for the Greeks knew very little about great works of art. We have said that in each of these works, tragedy and its real renewal in Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, irrationality is put to form as Dionysus wedded to Apollo. Is

this not a Greek notion? If it is it had been long forgotten and taken up only in the German world under Wagner's sway. In German, art is *Kunst*. In Greek, the word *technē* [τέχνη] once belonged to both art and craft.<sup>2</sup> *Technē*, however, means neither creation nor work, but "to know" [*wissen*].

In Greek thought, the essence of this knowing, which is held in *technē* belongs too to *Alētheia*, the forlorn truth whose essential essence we have sought in the preserving power of our Acolytes. As *Da-sein* sees into the Being of beings where they come to stand in the open of *Alētheia*, he lets them be. Letting beings be preserves the mystery of Being. Preserving the mystery of Being is part of *Da-sein*'s task, yet in inauthenticity *Da-sein* forgets, turning away from the mystery of existence, which is granted [*gewähren*] to his keeping. In simply letting beings be, it is difficult for *Da-sein* to "hold out."

Held also within *Alētheia*, however, is the knowing of *technē*, which acts as a "bringing forth." If the Greek *Physis* [φύσις] (understood in accordance with metaphysics [μεταφυσική]) is understood originally as the arising of something from outside of itself, it is also a "bringing forth."

We now have metaphysics as a "bringing forth," proper to the original experiences of *Alētheia* and *technē*. Together, *Alētheia* and *technē* bring forth a world. In the history of metaphysics, which we have detailed artistically as the hidden history of Being in the world, we have said that metaphysics means transcendence. Setting up an earth and setting forth a world occurs in the great work of art, which has at its deepest and most essential origin in authentic *Da-sein*. *Da-sein* affects the "bringing forth" [*technē*] of Being, which occurs in the great work of art. Here beings stand in *Alētheia*.



It has now become very plain that our Acolytes of Being, as great works of art, are in their essential essences always already *Da-sein*. Here it is critical to remind ourselves that *Da-sein*, as Heidegger writes it during his *Kehr*, does not simply mean “human being” or even “the there being” but, more than this means: *the there-ness of Being*. Ontologically towering up within ontic *Da-sein*—who is thrown towards destiny—Being is pressed into the shape of its history.<sup>3</sup>

At their Greek origin, both *physis* and *technē* meant “bringing-forth” as proper to *Alētheia*, and were taken over by Roman translation, without any corresponding originality. *Technē* as “bringing forth” in Greek was also proper to another word. This word is *Poiēsis* [ποίησις]. We can say nothing more beautiful or true than that, this “bringing forth” is *something poetic*.<sup>4</sup>

However, while *Alētheia* was hidden in the shadow of *veritas* through the ages, *technē* gave its name to technology. As with the translation of *Alētheia* to *veritas*, this translation marks the rootlessness of Western thought. Against *technē* as a knowing proper to *Poiēsis* that “brings forth” something essentially poetic, technology was based on modern physics as a calculable science.<sup>5</sup> When science becomes our passion, the revealing that rules modern technology becomes not the artistic “bringing forth” proper to *technē’s Poiēsis*, but a *challenging* [*Herausfordern*].<sup>6</sup>

*In this challenging Da-sein is in the most extreme danger.*

Similarly to *Alētheia*, *Technē* has for the past 2,500 years remained in erring [*irren*]: a means to an end, a human activity, something “intelligently in the hand” of man.<sup>7</sup> Dominated by the calculable sciences in the domain of *veritas*, we have said that scientific man irrupts into being as a whole [*Das Seiendes im Ganz*] and that precisely at the moment

he leaps forward to secure what is properly his he is speaking of something else entirely. The nihilating nothing, of which he wishes to know absolutely nothing. As such, “The irruption belonging to “bringing forth” [*Her-vor-bringen*] occurs only in the authentic artist.<sup>8</sup> This irruption is thus the proper task of *Poiēsis*, of the poet.

Yet modern technology comes to presence as disturbingly not any sort of poetry or craftsmanship. As an exact science, modern technology “challenges-forth” and this challenging gathers man into ordering so that he sets to work preparing guidelines and raising standards. Man is thus made subordinate to this orderability that challenges forth,<sup>9</sup> *he is indeed building an iron cage for himself*. It is in this way that man ceases to unconceal, for unconcealment as it unfolds in the challenging of scientific technology is never human handiwork any more than it is in the realm man traverses every time he as a subject related predicatively to an object in his linear progression.<sup>10</sup>

With technology, *Dasein* turns his back on the mystery, enslaved by the progressive “will to will” of a bourgeois nihilism. All the world retreats into the earth, locked therein. And beauty, as we have called it, falls into a cold and dreamless sleep.

Thus: The hydroelectric plant is set into the current of the Rhine. It sets the Rhine to supplying its hydraulic pressure, which then sets the turbines turning. This turning sets those machines in motion whose thrusts sets going the electric current for which the long-distance power station and its network of cables are set up to dispatch electricity. In the context of the interlocking processes pertaining to the orderly disposition of electrical energy, even the Rhine itself appears to be something at our command. The hydroelectric plant is not built into the Rhine River as the wooden bridge that joined bank with bank for hundreds of years. Rather, the river is dammed up into the power plant. What the river is now, namely, a water-power supplier, derives from the essence of the power station. In order that we may even remotely consider the monstrosity that reigns here, let us ponder for a moment the contrast that is spoken by the two titles: “The Rhine,” as dammed up into the *power* works, and “The Rhine,” as uttered by the *art*-work, in Hölderlin’s hymn by that name. But, it will be replied, the Rhine is still a river in the landscape, is it not? Perhaps. But how? In no other way than as an object on call for inspection by a tour group ordered there by the vacation industry.<sup>11</sup>

We recall from across the centuries our Greek temple, and the god, which had come to presence therein. His holy precinct was once delimited by the standing of the stone as it rested in the rock, which held him there to reign. And in his manifestation, too, the surge of the surf against the rocks below thundered all the clearer.

He sits now in an empty repose, behind a roped off section of the hall. And the waves below are muffled, by the hurry. We have borne witnessed the *Götterverlassenheit*.

In the power of *Poiēsis* as something poetic, the proper home to the “bringing forth” of *technē*, our modern scientific world has wrought a challenging. Stolen from *technē* when *Alētheia* was forgotten by sophistry and the traditions of logic, the essence of modern technology lies now in *enframing* [*Gestell*]<sup>12</sup>. Enframing is what happens when the hydroelectric plant comes to dominate the essence of the Rhine, and *Dasein* forgets.

*Dir mag auf heißem Pfade unter Tannen oder  
Im Dunkel des Eichwalds gehüllt  
In Stahl, mein Sinclair! Gott erscheinen oder  
In Wolken, du kennst ihn, da du kennst jugendlich,  
Des Guten Kraft, und nimmer ist dir  
Verborgen das Lächeln des Herrschers  
Bei Tage, wenn  
Es fieberhaft und angekettet das  
Lebendige scheint oder auch  
Bei Nacht, wenn alles gemischt  
Ist ordnungslos und wiederkehrt  
Uralte Verwirrung.*

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[To you in the heat of a path under fir-trees or  
Within the oak forest's half light, wrapped  
In steel, my Sinclair, God may appear, or  
In clouds, you'll know him, since, youthfully, you know  
The good God's power, and never from you  
The smile of the Ruler is hidden  
By day, when all  
That lives seems febrile  
And fettered, or also

By night, when all is mingled  
Chaotically and back again comes]  
Primaeval Confusion.<sup>13</sup>

For Heidegger, enframing blocks the shining forth and holding sway of truth, instead, it challenges. It is thus that where enframing “challenges forth” that there is danger in the utmost sense.<sup>14</sup> The enframed essence of the Rhine is ordered, regulated and secured: as “standing-reserve” [*Bestand*]. The Rhine is “intelligently in the hand” of man; its essence is “dammed up.”

As with the water’s pressure, challenged forth to turn the turbines, so too does Being tower up within the same apparatus and it becomes difficult to ignore the fury of its energy, gathering in standing reserve. In the last lines from Hölderlin’s hymn, “The Rhine,” we return chaotically “and back again comes primaeval confusion.”<sup>15</sup>

In Heidegger’s words, “Freedom is that which conceals in a way that opens to light, in whose clearing shimmers a veil that hides the essential occurrence of all truth and lets that veil appear as what veils.”<sup>16</sup> This is the realm of the mystery, properly under *Da-sein*’s protective power. Yet we know at this point that we have lost what is most proper to its protection, these Greek thoughts taken over without corresponding originality have slipped away into an erring. In our search for the Acolytes we turn to the great work of art for the very reason that *Poiēsis*, as a “bringing forth” of something poetic, *is also a destining*.<sup>17</sup>

Since the turn from *technē* to technology the bringing forth of *Poiēsis* has been in eclipse. With the advent of modernity, essences have been “challenged forth” and are “dammed up” in standing reserve. “It remains true nonetheless that man in the technological age is, in a particularly striking way, challenged forth into revealing.”<sup>18</sup> In 1914, the damn breaks.

At the turn of the century, World War I presented high-minded, increasingly liberal European society with a deep cultural and historical crisis. As young nation-states tore the modern world asunder, European civilization was brought to the brink of complete collapse. Early twentieth century Europe was no doubt, a *wasteland*. For the German *Volk*, who cultivated their extra-modern relationship with “ultimate reality” ontically in the landscape, modernity and its implications (industrialization, modernization, rationalization) immediately threatened the people’s community [*Völksgemeinschaft*]. Migrant workers arrived from distant lands with no hope of cultivating a relationship with the *Geist*. The introduction of these workers, deemed the “true proletariat,” (described in *Völkisch* terms as hopelessly “nervous” and “rootless”) posed a grave threat to Germans souls, thus culminating in “the true proletariat being an ‘unfortunate product of modernization.’”<sup>19</sup>

This threat of the “true proletariat” to the *Völksgemeinschaft* is directly related to their spiritual connection to the soil, which the *Volk* believed to be imbibed with the *Geist*. Of this aggressive rejection of eighteenth century rationality, characterized by modernity and actualized by the “true proletariat,” it becomes dangerously clear that “This group, identified as the ‘true proletariat,’ consisted of the totally disinherited... Consequently, it was futile to extend them a saving hand. On the contrary, the proletariat was the enemy to be vanquished.”<sup>20</sup>

In connection to this disinherited group of migratory workers, lacking a homeland and thus a natural and spiritual connection to the *Geist* is the idea of the critical importance of the *Geist* to not only the community of the *Volk* but, more than this, the very hope of cultivating a human soul. Of the importance of the *Geist*, “Only through roots anchored in the *Volk* could the German find a release for his religious dynamic—a force subsumed in the

*Geist*.”<sup>21</sup> For the *Volk* “rootedness” in the community as well as the natural landscape cultivated the soul and propelled the collective towards transcendence. “Rootedness,” for the *Volk* thus breaks open the ontological difference, the delimitation of ontic and ontological. Cultivated in the earth, the world of the *Volk* towers up and, as a work of art itself, is held open by the people. Resistant to the enframing of modernity, as it sets its standards and plans, the *Volk* is indeed “challenged forth.”

In nineteenth century *Völkisch* literature and art there comes about a “virtue of ferociousness,” apparent in famous texts such as *Der Werwolf* by Christian Morgenstern. This virtue of ferociousness is also strikingly present in Wagner’s renewal of German mythology, most potently his adaptation of the *Nibelungenlied* in his famous *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. In each of these *Volk*-tales, violence is virtue—necessary to protecting the tender growth of some mysterious saving power. Cultivating its ontological essence ontically in the landscape, the violence of the *Volk* is at once ontic and ontological.

From 1806 to 1829, Goethe crafted what can arguably be hailed as his most famous work, the tragedy *Faust*. A chilling tale, *Faust* has been written and rewritten across Europe with versions of the story penned by authors from Christopher Marlowe to Thomas Mann. Jaded by his life as a scholar and a doctor, *Faust* attempts to take his own life and in so doing calls upon the devil, Mephistopheles. In exchange for his immortal soul, Mephistopheles grants *Faust* both magic and wisdom; however, when the time comes that the deal is up, *Faust* will be dragged to hell and damned for all eternity.

In Marlowe’s play from 1602, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, *Faust* is damned to hell.<sup>22</sup> So too goes the story in the 1947 telling of Mann, *Doktor Faustus: Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn, erzählt von einem Freunde* (“Doctor

Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn, Told by a Friend"). Knowing that he is doomed to descend into madness, Leverkühn, a struggling composer, makes a pact with the devil: his immortal soul in exchange for the most beautiful music of all time. After rising to fame, Leverkühn too is damned, and dragged to hell by Mephistopheles.<sup>23</sup>

It is only in Goethe's *Faust* that damnation is forestalled when Faust's Gretchen, whom he used his powers to seduce, pleads with God to save his soul. Enlightened by compassion, innocence is restored and the angels intervene, carrying Faust out of the "eternal empty" to heaven.<sup>24</sup>

For Heidegger, when we think of "to save" we mean nothing less than to "fetch something back into its essence."<sup>25</sup> Lost to us first was *Alētheia*, and with it *technē*, both proper to *Poiēsis*. If we have sought the lost definition of transcendence, and hunted for its Acolytes through and through the history of the West, our task has been nothing less than to fetch back these heretofore forlorn essences—and bring them to stand in the blinding light of their Being. We are bolstering the ontological ferociousness of the saving power.

Thus, we have no other choice than to look with clear eyes into not just any danger, but *the danger*.<sup>26</sup> This is no passive act. We stand now in resolution. For: "in the realm of thinking, a painstaking effort to think through still more primally what is primally thought is not the absurd wish to revive what is past, but rather the sober readiness to be astounded before the coming of the dawn."<sup>27</sup>

In all the history of the West, we have wandered, keeper of essences, we have come finally to the greatest precipice. With our ontological eye trained on the horizon, we make a resolute turn towards fate as it gathers into a great destining. Thus we are able to say that from this vantage point there may be no more wondrous idea in the world than that of

twentieth century Europe. Home to traditions of high art and literature, philosophy and science, Europe struggled with the advent of the modern world to the tune of two world wars—crying out for some *kathartic* resolve. As a long-standing emblem of culture and tradition tore itself asunder to the alarm of the watching world, Europe came to the abyssal plane of its grave historical crisis.

By way of a study of poetry, philosophy, myth, music and language the grave historical crisis of twentieth century Europe—the clash of nation-state romanticism with modernism, industrialization and technologization—can be brought through history back to its origin and *combated*.

