

**The Enigma of Art in the Thought of  
Martin Heidegger**

**Russell Davies**

**Goldsmiths College, University of London**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of:  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**July 2011**

## **Declaration**

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

**Russell Davies**

**Date**

## Abstract

In crucial places in his path of thought, Martin Heidegger appeals to the notion of an insoluble enigma as a way of elucidating that thought, to such an extent that the enigma goes to the very heart of that thinking. All the words that are central to that thinking, the words that Heidegger uses to point towards the possibility of appearance and disclosure, are marked by this figure of the insoluble enigma.

Whether writing about the opening of a world that art is, or the happening that is figured as *Ereignis*, Heidegger resorts to the enigma to illuminate his thinking. But what does it mean to inscribe an enigmatic insolubility into one's very thinking and what kind of explanatory power can such a figure have? To answer these questions, this thesis traces the thought of the enigma through a series of readings of Heidegger's 'The Origin of the Work of Art', his 1942 lectures on Hölderlin's 'The Ister' and Sophocles's *Antigone*, and his writings on the poem of Parmenides.

Beginning with a consideration of the enigma of art, it moves on to the enigmatic activity of the river in Hölderlin's poem and how this gives rise to the enigma of the here and now, before moving on to the enigma of the uncanny in *Antigone* and the law of becoming homely in being unhomely; the place of the law itself becomes critical here. Finally, via Parmenides's saying that thinking and being are the same, the enigma is identified with Heidegger's rethinking of the ancient Greek thought of ἀλήθεια and traced, from there, to the givenness of being as *es gibt* and *Ereignis*.

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>		<i>page</i> <b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>On the enigma in thought</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>To see the enigma</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>The enigma of the river</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>The enigma of Antigone</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>The enigma of Parmenides</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Epilogue</b>	<b>A time and place for us</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>		<b>237</b>

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Alexander García Düttmann, for his help and guidance in the production of this thesis, Brendan Prendeville and Howard Caygill who read part of the thesis for my transfer to MPhil to PhD, and Daniele de Rugo for help with some of the ancient Greek.

My greatest thanks go to my wife Shiona for all her love and support while I was working on this thesis.

## Introduction

### On the enigma in thought

The figure of the enigma, the *Rätsel*, is one that ramifies and reverberates through a number of texts by Martin Heidegger without becoming an explicit theme therein. Apart from two paragraphs largely concerned with the etymology of *Rätsel* in his lectures on Hölderlin's poem 'The Ister', Heidegger neither gives us a definition of the enigma, nor does he elucidate it in a structured way. It is given to us in all its enigmatic character. Why does Heidegger resort to the enigma throughout his work? From 'The Origin of the Work of Art' to his essays on the Presocratics, the figure of the enigma is referred to in its essential insolubility. In the essay, 'Hegel and the Greeks', originally given as a lecture in 1958 and published in 1960, he writes of the enigma of ἀλήθεια, the Greek term usually translated as truth, and how it has prevailed or been at work [*walten*] both in the beginning of Greek philosophy and throughout the course of philosophy. Attending to the enigma, Heidegger says, is a form of pointing out that the philosophy of the Greeks exists in thinking in terms of a not yet [*noch nicht*] of what is still to be thought, what Heidegger calls the unthought, to which we have yet to measure up. To think the enigma attentively in Heidegger's terms would seem to suggest that we can begin to measure up to the unthought. In a footnote to the word *Rätsel*, added in 1960, Heidegger writes of 'the authority [*Befugnis*] of the enigma'.<sup>1</sup> It seems that being attentive to the enigma of ἀλήθεια is to submit oneself to the authority of the enigma and to put oneself in the position of the not-yet of thinking. The enigma seems to name this not-yet but what is this authority, how does it arise and who or what authorises it? Does the enigma claim this authority from out of itself for itself? Whatever the answer to these questions, it seems reasonable to say that the enigma has a certain privilege within Heidegger's thought, whether he characterises it as the enigma of ἀλήθεια, being or art. What it means to inscribe such a figure in philosophy and where it takes us are, perhaps, the guiding questions that lead this thesis as it follows the ravelling and unravelling of the enigma in Heidegger's thought. But should it concern us at all? To

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.336. *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1976, p.444.

say that something is an enigma could mean that we need trouble ourselves no further with it; surely, we know what an enigma is without really having to think about it. Nothing could be more straightforward than the meaning of an enigma, especially if we consult the dictionary. An enigma is a puzzle, a riddle, something ambiguous or mysterious, whose meaning can be figured out, or whose ambiguity can be demarcated and domesticated. But if there is one thing that Heidegger teaches us, it is, perhaps, that a resort to the dictionary tells us nothing essential. If we rely solely on the dictionary, perhaps we miss what is essential about the enigma, or we mistakenly assume that we know what an enigma is and therefore leave it behind, untroubled and untroubling.

That there is something troubling and troubled about an enigma, however, seems to be a recurrent theme in philosophy and this trouble is signalled in one of the beginnings of Western thought, in Greek tragedy, in Sophocles's drama *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Oedipus's response to the enigmatic Sphinx, a hybrid creature from Theban legend, firstly in freeing Thebes from her malignity and secondly in his ignoring of her injunction not to seek out the murderer of Laius, brings about his and his family's downfall. At the time of the murder, the Sphinx had counselled the people of Thebes not to bring his killer to justice, as Creon advises Oedipus during the play, after he has told him about the killing. This injunction is echoed by Tiresias in his confrontation with Oedipus who, having decided that the murderer must be found and punished, forces Tiresias to share his knowledge of the murder. Oedipus had been crowned king of Thebes, having solved the enigma of the Sphinx's riddle, thereby saving the city from her tyranny. In marrying Jocasta, he fulfils the second part of the Oracle of Apollo, having already fulfilled the first by killing his father Laius in ignorance of who he was. What brings about his downfall is not the actual killing of Laius but Oedipus's absolute insistence on knowing who the murderer is. It is this insistence on pursuing to the end what he does not know is self-knowledge that destroys him, leaving him abject. In 'Notes on the *Oedipus*', Hölderlin writes of a knowledge drunk on its own magnificent and harmonious form which 'provokes itself to know more than it can bear or grasp';<sup>2</sup> Oedipus has one eye too many, as he

---

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, edited and translated by Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth, London, Penguin Books, 2009, p.320. *Werke und Briefe, Band 2*, herausgegeben von Friedrich Beißner und Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main, Insel Verlag, 1969, p.732.

writes 'In lovely blueness'. This exposure of the truth about Oedipus takes the form of a series of interrogations which, says John Jones, 'have a sublime impersonal malignity such as a series of forced moves at chess would impart if the game possessed tragic relevance to life'.<sup>3</sup> These interrogations lead to a self-judgement in which there is a dual self-loss, writes Christoph Menke. Oedipus establishes his own condemned status, which he has 'imposed on himself, without, however, intending it. In his self-condemnation Oedipus immediately twice loses himself; for this reason he is – in as well as after his self-condemnation - a self no longer capable of self-determination, of action and living – he is one accursed'.<sup>4</sup> What the fate of Oedipus seems to teach us is that how one responds to an enigma can bring with it an overwhelming responsibility and that what seems to be a plausible answer might well be nothing of the sort. The Chorus enjoins us at the end of the play to look upon the disaster that has befallen the ill-starred Oedipus, 'who knew the answer to the famous riddle [ἀνίγμωτ'] and was a mighty man, on whose fortune every one among the citizens used to look with envy!'.<sup>5</sup> The Greek Sphinx had a monstrous reputation even before her troubled meeting with Oedipus – all who failed to answer the riddle were killed; are these the corpses that populate the foreground of Gustave Doré's painting *L'Enigme*? – so the outcome for Oedipus only added to this monstrosity, even though the Sphinx was seemingly defeated.

The Sphinx belongs to both Greek and Egyptian mythology, although there are differences between them, not least their sex, and both play a part in the historical development of art. The Egyptian and Greek Sphinxes are paradigmatic of a certain symbolic sense for Hegel. In his *Aesthetics*, Hegel sees symbolism as a stage in art's development, a stage that is inadequate to the spirit. This is 'because the spirit here is itself not yet inwardly clear to itself, as it would be if it were the free spirit; nevertheless at least there are configurations which reveal in themselves at once that they are not merely chosen to display *themselves* alone, but that they are meant to

---

<sup>3</sup> John Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1962, p.201.

<sup>4</sup> Christoph Menke, *Tragic Play: Irony and Theater from Sophocles to Beckett*, translated by James Phillips, New York, Columbia University Press, 2009, pp.51-52.

<sup>5</sup> Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* in *I Ajax, Electra, Oedipus Tyrannus*, edited and translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, Harvard University Press, 1994, p.483.

hint [*hindeuten*] at meanings that lie deeper and are more comprehensive'.<sup>6</sup> The symbolic work of art hints at things outside or beyond it, but these hints are not merely arbitrary. What it hints at must have an inwardly grounded affinity with the form in which the work of art is presented and have an essential relation with it, says Hegel. Symbolism is a form of hinting or pointing at something other, an indication. It is with the ancient Egyptians that the symbolic work of art reaches its apogee: 'Egypt is the country of symbols, the country which sets itself the spiritual task of the self-deciphering of the spirit, without actually attaining to the decipherment. The problems remain unsolved, and the solution which *we* can provide consists therefore only in interpreting the riddles [*Rätsel*] of Egyptian art and its symbolic works as a problem remaining undeciphered by the Egyptians themselves.'<sup>7</sup> The enigmas of Egyptian art can only be presented as enigmas by those who come after them. We have to see the enigma as an enigma and to solve the enigma of Egyptian art is to present this insolubility. The Egyptians themselves could not find a solution to their enigmas and nor can we in coming to them centuries later. It is the Sphinx that best expresses the enigmatic character of Egyptian art for Hegel. The works of Egyptian art are enigmas and the Sphinx is symbolic of 'the objective enigma *par excellence* [*Rätsel selbst*]...It is, as it were, the symbol of the symbolic itself'.<sup>8</sup> But a symbol that is symbolic of symbolism is surely a symbol that escapes the logic of symbolism or that at least is prior to symbolism but can only be seen in the light of such a symbolism. If symbolism is part of a representational order then the symbol that is symbolic of such an order cannot belong in this order because it is a symbol of itself in which it is not itself because it is a symbol. A symbol points to something other than itself. If a symbol points to itself it is no longer a symbol. The symbol is destroyed at the very moment that it becomes a symbol.

There is, therefore, a certain estrangement at work in the symbol of the symbolic and the Sphinx embodies this estrangement. The struggle which the Sphinx undertakes in its form, its *Gestalt*, between its human aspect and its various animal elements, is symbolic for Hegel of the struggle of spirit to come into itself, a struggle which is

---

<sup>6</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, translated by T.M. Knox, Volume I, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975, p.352. *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I Werke 13*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970, p.454. Hegel's emphasis.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.354/pp.456-7. Hegel's emphasis.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.360/p.465. Translation modified.

unavailing in Egyptian art. What it does do, however, is speak to the strangeness at the heart of the *Rätsel*: ‘This pressure for self-conscious spirituality which does not apprehend itself from its own resources in the one reality adequate to itself but only contemplates itself in what is related to it and brings itself into consciousness in precisely what is strange to it, is the symbolic as such which at this peak becomes an enigma [*Rätsel*].’<sup>9</sup> The Greek Sphinx appears in this sense, says Hegel, that is it appears only in its own estrangement, and it is in the perceived simplicity of Oedipus’s answer to the riddle, and in the Delphic oracle’s injunction to ‘know thyself’, that Hegel sees the clarity of the light of consciousness ‘which makes its concrete content shine clearly through the shape belonging and appropriate to itself’<sup>10</sup> and, as such, it is that which reveals only itself. The aim of symbolic art was for the spirit to attain a clarity free of enigma [*rätsellose*] so that it could form itself out of its own self-sufficiency and separate itself from appearance, according to Hegel, so that meaning comes into consciousness through its own power. In not being able to cast off the enigma, Egyptian art remained stuck in riddles and obscure symbolism. Because of this inability, symbolism is precisely a deficient - defective or disfigured - form for Hegel.