There is no question at this point in our quest that combat is what we seek. And we recall now that the forlorn unclosedness of *Alētheia* is echoed in German as *Entschlossenheit*: resoluteness. We have traveled on an ontological path, seeking the ontic keepers of essence—those who have cultivated an unveiling truth. We have called these keepers the Acolytes. Truth as *Alētheia* is what happens in the great work of art. At the origin of the great work of art is *Dasein*.<sup>28</sup>

We have called *Dasein* the “there being,” who in his emotive compartments fears and cares for the Being of beings when he sees them standing in the light. But under the reigning sway of sophistry and science, *Dasein* forgets—for *Dasein* is human. In art, *Dasein* gazes out into the forgotten mystery of Being. In the strife occurring between world and earth in the great work of art *Da-sein* ushers in the *thereness of Being*. In strife, *Da-sein* holds open the open region, as the coming preserver, *and the light of the Being of beings burns into oblivion*.



Our tale of the Acolytes has detailed great works of art. From tragedy to opera and now to poetry. But was poetry not always at the very center of all ontological hopes? Yes and no. The art of language takes Dionysus to Apollo, and seeks to hold him therein—as the earth cradles the world. In tragedy as in opera, language, which had fallen into everydayness and out of its original song, desperately needed a revival. This revival was the music, the lifeblood of language.

For Dionysus, as with the Christ, we know that gods die and are reborn—a renewal that is achieved only through the shedding of blood...

April is the cruelest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.<sup>29</sup>

Deemed the most important poem of the twentieth century, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* pairs a culturally traumatized post World War I Europe with King Arthur's wasteland of a kingdom, devoid of the grail. Tying itself mystically with a Pan-European romance, this poetic work of art affects a cultural gathering. In this great work of art, the monumental historical task of the twentieth century is "brought to light." Such a "bringing to light" insists, as we have said, that close attention be paid not only to the cultural void of the twentieth century but also to the traditions of language, myth and music offered to the historical destiny of European society by way of our search for the historical Acolytes. Only one who knows no fear can wrest love from the claws of sin, and restore the innocence of the gods.

Standing amidst the ruin of European culture, we turn to T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* as another work of art shining a light on our way. It is in the accompanying endnotes to the difficult poem that the skeleton key to its secret is discovered in the form of a very brief and

controversial text, Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. In his endnotes, Eliot himself asserts, "Indeed, so deeply am I indebted, Miss. Weston's book will elucidate the difficulties of this poem much better than my notes can do; and I recommend it (apart from the great interest of the book itself) to any who think such elucidation of the poem worth the trouble."<sup>30</sup>

From *The Waste Land's* assertion of a deep cultural crisis in twentieth century Europe, Eliot's reference to Weston's critical text roots his concerns for modern European society in a mythical history. We are speaking, of course, of the "Once and Future King."

Named Arthur, Amfortas or the Fisher King in various legends, his lands wither and perish, devoid of the life force of the grail. In other words, without the mystical life force of the grail, which has been lost to sin, the lands become infertile, culturally void and rootless. In nineteenth century Germany, *Völkisch* Ideology grappled with a strikingly similar struggle in the face of modernity. For Heidegger, inauthenticity, or forgetfulness of Being, plagues modern society in direct connection to the rise of technology and rationalism—these being defining qualities of modernity that the *Volk* resists. For the *Volk*, the "virtue of ferociousness"<sup>31</sup> begins to manifest *most violently* as it becomes clear that the *Geist* itself is in danger.

It seems that we are certainly making a blind, stupid leap of faith here at the advent of the twentieth century, with the destiny of Being hinging merely on the idea of some "mystical body" brought into the modern age from Arthurian legend by the difficult and stubborn particularities of a very *Sonderweg* style argument. However, this is not simple the case. At the end of her introductory chapter to *From Ritual to Romance* (the words of which,

we recall, T.S. Eliot asserts that *The Waste Land* is founded upon) Weston writes of the reconciliation of the Arthurian grail legends with European mythologies:

In the process of our investigation we must retrace our steps and turn back to the early traditions of our Aryan forefathers, and see whether we cannot... lay our hand upon a clue, which, like the fabled thread of Ariadne, shall serve as a guide through the mazes of a varying, yet curiously persistent tradition.<sup>32</sup>

From Weston's radical assertion, it becomes quite clear that a reconciliation of mythical histories is called for from the depths of Eliot's poetry.

Such a tradition, a rooted and spiritual conception of man's "essence" so too, his *Da-sein*, as creative fertility bound to the "mystical body" is brought before the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by *Völkisch* Ideology. This peculiar development carries in its heart the old stories, from Arthur to Siegfried and seeks to tell them anew, not only with brave and fierce new qualities but, for Germany's Siegfried and Parsifal, *with music*. Seeking to match technologization's augmented speed, myth too gathers, challenged forth by the great danger, enframed by the music—violence standing in reserve.

Myth and music have gathered in the twilight, towering up within the *Volk*. All eyes are on the hero; an outmoded ideal—shattered by the shells and drowned by the gasses of the First World War. As the lights go out across Europe, however, music and meter fall silent.

First published in the October 1922 issue of *The Criterion* at a massive four hundred and thirty-four lines long, T.S. Eliot's most critical work, *The Waste Land*, has since been heralded by scholars as "the most important poem of the twentieth century." Divided into five sections, "The Burial of the Dead," "A Game of Chess," "The Fire Sermon," "Death by Water," and finally "What the Thunder Said," *The Waste Land* presents a formidable intellectual task. As we have hinted, the great poem loosely follows the legend of the grail, as laid out in a mythic pan-European context by Weston.

Combined with vignettes of the contemporary conditions in Britain only three short years after the end of World War One, the great poem shifts between satire and prophecy, defining logical definition at first glance. Abrupt and unannounced changes in speaker, location, time and (importantly) meter, make the work jarring, even uncomfortable to read.

The behemoth of a poem is indeed well known for its disjointed structure, indicative of literary modernism: a reflection on the fragmented, obliterated, modern metropolis.

Originating in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century seemingly in response to the crisis leading to and following the First World War, literary modernism is characterized by a self-conscious break with traditional verse. Driven by an overarching consciousness, the modernist style was propelled by a desire to combat the horrors of the present in search of a renewed oneness. The jarring and ugly sounds produced by the poem signal crisis and despair in the face of a world whose jagged images are reflected in the poem's meter.<sup>33</sup> In much the same way, we can intimately understand that Eliot's use of modernist style in crafting *The Waste Land* suggests that not only is Dionysus missing, but Apollo too has fled.

Completing the behemoth poem in 1922, *The Waste Land* (originally entitled "He Do the Police in Different Voices"—a nod to Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*), was originally almost *twice* its present length.<sup>34</sup> Rushing straight to Paris with the manuscript, Eliot presented the poem to one of his closest friends and confidants, the fascist poet Ezra Pound. It was Pound, in fact, who first suggested to Eliot that the masterwork be called *The Waste Land*, in order to mirror Weston's text. Consequentially, the work is dedicated to Pound directly under the infamous epigraph with the added "*il miglior fabbro*" [the greatest locksmith].<sup>35</sup>

Deeply affected by the horrors of World War One, Ezra Pound renounced his American citizenship and garnered support for Mussolini and Hitler. After the Second World War, he would be captured by American troops in Italy and tried for treason. Pound, however, would never stand trial. Confined to a steel cage, in the manner of a big cat, the poet suffered a mental collapse. His memory inspires my own sordid image of Eliot's infamous epigraph.

*Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent: Σιβυλλα τι θελεις; respondebat illa: αποθανειν θελω.*

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With my own eyes I saw the Sibyl of Cumae hanging in a cage, and when the boys said to her: 'Sibyl, what do you want?' She replied: 'I want to die.'<sup>36</sup>

If we remember our Greek mythology, we know that "Sibyl" here is not so much a person but an idea of "man," a collective, prophetic voice under the influence of the gods. In Eliot's powerful epigraph she is seen locked in a cage, wishing only for death, for she foresees nothing but decay. Sibyl's proclamation mirrors Eliot's own pessimistic views of contemporary society, sitting in a "cage" built by the modern world. For Eliot, Europe has lost its unifying narrative and art, mythology, ideology and religion all decay in the grip of modernism.<sup>37</sup> Living in a culture that has decayed but will not die, Sibyl's remarks recall to us the plight of the grail king.

The tone of *The Waste Land* is prophetic and satiric all at once, giving the poem a drunken, heavy, sullen sense of resignation to death on this path of decay. An expatriate and arch-conservative himself, Eliot was very much concerned with protection of the guardians of culture and tradition, as made abundantly clear in his book *Christianity and Culture: The*

*Idea of a Christian Society and Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. As such, his turn to literary modernism, then, leads us to an overwhelming question.

Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'  
Let us go and make out visit.<sup>38</sup>

From Eliot's telltale epigraph, it becomes clear that his modernist style in the poem is a grim reflection of some lost hope for the augury of restored oneness. There is no *katharsis* to wring out the *polis*, no serif *Geist* to enfold the soul in its embrace. Turning to Weston, our skeleton key, we come to the realization that this thwarted hope seeks the grail—which is lost to the ages, and the Kings lands decay. From a reflection on Eliot's pessimistic modernist style what can be said for the future of this wasteland of a kingdom?

There is, however, a more secretive dimension to Eliot's epigraph. Written in a total of seven languages—English, French, German, Italian, Latin Greek and Sanskrit—*The Waste Land* plays a deceptive metaphysical language game with its audience.<sup>39</sup>

As seen in the epigraph, the narration is written in Latin while the actual dialogue is written in Greek. This malicious transition, remember, signals for Heidegger the rootlessness of all Western thought and the original forgetfulness of Being—a message Eliot is certainly paralleling. In each section of *The Waste Land*, and at times even within them, Eliot's style shift and changes in abrupt confusion. From classical meter to drunken song resisting any poetic treatment, Eliot's style searches for a defining pattern and finds none.<sup>40</sup>

Taken directly from the grail legends, the famous title of Eliot's poem is a specific reference to the Arthurian myth of the Fisher King, sometimes known as the "Wounded King." The last keeper of the grail, the king suffers from a fatal wound as his kingdom perishes around him, as if its fate is tied to his mystical body. Knights travel from faraway lands to bring remedies in an attempt to heal the king, but all fail.

Of the ontological nature of the work of art, Heidegger writes: “In the work of art something other is brought together with the thing that is being made. To bring together in Greek is *sumballein* [συμβάλλειν]. The work is a symbol.”<sup>41</sup>

A reference to the decaying lands of the Fisher King, Eliot’s *The Waste Land* signals the degradedness of modern culture. The first vignette to the opening section of the poem, “The Burial of the Dead” begins with a reference to the Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, April being the month when the land regenerates after the winter. In the modern wasteland, this dream of regeneration is a cruel one. The remembrance of spring only recalls the dead, and modern Europe prefers the numbness, the forgetfulness, of a long winter. Memory would insist on a confrontation of the present with the past.<sup>42</sup> In a city of graves, everyone has someone to mourn. “With the, death itself departed from tradition and also became irrational...”<sup>43</sup>

As the totality of beings gathers round, the nothing rushes up to meet us. The second vignette opens on an abyss, “a heap of broken images” constituting nothing—“I can show you fear in a handful of dust.”<sup>44</sup> Reason has abandoned us and the Christ fails. Signaling again the lost grail, “And the dry stone no sound of water.”<sup>45</sup> The speaker recalls a lost love, the hyacinths in her wet hair, but finds the memory too painful. “...I could not speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither living nor dead, and I knew nothing, looking into the heart of light, the silence, *Oed’ und leer das Meer*.”<sup>46</sup> Filtered through imagery and quotations from Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, the *Liebestod* connects with Arthurian tales of love and loss. Remembering, too, the origins of the Tristan Chord, there is no resolve, no *katharsis*. The vibrancy of the memory of love lost leads the speaker to the brutal realization of the nothingness he’s confronted with.

Disenchanted with the promise of rationality and science, the speaker goes for a tarot reading. But even in this safe haven of mythology the deck is scattered and divided, some cards don't even belong. The speaker's card is the drowned Phoenician Sailor—a card that doesn't even exist in tarot decks.<sup>47</sup> The most unclear section of the poem, Eliot appears to be merging the Christina four suite deck with the Pagan tarot deck. The title of the poem too signals this merging, as Eliot uses a dialectic structure in his four-part poem and a trinity in his title. The card of the drowned Phoenician Sailor signals the second the last section of the poem: “Death by Water,” and Madame Sosostris, the tarot reader, warns: “Fear death by Water.”<sup>48</sup>

The shortest section of the poem, “Death by Water” is also the most classical. A short, ten line stanza written in rhyming couplets, the section can be seen as juxtaposing the way different languages express rhythm (Being). In ancient Greek and Latin, rhythm was created through the alteration of long and short syllables. The Phoenicians dead body floating along in the sea speaks to the outmoded morality of drowned out antiquity. In English, as in German, rhythm is created through *stress*.

In the fourth vignette, of the opening section “The Burial of the Dead,” Eliot introduces the modern wasteland—London. This episode of the poem is quite surreal. As the speaker wanders through London streets, populated only by ghosts of the dead, he comments “Unreal City,”<sup>49</sup> (a reference to Baudelaire) as he moves, like a ghost himself, along the dead streets—a clear allusion to Dante's hell. The theme of death and decay almost consumes the entirety of the poem. The motif of the modern wasteland returns once again in this third section of the poem, “The Fire Sermon,” an allusion to a sermon given by the Buddha, in which he encourages his followers to give up earthly pleasures in favor of



following the true Dharma. The scene opens on a desolate riverbank: rats and garbage surround the speaker who is musing over “the king my brothers wreck”<sup>50</sup> among the filth. A chorus of voices sings softly in mournful harmony, recalling and grieving the lost oneness, which once existed between the speakers.

“Sweet Thames, run softly until I end my song...”<sup>51</sup>

It’s in the fifth and final section of the poem that Eliot refers directly to the Fisher King. Portrayed as a wounded and dying god, his pitiful presence signals a nihilistic climax. In his final moments he recalls the perpetual rise and fall of Athens, Alexandria, Vienna and London, who are destroyed and rebuilt over the centuries. Revisited most ominously near the end of the work, the Fisher King himself reflects on the misery and disaster of the modern world, and capitulates.

As the King emotionlessly regales the spectators he foregrounds a decaying chapel, suggesting the grail legend once again. Rain pours down across the chapel, across the lands, across the Fisher King and the desolate coast; but no rejuvenation, no *katharsis* will come... for no hero stands to claim it. The Fisher King, wounded and tired, begins to prepare his lands as the poem closes, indicating his coming death.

In the European grail legends as described by Weston in her text, the pure fool, Percival, arrives just in time to save the King and heal the wasteland, though, in Eliot’s apocalyptic poem... the hero never comes. In order to heal the King, Percival must only ask a simple question. Though the question itself varies from version to version of the retelling of the tale, the fact remains: It is the asking of the question, which brings the rain... healing the wasteland...

“There was a time when the bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful was called *technē*. The *Poiēsis* of the fine arts was also called *technē*.”<sup>52</sup> As a revealing that brought forth and make present we are seeking too a revival. If *technē* is proper to *Poiēsis*, in the most original linguistic sense, then it must be revived in the linguistic work. Yet, as with modern technology, enframing has challenged forth and blocked the power of *Poiēsis*. In our search for the Acolytes, language has lost and found its music. Language harbors in itself the music. So too “the essential unfolding of technology harbors in itself what we least expect, the possible rise of the saving power.”<sup>53</sup>

Human achievement alone can never directly counter this danger. Human achievement alone can never banish it. But human reflection can ponder the fact that all saving power must be of a higher essence than that what is endangered, thought at the same time must be kindred to it.<sup>54</sup>

In this most extreme danger, we begin to make out, deep in the abyss, the shining light of the saving power. We have said, “to save” means to “fetch something home into its essence.”<sup>55</sup> At the outset of our quest we made a play to “save” the heretofore forgotten, deluded and misremembered definition of transcendence and defined it in consonance with the entire tradition of western metaphysics. So too did we say that in the original realm of metaphysics as the transcendental that that moment of Being beyond beings defined transcendence. Thus was the term, along with metaphysics proper, fetched back into its essence. From the primaeval place we made our advance, as a hooded traveler, preserving Being in the allegory of art.

How have we made this path? By calling into question beings as a whole? Yes. But more than this, by posing the original metaphysical inquiry, which calls into question the entire tradition of Western metaphysics along with the questioner himself. *Da-sein is on the move.*<sup>56</sup>

At the outset of the destiny of the West this presencing of art and technology, drawing past each other like two comets in the course of the cosmos, illuminates the presence of the gods...

*Nah ist  
Und schwer zu fassen der Gott.  
Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst  
Das Rettende auch.*

\*\*\*

[Near is  
And difficult to understand is God  
Where danger is, grows  
The saving power also.]<sup>57</sup>

## Götterdämmerung

“Da-sein means: being held out into the nothing.”<sup>1</sup>

-Martin Heidegger

To this great horizon we have arrived, questioner of essences. Having taken our origin from deep in the West, we posed anew the first question: “what are Beings?”<sup>2</sup> We have said that this is the question that first grounds all history.

Yet with the traditions of sophistry and logic, and onward too to the calculable sciences, we have fallen into repose—and the greatest mystery has been forgotten.<sup>3</sup> Following the gaze of the *Angelus Novus*, we were able to hit upon a clue, the “so called root of the word.” Thus was the goddess *Alētheia* restored to her rightful power, and when we saw her standing in the light for the first time we knew of no other idea in all the world that could ever have been appropriate to beauty.

Having pledged loyalty to the beauty of *Alētheia*, we have scoured the globe for her Acolytes. At our own origin, which we took from Greece, but also from an even more primaeval place than that, we threw ourselves headlong into the open region. Here we have remained, on a shadow march through the history of the West.

When we threw ourselves out originally, we sought the salvation of three concepts: metaphysics, truth, and transcendence. We have said that when posing the original metaphysical inquiry that the whole of metaphysics must be brought into question, at once with the questioner himself. In turn, we have posed the question of transcendence in the same way. At the very center of all our hopes, we have sought to “save” these terms, to “fetch them back into their essences.”<sup>4</sup>

In all the history we have amassed, we have come to know that between scientific thought and religious thought there is hardly any distinction: man is “held at bay” from his essence. In our search for the Acolytes, subversive to persistent scientific alienation, we have named great works of art. At the origin of the work of art, we know that there is a caring *Da-sein*, for whom beings hide and show themselves. When *Da-sein* gazes long into the abyss of Being, beyond the veil of *Alētheia*, open as such in the original realm of metaphysics, *he is transcending*. We have said that in this “Being beyond beings,” *Da-sein is free*.<sup>5</sup>

But how? To this point material truth has signified the equation of something intelligently in hand with its “rational” concept.<sup>6</sup> Thus we have been laboring under the impression that this concept of the “truth” has nothing to do with the Being of beings—thus is not “transcending.”

Yet across the world, scientific man has investigated the qualities and quantities of beings, has had them formed correctly into matter and stretched them to reason. As scientific man leaps forward to investigate beings as a whole where he once came to nothing, he has now come to technology, which he believes to be properly his. From *technē* proper to *Poiēsis* under the original power of *Alētheia*, *technē* once meant: “to know” as well as “to bring forth.” Yet in the shadow of the forgotten mystery, *technē* has come to be named technology, which challenges.<sup>7</sup>

Long ago, *technē* was also the name given to the craftsmen and handworkers of ancient Greece. Art is *Da-sein*'s handiwork. It is in this way that “art and technology draw past each other like two stars in the course of the heavens—the stellar course of the mystery of their essences as the unveiling, i.e., of truth.”<sup>8</sup> Thus in the modern wasteland the mystery

of these essences and their unveiling brings about the primary occurrence of truth in the epochal encounter between Being and beings.

Standing now before an ontic—abyssal—plane, the world of the European wasteland of the twentieth century towers up in two distinct ways: as art and as technology—eternal opposites welded together by strife, which assert one another to their essential essences, the unveiling, i.e., of truth, which, only in this conflict, returns to its poetic origin. In the open region of *Alētheia*, the realm of the veil, beings come to stand in the light of their Being. We have also said:

Holding itself out into the nothing, *Dasein* is in each case already beyond beings as a whole. This being beyond beings we call “transcendence.” If in the ground of its essence *Dasein* were not transcending, which now means, if it were not in advance holding itself out into the nothing, then it could never be related to beings nor even to itself.<sup>9</sup>

Here it is clear that *Da-sein* is transcending, that *Da-sein* is free. It is thus that we know:

“*The essence of truth is freedom.*”<sup>10</sup>

In the history of metaphysics we have detailed, and as such attempted to “fetch back into its essence” with regards to both *technē* and *Alētheia*, we have boldly asserted that metaphysics means transcendence and is as such the history of human freedom, in shadow and in doubt. Yet, “Metaphysics regards such truth as the imperishable and the eternal, which can never be founded on the transitoriness and fragility that belonged to man’s essence... How then can the essence of truth still have its substances and grounds in human freedom?”<sup>11</sup>

Once again we think back to the history we have detailed, that of logic, religion and the calculable sciences, all of whose essences are housed in a “holding at bay,” which we can come to think of as “enframing” and “standing reserve,” now, in the age of modern

technology, wrought into a “challenging.” In the Enlightenment tradition (one amongst those named), we have experienced first-hand that “Resistance to the proposition that the essence of truth is freedom is based on preconceptions, the most obstinate of which is that freedom is a property of man.”<sup>12</sup>

Here in the twentieth century, however, under the sway of the intimate opposition between art and technology, the unveiling of the mystery of these lost essences brings about the primary occurrence of truth. The planets align, as in the myths of old, and the open region breaks into the unsaid. “Ek-sistence,” when written this way, expresses “the ecstatic character of freedom, standing outside of itself.”<sup>13</sup> Here, at the breaking of the world, *Da-sein* gathers as the thereness of Being itself, thrown headlong into the world as a great destining. Standing there, before the blinding light of the open region, ek-sistent *Da-sein* is ek-static and disclosive.<sup>14</sup> “Ek-sistence, rooted in truth as freedom, is exposure to the disclosedness of beings as such.”<sup>15</sup>

The question we first posed, “What is ‘transcendence?’” (in intimate relation to “What is Metaphysics?”) now marks an ek-static moment of ek-sistent *Da-sein*, which first founds all history and to which we have made a resolute return. If art and technology, drawing past one another in the course of the cosmos, bring about the unveiling, i.e. of truth, and we have said that the essence of truth is freedom, then there is one thing I insist that everyone who reads this essay in reflection on the greatest work of art of the twentieth century know:

Man does not possess freedom as a property. At best, the converse holds: freedom, ek-static, disclosive *Da-sein*, possesses man—so originally that only it secures for humanity that distinctive relatedness to beings as a whole... Therefore man is in the manner of ek-sistence.<sup>16</sup>

It is here, in the wasteland, that the thinking of Being acts as the most profound liberation in all history, founding, once again, all history. This liberation that renews history

is as such put into words and grounded so that man, as ek-sistent disclosive *Da-sein*, is *moved*. “How many have ears for these words matters not.”<sup>17</sup> Those who can hear them are the bearers of truth, ranging with poets and thinkers, as demi-gods.<sup>18</sup> We have called these great historical men “the coming preservers.” We have come to know them as the Acolytes of Being, great *Da-sein*, whose destiny is decreed by Being itself.

In our search for these Acolytes we have looked to history and, by looking to history, we have always already been within the realm of metaphysics, as the transcendental. We have said that transcendence, in contrast to its negative meanings tied to religion and science, means “being beyond beings.” We have come through history to this wasteland, where *technē* has been wrought into the challenging of technology. Now, too, a new definition of transcendence arises, which is bound to our own in the intimacy of strife, to take these essences back to their origin, *and beyond*.<sup>19</sup>

In the modern age “transcendence” has become synonymous with modernity. A ‘Metapolitical’ force, transcendence has been broken down into two categories: practical transcendence, and theoretical transcendence. We take practical transcendence to mean: that which, “manifests in material progress, technological change, political equality and social advancement.”<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, theoretical transcendence means: “Striving to go beyond what exists in the world towards a new future—eliminating traditional fetters imposed on the human mind by poverty, ignorance and class.”<sup>21</sup>

Split from within, these definitions of transcendence crafted for the modern age both stand *im Gegenteil* to our original definition of the term: “being beyond beings.”<sup>22</sup> These definitions, however, are political ones. In all our travel to this point, we have detailed great



works of art. Great works of art at the origin of which is great *Da-sein*, but great works of art for whom? For the people, for the *polis* or the *Volk*.

It is here that we make our great landing. As *Da-sein* turns towards fate, so too does *Da-sein* gather, to face destiny in resolution—to gaze with clear eyes into the most extreme danger. This danger has been called the “nothing,” which nihilates—devouring. Yet within the nihilating nothing, in the original realization that there are beings and not “nothing,” *Da-sein* falls through the circle, he transcends, and is free. In all the philosophical systems we have detailed thus far it is Hegel’s dynamic dialectic we return to in order to ground this new idea we have of politics as related to these modern, technological, definitions of transcendence.

In the grand process of Hegel’s dialectic, the spirit that moves world history takes its orient in the east and flies to Greece. Learning antithetically through Rome, the *Geist* takes root in the land of the Germans. Seeking a reconciliation of reason and faith, Hegel and the Romantic tradition (of which he is indeed and integral member) stand *Zivilisation* in stark opposition to *Kultur*. Reconciling reason and faith while remaining deep within a tradition that pits German *Kultur* against (French) *Zivilisation*, leads to the realization of a deeply anti-democratic predisposition rooted in the German *Volk*.<sup>23</sup> For Hegel, the culmination of all these spiritual hopes comes to synthesis in the Prussian constitution, which opens the way to a gathering. “Thus Germany comes into the ‘modern’ nation in a great lashing out against Napoleon and the tyranny of Western ‘Zivilisation.’”<sup>24</sup> In the wake of 1871, the “*Kulturreligion*” of the unspoiled *Volk* embraced nationalism and rushed towards “expression” in the First World War.<sup>25</sup> “By the end of the 1920s the Germans were

convinced that they were living through a profound crisis, a ‘crisis of culture,’ of ‘learning’ of ‘values’—or of the ‘spirit’ itself.”<sup>26</sup>

In the context of this crisis, we find ourselves speaking of the people, and of the founding of a modern political state, itself, a work of art. Chiefly understood as a resistance to bourgeois French culture, the term *Zivilisation* harks to Enlightenment humanism, the tenants of 1789 and Napoleons reign. Coming to fulfillment in strife against French *Zivilisation*, German *Kultur* was propelled into its own essence, which manifests in many ways as a deeply entrenched anti-modernism. Carrying with it a stark ‘apoliticism,’ Germany turn to *Kultur* in opposition to the French *Zivilisation* meant a rejection of Western political values wholesale. Moreover, they were considered decidedly ‘*undeutsch*.’<sup>27</sup> With the birth of modern nationalism largely characterizing the end of the French Revolution, however, there is more at play than first meets the eyes.

In the wake of 1789, French politics marks the thesis of a new dialectic process. Founded in 1889, the *Action Française* became a Catholic, monarchist, counter-revolutionary political movement under the leadership of its principle ideologist, Charles Maurras. Founded originally to support the anti-Dreyfusard cause, the movement garnered Catholic support and quickly became regarded by and large as a social rampart of religion, the spiritual welling up from within the realm of the political. By 1914, the *Action Française* was the most vital nationalist movement in France.<sup>28</sup> From our standpoint, we regard them as the first fascists.

For the thesis of this soon to be fascist dialectic, the blossoming of the state is akin to the consciousness of the human soul. The nation brought itself into being, remembers itself and asserts its existence. Yet the human soul, *Da-sein*, realizes himself in the first sight of

Being—as such we begin to make our landing. From the fascist thesis, Maurras advances the “fear for what is beautiful and fear of its destruction.”<sup>29</sup> Notions of fear, the enemy, the beautiful, and the “goddess” of the nation culminate in the *Action Française* idea of democracy as “anti-human,” resulting in the saying “democracy is forgetting.”<sup>30</sup> (Around 149). Planning and proposing, *Da-sein* forgets the mystery.

As with all dialectic systems, the thesis, or the proposition of the idea, moves through an alienating antithesis before learning and synthesizing in concrete representation. In our fascist dialectic, we posit Italian Fascism as this antithesis. A seemingly strange place for *El Duce*, Italian Fascism is still, however, a vital stage in fascist learning. (Let me pause and make it very clear here that this dialectic process of fascism’s development belongs to the Heidegger student, Ernst Nolte. His dialectic of fascism is inspired, yet hinges on definitions of “transcendence” and “immanence” dependent on modernity as a driving force as opposed to *Geist*.)<sup>31</sup>

Where Maurras and the *Action Française* have a well-developed notion of the state (ontic knowledge and Apollonian sentiments) while a doctrine of social life is lacking, Mussolini and Italian Fascism foster a strong mysticism (ontological knowledge and Dionysian sentiments), while the “form” of the state is left in disconnect.<sup>32</sup> As such, Italian Fascism can be seen as a “spiritualistic antithesis.”<sup>33</sup> Between the thesis and the antithesis, we begin to see the real growth of political and social knowledge towards a synthetic, even aesthetic, whole. So too is it clear that in this dialectic process the ontic and the ontological struggle with one another towards ultimate realization (a force critical to all dialectics—be they Hegelian or Marxist) in a manner calling back to our minds the thunder of the gods of tragedy.