The enigma of art is a problem for Hegel that is overcome through art’s progression. The enigma remains insoluble but having presented its insolubility it can be passed over. However, if insolubility is seen as constitutive of the inherently enigmatic symbol, it is also true to say that Hegel reduces the *Rätsel* to the level of a puzzle, something easily soluble, when later in the *Aesthetics* he contrasts the symbol with the riddle. A symbol, he says, is essentially an unsolved problem, while the riddle is solved precisely because it has an inventor who shapes both its veiling and unveiling. A riddle is a construct; the enigma, it would seem, arises out of the work of art without conscious intent. The enigma is somehow given. One can see, therefore, two orders of the *Rätsel* in Hegel’s thinking on art. The first, as symbol, could more properly be called an enigma, something that is inherently unanswerable and whose solution is the presentation of this insolubility. The second is the riddle as a puzzle that is decipherable, precisely because it has a conscious intent behind it, and is more akin to a game than an enigma. It is, he says, the conscious wit of symbolism, a test

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.361/p.465. Translation modified.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.361/p.466.

of ingenuity and flexibility in the way that various different aspects are combined, which is also self-destructive in that the riddle has an answer. It seems to be nothing more than a low grade form of verbal dexterity, which in modern times, he says, has been debased to the level of witticisms and jokes. Does this mean that it is safe to pass over the enigma, that it can be left behind? If the enigma of art is merely a developmental stage, or a mere puzzle, then perhaps it is a question of what remains of art and of the enigma. But this passing over of the enigma, this believing that the enigma of art has been definitively dealt with, would seem to be premature, as Jean-Luc Nancy acknowledges in his essay 'The Vestige of Art', when he conjectures that the entire history of art is constituted by the 'tensions and torsions toward its own enigma'. Art, he says, 'in our time imposes on itself a severe gesture, a painful move toward its own essence become enigma, a manifest enigma of its own vestige'.<sup>11</sup> Art, then, is a kind of tearing, a system of forces in which one rift is answered by another, always prone to the possibility of being torn apart. That the question of art – of art as an enigma – is an urgent one for Nancy is clear when he says that these tensions and torsions seem to have reached their peak today – he was speaking in 1994 – which, he says, might be an appearance or it might be the culmination of an event that began at least two hundred years ago. Art vacillates in its meaning, says Nancy, and it is imperative that this movement is accompanied and known. Art as vestige is not an image, he continues, but is the mark of a passing, the remains of a *pas*, which is past as soon as it is made. The vestige is that which is left behind, a hint, a mere trace, of what has passed of this rifting movement: 'It is impossible to say literally that the step takes *place*: yet a *place* in the strong sense of the word is always the vestige of a step.'<sup>12</sup>

This excursus into classical dramaturgy and Hegelian aesthetics, while not supplying a definitive answer to the question of the enigma, does seem to mark the fact that we have moved away from the dictionary definition. *Pace* Hegel's second order of the *Rätsel*, it is not just a simple puzzle, a riddle whose answer is worked out in advance. 'An enigma is more than a mere puzzle',<sup>13</sup> wrote Lawrence Durrell. But wherein lies this 'more'? How is it constituted? It is not just a form of intellectual play in which

---

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Muses*, translated by Peggy Kamuf, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1996, p.86.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p.98. Nancy's emphases.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Durrell, *Quinx or The Ripper's Tale*, Faber and Faber, London & Boston, 1985, p.166.

‘puzzling Questions’, such as what song the sirens sang, or the name Achilles assumed when hiding among women, ‘are not beyond all conjecture’.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the ‘more’ resides in the question of the answer to an enigma, whether an answer is ever possible or whether, in its structure and constitution, an enigma is unanswerable. But if the enigma is unanswerable then surely this is another reason to leave it behind. There has to be more than insolubility otherwise the necessity of engaging disappears. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his essay ‘Reading Montaigne’, hints at this something more when he describes the radical openness of an enigma in that it is both a demand and a refusal of such a demand but which, in its refusal, remains impossible to ignore: ‘Religion is valuable in that it saves a place for what is strange and knows our lot is enigmatic. All the solutions it gives to the enigma are incompatible with our monstrous condition. As a questioning, it is justified on the condition that it remain answerless. It is one of the modes of our folly, and our folly is essential to us. When we put not self-satisfied understanding but a consciousness astonished at itself at the core of human existence, we can neither obliterate the dream of an other side of things nor repress the wordless invocation of this beyond. What is certain is that if there is some universal Reason we are not in on its secrets, and are in any case required to guide our lives according to our lights.’<sup>15</sup> We seem to be at the mercy of a condition that demands answers but that is incapable of supplying them. What this passage from Merleau-Ponty also gives us are some hints about certain traits of the enigma: a voice that speaks without speaking; the demand for, and impossibility of, an answer; and, as with the Sphinx, another suggestion of a certain monstrosity.

The ‘more’ could also suggest that, in thinking the enigma of art, we are thinking more than the enigma of art. That thinking itself is an enigma, and that this thinking is either impossible or monstrous, is, perhaps, the lesson of Zarathustra’s vision of the enigma in Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Here the *Rätsel* is identified as the vision of the most solitary man, ‘a young shepherd, writhing, choking, convulsed, his face distorted; and a heavy, black snake was hanging out of

---

<sup>14</sup> Sir Thomas Browne, *The Major Works*, edited by C.A. Patrides, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1977, p.307.

<sup>15</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, translated by Richard C. McCleary, Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1964, p.203.

his mouth'.<sup>16</sup> Zarathustra tells of his vision on board ship, a few days out from port, having identified an appropriate audience, that is those *Sucher* and *Versucher*, who live in danger, drunk on *Rätsel*, who delight in the doubled light of twilight. These are people who hate the closure of calculation [*erschließen*], preferring the leap of guessing or surmise [*erraten*]. For Nietzsche, the vision of the enigma is not for common eyes. Vision itself is uncommon. To see [*sehen*] is to see the abyss [*Abgrund*], the abandonment of ground, and seeing the enigma of the most solitary man is, perhaps, to shudder with horror. Zarathustra's vision comes after a glimpse into the thought of the eternal return. In his climb up the mountain, with the dwarf of gravity on his back, he comes to a gateway marked *Augenblick*, moment or glance of an eye, which marks the confluence of two eternities, one flowing back into the past and one into the future. It is following the dwarf's failure to answer his questions about the *Augenblick* that the vision occurs and both dwarf and gateway disappear. Standing amongst wild cliffs, in the most desolate of places, Zarathustra sees the solitary man. He challenges his audience to solve the enigma of what he saw, but none of them are capable of meeting it. That vision in itself is shocking is signalled by the fact that, in his challenge, Zarathustra uses the word *schauen*, which means to see, look or behold, but *Schauer* means shudder, while *schauerlich* means horrific, terrible or dreadful. It is true that Zarathustra's vision changes as the shepherd, after exhortations by Zarathustra, bites off the head of the snake and is transformed into a laughing being surrounded by light. But even this vision is unsettling. The laughter is unearthly and inhuman and it is a laughter that Zarathustra longs for, a longing that consumes him and makes it impossible for him to live or die.

### **On the way to the enigma**

A certain thematic is building around the figure of the enigma. To take matters further, I want to make a preliminary enquiry into the enigma and its relation to Heidegger's thought. In turning to Heidegger, a number of questions arise about precisely where he begins to think the enigma, whether his thought could be said to be a thinking of the enigma, whether it has its beginning in the enigma, or whether to

---

<sup>16</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1961, p.180. *Werke VII, Also Sprach Zarathustra*, herausgegeben von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1968, p.197.

begin to think is to be always already in the enigma. Where to begin is a question that preoccupied Heidegger and the possibility of a return to the beginning out of which would arise an other beginning is one that accompanies him throughout his thinking. Where to begin is a matter of finding an appropriate point in Heidegger's thinking where the enigma is introduced in such a way that what the enigma is remains open, but where its importance in terms of thinking is established. One starting point is in his lectures on Nietzsche, where he considers Zarathustra's vision, but I will come to that in the first chapter. As Simon Critchley<sup>17</sup> has shown, one could start with *Being and Time* but there the focus is on Dasein, which isn't the focus of the enigma in the later writings. Instead, I will begin with the *Country Path Conversations*, written in 1945 and published in 1995, a collection of three dialogues, the first of which involves a Scientist, a Scholar and a Guide.

In this conversation, in a discussion about whether thinking is getting away from the discussants, or whether they are getting away from thinking, the enigma is approached through the question of what constitutes a nearness and a farness to thinking, where thinking does not have the character of an object [*Gegenstand*]. What is at stake, says the Guide [*Weise*] is the nearness and farness to this non-objective thinking. Nearness and farness stand in relation to something that is not an object, something that is not part of the economy of human representation, something that does not belong in what the Guide calls 'technology'. This is a form of cognition and theoretical comportment, which objectifies that which it brings into its purview and, therefore, submits it to a representational-mathematical calculus, the thinking Heidegger identifies as metaphysical. For the Guide, thinking cannot be approached in technological or metaphysical terms. If nearness and farness do not belong in a subjective framework then they must belong somewhere else. The Scientist [*Forscher*] postulates where this could be when he says that nearness and farness prevail [*walten*] through themselves [*selbsttätig*], and are both independent [*Selbstständige*] in the manner that space is independent. Both nearness and farness establish themselves from out of themselves, rather than being established by a subject. Nearness and farness enable the possibility that there are objects and objective relations, granting [*gewähren*] the arena wherein these relations can take

---

<sup>17</sup> Simon Critchley, 'Enigma Variations: An Interpretation of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*', *Ratio (new series)*, Oxford, Blackwell, XV, 2 June 2002, pp.154-175.

place. The Guide calls nearness and farness a unity, but this is a unity that has no name and the thinking of which is demanded by nearness and farness themselves. In the difficulty of thinking nearness and farness comes the demand to think them. It is in this devilish demand [*arge Zumutung*] that the Scientist identifies nearness and farness as an enigma, an enigma he finds oppressive but which the Guide finds beautiful and liberating [*Befreiendes*].