For Mussolini, the progress and technologization of the modern age is unavoidable. As such, fascism has the task of sinking the essence of technology into the nation—a purifying process in which the nation as an artwork acts as *Poiēsis*, retaking *technē*. Conceived as a “will to power,” the state itself becomes a “mystical body,” in which a “life force” flows.<sup>34</sup> With the nation as a living, breathing handiwork of authentic *Da-sein*, imperialistic, dynamic “growth” becomes proof of vitality, and fascism is “challenged forth” from the depths of myth and legend. For Mussolini, “There is no going back.”<sup>35</sup>

While there is a deep need in fascist thought to reach much further back in history than the birth of modernity, even as far as to myth and legend, this idea of “There is no going back” remains starkly characteristic of fascist thought—it is a resolution to return to essential essences *and beyond* in strife. Here in our dialectic it becomes the clearest that fascism must be raised to its essential essence in conflict with modernity, as art and technology draw past each other in the course of the cosmos.

From the *Action Française*, seeking a political return to monarchic rule in concrete history, to Italian Fascism, seeking a spiritual return to the glory of Rome, we have found that a fear of democratization meets with a resolution to incorporate progress in a mythic vision. As such, we have come to the contemporary (modernized) image of fascism as: “political opposition to Marxism, sociological opposition to bourgeois values, and ‘Metapolitical’ resistance to transcendence.”<sup>36</sup>

Earlier, we introduced the idea of modern transcendence as a political one, split between practical transcendence and theoretical transcendence. Now we have posited fascism as “resistance to transcendence” and know that from this modern political definition, that transcendence here means not the distance between God and man, or man and Reason,

but the spirit of modernity, technology, itself. Belonging originally to *technē*, art and technology affect an opening of the open region. Yet, where the original *technē* once “brought forth,” technology challenges and enframes, dominating the essence of the Rhine—damming it up, so that man no longer sees into the Being of its being, its beauty—and through this realization *he is never free*. Knowing that there is no going back, no cowering from the pains of progress, fascism must indeed go back further into history, to myth and legend, in order to assert the original definition of transcendence, and “fetch back” truth and freedom. Thus: “Fascism does not face liberalism as the system of authority faces the system of liberty, but rather as the system of true and concrete liberty faces the system of abstract and false liberty.”<sup>37</sup> Fascism is hunting for the Acolytes; it seeks to fetch them back.

In order to think more critically about a political definition of transcendence, as well as the status of art in an aesthetic politics mediating modernity through the nation, we seek a new perspective on the foundations of the modern nation-state in Europe. We are speaking, of course, of the French Revolution.

The vast majority of scholars, of France, of political ideology or otherwise, see the French Revolution by and large as the birth of modern liberalism. Putting a decisive end to monarchy, the estate system and privilege, the French revolution touted the famous motto: *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. Founding democratic ideals in Europe, the tenants of 1789 held up the “general will” of the people, a social contract signed in blood. Thus man “transcended” (in the sense of the term we have sought to overtake) into society and, as such, was free in his property and speech and creed and so on. In the famous words of Rousseau’s *The Social Contract*:

So that the social pact not be a pointless device, it tacitly includes this engagement, which alone can give force to all others—that whoever refuses to obey the general

will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body; which means nothing else than that he shall be *forced to be free*...<sup>38</sup>

“He shall be forced to be free.” Such a phrase strikes the ear as paradoxical at best. This freedom, the freedom we’ve spoken of as positive and negative and so on, must then be the freedom of the spirit of modernity—as such, a freedom that is “challenged forth.”

From this place then, we can begin to think of transcendence in modern, political terms as related to what we have heretofore called freedom. But the tradition of liberalism and abstract freedom isn’t all the French Revolution discovered. As such, these definitions of freedom as abstract, negative or positive are not the only definitions born from this beautiful conflagration—just as the left is not the only wing with a claim.

So too did the French Revolution cultivate a novel view of the sacred as a civic religion, belonging to the very essence of the nation itself.<sup>39</sup> Filtered almost entirely through the eyes of the Jacobin dictatorship, the French revolution lends a powerful portion of its legacy not simply to totalitarianism, but to fascist ideology more specifically. Though political connections between fascism and the French revolution are ultimately of little consequence, it is the *aesthetic* of politics that brings us here.<sup>40</sup> Rites, festivals, myths, symbols, the use of holy places, martyrs and the “drama of politics” effected a disciplined mass movement of passion for the nation, which, having brought itself into the world, was the vehicle by which a “new man” could come forth to assert his existence.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore: “Nationalism, wherever it took root, had little choice but to draw, however indirectly, on the only serviceable past within reach: The example of the Jacobins...”<sup>42</sup>

Suggesting an equal distribution of the Jacobin legacy to all totalitarian or nationalist movements, the pieces of this past within reach are indeed extra-rational ones. For the right, the mystical and spiritual elements offered to the idea of the nation by the French Revolution

center on notions of youth, beauty, war and death, with the idea of the nation as a god, but a god born of itself, in need of protection. As such, both fascists and French revolutionaries struggled with death, positing it instead, in the case of the French Revolution, as simply an “eternal sleep.” For fascism, however, death ceased to exist altogether. “Thus fascism sought to abolish death, just as it attempted to make time stand still.”<sup>43</sup>

Though, unlike fascism, the French Revolution did not see death as accompanied by any form of resurrection, no dialectical renewal. Seeking a “new man” to take up the challenge of modernity, fascism’s *struggle* to abolish death sought to propel man *beyond* the present into an unspoiled, uncharted future, where he will once again find all history in the poetry of a “national awakening.”

But does the absurd will to abolish time not recall the absurd notion of returning to the Greeks? And the equivalent desire to destroy Being itself? As art and technology draw past one another, Being and time themselves are brought to their most essential essences in strife—as the speed of technological time begins to eclipse the light of Being. As such, the essence of the greatest work of art is brought into its most essential mode here in this rare Dionysiac twilight. For Heidegger, the fascist synthesis found in Nazism effects the gathering of *Da-sein* in order for the “new man” to turn towards his historical task.

Easily considered by some to be the greatest philosophical mind of the twentieth century, Heidegger’s status as a staggering intellectual separates him for many from the spiritual impetus of Nazism—just as Nazism’s brutish façade severs its own essence from great works of art. Nazism, in fact, (as with all fascisms) was no anti-intellectual movement, just as it can in no way be considered anti-artistic. Intellectuals associated with the far right

“regarded themselves as guardians of ultimate values in society and saw fascism as a means to realize these values.”<sup>44</sup>

For fascist intellectuals, society was near irredeemably broken after 1918 and had to be “transcended” socially and economically as well as spiritually.<sup>45</sup> As such, the more rationally ordered modern society became, the more fascism and its intellectuals pulled back towards the irrational needs of man. Once again, Dionysus and Apollo come to the fore. In the arms of an ideology that promised to bring the rain across Europe, totality was symbolized by cultural activity, thus, “if the arts were restored, then society as a whole would be able to transcend the present.”<sup>46</sup> In this distinct, rejuvenating way, art and poetry became vital to the fascist project in order to express the irrational needs of modern man, necessary to combatting “bourgeois nihilism” and *Zivilisation* by sinking into the inward spirituality of *Kultur*, housed in the *Volk*.

“What seemed to remain constant, at least until 1933, was a theoretical nihilism which denied the possibility of metaphysical truth.”<sup>47</sup> In a similar vein to the “chaos of the soul” of the Expressionist movement, fascist intellectuals came to see the fascist movement as a collective beauty. A weapon against the menace of modernity, the irrational artistic expression of man is put forward by the fascist synthesis in National Socialism. As such, an aesthetic politics replaced traditional morality, in much the same way as the “virtue of ferociousness”<sup>48</sup> came about within the *Volk*. With this new aesthetic politics as a moral impetus to rejuvenate the wasteland, art could no longer be accepted in any decadent form—as if it were too significant, too sacred, to be tampered with.

For fascism, the hero, this “new man” who is “challenged forth” to do battle with technology as the champion of *technē* proper to *Poiēsis*, would rise to resolve all conflicts



and return the whole to itself. For National Socialism, Expressionism and Futurism did not conform with, or could not be rooted in, the tradition of the *Volk*.<sup>49</sup> Characteristic of a general anxiousness, inwardness and ludeness, “degenerate art” was symptomatic of the crisis and consequently not only of little value, but inherently *hazardous*. With the Germans believing they had reached the “ultimate state of Nietzschean thought,”<sup>50</sup> there was a sense of standing before the threshold of the end times, which characterizes the crisis of twentieth century thought, and the crisis of metaphysics.

Here we come before the great confrontation, that struggle which brings each combatant to its essential essence *and beyond it*. In Heidegger’s philosophy, the ontological is contained within the ontic, towering up and held therein as the earth cradles the world. For Nazism, the ontological degeneration and danger of the modern age is heaped into ontic subject. As such, degenerate art is put on show and destroyed—and “a pleasure in killing the other is a ‘will-to-power’ attempting to overcome, or face, the ‘will-to-will’ of technology.”<sup>51</sup> In an effective inversion of both religion and the rationality project, “God” or “Reason” is replaced by *kampf* to effect truth as unhiddenness, in accordance with *nothing* other than the immediate release into “ultimate reality.” This “ontological violence” is accomplished by thinkers and statesmen, as poets in their souls.<sup>52</sup>

For the Nazis, the “beautiful” was thought of as the eternal, the immutable, in our words, that open place beyond beings themselves—the place we have also called the oblivion. In seeking a myth that would rejuvenate the future as well as awaken a hero who could rise to combat the challenging of technology, fascism made a return to the so called “root of the word,” the essence of *Alētheia*. But, as we have already said with regard to this hapless holding open, “Metaphysics regards such truth as the imperishable and the eternal,

which can never be founded on the transitoriness and fragility that belonged to man's essence... How then can the essence of truth still have its substances and grounds in human freedom?"<sup>53</sup> Ignorant of time in the face of ek-static Being, Nazism reached out into the oblivion with hopes of becoming the god man cried out for in the horror of World War I, by "holding out" and bringing back a sliver of eternity.

Holding open the open region, we recall that when speaking of great works of art we named this historical group of men "the coming preservers." For fascism, at its zenith Nazism, "The rawness of the movement, its apocalyptic tone, meant at once a search for tradition and an obsession with the speed of time."<sup>54</sup> Standing boldly on the frontier of "technocracy" with an aim to bridge the gap between history and the future, Nazism's "new man," at once stood opposed to bourgeois values and sought to save them all at once by maintaining *an intense control* in order to lead society resolutely into a post-liberal age.<sup>55</sup> For Nazism, the speed of time must not merely be combatted, but *dominated*.<sup>56</sup> As such, fascism takes up its post as a violent *avant-garde*.

As I have mentioned, industrial components of technological modernity must be integrated into the glory of national myth in order to be "transcended" and taken up by the artistic domain of the nation.<sup>57</sup> This "transcending" of technological modernity is not simply a dominating, however, but a "fetching back" to the aesthetic origins of *Poiēsis*—of poetry. At the turn of the twentieth century the closest things to man were the radio, motor cars, and airplanes. Here too were the final things even closer: death and judgment.

In his struggle, the fascist was engaged in "a constant quest for mediation between the speed of the airplane and a harmonious universe where past and present met."<sup>58</sup> For this "new man," the modern instrument, when grounded in the nation—when *technē* was returned

to *Poiēsis*—could raise man’s soul to the speed of the sky, the expanse of the mountains and he could meet with eternity. For fascism, this attempt to sink technology into the glory of the nation raises the nation to the challenge of modernity.

Indeed, the famous mass flights across the Atlantic or the Mediterranean, which he led, were supposed to educate a fascist élite and demonstrate to the world that it had conquered the challenge of modernity. But this challenge was met by integrating past and present, setting the act of flying and the speed of time within eternity—the blue skies, the mountains.<sup>59</sup>

For National Socialism, however, it was not simply the airplane or the sky within which it flew that appropriated modernity and held the speed of time therein, but the nation itself, as a living, breathing creature—a god, towering up within the nation, as the spirit of an historical *Volk*. As such, the nation reaches out to retake *technē* and house it once again within the poetic.

Poised to take a controlled stand in the portico of the open region, the “chaos of the soul” of the Expressionist and Futurist movements, however attractive to many ideologically committed Nazis, could not be taken on. Unlike with the Nazis, Italian fascists found a more amiable *simpatico* with not only Futurists and Expressionists, but Syndicalists as well. Anti-historical in many ways, Italian fascism achieved a kind of *avant-garde* status that was at once mythical and spiritual but could also stand opposed to tradition, propelling them into the post-liberal age through a new, raw art.<sup>60</sup> Signaling Italy’s place at the antithetical piece of our fascist dialectic model, Mussolini asserts that fascism must create a “new art.”<sup>61</sup> Such art departed from the art of the “folk,” the people. In Italy, however, this kind of art had always been on the outside, whereas in Germany the *Volk* and its mythical *Geist* were rooted at the very center of all German dreams, expressions, and romances.

For the fascist antithesis, Futurist and Expressionism symbolized a new, untamed art, violent even in its possibilities of surging forward beyond the unknown. National Socialism, however, could not follow. We return to the romantic notion of these early pilots and know that, for National Socialism, “The pilot appropriates a piece of the eternity, of the sky, and it is this appropriation of immutability that enables him to keep control.”<sup>62</sup> Raising himself to nature, National Socialism “reaches out” to the nihilating nothing of eternity, where Being and time devour one another at the tail. Instead of throwing himself out into the oblivion in a blind leap, National Socialism must remain in control, steady of hand and heart and “hold open” the way for Being to make its appearance ontically.