While it is the Scientist who first raises the figure of the enigma, it seems that he is taking the hint from the Guide, as *Weise* implies. *Der Weise* is a wise man or sage, and *Weisheit* means wisdom, but *Weise* also means the way or manner, and *weisen* means to show or point so that wisdom seems to come from pointing something out. *Hinweis* means tip or piece of advice, allusion or hint, while *hinweisen* means to point out. So the Guide is one who points out, who hints at or alludes, one who can point people along the way. It is not a question of being too prescriptive, of forcing the issue, of providing propositions that can be tested. That Heidegger himself saw the *Weise* in this way is perhaps indicated by the Guide's own comments that there are, presumably, no wise ones or sages, but only those who can guide us, where the guide is not one who knows, a *Wissende*, but one who merely indicates, who shows the way, who can point out the place from which hints or signs come to human beings and who can point out how these hints could be followed. It is a question of indirection. If one is to think non-representationally, which seems to be the way that nearness and farness are to be approached, then it is not possible to do so if one does it through propositions and, if propositional thinking appears in the form of an activity, then hinting points towards a certain passivity. Hints can only be taken, writes Adam Phillips in his essay 'A Stab at Hinting', and 'each hint taken furthers the drama; but the play is not one we can know'.<sup>18</sup> Hints begin things, he says, but it is impossible to know beforehand precisely what will be a hint for us to take. In a way, taking the hint means accepting responsibility, responding to the hint in taking it up. It is only through the hints of the Guide that the enigma arises, the hints being taken by the Scholar and the Scientist, but it is also the fact that what the Guide finds liberating and beautiful is only a liberation into perplexity [*ratlos*], which, the Guide says, is presumably [*vermutlich*] demanded [*zugemutet*] by the enigma itself. The

---

<sup>18</sup> Adam Phillips, *The Beast in the Nursery*, London, Faber and Faber, 1998, p.72.

enigma demands this insolubility when we come face to face with it. But this is to be too emphatic. As the Guide says, we can only *presume* that the enigma makes this demand, and in this presumption we cannot know it; we can only conjecture. The demand is not an object of knowledge. What is required is a different way of thinking, a thinking, says Krzysztof Ziarek, that is not ‘advancing positive statements or making cognitive claims but rather [is] a thinking of inflections, dislocating and simultaneously withdrawing itself from the paradigms of thought’.<sup>19</sup> Because there is only this *vermutlich*, because we cannot know that the enigma is insoluble, we are presented with a demand that an attempt be made to find a solution. Therefore the question of the enigma remains open. In not knowing that the enigma cannot be solved lies the possibility that it can be. It is this, perhaps, that draws us into the enigma. It is also here that we might be able to glimpse just one sense of what nearness and farness to the enigma might be. It is a question of approach. The Guide says that we never attend to this demand of the enigma. All too often, the matter is left to rest without it becoming a concern. Perhaps merely pointing it out is enough to pass over it. The Scientist would rather ignore it, but the Guide believes that the enigma can only be laid to rest if there has been a prior thinking about it. If the Guide is correct in this, then how thinking approaches it becomes central to the enigma’s nearness and farness. The questions of whether the enigma can be solved over time, whether human agency can force a solution through, or whether there are other possible ways of comportment towards the enigma, are all situated in the nearness and farness to the enigma, where the enigma itself is this nearness and farness.

The question of nearness and farness is a question of belonging and has a bearing on human belonging. Nearness and farness seem to suggest a place to which they both refer. There has to be a where to which there is a nearness and a farness. But it would be wrong to think that this place is where human beings happen to find themselves. The Scientist fears that he has become a stranger [*Fremder*] in his own area of expertise, what he calls his house of physics, and the Guide elaborates this estrangement into a general statement about the human not being at home in his own dwelling [*in seinem Haus nicht zuhause*]. That means, says the Scholar, ‘that the human does not know his own habitat, so that he would be missing from his own

---

<sup>19</sup> Krzysztof Ziarek, *Inflected Language: Toward a Hermeneutics of Nearness*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994, p.47.

premises – that is, be absent in his own presencing’.<sup>20</sup> These last two phrases translate one phrase in the German: *so daß er im eigenen „Anwesen“ abwesend wäre*. Heidegger is playing on the current meaning of *Anwesen* as meaning a large property and on its now covered over meaning of presencing. The Guide conjectures that in this strange absence [*seltsame Abwesenheit*] lurks the enigma of nearness and farness and, in response, the Scientist feels the uncanny [*unheimlich*] stirring in the unhomely [*unheimisch*]. If the enigma is nearness and farness then it would seem that the enigma has a relation to the unhomeliness and uncanniness of the human being.

Negation also enters into the heart of the enigma, in the sense that nearness and farness prevail in negation, in that it is both a withdrawal and a bringing forth. This is elaborated further by the Guide when he talks about the enigma that is a simultaneous divulgence and covering up. The enigma reveals [*verraten*] but also veils [*verhüllen*] that which removes the shroud [*Verschleierung*] and the more it uncovers the more perplexed we are left: ‘The concealed [*Verborgene*] of the enigma is unconcealed when we find the solution: but never such that the enigma is discovered. Even where we first only come upon the enigma, this is not a discovery [*Entdecken*].’<sup>21</sup> The closer we get to a thing, and we get closer the more the shroud is removed, the less we penetrate into that thing, so that what is concealed in the enigma is the concealing. The solution of the enigma reveals only this process, if it is a process, of concealing and unconcealing. The concealing is unconcealed but that which is concealed is not. The enigma itself is never disclosed. Merely pointing out the enigma is not to discover it. Thus, in saying that nearness and farness are the enigma, we have not discovered the enigma. The enigma itself is near and far precisely because its solution is its continued perplexity. In a way, its giving away is also a betrayal – *verraten* also means betray - in that what is betrayed is not the enigma itself but the possibility of a solution. In the conversation, the matter is largely left at an impasse which is summed up by the Guide. It is precisely this question of what it means to let the enigma lie [*sich beruhen zu lassen*]. Is it just a question of leaving it by the wayside and passing by [*übergehen*] or does it mean to

---

<sup>20</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, translated by Bret W. Davis, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2010, p.24. *Gesamtausgabe III. Abteilung: Unveröffentlichte Abhandlungen, Band 77, Feldweg-Gespräche*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1995, p.37.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.51./p.81.

enter [*eingehen*] into the perplexity of the enigma and linger [*verweilen*] in the face of it? Perhaps it is just a question of what it would mean to ignore the enigma, where ignorance is a not-knowing, whether the not-knowing is meant objectively or whether it refers to a knowing that stands outside metaphysical or technological thinking.

This conversation gives an indication of what is at stake in the enigma and what a thinking of the enigma in Heidegger might be. Before looking in more detail at Heidegger, however, I want to look at two other twentieth century philosophers, Emmanuel Levinas and Theodor Adorno, both of whom thought through the figure of the enigma. Both of these philosophers can be seen to exist in a nearness and a farness to the thinking of Heidegger. Levinas began his career as a disciple of Heidegger but came to define his position in terms of an otherwise than being, whereas Adorno was consistently hostile towards Heidegger. The question of how near to, and how far from, Heidegger they are remains beyond the scope of this thesis, however. What I would like to do is to examine briefly the thinking about the enigma of each of these philosophers to see what insights arise from their thought. Initially, I will look at Levinas, specifically the essay 'Phenomenon and Enigma', first published in 1957, and collected in *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*.

### **Facing the enigma**

Levinas introduces the enigma as the name [*nous l'appelons*] of that which is unrepresentable, of a manifestation that manifests without manifesting. It is the way the other has of seeking recognition while remaining incognito; it is an appearance which withdraws at the very moment of appearing, he says. He ties its meaning to its Greek etymological origins and compares its self-effacement, its modesty, with the triumphalism of the phenomenon. This return to the Greek shows a strategic nearness, perhaps, between Levinas and Heidegger, but, more importantly, it says something about the enigma and, while the etymology of enigma is not literally relevant to that of *Rätsel*, it does have relevance to the figure presented by the enigma. Αἴνιγμα is a dark saying or a riddle and comes from ἀνίσσομαι which means to speak in riddles or to hint a thing, to intimate or shadow forth. These Greek

terms are linked to  $\alpha\hat{\iota}\nu\omicron\varsigma$  which means tale, story or fable. This same word with different diacritical marks has meanings, such as dread and terrible, and is linked to  $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ , a word that is hugely important for Heidegger in his discussion of *Antigone*. What these meanings tell us is that the enigma is a tale which tells of something, which does not quite mean what it says or say what it means. It never speaks directly, only obliquely. It is indirection, a straying from the path. It hints at something, provides intimations, but never explicitly says. It is something that lurks in the shadows, indistinct, never fully coming into the light. The enigma is a *se manifeste sans se manifester*, in which, for Levinas, the other seeks recognition, but it is a recognition that does not belong to cognition. To manifest is to make something plain but a manifestation that does not manifest is to make something oblique.

What is essential for Levinas about the enigma is the way a meaning [*sens*] that is beyond meaning, a meaning that is, in a sense, uncontainable, is then inserted into the meaning that remains in an order. An uncontainable meaning insinuates itself into an order of signification but without being subject to the laws of that signification. *Sens* underlines the lack of fixity in the meaning that Levinas describes, because it can also mean sense or direction, so there is always the question of whether it makes sense, whether one is going the right way. In a sense, *sens* is the provision of an opening rather than the fixing of a meaning, because if one senses something, it does not mean it is definitively known. For Levinas, the enigma is a *sens* that cannot be contained within what he later names as the ‘philosophical tradition of the West’, that is ‘consciousness, thematic exposition of being, knowing’.<sup>22</sup> It is the incognito in cognition, that which is disguised in cognition, that which escapes cognition and remains unassimilable to it. It is both *in* cognito and incognito in the cognito, that which remains concealed in the unconcealed. It is a light that shines in its being extinguished. It is not, says Levinas, the ambiguity of two equal terms, a mere equivocation, both of which have an equal claim and appear in the same light: ‘In an enigma the exorbitant meaning is already effaced in its apparition.’<sup>23</sup> In its

---

<sup>22</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, The Hague/Boston/London, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981, p.99. *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1974, p.157.

<sup>23</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, ‘Phenomenon and Enigma’, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987, p.66. ‘Énigme et Phénomène’, *En découvrant l’existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2006, p.291.

exorbitance, which literally means to go off track, meaning has strayed from the path, just as it could be said the three discussants in Heidegger's first *Country Path* conversation have strayed from the path of thinking in coming face to face with the enigma. It is a phantom meaning, ghostly, spectral, haunting, one that has withdrawn [*s'effacer*] into the background. There is, again, a certain modesty here, which Levinas counterpoints to the arrogance of the phenomenon or being. If there is an order to the enigma, then it is the order of the *sans*, the without. This *sans* disturbs the *sens* of order and gives us an appearance without appearing, a manifestation without manifesting or an advancing without advancing. The enigma is a form of disturbance [*dérangement*], something troubling, but not one that can be accommodated within what Levinas calls the spiritual adventure of being. It does not break up a category only to reinvent that category more broadly, nor is it an incomprehensibility that will become comprehensible. It is not a simple puzzle whose meaning can be figured out. Nor is it merely absurd, irrational or surprising. The disturbance occasioned by the enigma is not 'the simple parallelism of two orders that would be in a relationship of sign to signified, of appearance to thing in itself, and between which, as we have said, the relationship would reestablish the simultaneity of one single order'.<sup>24</sup> It is, it seems, a form of resistance, resisting order, comprehension, categorisation, being. The enigma is a form of what Levinas will later call anarchy – and one should see this term in all its etymological layering as being without rule, principle, beginning or origin – in *Otherwise than Being* where he describes the proximity to the other as an anarchic relation with a singularity that is not mediated by any principle or ideality, where the possibility of any signification arises as a consequence of the relation with the other.

The question of time also figures in the enigma. The disturbance that Levinas claims the enigma occasions demands a present that is fissile, one that is split or capable of being split. The enigma is not part of a representational order that is able to appropriate or recuperate it: 'The alterity that disturbs order cannot be reduced to the difference visible to the gaze that compares and therefore synchronizes the same and the other.'<sup>25</sup> It is instead the supreme anachronism, says Levinas, which precedes the entry of the disturbance, the enigma, into any order, otherwise it would still be a

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p.67/p.293.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p.68/p.293.

participation in this order and therefore collapsible into the synchronicity of the representing gaze. As with anarchy, which he explicitly links with the Greek ἀρχή in *Otherwise than Being*, and enigma, I think that we are again meant to be attentive to the etymological layerings that constitute the term anachronism.<sup>26</sup> Anachronism belongs to another time and is out of its own time. It comes from the Greek terms χρόνος and χρονίζω meaning time and to spend time, to linger or tarry, with the prefix ἀνα meaning back or backwards. It literally means timed back. The anachronism is to be prior to any commitment, says Levinas in *Otherwise than Being*, in an anteriority that is “*plus ancienne*” than the a priori. Presumably his quotation marks around this term are meant to signify that while anachronism is more ancient in one sense, in another it cannot be older because it is not part of the order of a chronology in which the term ‘older’ would make sense. What anachronism means, therefore, is that the other has always left before arriving; its past could never have been present. It partakes in what Levinas calls the meanwhile, the *entretemps*, which can be neither an order nor a disorder, because disorder is just another order, where the expected event becomes part of a past without ever having been lived. It is an irretrievable past which cannot be brought back in the way, Levinas claims, memory brings back the past, or the way that the sign recaptures the signified.<sup>27</sup> The representing subject always arrives too late: ‘Something takes place between the dusk in which the most ecstatic intentionality, which, however, never aims far enough, is lost (or is recollected) and the dawn in which consciousness returns to itself, but already too late for the event which is moving away.’<sup>28</sup> The subject seems to be asleep at the most crucial moments. Consciousness, Levinas writes in *Otherwise than Being*, always finds itself delayed behind its present moment and unable to recover it.