For Mussolini, the “new man,” which all of fascism was cultivating in different doses of art, myth, tradition, history, control, chaos, expression and violence, would “on the one hand transcend space and time,”<sup>63</sup> while on the other remain restrained by tradition. For the Nazis, however, this restraint by tradition not only created a “new man,” a hero to stand forward and challenge Fafnir, but opened the way for Being *to arise from out of its history*. Standing there, the Nazism roots in the rocky ground. This rooting of their great work draws up out of the nation the obscurity of the spirits spontaneous support. Standing there, it holds its ground “against the storm that rages above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence.”<sup>64</sup> As the world towers up within the earth, first does the light of day begin to shine the clearer, flush against the darkness of the wasteland. Here, standing at the edge of things, National Socialism struggles under the weight of Atlas’s burden. Holding up the world from out of the earth, the open region is open, and National Socialism gazes long into the abyss. “The steadfastness of the work contrasts with the surge of surf, and its own repose brings out the raging of the sea.”<sup>65</sup>

In this time of renewed crisis, the apparatus of modern technology will be raised to its essential essence when challenged anew by a reawakening of *Poiēsis*, who makes *a resolute return within the power of Being itself*. A “chaos of the soul,” torn asunder in the cosmic strife of Titans released from Zeus’s bonds, the struggle to “hold open” commands courage as grace under pressure, as *technē* proper to *Poiēsis*. No longer can the modern state wither in the wasteland, devoid of the grail, the question, the rain. Here too do the gods walk among men. We stand now before the breaking open of the earth, and can call National Socialism, truly, a *katharsis* unbound—*eine Frühling ohne Ende...*<sup>66</sup>

“All historical probing must ultimately encounter something elemental and primordial; sometimes this is called ‘man,’ sometimes ‘history,’ occasionally ‘God.’”<sup>67</sup> To this end we have come. But more truthfully, to an essential self-assertion, of a primordial place in the arms of history, moved by beauty—moved by the hand of God. We began this journey by gathering around us the whole of metaphysics, and being thrown out into it, as the transcendental. In the course of this chapter, I insisted that one truth be held the most dear: “Man does not possess freedom as a property. At best, the converse holds: freedom, ecstatic, disclosive *Da-sein*, possesses man—so originally that only it secures for humanity that distinctive relatedness to beings as a whole...”<sup>68</sup> This “being beyond beings” we have called, transcendence. We have found it beautiful. At the sight of beauty we have been set free.

In the modern age, we find that the opposite of transcendence is immanence—the “within worldly and the non-divine.”<sup>69</sup> Still, however, there is no philosophical agreement that endures as to the interpretation of the term “transcendence.”<sup>70</sup> In our own definition of transcendence, man made his assent in one of two distinct ways—to God, or to Reason. Now we also have two new definitions of transcendence, split in an alienating dualism: the idea of

practical transcendence, and the idea of theoretical transcendence. This is yet another “holding at bay,” of the finite and the eternal.

Transcendence, as with metaphysics, must rejoin history. History, as such, must be founded anew. For National Socialism, which has been labeled as resistance to practical transcendence and struggle with theoretical transcendence (at best), the first definition already contains within it the second, and the second definition is then always already propelled to a third—contained within it the splitting of the first two. This is the moment where we know that by metaphysics, we means transcendence, and that when decreed by Being itself, man’s transcendence must turn towards the Metapolitical.

For Heidegger: Another way in which truth occurs is in the act of founding a political state...in which truth comes to shine forth is the nearness of that which is not simply a being, but a being that is most in being....in which truth grounds itself is essential sacrifice.<sup>71</sup>

In the history of the West as the history of metaphysics, of metaphysics itself as a lost definition of transcendence (as we have defined it), man raises to “transcendence” through the powers of thought or prayer. With fascism, and most potently thought its National Socialism, man does this as well, but not to God or to Reason but to the *Volk*. Here, the ontic is contained within the ontological. Within all the tradition of all the argumentation aimed at coming to some agreement about transcendence, three elements remain standing: time, place and “the One.”<sup>72</sup> Be this “One” nature or God, it is not any finite creature; therefore, this idea alone fulfills the absolute meaning of pure existence as such, and the distinction that has grown up between the finite and the eternal breaks open for all to see. In this breaking open of the ontological distinction, man reaches out with his thought, with his action, and, although he is a being among beings, the shackles of his finitude shatter, and he is *free*.

Thus have we defined transcendence, as metaphysics, as the shadow history of the West. Coming to presence over time, we know too that Being has a history [*Seinsgeschichte*]<sup>73</sup> and that this history is wedded to transcendence, illusively in the same shadow. And so we have named the Acolytes, as those at the origin of the great work of art, which holds open the earth and wills the world to rush up to meet us. The history and “becoming of Being” has, as we have said, been the handiwork of *Da-sein*, at the origin of the great work of art. Yet, as art and technology draw past one another and come to their essential essence in strife, this individual impetus of *Dasein* is eclipsed as strife throws man beyond himself.<sup>74</sup> All the more does the “fate” of *Dasein* begin to gather and turn towards some mysterious destiny—as decreed by Being itself.<sup>75</sup> We stand now in the place we have sought, the place where the gods once more walk among men and thunder their will through the course of the highest heavens and the deepest seas. We have come now before the *Götterdämmerung*—the twilight of the gods, who themselves must gaze with clear eyes into death.

As such, we ask: “if Being has a history, might it not too have a politics?”<sup>76</sup> In our talk of transcendence, which, just previously, led us to the Metapolitical, we can truly begin to wonder what sort of politics acts as Acolyte of Being—holds out, and holds open.

For Heidegger, “‘Forsakenness’ has become the distinguishing feature of the modern age: an age that is irredeemably suspended in the no man’s land between ‘the no longer of the gods that have fled and the not yet of the god to come.’”<sup>77</sup> Thus, Heidegger himself remarks, “The only possibility available to us is that by thinking and poeticizing we prepare a readiness for the appearance of a god.”<sup>78</sup> Here we can see that, as suggested in Heidegger’s later work, the *Seinsverlassenheit* simultaneously signals the *Götterverlassenheit*.<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, politics as a puzzle of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* can no longer face the gravity of the *Götterverlassenheit*. Thus the questions of standards, rights, polity and practice must all be aimed towards the frantic retrieval of the *Seinsfrage* itself. For National Socialism, which refused to part with tradition and history, this retrieval is best understood in a circular motion. “Heidegger described the ecstatic temporality structure of Dasein as the circular movement which goes from future...back to past.”<sup>80</sup>

At the outset of the twentieth century, *Da-sein* is no longer individual or self-contained, but begins to gather, “challenged forth” by the augmented speed of time as effected by industrialization. Even Heidegger himself begins to speak of our “Western-Germanic historical *Da-sein*.”<sup>81</sup> Here we know that Being has a history and a politics, but we also know even more immediately what we have been working to draw forth the whole time—that *Being itself is historical*.<sup>82</sup>

When speaking of history, of German history, and now of this history as the history of European-Germanic historical *Da-sein*, we know that Germany’s unique path—be it political, geographic or artistic—came to a profound crisis of culture, of values and of the spirit [*Der Geist*] itself. In these regards, Heidegger can certainly be positioned in relation to German conservative revolutionaries who, by and large, take up the tradition of post-Enlightenment Romanticism, and stood in active opposition to the bourgeois values of commerce, materialism, and democracy in order to reassert a new set of historic, heroic, life affirming values. These values, dependent not only on history, must “break through” into a kind of *Seinskönnen* (future-oriented-potentiality-for-Being).<sup>83</sup> For these conservative intellectual revolutionaries (Spengler, Schmitt and Jünger among them), Europe was paling before the horror of a Nietzschean prophecy fulfilled. As such, these values associated with



“bourgeois nihilism” must needs be eradicated by the assertion of an active nihilism—will, power, and destiny *on the move*.<sup>84</sup>

These heroic values of the “new man” culminated in nothing less than that original strife of opposites bound together in intimacy, which raise opponents to their essential essence *and beyond*. From the Romantics, both Heidegger and the conservative revolutionaries cared for an “aesthetic sensibility.”<sup>85</sup> Such strife was only accessible through the violence and authenticity of war, as art an artistic, even existential, movement. Thus *Kampf* was all that remained. The Nazis called this movement “*Bewegungskrieg*.”

Abstract modernity had tampered with the speed of time, and, stretching its hand across the world, so too disrupting the mystery of Being. It is difficult to think of this disruption as something not perfectly analogous to the “virtue of ferociousness,” which had developed in *Völkisch* thought at the end of the nineteenth century. For the conservative revolutionaries, the “flowers of evil” contained a deadly poison, the only antidote to which was poison again. “Thus, the aesthetic influences of the artistic avant-garde—Baudelaire, futurism, expressionism—proved far reaching...”<sup>86</sup> In this way, and only this way, art becomes the weapon, the only power potent enough to rise to challenge technocracy—but not only this—to overcome it—to fetch it back into its essence, as *technē* proper to *Poiēsis*. The jaws of the earth unhinge, to devour the world and hold it once again therein, to preserve the mystery, that pre-essential essence.

We are reminded now of the famous words of Friedrich Nietzsche, “the world as a work of art giving birth to itself.”<sup>87</sup> In Nietzsche’s aesthetic justification of the existential, long standing boundaries are defaced and the “holding at bay” that long placed itself between

fact and truth, between Being and beings, falls into itself in the manner of a dying star, a return to *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*.

In his *Kehr* of, broadly, the late 1920s and early 1930s, we have said that Heidegger's most central concept—that of “*Dasein*”—undergoes a remarkable transformation to “*Da-sein*.” Written as *Da-sein*, this term for man, for existence, for “being in the world” now moreover means the thereness of Being itself. In the thereness of Being itself, *Da-sein* gathers, bound together by a mysterious fate. For individual *Dasein*, the decision to turn towards fate happens in the realization of beings, as beings, and not nothing. When *Da-sein* gathers, however, this already essential vision of fate gathers too—and becomes a great destining.<sup>88</sup> For authentic *Da-sein*, turning towards destiny means nothing less than to obey the power of Being itself, which is making its resolute return.

This idea of a “great destiny” in Heidegger's thought, which also gathers, is closely linked with his idea of time (which almost entirely disappears in the *Kehr*). As we know, Being and time define one another reciprocally—Being itself has a history, and comes to presence over time. For *Da-sein*, the most beloved beast of Being, authenticity is most potently expressed by recognition of death, as seen with sober eyes. Beyond death is the oblivion of Being and time, one eternally devouring the other at the tail. Authentic *Da-sein* nihilates in an ek-static *Vorlaufen-zum-Tod* [anticipation towards death].<sup>89</sup>

Pitted against the racing speed of modernity as the technocracy, we can easily understand that the temporality characteristic of bourgeois nihilism (a passive nihilism) is characterized by their attempt to detach themselves from that “profound anxiety,” of *Vorlaufen-zum-Tod*, “thereby essentially *closing off the future*,” rejecting any possibility of a *Seinskönnen*.<sup>90</sup>

It is precisely such ‘un-ecstatic’ immersion in the ‘present’ that characterizes the Being of non-humans. Therefore, the Being of inauthentic *Da-sein*, in its renunciation of authentic temporality, comes to resemble the inert Being of *things*—it succumbs to the static allure of a timeless, undynamic present and gradually sinks into *lifelessness*.<sup>91</sup>

In the years immediately following the publication of *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger’s *Kehr* is characterized, *im großen und ganzen*, by this turn towards destiny, as decreed by Being itself. Here, as with intellectual revolutionaries from Schmitt to Jünger, a nihilistic Nietzschean prophecy seemed to fulfill itself—“the decline of the West.”<sup>92</sup> Thus it was with National Socialism that: the iron will of the Overman would kneel before the blinding light of *Da-sein*’s great destiny.

Standing there, in the open portico of *Alētheia*, European-Germanic historical *Da-sein* has gathered and surmounted individual fates to turn towards a collective, historical, destiny in authentic *mitsein*.<sup>93</sup> Yet, contingent on time—ripped helplessly out of balance with the power of Being—the gathering of “fate” towards destiny accelerates ek-static *Da-sein*’s *Vorlaufen-zum-Tod*. As such, “*Being and Time* simultaneously contains certain fatalistic tendencies.”<sup>94</sup> Never reconciled in *Being and Time*, the ideas of “will” and “fate” remain locked in strife.<sup>95</sup> And yet, “willing,” for Heidegger, must become a “knowing,” a gazing with clear eyes into the most extreme danger. The acceptance of the path of destiny, authentic *Da-sein* heeding the call of Being, resolutely takes hold of the appointed task of the age. We are beyond any wish to “reconcile,” only to become. Recall that in Greek *Alētheia* means: unhiddenness, and that in German, unhiddenness or unclosedness is *Entschlossenheit*: resoluteness. Resolutely, *Da-sein* races towards destiny. For it is not in the will to justice or the will to freedom of slaves that the most courageous man finds true power—but in the will to self sacrificial love—of the people, of the truth and of God.<sup>96</sup>

In turning resolutely to run head long into great destiny, the most extreme danger, *Da-sein* is affecting the thunder of struggle, under whose skies history rolls over and over again in the foam on seaward waves. In this circular movement, which turns over from future back to past, we know that “To repeat an authentic possibility derived from the past means that ‘*Dasein* may choose its hero.’”<sup>97</sup> These new heroes are quintessentially anti-bourgeois and bring about a paroxysmal renewal of life-affirming, existential values on which to build a “new man” who alone can take up the challenge of the future and bring it under the sway of truth.

It was only after the publication of Heidegger’s masterwork *Being and Time* in 1927, that the gathering of authentic historical *Da-sein* began to move his new work in the *Kehr*. This character of movement was, for Heidegger, taken up by the guardian spirit of the German “National Awakening” affected by history, decreed by Being itself.<sup>98</sup> With Being’s historicity in this landing, which assumes an ontic, ek-static form, we know too that Being has a politics. In many ways it is completely understandable that *Being and Time* is a *Völkisch* work. Towering up within itself, the *Volk* violently resists modernity and the fatal threat it presents to the *Geist*, an expression of Being in many ways. “Idealized and transcendent, the *Volk* symbolized a desired unity beyond contemporary reality.”<sup>99</sup> As Being gathered, that is, took the shape of its history, the resolute turn to a movement of ek-static, disclosive *Da-sein* arrived at the decision to choose its hero—this hero, would be National Socialism—the final Acolyte of Being—*eine Frühling ohne ende...*<sup>100</sup>

In the face of the contemporary historical crisis, the clash of art and technology, *Poiēsis* seeking to swallow *technē* once more and preserve the pre-essential mystery of Being, “inauthenticity incarnate” described the character of modern Europe—truly a

wasteland.<sup>101</sup> Shock, disturbance, catastrophe, decay and confusion became the order of the day, only achieving in asserting the “impotence of science,” the “baselessness of philosophy,” and the “powerlessness of religion.”<sup>102</sup>

Death is the only certainty, and fear drains *Da-sein* as he slumps in a lifeless stupor. At this point it is clear that no one alone can escape from Moloch, and “autonomous-individual *Da-sein* will fall short of existential fulfillment—will fall short of authenticity.”<sup>103</sup> Alone, *Dasein* will perish, in an empty repose. His history has betrayed him and his science has dominated him. Thus, “The politics solution, if one is to be found, must itself be of an eminently metaphysical character: it must establish an entirely new relationship between man and Being.”<sup>104</sup>

For Heidegger and the conservative revolutionaries, the idea of the “extreme situation” simultaneously stood for “Active Nihilism: (represents the insights of superior characters who realize that ‘if something is falling, one should give it a shove)’” as starkly opposed to the “Passive Nihilism: (Characterizes all those who cling futilely to the traditional Western values, already in an advanced stage of decomposition [Western humanism in general]),” which must be overcome.<sup>105</sup> “Active Nihilism,” the “extreme situation” and Heidegger’s idea of the “most extreme danger” all insist that “...the essential will ‘*Wesenswille*’ to knowledge requires that the *Volk* be subjected to ‘the greatest inner and outer danger.’”<sup>106</sup> In this “greatest shattering of *Da-sein*” the *Volk* itself is “thrown” towards destiny, towards an authentic and resolute confrontation of the ontological difference and towards the “coming preservers” themselves—a great work of art.

The “new man,” who will lead humanity into a post-nihilistic age, must not only assert new values of the future, but “fetch them back into their essences” from the depths of

legend, language and history. This “new man” may in some artistic renditions, recall to the mind of some the figure of Volker from *Das Nibelungenlied*—slaying with the bow of his violin, the poet warrior. Daring, cruelty and instinct as opposed to humility, mercy and reason must now be taken up by the new man as life affirming values.<sup>107</sup>

Recalling, again, the “virtue of ferociousness” in the German *Volk* of the late nineteenth century, it is the German conservative revolutionaries (Jünger and Spengler, standing on the edge of Nietzsche’s understanding of metaphysics) who came to the conclusion that the only way for Germany to save himself was if he could rise to the challenge of modernity by cultivating a new “modern community.”<sup>108</sup> Only in this way could the crisis be met head on. Such a community would remain grounded in the *Volk*, in the nation, and through this relationship would be forged a “utilization of the most advanced technological means in all spheres of life.”<sup>109</sup> To this point we have traveled, to stand now before the great doom of our time. National Socialism has been given the task of taking up arms against a rising darkness, which threatens to sweep man away into planning and ordering, slavery and enfeeblement. Here, beauty will suffocate and die, a wild rose rotting in an iron cage.

This is their great historical task, but can these “coming preservers” “hold out” long enough? At what point does the oblivion tear our souls apart? “But what if there is a fundamental discord between the ontological and the ontic, so that, as Heidegger put it, those who reach ontological truth have to err in the ontic? What if, if we are to see with the ontological eye, our ontic eye has to be blinded?”<sup>110</sup> We are reminded of the leader of the gods, Wotan, who gave his own eye for the gift of total wisdom.

It has never been more clear that the nothing nihilates. Therefore, the political solution, if politics can even remember the dream of rising to meet this epochal stand, must needs be not only a metaphysical one—but an aesthetic one, a beautiful one: “...thus all is not lost as long as Germany can reestablish its authentic, epochal-historical relation to the primordial powers of Being.”<sup>111</sup> Here it is clear that:

...though one does not discuss the ‘Really-Existing National Socialism’... Heidegger is nonetheless a philosopher who *did* engage in a kind of critique of ‘Really-Existing Nazism’ on behalf of its true potentials...betrayed by its racist-technological nihilistic reality.<sup>112</sup>

In this way, the crisis of metaphysics itself, stretched from its origins for 2,500 years, holds in its sway the final catastrophe. Here, we know that Heidegger sees a reenactment of the Greek beginning as no simple revival, but an “authentic repetition.”<sup>113</sup> Thus the German *Volk* must turn towards an historical destiny, to reimagine the acropolis, the theater, the *polis*. Yet this is only possible if National Socialism can keep the control necessary to make this “founding leap” [*Ursprung*].<sup>114</sup>

What is of paramount importance, the “really existing” of National Socialism is the relationship between the *Volk* and philosophy as it is properly established. That is, the *Volk* itself must be led by a higher, ontological self-understanding—by a *Seinsgeschichtlichen Auftrag*—which Heidegger identifies as “the guardianship of the truth of Being.”<sup>115</sup>

“The guardianship of the truth of Being.” Out of shadow and doubt, we now come to know the true face of the Acolytes of Being. In all our searching to this point we have named a series of great works of art, at their origin great *Dasein*, who have opened *Alētheia*’s portico for a moment to glimpse her forgotten beauty. For National Socialism, the guardians of the truth of Being, our final Acolyte, the great work of art gathers in European-Germanic historical *Da-sein* itself. With National Socialism, *Da-sein* trembles with a great fear for the loss of what is beautiful, what is true. In the astounding pressure of the gathering whole,

National Socialism lands on the ontic surface with ontological eye. As such, this aesthetic politics places itself between man and the oblivion.

In the aesthetic politics of the *katharsis* unbound, “Authentic Dasein leading towards destiny assumes a character of *movement*.”<sup>116</sup> The land in the middle, a nation that has always undiluted through space and time, breathing in and out as it expands and contracts, throws existence furiously into the world—a life affirming relatedness to the Being of beings that rushes into the abyss. As such, “*Total mobilization* is an exercise in *active nihilism*.”<sup>117</sup> With National Socialism, our “coming preservers,” “*Dasein* is ‘on the move.’”<sup>118</sup>

Most evident in Heidegger’s Rectoral Address of 1934, we recall the gathering of the “saving power” spoken of by the poet Hölderlin, which Heidegger sees reflected Nazism’s ek-static thrownness into the world. *Stadtswek*, *Denkwerk* und *Kunstwerk* all dance to the beat of a total mobilization, which “with increasing autonomy” crescendos—a symphony conducted *by Being itself*.

The openness of the world established by the work seems always under threat of slipping back into the unnamable, concealing embrace of the earth. However, this manner of describing the polemos between world and earth is not intended to prejudice either term. For the ontological structure of these two forces unquestionably issues forth in a fruitful tension. In truth, the most fruitful tension. For it is by virtue of this conflict alone that the epochal encounter between Being and beings occurs.<sup>119</sup>

This is the great destiny of the German *Volk*—whether it wants this destiny or not. After having destroyed the bonds of Plato’s banishment to the realm of ideas, the abstract, the distant, Being returns to the dwelling of man. “Poetically, man dwells on this earth.”<sup>120</sup> Here, in the open portico of *Alētheia*, *Da-sein* is transcending, *Da-sein* is *free*—and, rushing towards death, *Germany lives*.



Holding open the open region, National Socialism struggled in ridged control and perilous danger—collapsing into the oblivion of Being. And yet, for a fleeting moment, humanity gazed out into the Being of beings, and, glimpsing the twilight of the gods, returned with a sliver of eternity.

*Schwer Verlässt  
Was nahe dem Ursprung wohnet, den Ort*

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Reluctantly  
That which dwells near its origin departs

-Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Wanderung*<sup>121</sup>

For Heidegger, National Socialism’s “inner truth and greatness” refers to what he calls the “encounter between planetary technology and modern man.”<sup>122</sup> When this notion of “inner truth and greatness” is really investigated, we find that while *Da-sein* stands at the origin of the work of art, Being stands at the origin of *Da-sein*. It was with this origin, when Being stands as the essence of *Da-sein*, that National Socialism as *ein Gesamtkunstwerk*, held the key to “metaphysical-historical transcendence.”<sup>123</sup> Thus, when we know that Being stands at the origin of *Da-sein*, and *Da-sein* at the origin of the work of art, we know too that: “*Art then is a becoming and happening of truth.*”<sup>124</sup>

We come, once again, to yet another iteration of our founding question. Where does art stand when Being is rightfully at the origin of *Da-sein*? We mean here that art is then a pre-essential origin itself. What do we now mean by “Origin?” All art is, in the broadest sense, poetry; poetry of all kinds is the art of language—housing Being. In the naming of things, truly, in *poetry*, *Da-sein* thinks Being and in so doing, he houses the ontological within the ontic. In the case of art as an origin, we can say this:

Art lets truth originate. Art, founding preserving, is the spring that leaps to the truth of beings in a work. To originate something by a leap, [*Geworfenheit*: thrownness], to bring something into being from out of its essential source in a founding leap—this is what the word “origin” [*Ursprung*, literally primal leap] means.

The origin of the work of art—that is, the origin of both the creators and the preservers, which is to say of a people’s historical existence—is art. This is so because art is in its essence an origin: a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical.<sup>125</sup>

And so we have named the Acolytes of Being, as great works of art, with *Da-sein* at their origin. In the twentieth century, Being itself makes a resolute return to the dwelling of man—as something poetic. Hence, with National Socialism, art stands at the origin of *Da-sein*, thinking the Being of beings. And yet, as always, we turn to the poet to remember that as soon as we enfold the question in our hand it has always already slipped through our fingers. Holding out and holding open, National Socialism was able to brush its fingers over the ephemeral, grasping the fabricated texture and weight of the intangible.

Thrown into the modern world, *Poiēsis* rose to the most essential strife in an attempt to overcome technology, and “fetch back” *technē*. “Betrayed by its racist-technological nihilistic reality” the violence done *did not go far enough*. In the words of Hannah Arendt, “The true problem of Nazism is not that it went ‘too far’ in its subjectivist-nihilistic hubris of exerting total power, but that it did not go far enough.”<sup>126</sup> In essence, ontic violence must connect with ontological violence, making the effort to usher in a new mode of existence. In endeavoring to think with Heidegger, and in so doing to make the effort to “think with” National Socialism we find the troubling answer to our original question: “...Heidegger—in his Nazi engagement, was not ‘totally wrong’—the tragedy is that he was almost right.”<sup>127</sup> After the fall of National Socialism, Heidegger was never again political. Under the leveling gaze of the great philosopher of Being: “Only a God can save us now.”<sup>128</sup>

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Out of a primaeval place, man wrought from the beauty of *technē* technology, a Ring of power, wielded only by those who foreswear all love. The essential message of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* is not so much one simply of the death of the gods, but of a restoration of their original innocence through the founding, preserving power of love—which “holds out” through the darkness of all storms. As such, National Socialism stood resolutely in the open region, assuming a character of artistic movement, which set *Da-sein* forth into a world, at his origin, *ein Gesamtkunstwerk*, which only had to “hold out” long enough.

## Epilogue: Parsifal

“Du siehst, mein Sohn, zum Raum wird hier die Zeit.”<sup>1</sup>

Gurnemann, *Parsifal* von Richard Wagner

Where are we now? After the death of the gods? At the origin of the great work of art we have great *Da-sein*, and the blinding light of his historical destiny. At the origin of great *Da-sein*, we know that we have Being, who comes to presence over time, who hides and shows itself in the great work of art, when *Da-sein*, as the keeper of the great mystery holds open the open region for all to see. In thinking as poeticizing: we endeavored to take a founding leap [*Ursprung*].

At the origin of each of our Acolytes, National Socialism most auspiciously, we know that we have Being. This revelation, when we first sought the Acolytes, was always already with us—and yet always already an ephemeral glimpse. In art, as its own origin, we are thrown towards destiny; we are thrown at the feet of Being and, as both creators and preservers, become historical. With a primal leap, which lets truth originate as a founding as well as a preserving, we have made a return to the question, which first founds all history, once again.

Art is the becoming and happening of truth in history. As such, those we have named the Acolytes of Being, who shine a light out of history. This light is destiny.

In our telling of Being’s journey from out of the depths of the West, we named four Acolytes, their art and their *Da-sein*: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, Richard Wagner and his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, T.S. Eliot and *The Waste Land*,

and, finally, Nazism, which stood within the portico of the open region as an aesthetic politics through which, *Da-sein* was “on the move.” Each of our Acolytes *moves history*.

The posing of the question moves history, and is itself an historical work of art.

With these Acolytes as our tutors, we have studied language, myth, legend, music and poetry. In each of our Acolytes, we have observed different doses of each treatment. Making a case for the historicity of Being, we have observed a landing of Being within beings—a return of the ontological to the ontic—which was, for so long, “held at bay.” In breaking this ontological difference and releasing the oblivion of Being into the world of man, we know now that we were transcending, and we know that *Da-sein* was *free* unto the oblivion.

In coming to know these Acolytes as they gather at the breaking and bracing of metaphysics in the twentieth century, our story was told as a *legendary history*. Taking its orient in Greece and moving antithetically through Rome, the spirit that moves world history made its home in the founding of modern Germany. Following this trail, with the *Angelus Novus* as a guide, we have told this story as the story of *Der Ring des Nibelungens*. Out of the depths of the river Rhine was wrought from a magical treasure the Ring of the Nibelungs—thus was *technē* first stolen from *Poiēsis*.

In the end, at the great precipice of the *Götterdämmerung*, we remember from Wagner’s telling of the legend, in a romantic key, that this fall of the gods is no death; rather, it is a restoration of original innocence. We remember too that a chief comportment of *Da-sein* is found in his care, that is, in his compassion. At the end of Wagner’s Ring cycle, though she was betrayed by the power of the Ring, Brünnhilde’s love for Siegfried returns the talisman to the Rhine Maidens. Reaching up from the depths, as Siegfried and

Brünnhilde die together, they retrieve the Ring from Siegfried's lifeless hand.<sup>2</sup> This retrieval is one that restarts the wheel of history, one that returns evil to the depths.

As such, we find ourselves standing out on the bloodstained moors of the wasteland, waiting, once again, for the appearance of a god. In the writing of *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot drew together the harmonious legends of European history. At the end of the poem, the fisher King—an expression of both Arthur and his metaphysical foil Amfortas—capitulates and dies, with no rain to heal his kingdom, no *katharsis* to wring out the *polis*. Only together, as irrationality put to form, can Dionysus and Apollo propel the audience to the height of their suffering, and in so doing, purify them. We remember Dionysus too as the only god to die and be reborn.

I want to say that as this history of Being has revealed itself as an artistic history of *Da-sein's* thownness towards a great destiny, we are making history itself artistic. In the breaking of the ontological difference in the twentieth century, legend too makes a landing. As such, we have told the story of *Der Ring des Nibelungens*. Here, in the wasteland, in the twilight of the gods, we find ourselves waiting for a new “great work of art” to once again lead the way, by posing the question anew. We are waiting for *Parsifal*—the pure fool, enlightened by compassion.