The enigma, however, is not some form of irrational interruption of the rational, says Levinas. It is co-extensive with the phenomenon which it disturbs in so far as the phenomenon carries the trace of the saying which is already in retreat from the said.

---

<sup>26</sup> Levinas, in seeking to overturn the Greek, will use Greek terms in all their etymological fullness as part of this strategy. Whether this is an ironic return or a return that subverts his own project is not decided in this thesis.

<sup>27</sup> It is questionable whether memory ever retrieves the past in the way that Levinas seems to be claiming here. Memory can be unreliable and unstable and is, perhaps, a narrative about the past, rather than something that seizes hold of [*ramener*] it in such a violent and grasping fashion.

<sup>28</sup> Levinas, ‘Phenomenon and Enigma’, p.68/p.294.

The phenomenon is the said, that is the said is part of a representational framework available to synchronization, but the saying that leads to this said is not part of this same framework. The saying is not an experience of the cognizing consciousness. The significations that arise in the natural world do so because of a transfer of meaning from the anthropological to the natural, that is, it is the human as the signifying animal which confers meaning on the natural world but only on the basis that it is always already one step behind this natural world. These significations never reach to the saying: ‘Significations which link up cover over the traces of the *saying* that left them, as the perfect crime artist inserts the traces of his violence in the natural folds of order.’<sup>29</sup> It would seem that, like Macavity the mystery cat, the saying is not there. The traces of the saying are covered up, or rubbed out, leaving only a trace of this rubbing out. The criminal aspect of the saying is emphasised again by Levinas in an essay on the trace where the criminal, in wiping out his fingerprints, wipes out his presence: ‘Its [the trace’s] original signifyingness is sketched out in, for example, the fingerprints left by someone who wanted to wipe away his traces and commit a perfect crime. He who left traces in wiping out his traces did not mean to say or do anything by the traces he left. He disturbed the order in an irreparable way. He has passed absolutely.’<sup>30</sup> The enigma is entirely bound up with the phenomenon, not so much as an absence, but as the mark of an unreadable mark, such as smudged fingerprints. What is left behind is a trace, but, says Jill Robbins, ‘it is the mark of the effacement of a mark. As it is the mark of the effacement of a mark that was already the mark of an absence...it is a double effacement, a double erasure, a re-mark and a re-tracing’.<sup>31</sup> It is inaccessible to the present and belongs to an immemorial past, standing outside the duality of presence and absence. When the trace leaves a trace, she says, it leaves.

An enigma is beyond all cognition, says Levinas, where cognition is that which rests [*reposer*] on phenomena, which is unfolded by the being of beings, where order is ordered together in the light. The enigma is outside of being, or other than being, if it

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p.69/p.295. Levinas’s emphasis.

<sup>30</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, ‘The Trace of the Other’, translated by Alphonso Lingis, in *Deconstruction in Context*, edited by Mark C. Taylor, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1985, pp.345-359, p.357. ‘Le trace de l’autre’, in *En découvrant l’existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, pp.261-282, p.279. Whether this analogy works in the age of DNA testing is moot.

<sup>31</sup> Jill Robbins, *Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1999, p.28.

is the disturbance through which the other as other is manifested in its non-manifestation, where the other is other than being. Beyond the cultural life of propositions, known truths, significations and so on, lies the saying – the face, the other, the enigma – which, says Levinas, is an unheard-of [*inouïe*] proposition – *inouïe* also means unprecedented, extraordinary, incredible – an insinuation [*insinuation*] which is immediately reduced to nothing. The saying, as insinuation, winds and curves its way in – it is never a direct approach, always circuitous, perhaps even underhand – and is then obliterated. In Levinas’s oxymoronic formulation, the saying is an insinuating proposition, directly indirect, which then disposes and dis-insinuates itself. The disappearance of the saying is likened by Levinas to Banquo’s description of the disappearance of the witches in the opening scenes of *Macbeth*, “the bubbles of the earth”.<sup>32</sup> But if the insinuation is immediately reduced to nothing, how is it possible to speak of it? Through the duplicity of the enigma and its partner, subjectivity, says Levinas. The duplicity of the enigma consists of its keeping open a relation between the saying and the said, between the language that constitutes the saying and the language that constitutes the said, between insinuation and proposition. Subjectivity is summoned in its singularity by the other and arises as a response to this summons and the insinuation is retained as this singular subjectivity – singular because the summons is an exclusivity – but without it being possible to translate the call into any kind of objective language. This subject, quite different to the extreme privacy of the singular ego, as Levinas puts it, is a responsive listening: ‘The enigma, the intervention of a meaning which disturbs phenomena but is quite ready to withdraw like an undesirable stranger, unless one hearkens [*tendre l’oreille*] to those footsteps [*pas*] that depart, is transcendence itself, the proximity of the other as other.’<sup>33</sup> What is at stake here is an attentiveness, a hearkening to the enigma, a form of lingering in proximity to it - *tendre l’oreille* suggests a stretching towards it. It infers that it is a question of seeing the enigma as enigma, or hearing the enigma as enigma, a question of tarrying in the face of it, but without it being

---

<sup>32</sup> Levinas, ‘Phenomenon and Enigma’, p.70/p.296. The reference is to *Macbeth*, Act 1, Scene 3, where Banquo says ‘The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, | And these are of them.’ Two lines later he wonders whether there were really such things as these witches or whether he and Macbeth had ‘eaten on the insane root | That takes the reason prisoner?’ Perhaps a quotation too far for Levinas’s analogy, or one that confirms it? See William Shakespeare, *Macbeth, The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, p.1311.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70/p.297.

brought into the representational-mathematical calculus. Subjectivity, as Levinas defines it, is this response to the elusive stranger and, as such, becomes an openness to it, rather than a subject that represents the enigma to itself. The signifyingness [*signifiante*] of an enigma is not reducible to a grasping conceptualisation. Instead, it ‘comes from an irreversible, irrecuperable past which it has *perhaps* not left since it has already been absent from the very terms in which it was signaled’.<sup>34</sup>

### **Adorno and the enigma of art**

If, for Levinas, the enigma is the phenomenon of the non-phenomenon and marks the approach of the other, for Adorno the enigma is *the* philosophical figure, whether it is the enigma of art or philosophy. In an essay from 1931, ‘The Actuality of Philosophy’, an early statement of his opposition to Heideggerian ontology, Adorno defines philosophy, in contradistinction to science, in terms of its prevailing idea being interpretation [*Deutung*] rather than research [*Forschung*]. Philosophical process is one of *enträtseln*, of deciphering or making unenigmatic, through interpretation but without ever having a final, certain key to interpretation. Philosophy is given only fleeting hints [*verschwindende Hinweise*] of the enigmatic figures [*Rätselfiguren*] of the existing [*Seienden*] and its interlacings [*Verschlingungen*]. The history of philosophy, says Adorno, is nothing other than the history of such interlacings. That there is something destructive in these interlacings is marked by the fact that *verschlingen* means to devour or consume, as well as to entwine or become entangled or twisted. It can be used in phrases such as becoming engulfed by darkness. Philosophy seems to be a knotting entanglement always on the point of disappearing into darkness. For Adorno, the question of interpretation does not coincide with the question of meaning [*Sinn*]. It is not a question of justifying reality and declaring it to be meaningful: ‘Every such justification of that which exists is prohibited by the fragmentation in being itself. While our images of perceived reality may very well be *Gestalten*, the world in which we live is not; it is constituted differently than out of mere images of perception.’<sup>35</sup> What philosophy

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.71/p.298. Levinas’s emphasis.

<sup>35</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, ‘The Actuality of Philosophy’, translated by Benjamin Snow, in *The Adorno Reader*, edited by Brian O’Connor, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2000, pp.23-39, p.31. *Gestalten* is left untranslated in the English version. ‘Die Aktualität der Philosophie’, *Philosophische Frühschriften*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973, pp.325-344, p.334.

has to read is incomplete, contradictory and fragmentary [*brüchig*], says Adorno, and is an attempt to banish the blind demonic forces that may be responsible for much of what is given to us to read – philosophy as a way of learning to live with demons. This is not to suggest that interpretation is a method of reading through appearances into a secret world beyond; it is not the Kantian dualism of the intelligible and the empirical: ‘He who interprets by searching behind the phenomenal world for a world-in-itself which forms its foundation and support, acts mistakenly like someone who wants to find in the enigma [*Rätsel*] the reflection of a being which lies behind it, a being mirrored in the enigma, in which it is contained. Instead, the function of enigma-solving is to light up the enigma-*Gestalt* like lightning and to negate it, not to persist behind the enigma and imitate it.’<sup>36</sup> There is no meeting between fixed meaning and authentic [*echte*] philosophical interpretation. Instead, it is a momentary simultaneous lighting up and consuming of that meaning. It is, then, a question of seeing the enigma for what it is in a moment [*Augenblick*], that is both illuminating and destructive. As Alexander García Düttmann writes, when philosophy is figured as interpretation the ‘answer must consume the question, and the solution the enigma, for the meaning cannot exist independently of the enigma and the question. It is in this very consumption that question and answer, enigma and solution, become suddenly manifest and appear as if they were illuminated... The solution is not a piece of knowledge at one’s disposal once the enigma has been consumed, for this would again result in justification. The solution is an experience without knowledge: the enigma does not resolve itself in knowledge’.<sup>37</sup> It is, he says, only because the enigma is consumed that it is possible to speak of it. The enigma becomes possible only in its aftermath, only in what remains after its consumption, but it is never an experience available to cognition. The enigma has always passed, irretrievable, perhaps. It is a memory but not the grasping, seizing memory that Levinas identifies with the representing gaze.

Philosophy is interlaced with the enigma but the enigma is only in its recollection, just as the enigmatic character of the work of art is the recollection [*Erinnerung*] of the shudder, not its living presence. This is how Adorno characterises the work of art

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p.31/p.335. Translation modified. *Gestalt* is not translated in the English version.

<sup>37</sup> Alexander García Düttmann, *The Memory of Thought: An Essay on Heidegger and Adorno*, translated by Nicholas Walker, London, New York, Continuum, 2002, p.103.

in *Aesthetic Theory*, which includes an extended meditation on the enigma of art. For Adorno, what aesthetics should be doing is not comprehending [*begreifen*] artworks as hermeneutical objects, as objects for the conceptualizing gaze, but comprehending them in their incomprehensibility [*Unbegreiflichkeit*] and it is in the context of this demand that Adorno examines the enigma. The statement about the enigma of art as recollection comes in the ‘Paralipomena’ section of *Aesthetic Theory* and is mirrored by a comment in the section ‘Enigmaticalness, Truth Content, Metaphysics’, where art is described as the legacy [*Erbe*] of the shudder [*Schauer*], which is a form of pre-conceptual, pre-categorical experience of what is there and which is not reducible to conceptual experience, as James Gordon Finlayson notes: ‘[T]he shudder is, epistemically speaking, a positive experience that is true to what is there prior to conceptual identification - the amorphous, the undifferentiated, the strange. It is an impulsive somatic experience that momentarily registers the presence of what occasions it.’<sup>38</sup> We are brought up short face to face with that which is absolutely other to us, registering its sheer strangeness, without being able to grasp it conceptually. Conceptual, reflective thought is the way the subject then seeks to domesticate this experience of the strange and become its master. For Adorno, modern art is able to bring forth the shudder, is the occasion of its evanescence, and what constitutes this ‘experience of the modernist sublime’ is, J.M. Bernstein writes, ‘the memory of the experience of the terror and strangeness in the face of threatening nature. Shudder is the memorial experience of nature’s transcendence, its non-identity and sublimity, at one remove’.<sup>39</sup> The enigma, as the legacy of the shudder, is bound up with this memorial experience. Art reminds us of what is repressed as reason and technology advance, says Bernstein. The enigma is what remains of the shudder but it is a remainder that is only a recollection in the shudder’s wake. As the legacy, or inheritance, of the shudder, art has been handed down by that which no longer is. A legacy is a gift given in, and through, a testamentary performance. The testament is a written document in which that which was once owned by someone living is formally given over. The writing marks an absence, but it seems to be an absence that was once present in that it is the testament of a once living human being, the mark of someone who has left. The written document, however, only has

---

<sup>38</sup> James Gordon Finlayson, ‘Normativity and Metaphysics in Adorno and Hegel’, [www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/jgf21/research/NAM/rtf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/jgf21/research/NAM/rtf) accessed 10/3/2011, p.12.