Written first as part of the Arthurian romances as *Perceval* by Chrétien de Troyes, then as *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach, the story of the grail knight acts as a critical thread, weaving European legend into history. In a similar vein to *Faust*, *Parsifal's* rewriting in each appointed age shines a light out of history in an acetylic way. Upon its arrival to Germany with the author Wolfram von Eschenbach, the knight Parzival travels through space and time between the court of Arthur and the dwelling of the fisher king, Anfortas, in the

castle of Monsalvat. In so doing, Parzival makes the journey between the grail castle and the kingdom of men—the great distance between Being and beings.

First conceiving of his opera *Parsifal* in 1845, while taking the waters at Marienbad, it wouldn't be until 1882 that the public would see Wagner's "journey of the soul" achieved on stage. With *Der Ring des Nibelungens* first performed in the 1870's, we can very well assume that Wagner had *Parsifal* in mind during his writing of the Ring Cycle, which we have used thus far to detail European-Germanic historical *Da-sein*. With Eliot making nods to *Parzival* in his *The Waste Land*, we remember that no hero comes to presence, and the last king of the grail prepares his lands for death.

A *Bühnenweifestspiel* ["A Festival Play for the Consecration of the Stage"], Wagner's opera *Parsifal* tells the story of the legendary knight Parsifal on his quest for the grail castle, Monsalvat. Traveling outside of space and time, it is Parsifal's destiny to fulfill the prophecy of the grail: to heal the wounded King, Amfortas, and himself becomes king of the grail. With Amfortas wounded by the holy spear, the castle and the knights of the grail diminish, for in his pain the king is not able to stand before the relic. For the young Parsifal, he must only ask the wounded King a simple question to absolve him of his agony and reveal the grail once more. In each retelling of the story, this question varies in its iterations, yet what remains is that asking of the question itself heals the wasteland and replenishes the life force of the grail—bringing the rain.

In Wagner's unique concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the German language was rejuvenated through the beauty of the spirit of music, to forge anew these founding European-Germanic myths. We can understand that in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the music is lost—as with the Tragedies of Euripides, writing after Aeschylus. In intimate

connection to Germany's Romantic period, *Parsifal* itself enjoyed a mystical connection to "place," and the theater at Bayreuth acted as a sight of holy pilgrimage. Recalling to mind the mystical relationship of the *Volk* and the *Geist*, we can easily comprehend the significance of *Parsifal*'s "rooting" in the soil of Bayreuth.

"Never!" Wagner had announced to King Ludwig II in 1880, "...Should *Parsifal* ever be presented for the public's amusement on another stage."<sup>3</sup> At the turn of the century, however, the Wagner families claim on the production rights to the *Bühnenweifestspiel*, *Parsifal* were democratized, and the sacred opera was released to theaters across the world. Contrary to Wagner's wishes (for he had no written will), *Parsifal* was "uprooted" from the theater at Bayreuth by the Reichstag, hauntingly, in the year 1914.

The release of *Parsifal* from Bayreuth results in accusation of "nothing less than Grail robbery" from those Germans who affiliated with the "Protect *Parsifal*" camp and fought the passing of the legislation.<sup>4</sup> It was on 2 May 1901 that Cosima Wagner endeavored to speak out, imploring the Reichstag to act in favor of her husband's dying wish. Naming *Parsifal* as Wagner's "bequest to the German nation"—even more so than *Der Ring des Nibelungens*—she asked that his memory be honored by carrying out his will with respect to the protection of *Parsifal*.<sup>5</sup> The Bayreuth Circle, those in favor of "*Parsifal* Protection," and the Wagner family themselves insisted: "Protect *Parsifal*, protect Germany."<sup>6</sup>

As such, "*Parsifal* was more than just a Wagnerian ritual practice. It also served as a Wagnerian gospel that cloaked notions of German ideology and cultural regeneration in a mystical religiosity."<sup>7</sup> As modernity converged on the still young Germany nation, *Parsifal* was released, torn away—and the grail was once again shrouded in the castle of Monsalvat. When *Parsifal* was uprooted from his landscape, from Bayreuth, he lost his connection to the



*Geist*—to the *Volk*. His grail is shrouded, meaning, from the legend, that the question has yet to be asked. As World War I begins to stir in European soil *Parsifal* too becomes modernized, industrialized, globalized... and he, and his beloved *Volk*, are in grave danger of losing their human souls.

Proponents of the ‘protect *Parsifal*’ camp argued that in an increasingly materialistic age, Germany had to maintain Wagner’s noble, idealistic experiment—where art was pursued solely for its own sake—by keeping *Parsifal* safe from pecuniary, market influences.<sup>8</sup>

Broadly characterizing a much deeper critique, this artistic debate makes a turn towards the political—severely symptomatic of a broader crisis. Ultimately, the protection of *Parsifal* could not be reconciled, as modernity and technologization began to challenge the young nation. In the “challenging forth” of technological modernity *Parsifal* is expelled from Monsalvat. As told in both Wagner and Wolfram von Eschenbach’s accounts of the legend, it is not in his primary visit to the grail castle that *Parsifal* has the courage to pose his healing question, and the grail is not revealed.

When realizing that we have detailed the aesthetic history of Being in the West as a coming to presence of a poetic politics, through which Heidegger sought to combat modernity and return *technē* to *Poiēsis*, we know that after the *Götterdämmerung*, we are waiting for *Parsifal*. For it is only in the power of the compassionate question that the pure fool, enlightened by compassion, can restore original innocence and truly begin anew. As such, we must now make the attempt to direct the oblivion of Being towards *Parsifal* and in so doing, restore the innocence of the god.

## *Appendix I: Das Rheingold*

The Rhein-gold, hidden 'neath the waters of the river, is watched by three Rhine maidens—Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde. Wrought into a ring, the gold would bring universal domination to its possessor; but none, save one who despises and forswears love, can wield it. The magic gold is stolen by force from the maidens by the Nibelung, Alberich, who has wooed them in vain, and they cry for help to Wotan.

But the gods themselves are in danger. Desirous of building a palace, they have called their foes, the giants, to their aid; and as reward for their labor Wotan, trusting to Loge's cunning to enable him to evade the promise, has agreed to deliver up Freia, the goddess of youth, whose loss will bring old age and decay on the gods. The palace built, Fafner and Fasholt, the giants, demand their payment; and Loge, called upon for his promised aid, avows that though he has sought through both Heaven and Earth, he can find naught that may be held as equivalent for woman's worth and beauty. Then while the gods are in suspense, seeing no way out of the difficulty, he tells of the rape of the Rhine-gold, and how the magic ring has been wrought by Alberich, who hopes by its means to subdue all Earth and Heaven to his will. The giants, between whom and the Nibelungs a feud has long existed, are greatly disturbed by the tidings, and finally announce that if the gods will win for them the Hoard of the Nibelungs, they will accept that as ransom for Freia, whom they hold as pledge in the meantime.

Wotan and Loge therefore descend to Nibelheim, where, by the aid of the magic ring, Alberich is accumulating a vast hoard of treasure, and has further employed the skill of Mime to make for him a helmet, by the magic power of which he can change his shape, or become invisible at will. By Loge's cunning the gods succeed in binding the Nibelung, and refuse to lose him till he has paid over the ransom of the entire Nibelung Hoard, together with the helmet and ring. Deprived of this last, Alberich utters a curse upon all its future possessors; it shall bring death and destruction to all alike, till it return once more to his keeping.

The giants, with Freia in their power, return to claim the promised ransom, and, thrusting their staves, into the earth before the goddess, demand that the gold shall reach a height sufficient to conceal her from view; the helmet of magic is added to the pile; but when all the gold has been heaped together, there is still a chink through which the eye of the goddess can be seen. To fill this the giants demand the ring, which is now on Wotan's hand; he at first refuses to part with it; but at the interference of the goddess Erda, who rises from the earth to warn him against incurring the curse invoked on the possessor of the ring, he adds it to the pile, and the ransom is complete. Freia is delivered up to the gods, and the curse of the ring forthwith brings to work; Fafner claims the greater part of the Hoard for himself, and, on Fasholt's resistance, slays him.

Donner and Froh call the spirits of the clouds together, and a rainbow bridge spans the valley, passing over which the gods enter Walhalla, while the wail of the Rhine maidens for their lost gold rises from the depths beneath.<sup>1</sup>

—Jessie L. Weston

## Appendix II: Die Walkyrie

Sieglinde, daughter of Wälsing, has been carried off by robbers, her father and brother, she believes, slain, and she herself married against her will to Hunding.

To the forest-dwelling of Hunding and Sieglinde there comes a fugitive outlaw, overcome by conflict and weariness, in whom Sieglinde finally recognizes Siegmund, her twin-brother, and the predestined winner of the sword, Nothung, which at her wedding-feast, a mysterious stranger had thrust up to the hilt in the trunk of the tree which supports their dwelling, and which can only be withdrawn by the bravest of men. Siegmund withdraws the sword with ease, claims Sieglinde alike as sister and bride, and the two fly together.

Wotan, in view of the inevitable conflict between Hunding and Siegmund, summons Brünnhilde, the Valkyrie, and bids her give victory to Siegmund; but Fricka demands vengeance on the Wälsing, who had outraged the sanctity of the marriage vow, and, when Wotan resists, upbraids him with his infidelity, Siegmund being, in truth, Wotan's son; against his will Wotan yields, and revokes his commands to Brünnhilde. The Valkyrie adjures him to give the reason for this change of purpose, and Wotan tells her of the fatal spell of the Nibelung Ring, which, till it is restored to its original owners, the Rhinemaids, must be a source of danger to the gods. Should Alberich recover possession of it, he, who by cursing Love had succeeded in welding the Ring, can use its magic runes with fatal effects against the gods, and so bring about their total ruin.

Wotan himself is powerless to recover the talisman, having given it as payment for service to the giants, of whom the survivor, Fafnir, holds it. It can only be won by a hero, who unconscious of the spell and unaided by the gods, to whose law and favor he is a stranger, is driven by his own necessity to the task.

Such a hero Wotan had thought to find in Siegmund, the outlaw, defiant alike of the laws of gods and men; but Fricka had detected the truth that Siegmund is, in fact, no free agent, Wotan's will having been the motivating power of his actions. It was Wotan who was his father, Wotan who prepared the magic sword, Nothung, and Wotan who had led Siegmund to the dwelling of Sieglinde. Therefore Siegmund is ineligible for the task which the gods had assigned to him, and Wotan, his purpose penetrated by Fricka, must yield him up to her will. Brünnhilde, moved by admiration for Siegmund's dauntless bearing of love for Sieglinde, resolves to defy Wotan's expressed *will* and fulfill his hidden *wish*, by shielding Siegmund in the conflict. Wotan, however, interposes his wrath at her disobedience, the sword, Nothung, shivers on the spear of the god, and Siegmund falls, slain by Hunding. Brünnhilde flies with Sieglinde, who saves herself and her unborn child by taking refuge in the wood where Fafnir, in dragon form, watches over the Nibelungen Hoard.

The Valkyrie remains to brave the wrath of Wotan. In punishment for her disobedience the god banishes her from Walhalla, deprived of her divinity, and condemns her to wed the mortal who shall rouse her from the magic slumber into which he will cast her. Brünnhilde beseeches that none save the bravest hero on earth

(whom she foresees will be the son of Siegmund) shall wake her, and with this view entreats Wotan to defend her slumber by surrounding her with fire which none but the bravest may pass. Wotan yields, and, kissing her on the brow, he robs her of her divinity and casts her into a slumber; then, striking his staff on the rock, flames spring up around the Valkyrie, amid which Wotan vanishes.<sup>2</sup>

—Jessie L. Weston

### Appendix III: Siegfried

Siegfried, the son of Siegmund and Sieglinde, has been brought up in the forest by the dwarf Mime, who intends to use Siegfried as his instrument in recovering for him the Nibelung Hoard and the Ring. The great obstacle in the way of his carrying out his plan is his failure to forge a suitable weapon, Siegfried at once breaking into pieces every sword Mime can forge. Indignant at these repeated failures, Siegfried at last wrings from Mime the confession that his mother, dying, had entrusted him with the fragments of Nothung, Siegmund's sword, and Siegfried bids wield these fragments anew; Mime knows himself to be unequal for the task, and yet knows that no other weapon will serve for the slaying of Fafnir.

Wotan, in the guise of the Wanderer, appears to Mime; and in a riddling contest, in which each stakes his head on the successful solving of three questions, forces from Mime the confession of his failure, and then reveals to him that Nothung can only be forged anew by one to whom fear is unknown.

On Siegfried's return, Mime admits his inability to fulfill the task, and bids the lad attempt it himself, which he does with success. Mime, having vainly endeavored to extort a confession of fear from Siegfried, promises to lead him to Fafnir, in whose presence he will surely learn it.

Alberich, who watches Fafnir's retreat in the hope of regaining the ring himself, is warned by Wotan (the Wanderer) of Mime's intentions of winning the Hoard through the instrumentality of Siegfried, and both endeavor, but vainly, to put Fafnir on his guard.

Siegfried, led by Mime to the neighbourhood of the dragon's cave, attempts to imitate the song of the birds, and awakens Fafnir by his horn; but, far from feeling fear at the monster's appearance, he is only roused to wrath by his threats, and attacks him, finally piercing him to the heart with Nothung. His hand being scorched by the fiery blood of the dragon, the lad places it to his lips to cool it; and as soon as he tastes the blood, he understands the song of the bird, warning him to take possession both of Ring and Tarn-helmet, and to be on his guard against Mime's treachery.

Consequently, when Mime approaches him with flattering words, Siegfried detects the thought beneath; and on the dwarf offering him a poison drink, he slays him and casts his body into the cave, the entrance to which he closes with the corpse of the dragon. Resting under a tree, the bird sings of Brünnhilde the sleeping Valkyrie, who can only be awakened from her fire-girdled slumber by one who knows no fear; Siegfried announces that he has never learned that lesson, and bids the bird lead him to Brünnhilde.

Wotan awakes the goddess Erda to tell her that her wisdom is now baffled, for his *will* accepts what her knowledge foretold. The Ring has been won by Siegfried, and Brünnhilde, the daughter of Wotan and Erda, shall work out its curse, and, having learned *to know*, shall carry through the deed which shall free the world. There is no further need for Erda's wisdom, and Wotan bids her to everlasting slumber.

Siegfried, led by the bird, arrives at the foot of Brünnhilde's mountain, where he is confronted by the Wanderer, who would bar the way with his spear; Siegfried hews the weapon asunder with his sword, and makes his way through the flames to the summit of the mountain, where he finds the Valkyrie sleeping under a fir tree. He removes her helmet, and cuts off her corset with Nothung, and, at the sight of the first woman he has ever seen, feels at last the touch of fear. Brünnhilde, awakened by Siegfried's kiss, at first shrinks in terror from her fate; then, recognizing the hero as the son of Siegmund, whose coming she had herself foretold, confesses her love and yields in ecstasy to his embrace.<sup>3</sup>

—Jessie L. Weston

## *Appendix IV: Götterdämmerung*

The drama opens with a scene between three Norns, who indicate by their dark prophecies, and the breaking of the chord they weave, the fate of the hero, and the approaching fall of Walhalla.

Siegfried leaves Brünnhilde, having pledged himself to her, and given her the Ring as a love-token, and arrives at the hall of Gibichungs, Gunther and Gutrune, with their half-brother Hagen, who is really the son of Alberich.

Hagen, well aware of the task which his father has imposed upon him of regaining the Ring, urges Gunther and Gutrune to marriage, telling them that in Brünnhilde and Siegfried they will find their fitting mates.

On Siegfried's arrival, Gutrune, acting under Hagen's advice, presents him with a magic drink, the effect of which is not only to inspire him with a sudden passion for the Gibichung Princess, but to make him entirely forget Brünnhilde; whom he offers to assist Gunther in winning as his wife, claiming the hand of Gutrune as his reward, and the two heroes swear an oath of blood-brotherhood.

Brünnhilde, awaiting the return of Siegfried, is visited by the Valkyrie, Waltraute, who tells her of the dismay in Walhalla, caused by Wotan's acceptance of the coming Götterdämmerung, and refusal to make any effort to avert it. Nothing can save the gods except the return of the fatal Ring to its original guardians, the Rhine Maidens. Brünnhilde, who has now fully accepted the fate Wotan has prepared for her, and accounts Siegfried's love a greater treasure than her lost divinity, refuses to part with the Ring, Siegfried's love-token, and Waltraute leaves her indignation. Siegfried, in the shape of Gunther, which he has assumed by means of the Tarn-helm. Penetrates again through the flame to Brünnhilde, and, in spite of her struggles, forces the Ring from her, and compels her to accept him as her husband, keeping faith with Gunther by placing the sword, Nothung, between them.

In the mist of the morning, Siegfried and Gunther change places, and Brünnhilde follows the latter to the hall of the Gibichungs, where she is met by Siegfried and Gutrune. She at once accuses Siegfried of having betrayed both herself and Gunther, and he swears his innocence on Hagen's spear. Hagen offers to avenge Brünnhilde and Siegfried's death is determined upon.

A hunting party is arranged, and Siegfried, who has become separated from the others, is confronted by the three Rhine Maidens, who entreat him to give them back the Ring, and on his refusal foretell that he will die that day. Siegfried refuses to give them through fear what he would not yield freely, and the maidens vanish.

Siegfried is joined by the others. And during the following meal, under the influence of a drink given by Hagen, he relates the story of his slaying of the dragon and winning Brünnhilde. Two ravens fly out of the thicket behind him, and Siegfried, turning to look at them, is struck to the heart by Hagen.

The body is borne to the hall, where Hagen claims the Ring as his property, both as avenger of perjury and heir to the rightful owner, Alberich, but is opposed by Gunther. The two fight, and Gunther falls.



At Brünnhilde's command a funeral pyre is raised on which the body of Siegfried is laid, and Brünnhilde, after proclaiming love alone, not gold or glory, to be the enduring good, mounts her horse, Grane, and spurs it into the flames.

The waves of the Rhine rise, and the maidens summoned by Brünnhilde's last words, draw the Ring from Siegfried's hand and disappear into the waves, dragging with them Hagen, who has endeavored to frustrate them. A glow in the northern sky tells of the fall of Walhalla and the 'twilight of the gods.'<sup>4</sup>

—Jessie L. Weston

In the castle of Monsalvat, in the mountains of Northern Spain, the Holy Grail, the Cup of the Last Supper, and the Spear with which the side of the Savior was pierced on the Cross, are guarded by the Order of the Grail Knights, ruled by their king Amfortas, son of Titurel, to whose care in the first instance the sacred relics were committed. In the valley beneath Monsalvat the enchanter, Klingsor, has erected a magic castle and garden, and furious at the refusal of Amfortas to admit him as one of the Order, devotes himself to the task of corrupting and ensnaring the Grail Knights. Amfortas himself has been seduced by the charms of an unnamed sorceress, and not only robbed of the Holy Spear, but in the struggle wounded by the weapon. The wound will yield to no known remedy, but the Grail oracle has declared that healing shall come through 'a pure Fool' wise through fellow suffering.

Such is the explanatory account given by Gurnemanz, a knight of the grail, to his attendant squires, at the commencement of the drama. Kundry, the self-appointed messenger of the Grail, a wild and fantastic figure, breaks in upon the scene with a flask of healing balsam from Arabia; but the king and knights are alike aware that no means of healing, save that foretold by the Grail, will be of any avail.

The knights bear Amfortas to the lake for refreshment; and while the king watches with interest the flight of a wild swan, the bird falls, transfixed by an arrow from the bow of Parsifal. Taxed with the deed, the lad avows it gleefully, but when Gurnemanz' remonstrance convinces him of the cruelty of his action, he is struck with remorse, and, breaking his bow, throws it and the quiver from him. Asked who he is, and whence he comes, Parsifal can give no satisfactory answer; but Kundry declares her knowledge of his parentage: he has been brought up in the woods 'as a fool' by his widowed mother, who has died of grief at his desertion. The lad, overcome with rage at Kundry's mocking tone, makes a furious attack upon her, but is checked by Gurnemanz. The knight, thinking he recognizes the new-comer the *Fool* of the prophecy, bids him accompany him to the Grail Feast. Kundry sinks down, overcome by heavy slumber, against which she struggles in vain. The scene changes to the temple of the Grail, where the mystic relic is to be unveiled, in the presence of the knights, by the king.

Amfortas, to whom the sight of the grail brings renewed suffering, at first shrinks from his task, but, urged by the voice of his father, Titurel, who is himself preserved in life by the sight of the Grail, he unveils the cup, blessing with it the bread and wine, which thus becomes possessed of a miraculously sustaining power, and, as such, are partaken of with reverence by the Brotherhood. Parsifal remains a spectator of the solemn Feast, but when questioned by Gurnemanz at the conclusion, shows no sign of comprehension of what has passed, and is driven by him with contempt from the temple.

Klingsor, aware that in Parsifal he has a foe whom it is essential to his plans to disarm and render powerless, summons to his aid Kundry (who having once vainly tempted Klingsor is now in his power, compelled to work his will), and bids her exercise on Parsifal the charms which have proved to fatal to Amfortas. Parsifal,

drawn by Klingsor's spell to the castle, and having overcome by his valor the recreant of the knights of the Grail who guard it, enters the magic garden, and is at first enchanted, and afterwards repelled, by the fascinations of the Flower Maidens who inhabit it. Kundry's entrance puts them to flight, and by recalling to memory the lady's name, and working upon his affection for his mother, almost bends him to her will. But her kiss awakens in Parsifal a comprehension of Amfortas' sin and his own danger, and he steadfastly repels the temptress; Kundry summons Klingsor to her aid, and with the intention of slaying Parsifal he flings the Holy Spear at the lad; but the weapon hovers in the air above his head, and Parsifal seizing it in his hand, and making the sign of the cross, Klingsor's castle falls in ruins to the ground.

Amfortas, shrinking from the agony of his wound, refuses to unveil the Grail; the Brotherhood, deprived of their mystic food, become weakened and demoralized; Titurel dies; and Gurnemanz seeks refuge in a hermitage from the impending ruin of the Order. To him, on Good Friday morning, arrive, first Kundry, in the garb of a penitent, silent, but desirous as ever of serving the Grail; then Parsifal, grown to manhood, fully armed, and bearing the Spear, which through all his wandering he has preserved unharmed. Cursed by Kundry in the previous act, he has till now been unable to find the Grail Castle, and is overcome with grief on learning the straight to which the Brotherhood is reduced. Gurnemanz assures him that he has conquered the curse, and anoints him king of the Grail. In his kingly office Parsifal first baptizes Kundry, and then, assuring her of redemption, gives her the kiss of absolution. The three repair to the Grail Temple, where, at the funeral of his father, Amfortas has promised to unveil the Grail; but when the moment arrives he refuses to fulfill his promise, renounces his royal office, and demands death at the hands of the indignant knights. Gurnemanz and Parsifal enter; and Parsifal with a touch of the Spear heals Amfortas, and, assuming the office he later has renounced, unveils the Grail, while the knights kneel in silent adoration, and Kundry falls dead at his feet.<sup>5</sup>

—Jessie L. Weston

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## ENDNOTES

### Front Matter and *Preface*

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 89.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger, “What Calls for Thinking?,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 365.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 103.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, “‘Only a God Can Save Us’: *Der Spiegel*’s Interview with Martin Heidegger,” trans. Maria P. Alter and John D. Caputo, in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993), 107.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 13.

### *Prelude: A Definition of “Transcendence”*

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 213.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 93. As homage to the text that first profoundly inspired me to *think*, this opening paragraph parallels Martin Heidegger’s own introduction to “What is Metaphysics?” As I write this definition of the term transcendence for the modern age, (which will guide my thesis to its end), four of Heidegger’s essays in particular are very present in guiding me. These are: “What is Metaphysics?” “The Essence of Truth,” “The Origin of the Work of Art,” and “The Question Concerning Technology.” Working closely with Heidegger’s writings I have done my best to both think with and write with the great philosopher of Being on this so far tentatively explored topic.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 93-94.

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- <sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 94.
- <sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 152.
- <sup>6</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 153.
- <sup>7</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 154.
- <sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 154.
- <sup>9</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 148-149.
- <sup>10</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 149.
- <sup>11</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 192.
- <sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 118.
- <sup>13</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 118.
- <sup>14</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 118.
- <sup>15</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 118.
- <sup>16</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 118.
- <sup>17</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 118.
- <sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 119.



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- <sup>19</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 155.
- <sup>20</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 95.
- <sup>21</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 156.
- <sup>22</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 120.
- <sup>23</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 95.
- <sup>24</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 95.
- <sup>25</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 95.
- <sup>26</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 95.
- <sup>27</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 95.
- <sup>28</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 96.
- <sup>29</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 96.
- <sup>30</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 96-97.
- <sup>31</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 97.
- <sup>32</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 97.
- <sup>33</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 97.

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- <sup>34</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 98.
- <sup>35</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 97.
- <sup>36</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 100-101.
- <sup>37</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 100.
- <sup>38</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 97.
- <sup>39</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 103.
- <sup>40</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 101.
- <sup>41</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings*. (London: Routledge, 2010), 101.
- <sup>42</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 147.
- <sup>43</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 103.
- <sup>44</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 103.
- <sup>45</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 103.
- <sup>46</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 103.
- <sup>47</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 134.
- <sup>48</sup> Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 103.

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- <sup>49</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 122.
- <sup>50</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 126.
- <sup>51</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 127.
- <sup>52</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 126.
- <sup>53</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 126.
- <sup>54</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 123.
- <sup>55</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 125.
- <sup>56</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 125.
- <sup>57</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 165-182
- <sup>58</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 130.
- <sup>59</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 130.
- <sup>60</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 130.
- <sup>61</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 132.
- <sup>62</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 134.
- <sup>63</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 134.

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<sup>64</sup> Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 134.

<sup>65</sup> Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 134.

<sup>66</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 200.

<sup>67</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 143.

<sup>68</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 143.

<sup>69</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 144.

<sup>70</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 145.

<sup>71</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 147.

<sup>72</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 147.

<sup>73</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 146.

<sup>74</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 147.

<sup>75</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 148.

<sup>76</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 148.

<sup>77</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 165.

<sup>78</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 165.

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<sup>79</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 167.

<sup>80</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 168.

<sup>81</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 169.

<sup>82</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 167.

<sup>83</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 170.

<sup>84</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 170.

<sup>85</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 170.

<sup>86</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 172.

<sup>87</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 172.

<sup>88</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 165.

<sup>89</sup> Martin Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 103.

<sup>90</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 173.

<sup>91</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 178.

<sup>92</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 180.

<sup>93</sup> Martin Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 103.

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<sup>94</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 177.

<sup>95</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 176.

<sup>96</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 177.

<sup>97</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 33-34.

<sup>98</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 174.

<sup>99</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 182.

<sup>100</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 178.

<sup>101</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 184.

<sup>102</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 184.

<sup>103</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 184.

<sup>104</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 317.

<sup>105</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 318.

<sup>106</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 319.

<sup>107</sup> Plato refers to “*gigantomachia peri tes ousia*” in *Sophist* 246a-249c. Heidegger refers to it at the conclusion of *Being and Time*, speaking of “the strife in relation to the interpretation of being.” Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 398.

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<sup>108</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 337.

<sup>109</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 333.

<sup>110</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2010), 337.

<sup>111</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “Why Heidegger Made the Right Step in 1933,” *International Journal of Žižek Studies* 1:4. (2007): 39

### *A Review of the Literature*

<sup>1</sup> Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger, “‘Only a God Can Save Us’: *Der Spiegel*’s Interview with Martin Heidegger,” trans. Maria P. Alter and John D. Caputo, in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993), 107.

<sup>3</sup> Ernst Nolte, “The Past that will not Pass: A Speech that Could be Written but not Delivered.” Available online at [http://www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Chapter14Doc\\_11Intro.pdf](http://www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Chapter14Doc_11Intro.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians’ Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 143.

<sup>5</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians’ Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 141.

<sup>6</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians’ Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 155.

<sup>7</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians’ Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 158.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 63.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 30.

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<sup>10</sup> Ernst Nolte, "The Past that will not Pass: A Speech that could be Written but not Delivered." Available online at [http://www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Chapter14Doc\\_11Intro.pdf](http://www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Chapter14Doc_11Intro.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 163.

<sup>12</sup> Ernst Nolte, "The Past that will not Pass: A Speech that Could be Written but not Delivered." Available online at [http://www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Chapter14Doc\\_11Intro.pdf](http://www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Chapter14Doc_11Intro.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 164

<sup>14</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 164.

<sup>15</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 166.

<sup>16</sup> Víctor Farías, *Heidegger and Nazism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), xii.

<sup>18</sup> Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), xiii.

<sup>19</sup> Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), xiv.

<sup>21</sup> Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1991), 59.

<sup>23</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1991).

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### *Götterdämmerung*

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### *Epilogue: Parsifal*

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony J. Steinhoff, “Embracing the Grail: Parsifal, Richard Wagner and the German Nation,” *German History* 30:3 (September 2012): 375.

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## *Appendix I-V*

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