<sup>39</sup> J.M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno*, Cambridge, Oxford, Polity Press, 1992, p.220.

meaning in the event of the absolute absence of death, so that art's relation to the shudder is a relation to its absolute absence. To experience art is to experience the recollection of the shudder, which is only experienced in, and as, this recollection. It is a memorial experience.

But if the enigma figures a non-conceptual memorial, it also remains bound up with history, for Adorno. It is history that has made the work of art an enigma; it is history that keeps at arms length what Adorno calls the embarrassing question of its reason to be; and it is history that gave artworks their authority. The enigmatic character of the work of art is a knitting together, a growing together with history, he says. What Adorno writes is that the enigma *bleibt verwachsen* with history. *Verwachsen* means to grow or knit together. History and the enigma weave in and out of each other. But there is something grotesque about this interlacing. As an adjective, *verwachsen* can also mean deformed, stunted or overgrown. Could one read here that the enigma is deformed by history or that history is deformed by the enigma? Is the enigma a kind of disfigurement? It is not a question of the enigma being irrational, says Adorno. As such, the disfigurement does not mark an irrationality, but perhaps arises from an excess of rationality. Adorno says that it is the rationality of artworks that figure the enigma. The more an artwork is governed by a method, the more it is ruled by formal plans, the greater the emphasis on the enigma, the more the enigma is thrown into relief, says Adorno. The enigma is a lapidary saying, and it is through form, says Adorno, that artworks resemble language seeming 'to say [*bekunden*] just this and only this, and at the same time whatever it is slips away'.<sup>40</sup> The artwork expresses something singular but in the moment [*Momente*] of this expression, the saying withdraws. It is a saying that unsays itself in the saying and this is the enigma, a saying that can only be said in its disappearance, in its being wiped away. The saying escapes. It seems that the work of art is an intimation that vanishes, or the record of a vanishing intimation.

The character of the enigma is expressed from the perspective of language in this doubled movement of saying and withdrawing and it is this characteristic that, says

---

<sup>40</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor, London, New York, Continuum, 1997, p.120. *Ästhetische Theorie*, herausgegeben von Gretel Adorno und Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970, p.182.

Adorno, cavorts clownishly, which suggests that the enigma is something of a joke or a trick, a grotesquerie. The figure the clown presents is a disguise; the clown's make-up is a mask, which turns the clown into a genus, or into something impersonal. The clown is also a figure that can be disturbing or monstrous. This comic absurdity is expressed, says Adorno, in the way that the enigma makes itself invisible if one participates within the artwork. Stepping outside this immanent context entails the return of the enigma as spirit [*spirit*]. The enigma is invisible to those participating in the artwork, whether as creators or spectators, and is only visible as a ghost, if it is visible at all, to those who have broken the contract with the artwork's immanent context. There is a distinction between those who remain within the artwork and those who abstract themselves from it. Either way, however, the enigma remains insoluble, unknowable to the former and inscrutable to the latter. Art's enigma, says Adorno, becomes an outrage to those who have no feeling for art, for whom art is inexplicable. Art's truth is confirmed at precisely the point where art is completely negated by those for whom art is utterly alien and art's enigmatic character is defined by the gap between what the unmusical hear and what the initiate hears, a gap that exists for all art, whether it is music, poetry or painting. This constant pull is between the conceptual and the mimetic, according to Menke, which gives rise to the enigmatic character of art: 'Art works become enigmatic when we neither reenact them purely immanently nor view them externally as one discourse among many, but instead, allow these two perspectives to clash with one another.'<sup>41</sup>

Art falls silent before questions of its purpose and its point, says Adorno. Before the demand to justify itself, in which the demand seeks to master the work of art through a form of conceptual address, the artwork becomes an aposiopesis, a mute breaking off. Art is a becoming silent, says Paul Celan in 'The Meridian': '[T]he poem clearly shows a strong tendency towards falling silent [*Verstummen*]'.<sup>42</sup> But to understand art's enigmatic character is not the same as understanding the work of art. In fact, the better an artwork is understood, the deeper the enigma that constitutes it becomes and even though the potential for a solution is contained therein, the solution is not

---

<sup>41</sup> Christoph Menke, *The Sovereignty of Art: Aesthetic Negativity in Adorno and Derrida*, translated by Neil Solomon, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, The MIT Press, 1998, p.169.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Celan, *Collected Prose*, translated by Rosmarie Waldrop, Manchester, PN Review Carcanet, 1986, p.48. Translation modified. *Der Meridian und andere Prosa*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983, p.54.

objectively given. The enigma holds out this promise of a solution but always withdraws it. The fulfilment of the promise is always its non-fulfilment. Artworks, says Adorno, are hidden through their visibility and here he references the letter in Poe's short story, 'The Purloined Letter', which was hidden precisely because it was placed in a position where it was visible.<sup>43</sup> Although Adorno does not elaborate on this, in the story the letter is concealed in its not being concealed and it escapes observation because it is so easily observed. The concealer of the letter, the Minister D-, is both poet and mathematician and it is implied in the story that it is the turning to the poetic that leads to such a concealment. But crucial to the success of this concealment is the fact that the letter is disguised and it is, perhaps, only because Dupin is also something of a poet – he confesses to writing 'certain doggrel myself'<sup>44</sup> – that he is able to see through both the concealment in unconcealment and the letter's disguise. Even the Minister himself seems to be disguised. Dupin calls him the most energetic human being alive, but only when unseen. But, if the analogy does not quite work, in that the letter is discovered, although the Minister is unaware that it has been, the principle is established of the non-evident in the evident and it is this enigma that Adorno believes is best exemplified by music: 'Of all the arts, music is the prototypical example of this: It is at once completely enigmatic and totally evident. It cannot be solved, only its form [*Gestalt*] can be deciphered, and precisely this is requisite for the philosophy of art.'<sup>45</sup>

Music is exemplary for Adorno and it is this exemplarity which informs his contention that to view understanding or comprehension [*Verständnis*] as the sole means with which to approach art is, in fact, to move further away from it. That such *Verständnis* is a form of looking and, that in looking or seeing, that which is seen disappears [*verschwindet*] is made clear when Adorno draws an analogy with a rainbow, where, if one gets closer to the rainbow, it disappears. Understanding [*Verstehen*] does not get rid of the enigmatic character of the work of art.

Interpretation always calls for further understanding, as if, says Adorno, waiting for a

---

<sup>43</sup> Poe seems to be a paradigmatic modern figure for Adorno, who calls him one of the beacons for Baudelaire and modernity, and in his work the shudder of the new is presented with *unerreichter Gewalt*, he says. 'The Purloined Letter' was the subject of a seminar by Jacques Lacan, to whom Jacques Derrida responded in 'Le facteur de la vérité'.

<sup>44</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Purloined Letter', in *Poetry and Tales*, edited by Patrick F. Quinn, New York, The Library of America, 1984, p.684.

<sup>45</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.122/p.185.

word that can solve the artwork's constitutive and ever deepening obscurity. It seems that for Adorno interpretive understanding is a waiting for Godot; only a Godot can solve it. It is only through an imaginative immersion in the work of art that one can even begin to make a step towards understanding, but even this is deceptive [*trügerische*], because it is still not a solution: 'Those who can adequately imagine music without hearing it possess that connection with it required for its understanding. Understanding [*Verstehen*] in the highest sense – a solution of the enigma that at the same time maintains the enigma – depends on a spiritualization of art and artistic experience whose primary medium is the imagination. The spiritualization of art approaches its enigmaticalness not directly through conceptual elucidation, but rather by concretizing its enigmaticalness. The solution of the enigma amounts to giving the reason [*Grund*] for its insolubility, which is the gaze [*Blick*] artworks direct at the viewer [*Betrachter*].'<sup>46</sup> The solution of the enigma is the ground of its insolubility and this solution is the look that the artwork presents to its observers. The artwork gazes back at those who would gaze at it, at those who would strive to understand it, and this gaze is the demand that the content of the work of art be understood but this understanding only comes through mediation, through a theoretical comportment towards the work of art. It is never a direct experience, so the enigma itself remains beyond this theoretical comportment.

The enigma, like a work of art, is both determinate [*bestimmt*] and indeterminate [*unbestimmt*], in that both are question marks [*Fragezeichen*], says Adorno. But is a question mark the question itself? The mark points to a question without articulating that question so that in this case both the enigma and the work of art, as marks, point to the question, they are both signs of the question. But these question marks cannot be reduced to a singular meaning [*eindeutig*]. There is nothing clear or unambiguous about them and even synthesis fails to deliver them from ambiguity. Structurally, says Adorno, the work of art and the enigma both demand [*erzwingen*] and conceal [*verschweigen*] the answer. As signs, however, they remain unreadable. As *erzwingen* means force, the enigma's structure is one of both force and withdrawal, the force of a saying which then disappears. Art's aim is to determine the indeterminate, says Adorno, this is what gives purpose to the work of art, which is

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

given its legitimation as the figure of an answer. But the figure of an answer is not the answer itself, as Adorno makes clear when he likens the work of art to *écriture* which illuminates the art of the past. All works of art are writing, he says, they are hieroglyphs for which the code has been lost. Just as Hegel saw Egyptian art as paradigmatic of a certain sense of art, so does Adorno, but whereas, for Hegel, this art was merely a stage in art's progression, for Adorno a dead Egyptian language becomes a metaphor for the work of art, for the enigma, and interpretation of this dead language can never reach its destination; the enigmatic character of the artwork always 'outlives the interpretation that arrives at the answer',<sup>47</sup> he says. Art presents a kind of inscrutability even where it is most intensely engaged, such as the musician who intimately knows and understands the score, or the actor who inhabits the lines of the play; even here, Adorno says, neither knows what they play, in a certain sense, but this performance is still the manifestation of a mimesis which only leads to an understanding on this side [*diesseits*] of the enigma. Through performance, the enigma is approached but it is an approach that does not penetrate to the other side of the enigma. Immanence to the work shows the work still to be enigmatic. Art, for Adorno, Shierry Weber Nichol森 says, is mimetic rather than conceptual: 'Being nonconceptual, it cannot be unenigmatic, because it cannot have a discursive meaning. Further, it is enigmatic because it lost its purpose when the mimetic migrated from ritual into art.'<sup>48</sup> The enigma is, she says, the difference between an absolutely exterior experience of the work of art and an absolutely interior one.

The enigma of the work of art consists in its being broken off [*Abgebrochensein*] and in this is the denial of what it wants to be, says Adorno. Artworks are like broken off memorials in graveyards, but only retrospectively can they be seen this way. The work of art is a memorial to a meaning that it never had, if one takes this simile literally. The memorial in the graveyard points towards someone that once had meaning, the person to whom the memorial is erected, just as the testament points to the person who has left it, but it never was this person, nor can it be said to be a mark that this person has left behind. In this it is unlike the testament. It is a remembrance of something that is now past but to which it never had a relation prior to this

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p.125/p.189.

<sup>48</sup> Shierry Weber Nichol森, *Exact Imagination, Late Work: On Adorno's Aesthetics*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, The MIT Press, 1997, p.150.

remembrance. The relation occurs in the remembrance. Even more, the memorial has been fractured in some way, whether deliberately or accidentally, Adorno does not say, but this fracturedness points towards the essential incompleteness of the work of art. In a sense, the artwork is radically incomplete – Kafka is exemplary for Adorno here – and is always threatening to fall back into the myth from which it has been precariously rescued. The enigma of art emerges out of a historical process, says Adorno, through which it has lost its magical and cultic functions. Art, as enigmatic, is what remains after these are gone and it is as enigmatic as the horror that comes from out of the primordial world, says Adorno. It is, he claims, the seismogram of that horror. Art is the record of a primordial horror. A seismogram is never the actual event nor is it an experience of the event. It is a mechanically produced record, converting the shuddering of the earth into a form of script, a writing that purports to show the occurrence of the event of an earthquake. It is a sign and mark of the event, something that points to the event and says this happened but, like the broken graveside memorial, like the experience that is experienced only in recollection, it is only a record of something having happened.

Every artwork asks “Is it true?” but then refuses to answer it discursively. This is the truth content of the work of art and the enigma, in demanding a solution, points to this truth content, which can only be reached through philosophical reflection, but this reaching is only ever after the unreachable. Artworks both have truth content and don’t have it, says Adorno: ‘[T]hey are the physiognomy of an objective spirit that is never transparent to itself in the moment in which it appears’.<sup>49</sup> The enigma gazes out of the work of art and, like the Sphinx, demands an answer that is always the same [*dieselbe*], says Adorno, but this same can only come from difference and not from a unity which is, perhaps, the deceptive promise of the enigma: ‘Whether the promise is a deception – that is the enigma.’<sup>50</sup> One can see that for Adorno, as for Levinas, there is a certain duplicity about the enigma. Adorno writes that art is the broken promise of happiness. It is a promise of plenitude that can never be realised. That is to say that the enigma is this broken promise, and it is this broken promise as the memorial in the graveyard, the experience experienced only as recollection, or the seismogram that is only ever a record of the shudder. The enigma points to this

---

<sup>49</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.128/p.194.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* p.127./p.193.

shudder, it is the question mark that can never articulate the question and, in this inarticulation, can never provide an answer. For Adorno, the enigma is an inarticulation.

### **Design of the thesis**

Both these, necessarily preliminary, propaedeutics to the figure of the enigma in the work of Levinas and Adorno – and one could foresee the necessity of a deeper excavation of this figure in their thought – provide hints for how the enigma is to appear throughout this thesis. One can see a movement and a structure that are both emblematic of the enigma as it is pursued in relation to the work of Martin Heidegger. It is not my intention now to summarise what has just been expounded in this introduction. I merely wish to mark such notions as promise, of saying and unsaying, of the sign as unreadable – and perhaps monstrous – of the memorial, of the uncanny and so on. All of these are dealt with, to a greater or lesser extent, as we move through the readings that are presented here. It is pre-eminently a reading that is the form of this thesis. In essence, it is an examination of the enigma – of art, of being, of truth – through four stagings. Each staging takes a reading of Heidegger's and then applies a reading to that reading. Each chapter can be described as a meta-reading which both stays within the Heideggerian reading, to the extent that a certain immanence is a mark of the reading, while seeking to go beyond the Heideggerian reading. In ancient Greek, *μετα* had a number of meanings, including in the midst of, among, of moving into the middle of or of being in pursuit of, as well as meaning beyond or behind or after. The idea of the *meta* in the meta-reading is to mark a certain positioning in relation of the one reading to another, of an insinuation, incorporating all those meanings just mentioned but, perhaps, especially in terms of the *after* in its temporal, causal complexity, wherein one reads both according to Heidegger and in spite of him, where one is in pursuit of him, while restaging the movement of his arguments.

Each staging of the enigma has a chapter devoted to it, making four in all, and, in each chapter, art, or a specific work of art, is central to the staging. In the first chapter, it is art in general – putting aside just what such an 'in general' would look like, whether, indeed, it is possible to speak of art in general – that is the focus, while

subsequent chapters concentrate on Hölderlin's poem 'The Ister', the *Antigone* of Sophocles and the philosophical poem of Parmenides. In each of these, however, it is Heidegger's reading that is at stake and it is only in relation to those readings that the underlying work becomes a theme for my reading. Therefore, whether Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin actively misconstrues the poet is not addressed in this thesis, nor do I consider Heidegger's place in the field of Parmenidian scholarship. The first chapter is a consideration of Heidegger's essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. It is here that the enigma of art is introduced, but only in the Afterword, the *Nachwort*. It is a brief reference in which the task of the enigma is laid out and this first chapter is precisely an initial attempt to undertake that task. In the second chapter, I turn to Hölderlin and his poem 'The Ister'. Heidegger lectured and wrote many times on Hölderlin's poems, including *Germanien*, *Der Rhine*, and *Andenken*. 'The Ister' is one of Hölderlin's great river poems and it is in these lectures that Heidegger gives us a brief definition of *das Rätsel* – the only place, as far as I am aware that he does so – where it is identified with the doubled movement of the river and which leads to the question of the possibility of being at home and the necessity of a journey into the foreign. The question of the home, of the *heimisch* and the *heimlich*, and therefore of the *unheimlich*, is pursued further in chapter 3, where the figure of Antigone from the play by Sophocles becomes the focus. In a reading of the choral ode, given in the lectures on 'The Ister', Heidegger identifies Antigone as the uncanniest of the uncanny, which then leads into a thinking of the home and the hearth, the poet as sign and the νομός. Finally, chapter 4 looks at the poem of Parmenides as it is filtered through a number of texts by Heidegger. It is in his thinking on Parmenides that the enigma plays its most prominent role, where it seems to be embedded in the very terms that Heidegger uses. Here we see the way to tautology being mapped out, a mapping that includes ἀλήθεια, *es gibt* and *Ereignis*.

### **A note on the translation of *das Rätsel***

The question of translation is one that looms large in the thought of Heidegger. For example, the translation of the Greek word into Latin has had dire consequences, as far as he is concerned. In the transposition of ancient Greek thought into Roman philosophy lies the *Bodenlosigkeit* of Western thinking, the loss of ground, its rootlessness. A failure to attend to what is essential in the word is at the heart of this

catastrophe, this overturning. Translation is a kind of going astray, says John Sallis,<sup>51</sup> but it is, perhaps, in going astray that translation can do justice to the translated. Translation begins, says Heidegger, only when the translated transports us into the realm of thinking from which the translated has come. In the case of Parmenides's word ἀλήθεια this does not mean giving it a literal translation, rather it means attending to its saying in its saying, so that we come into the realm of experience from out of which Parmenides says this word. Turning now to the word of this thesis, *das Rätsel*, it can be variously translated as riddle, puzzle, mystery or enigma. Of all of these, it seems to me, only enigma approaches the kind of translation that is called for, a translation that takes us back into the realm of Heidegger's thinking, that does justice to what *das Rätsel* is calling for in terms of that thinking; only enigma suggests the troubling insolubility that attends to Heidegger's use of *das Rätsel* throughout the texts under discussion here.

#### **A note on citations**

Where both German and French texts, and their English translations, are used I give the English first followed by the original. I have used existing English translations in all cases and modified them where necessary. In general, when I cite German, French and ancient Greek terms, these words are quoted as they appear in the texts under discussion.

---

<sup>51</sup> John Sallis, *On Translation*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2002, p.xi.

## Chapter 1

### To see the enigma

In the *Nachwort* to ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, Heidegger writes that in what we have just read, these deliberations [*Überlegungen*], he is concerned with the enigma of art, the enigma that art itself is. The task in the essay is not to solve the enigma, but to see [*sehen*] the enigma as enigma. Although this ‘as’ structure is not quite how Heidegger formulates it here, it is implied. In the lectures on ‘The Ister’, this structure is made explicit: ‘[W]e must try to bring the enigma as enigma closer to us’,<sup>1</sup> he writes. Whether ‘The Origin’ has been a successful attempt to see such a phenomenon remains open, while other questions present themselves, such as what Heidegger means when he says that the task is to see the enigma and what does see mean? Is the enigma a phenomenon as such? One question Heidegger answers in the essay is just this question of what seeing means. During a discussion of the Greek term τέχνη, in which he explicitly rejects any notion that this term means technical or practical accomplishment, Heidegger argues that, rather than meaning craft or art, τέχνη means knowing, but not in an epistemological sense in which a subject knows an object. Rather, τέχνη is a form of seeing, or having seen, in which seeing in a broad sense ‘means the apprehension of something present as something present [*vernehmen des Anwesenden als eines solchen*],’<sup>2</sup> or as something that comes to presence. This kind of knowing, this seeing, is linked to truth as ἀλήθεια, which for Heidegger is not truth as correspondence to the facts but is ‘the unconcealment of beings’<sup>3</sup> and ‘the clearing and concealing of that which is’.<sup>4</sup> To see the enigma, therefore, would be to apprehend it as something present in its presencing.

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, translated by William McNeill and Julia Davis, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1996, p.35. *Gesamtausgabe II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1923-1944, Band 53, Hölderlins Hymn “Der Ister”*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1984, p.41.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.35. *Holzwege*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1950, p.46.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p.35/p.47.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p.44/p.59.

However, as soon as Heidegger has introduced the enigma in the *Nachwort*, he then explicitly contrasts the enigmatic character of art, and how he approaches art in ‘The Origin’, with how art is approached through aesthetics, or his version of aesthetics. It is clear from the essay itself that Heidegger is setting up ‘The Origin’ as being against aesthetics, both in the way he discusses matter and form and in the way that artist and audience are displaced. Heidegger claims that from the very beginning of specialised thinking [*eigene Betrachtung*] about art and artists, this thinking [*Betrachten*] was referred to as aesthetic. Heidegger’s usage of the term aesthetics, says Robert Bernasconi, should not be confused with the autonomous discipline that appeared under this name in the eighteenth century. Rather, aesthetics covers all thinking about art since the time of Plato and Aristotle and the point of this identification, says Bernasconi, ‘is intimately tied to his attempt to overcome metaphysics, the history of Western ontology’.<sup>5</sup> In *Nietzsche*, from 1936, Heidegger identifies aesthetics as the relation of humanity’s state of feeling to the beautiful. Aesthetics arises at that point when great art and great philosophy come to an end, he says, which is the time of Plato and Aristotle. That this conception of aesthetics, and the role of Aristotle and Plato, does not change is shown by ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, written in 1953, where art is given a privileged, non-aesthetic position prior to Plato and Aristotle: ‘The arts were not derived from the artistic. Art works were not enjoyed aesthetically. Art was not a sector of cultural activity.’<sup>6</sup>

Aesthetics objectifies the artwork, makes it available to sensory experience, and therefore makes it an object for a subject. Such sensory apprehensions [*sinnlichen Vernehmens*] are today called experiences [*Erlebnis*], says Heidegger, and aesthetics, which is how human beings experience art, claims that it has something to say about art’s essential nature. But this is not Heidegger’s view. As far as he is concerned, aesthetics cannot speak about the essential nature of art. In fact, aesthetics as experience

---

<sup>5</sup> Robert Bernasconi, *The Question of Language in Heidegger’s History of Being*, Amherst New York, Humanity Books, 1985, p.32.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt, New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1977, p.34. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1954, p.38.

– and experience is the standard in aesthetics for the appreciation, enjoyment and creation of art, claims Heidegger – is possibly where art dies, a slow, lingering, centuries-old death. The way that people now talk about immortal art and its eternal value – what one could call aesthetic chatter – in fact deals with nothing, he continues, precisely because the glib way that great art is referred to fails to involve an original thinking [*Denken*], a type of thinking that is greatly feared today, says Heidegger; perhaps great art, and its essence, has departed. If we attend to Heidegger's language on thinking here, we can see that for him aesthetics doesn't *think* as such about art at all. In aesthetics, thinking is *betrachten*, which means to observe or look at. A *Betrachter* is an observer, the ultimate stance of the aesthetic. True thinking about art is characterised as *Denken*.

Heidegger asks whether art is still an essential and necessary way in which truth happens that is decisive for the historical existence of human beings and, if this is no longer the case, why it is so. Hegel's judgement – that art no longer counts as the supreme way in which truth finds its own existence – stands, according to Heidegger, in that it still awaits a decision, because behind this judgement is the whole tradition of Western thought since the Greeks, which refers to a specific happening of the truth of beings. As John Sallis writes in *Transfigurements*, in invoking Hegel's judgement here Heidegger is not simply reaffirming it.<sup>7</sup> Rather, what he is doing is reinscribing the Hegelian move in a question as a question, he says, and, by doing so, Heidegger is placing Hegel in the metaphysical realm in relation to a truth of beings that arose in Greek philosophy. Heidegger claims that this decision about art can only be made out of a thinking of the truth of beings. In the meantime, because the judgement stands, it is necessary to ask whether it is conclusive, he says. These kinds of questions can only be asked through an examination of the essence of art and asking the question of the origin of the work of art is a move towards this essence. The meaning of the word origin is thought out of the essence of truth, says Heidegger. This truth is not the truth associated with science and knowledge, and which is distinct from the beautiful and the good, but is the truth of the

---

<sup>7</sup> John Sallis, *Transfigurements: On the True Sense of Art*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2008, p.156.

unconcealment of beings as beings, truth as the truth of being. Art can only be renewed if there is a break with metaphysical truth, says Sallis, and ‘the alleged pastness of art can be put in question only if there is a break with this truth’.<sup>8</sup>

In the displacement of aesthetics, beauty is also displaced, as are the artist and audience. Beauty only appears when truth puts itself into the work; beauty arises out of the activity of truth in the work of art, says Heidegger, it belongs to the coming [*Sichereignen*] of truth. He claims that this specific convergence of beauty and truth has become concealed and beauty has become an object for subjective pleasure. This concealment occurs through the Platonic-Aristotelian conceptual pairing of matter [ύλη] and form [μορφή], through which reality becomes objectivity, which becomes experience. The essence of truth that is concealed corresponds to the essential history of Western art. In the same way that philosophy becomes metaphysics, thinking on art becomes aesthetics. It is not possible to get to the essence of art through a consideration of beauty by itself, in the same way that it is not possible to do so through experience, Heidegger claims. When beauty becomes an object, what is covered over is the appearing of beauty as the being of truth in, and as, the work. In this way, aesthetics is complicit in the forgetting of the truth of being, which Heidegger has identified as the key thrust of Western metaphysics. ‘The Origin’ sets itself up against this tradition. If we take aesthetics and seeing in Heidegger’s terms, we can conclude that in seeing the enigma, we are not being asked to see it in terms of a subject grasping an object, in which the subject represents the object to himself. We are meant to see the enigma as something that presences and as something present within the play of concealment and unconcealment of Heidegger’s conception of truth. The enigma of art happens in the artwork in close proximity to, or out of, the happening of truth in the artwork. Art is the setting-itself-to-work of truth and, as such, it is the ground of history, says Heidegger. Art allows truth to arise and ‘arises as the founding preservation of the truth of beings in the work’.<sup>9</sup> This letting-be of truth, the bringing ‘into being from out of the essential source in the founding leap’<sup>10</sup>, is what Heidegger means by the term origin. Art is an origin because it is a distinctive

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.157.

<sup>9</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.49/p.65.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

way in which truth comes into being, becomes historical. As William McNeill writes: 'The great work of art opens up the being of beings as a whole, it first opens up a *world* for human beings.'<sup>11</sup> Through this opening up, he continues, the work of art grants significance and meaning to beings, establishing them historically and in their relations to one another. Art, as poetry, for Heidegger, is the founding of truth, with founding understood as bestowing, grounding and beginning. This founding can only happen, however, out of the essential repose [*Ruhe*] of art.

In order to examine whether such a seeing of the enigma occurs, we need to start from out of this repose, which Heidegger also characterises as the artwork's self-subsistence or its resting-in-itself. McNeill writes that the artwork 'rests in itself, in its own singularity, it holds itself within its own limits, within what is proper to it; it holds itself back in its very accomplishment'.<sup>12</sup> An English term that captures this repose is composure, as Christopher Fynsk points out<sup>13</sup>, precisely because it brings out two fundamental aspects of the work of art, the fact that it is as something created and the fact that it is a form of resting or repose; when one is composed one is calm, tranquil or serene. What is this composure and how does it arise? It happens through, or is, the conflict of two essential traits in the work of art, world and earth, claims Heidegger. World and earth, however, are not things in themselves, or powers, as Gregory Fried reminds us, but are terms, part of a vocabulary, for thinking about how structures of sense and meaning happen temporally through and for Dasein. World is 'the horizon of intelligibility within whose circle beings and activities make sense'.<sup>14</sup> It is the context of meanings which we inhabit. J.M. Bernstein writes that the world 'is not to be construed as an object before us, but rather as the disposition of men and things with respect to one another in virtue of which they possess the kind of place, duration and worth they do or can have'.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, earth, says Fried, is 'the givenness of the sense of being, the thrownness of possibilities, that can never be fully laid bare because this givenness

---

<sup>11</sup> William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999, p.282. His emphasis.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.289.

<sup>13</sup> Christopher Fynsk, *Heidegger Thought and Historicity*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, Expanded Edition, 1993, p.145.

<sup>14</sup> Gregory Fried *Heidegger's Pólemos*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2000, p.60.

<sup>15</sup> J.M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992, p.119.

of sense always already informs the fore-structure of Dasein's understanding of Being'.<sup>16</sup> Earth defies conceptual analysis, says Heidegger. As an example, he gives us the rock upon which the temple stands and sets up a world. The heaviness of the rock can never be penetrated, even if we smash it to pieces or measure it. What we have is either a mess of fragments or a number. In both cases, the rockness of the rock remains ungrasped. In this manner, earth eludes us: 'The earth is openly illuminated as itself only where it is apprehended and preserved as the essentially undisclosable, as that which withdraws from every disclosure [*Erschließung*], in other words keeps itself constantly closed up.'<sup>17</sup> Although the earth can be set forth in myriad ways, 'the earth itself cannot be finally, once and for all, revealed'.<sup>18</sup>

What happens in the work of art is the setting up of a world, which is seen in terms of disclosure and holding open, and the setting forth of the earth. This setting forth of the earth moves the earth into the open of a world and holds it there, says Heidegger. It is the element in which the arising of everything that arises is brought back to itself as it is in itself and given protection, he continues. Earth presences as the protector. This coming forth and rising up in turn lights up that which provides a dwelling for man. These two traits – world and earth - belong together in the unity of the work-being. This unity [*Einheit*] is what is sought via a reflection [*bedenken*] on the self-sufficiency [*Insichstehen*] of the work of art and tries to say in words the closed, unitary repose [*einige Ruhe*] of this resting-in-itself [*Aufsichberuhens*]. The work in its constancy, its repose, its determination, its intensity of purpose, stands out against the unruliness of its surroundings and in so doing brings out these surroundings as what they are. But it is wrong to think that this repose is merely a resting, according to Heidegger. It is a repose that is a happening [*Geschehen*]. He seems to claim that *Ruhe* is the opposite of movement but almost immediately qualifies this opposition by claiming that it is not an opposite that excludes but one that includes. Rest and movement belong together in an inclusive opposition. But what kind of rest is it that includes movement in an inclusive opposition and what happens to these terms – rest and movement, inclusive and

---

<sup>16</sup> Fried, *Heidegger's Polemos*, p.61.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.25/p.33.

<sup>18</sup> Bernstein, *The Fate of Art*, p.119.

exclusive – if rest is thought in this way? Perhaps we need to think *Ruhe* as prior to this distinction between rest and movement. There could be an analogy here to the notion of passivity that marks something like the thrownness of Dasein, which is a form of passivity that is prior to the usual opposition between active and passive, in the way that a thrown Dasein has to take responsibility for its thrownness. Meanings are qualified by what are normally thought to be their opposites so that the term opposition undergoes something of a transformation if it is thought of as inclusive. If rest is not simply rest, then opposition is not simply opposition. When speaking of the opposition of rest and movement, Heidegger uses the term *Gegensatz*, which can also mean antithesis in philosophical terms, although the play of rest and movement is not dialectical. The one does not subsume and transform the other in a synthesis. Perhaps a better analogy would be a musical one. *Gegensatz* can also mean countersubject, a musical term which denotes a theme in a piece of music, a fugue for example, which is used as a counterpoint to the main theme in the same piece. While there is a difference – it is difficult to say which of world or earth is the main theme – this notion might be worth bearing in mind when trying to think the nuanced idea of rest that Heidegger introduces here. George Pattison, following a thought of George Steiner's, believes that musical structure can be used to illustrate the thinking of the later Heidegger. This is not to say that his work should be read as 'merely emotive-expressive' but that it has 'a kind of structure that resists incorporation into any linear progression in which the various parts are ordered hierarchically and in which discord and conflict are resolved into a final unity'.<sup>19</sup> When Heidegger uses the term *Gegeneinander* to describe the opposition of world and earth, we are not meant to see these terms in a hierarchical order, nor their unity as a final one.

Heidegger calls *Ruhe* an inner collection of movement [*innige Sammlung*], a gathering, a kind of coming together of motion. This rest is extreme agitation [*höchste Bewegtheit*], he says. This is the kind of rest of the work that rests-in-itself. We can get near to this repose if we can 'grasp the movement of the happening [*Geschehens*] in the work-being

---

<sup>19</sup> George Pattison, *The Late Heidegger*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, pp.23.

of the work as a unity'.<sup>20</sup> This gathering together points towards the kind of relation there is between world and earth which is exhibited and happens in the work of art; in Heidegger's thinking about art, it is less a question of art being an exhibition of something, rather it is one where art is a happening, an event. There is a unifying relation between world and earth that happens in the work of art. World and earth are essentially different, says Heidegger, but they are never separated from one another. The earth provides the ground for the world and this earth rises up through the world. It is not an empty unity where opposites are not concerned with each other but one where striving and opening compete with withdrawal and closing, he says. In this, therefore, there is an interdependence or co-dependence. The one can never do without the other: 'The earth cannot do without the openness of world if it is to appear in the liberating surge of its self-closedness. World, on the other hand, cannot float away from the earth if, as the prevailing breadth and path of all essential destiny, it is to ground itself on something decisive.'<sup>21</sup> The unity of the happening appears as the relation [*Bezug*] between the setting up [*Aufstellen*] of a world and a setting forth [*Herstellen*] of the earth. This movement of world and earth must be grasped as a unity which, as a form of gathering, provides the resting-in-itself [*Insichruhen*] and standing-in-itself [*Insichstehen*], effectively the self-subsistence, of the work, says Heidegger. The relation between world and earth is a form of mutuality which is unresolved and irresolvable, yet at the same time is resolved in a unity, a resolution without resolution, perhaps. In the same way that it is not an empty unity, it is also not just a simple opposition. It is, on this basis, a full unity, an accomplished unity, a plenitude born out of opposition, and a differential unity. It is, as Christopher Fynsk points out, 'an identity founded in difference'.<sup>22</sup>

This oppositional co-dependency is termed strife [*Streit*] by Heidegger. But, he says, this strife cannot simply be reduced to discord, dispute, disruption or destruction. Strife is not a rift [*Riss*] in the sense of a tearing open but is the intimacy of the mutual dependence of the contestants [*Innigkeit des Sichzugehörens der Streitenden*]. The rift

---

<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.26/p.35.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.27/p.35-36.

<sup>22</sup> Fynsk, *Heidegger Thought and Historicity*, p.131.

takes the contestants into the source of their unity, their common ground, their belonging-togetherness; they are not allowed to break apart. Strife raises both the world and earth into the self-assertion of their essence and by setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work brings strife into its fullness. Strife reaches its zenith in fighting the fight between world and earth and the work-being of the work consists in this fight. The unity of the work happens in this fight, which Heidegger calls a simple intimacy [*Einfachen der Innigkeit*]: ‘The fighting of the fight is the continually self-surpassing gathering [*Sammlung*] of the agitation of the work. The repose of the work that rests in itself thus has its essence in the intimacy of the struggle.’<sup>23</sup> Our first sight of what is at work in the work is enabled from out of the work’s composure, which is crucial for what is happening in the work of art and, therefore, for art itself.

Truth happens in the repose of the work of art. The happening of truth in the work is the contest between world and earth and, in this contest, repose comes to presence. But in this contest, there can be no winner. There is always a contest and, as such, a certain equilibrium is achieved. Even though there is conflict, it is never a question of the one vanquishing the other, and therefore the contest becomes harmonious, in the same way that two parts of a piece of music can be said to be in harmony, because neither part can do without the other. Rather than being antagonistic enemies, world and earth are agonistic contestants. Agonistic is drawn from the ancient Greek term for contest or challenge, ἀγών, which can also mean assembly or gathering. As has been seen, gathering [*Sammlung*] is used by Heidegger to describe the way the work of art comes together. Ἀγών is also a verbal dispute between two characters in a Greek play, two characters who belong together within a formalised structure. It is this sense of belonging together in a structure that I want to convey by using the term agonistic, rather than the more belligerent term antagonistic. World and earth are part of a formal structure of contestation, rather than being in a conflict which is a fight to the death. But if this is a formal structure then the question of victory becomes problematic. It is just a question of whoever gets the last word being the winner. Victory, therefore, is a purely formal matter. Winning is a case of speaking last. But if victory is purely formal, then

---

<sup>23</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.27/p.36.

what kind of victory is it? If winning is predetermined, then victory has already been withdrawn from the character speaking second. Victory is always already defeat. Marc Froment-Meurice picks up on this when he describes the outcome of the struggle between world and earth: 'Earth, or rather reserve (itself double), will always have the final word; but since it is the word given by the other, the world, the earth sees its victory stolen from it. By the very fact that it will always appear victorious, it will appear, and thus will be defeated. This is not a simple dialectic in which the loser wins, for this would always suppose that the goal is to win, to aim accurately, to say the truth.'<sup>24</sup>

This contesting equilibrium can therefore be called repose, or composure, precisely because of the balance achieved in this mutual, agonistic fight. Strife is a composition. In this conflict is grounded the work's *Insichruhen*, or its *Insichstehen*, its resting-in-itself, its self-subsistence, its self-sufficiency. In the *gesammelten Bewegen* of the conflict, repose comes to presence. *Gesammelten* is translated as intense but this translation misses the meaning of collectivity that the term contains, linked as it is to *gesamt*, meaning whole or entire, and *Gesamt*, totality or complete. *Bewegen* means movement. In this collective movement of the conflict, there is a certain type of fullness, completion, accomplishment and unity involved. There is a gathering together of movement within the work's resting-in-itself. Repose is a movement of gathering together. This suggests that the work of art is brought to a unified whole in the equilibrium of the strife of world and earth. This unification points towards the self-sufficiency of the work of art, grounded as it is in itself, without any dependence on anything external to it. The work composes itself in the conflict of world and earth. In the strife, the unity of world and earth is won. The work of art is, in itself, autonomous; it gives itself its own law.

Julian Young claims that the whole notion of strife, the primal conflict, can be dismissed and that Heidegger himself performs such a dismissal in the turning to *Ereignis* that is

---

<sup>24</sup> Marc Froment-Meurice, *That is to Say: Heidegger's Aesthetics*, translated by Jan Plug, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1998, p.156.

instituted in the years 1936-38, a turning which is virtually contemporaneous with 'The Origin' (1935-36). Young's claim is based on two main theses. Firstly, he claims that to think that each and every artwork is agitated is to misconstrue the nature of the artwork, or that it is a generalisation too far. Not every work of art is agitated, he says. Works of art may, indeed, inspire awe in the way that world and earth come to presence but this awe is inspired not by conflict but by their coming to presence 'in a serene *harmony* with each other'.<sup>25</sup> He gives Raphael's *Sixtina* as an example of a serene work of art. His second thesis is based upon the series of footnotes that Heidegger appended to the essay when it was republished in 1960. These footnotes indicate that the *Urstreit* is to be replaced by *Ereignis*, according to Young, as well as highlight a general dissatisfaction on Heidegger's part with the essay. Heidegger says that the whole project of 'The Origin' is somehow inadequate (*unzureichend*) because of the inappropriate way that the term truth is used in relation to the concealing and unconcealing of the clearing.

In answer to Young's first point, one has to question whether the strife between world and earth can be seen simply as agitation, whether it is 'essentially warfare between the forces of disclosure and those of concealment internal to a self-conflicted Being'.<sup>26</sup> It has already been seen how closely Heidegger relates *Streit* to *Ruhe* throughout his description of the struggle between world and earth. It is clear that there is a co-dependency between world and earth that is, in a certain way, a harmony and cannot be reduced to agitation. A strife that is 'the intimacy of the mutual dependence of the contestants',<sup>27</sup> that is gathered together into a unity, is not just agitation and we could 'all too easily falsify the essence of the strife were we to conflate that essence with discord and dispute, and to know it, therefore, only as disruption and destruction. In essential strife, however, the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their essences'.<sup>28</sup> The relation between strife and repose that is exhibited in the work of art may well be paradoxical and it is perhaps this paradoxical relation that is at the heart of the work of art. In writing of the strife, Heidegger is not saying that all artworks are

---

<sup>25</sup> Julian Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.62. Young's emphasis.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.64.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.38/p.51.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p.26/p.35.

agitated but that all artworks are paradoxical in the way that strife rests and rest strifes.<sup>29</sup> It is also worth noting that when Young refers to agitation he is referring to the term *Bewegtheit*, which means emotion but is linked to *bewegen* meaning to move, and which he translates in his own version of 'The Origin' as agitation in the passage considered above. A little later, in the same paragraph, he translates the same term merely as movement. In the *Zusatz*, which Heidegger wrote twenty years after the original essay, the term *Bewegtheit* is used again and Young once more translates it as movement. Movement is a far less loaded or emotional term than agitated, which brings in meanings such as troubled or disturbed. There is, perhaps, on Young's part, a desire to intensify his thesis through the translation and, rather than saying extreme agitation, Heidegger could be intensifying his terms, calling rest that is the inner collection of movement the *supreme* movement [*höchste Bewegtheit*].

The second point that Young puts forward to support his claim is that the notion that truth battles its way to presence is replaced in Heidegger's thinking by the more serene happening that is theorised around the term *Ereignis*. 'Heidegger dismisses the *Urstreit* from his thinking...it makes no further appearance in connection with art or with anything else.'<sup>30</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to follow the fortunes of strife in Heidegger's subsequent work, nor can justice be done here to the movement of *Ereignis* in his work, although I will return to it in the final chapter, but this citation from the *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, written during the years 1936-8, but not published until 1989, is just one example that can be used as a way of questioning whether Young is entirely right, perhaps suggesting that the relation between *Urstreit* and *Ereignis* cannot be so easily dismissed. Heidegger writes: 'As the grounding that takes the strifing of the strife

---

<sup>29</sup> An initial tracing of a relation, of nearness and farness, perhaps, can be drawn here between the strife of world and earth as outlined in 'The Origin' and Adorno's notion of the artwork as an inner tension [*Innenspannung*] through which the work is defined as a force field or field of forces [*Kraftfeld*]. The work is both the epitome of relations of tension and the attempt to dissolve them. See *Aesthetic Theory*, translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor, London, Continuum, 2002, p.291. *Ästhetische Theorie*, herausgegeben von Gretel Adorno und Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970, p.434. Adorno writes of artworks as processes which 'synthesise ununifiable, nonidentical elements that grind away at each other', in which an identity of the identical and nonidentical is sought and which involve a resistance to otherness but on which they nevertheless depend. The artwork involves an 'irresolvable antithesis' where its 'tension does not terminate in pure identity with either extreme' and where it becomes a force field of its antagonisms (p.176/p.263).

<sup>30</sup> Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p.64.

[*Streites*] into what is opened up by strife, *Da-sein* is awaited by humans and is carried in the inabiding which sustains the “t/here” and belongs to enowning [*Ereignis*].<sup>31</sup> In addition, in the winter of 1942-43, Heidegger again returns to the notion of the *Streit* in his lectures on Parmenides. Here, truth as ἀλήθεια is the result of a struggle [*erstritten*] between concealment and unconcealedness which are in mutual conflict [*Streit*]. It is not a question of human beings struggling for truth, rather it is a question of truth itself being essentially a conflict [*in seinem Wesen ein Streit*]. For Heidegger, *Streit* cannot just be equated with war, discord or competition but, he asks, how can we come to define πόλεμος if we have not penetrated the conflict that is indigenous [*heimisch*] to truth? We have, he says, been alienated from this conflictual essence for a long time.

It can be seen even in this brief consideration that the dismissal of *Streit* is not as straightforward as Young would like it to be. Part of his motive for this dismissal comes from the marginal glosses Heidegger added to the essay in 1960. Young’s claim is that *Ereignis* replaces the primal conflict as the essence of truth because Heidegger footnotes this and calls it *Ereignis*. But is this a replacement, a renaming or a clarification? Is Heidegger seeking to claim retrospectively that when he describes the essence of truth as the primal conflict in ‘The Origin’ that he was thinking the thought of *Ereignis* all along, that the thinking of truth in ‘The Origin’ was consistent with his later thinking of *Ereignis*? These questions must be left hanging here but they do serve to indicate that one should not be too peremptory in dismissing the strife of world and earth. What also needs to be borne in mind here is that ‘The Origin’ is already making a case that there is a certain passivity involved in the coming forth of the earth. The setting up of a world belongs to the being of the work and this setting up of the world, in its turn, brings the materiality of the work into the open of the world of the work. A work of art, in this case a temple, sets up the world and allows the earth ‘to come forth for the very first time’,<sup>32</sup> and this allowing is a letting [*lassen*], not a forcing or pushing. In fact, Heidegger writes,

---

<sup>31</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1999 p.22. *Gesamtausgabe III. Abteilung: Unveröffentlichte Adhandlungen Band 65, Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1989, p.31.

<sup>32</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.24/p.32.

‘Earth is that which cannot be forced, that which is effortless and untiring’.<sup>33</sup> While it is the work that is doing this – ‘*The work lets the earth be an earth*’, writes Heidegger and he also glosses this as *Ereignis*<sup>34</sup> – it can only do it because in the move that sees the setting up of a world, there is also the move that allows the coming forth of the earth, implying that it is not a violent conflict, but more a case of opening a space.

There is another reason why Young seeks to keep a distance between the later Heidegger and the notion of the strife and this has to do with the deeper question of Heidegger’s involvement with National Socialism during this period, the middle to late 1930s. It is a matter of record that Heidegger publicly declared his support for Hitler and National Socialism during his rectorship of Freiburg University. What is not as clear is the extent to which Heidegger later repudiated his National Socialist views. A separate industry has developed arguing totally opposed positions, suggesting either that Heidegger remained a Nazi for the rest of his life or that he abandoned National Socialism after his brief flirtation with it. Young subscribes to the latter view and he sees the dismissal of the primal conflict as part of Heidegger’s break with fascism. He believes that the notion of the primal conflict does not have its source in the theory of truth but rather in the militaristic rhetoric of the time. Young identifies *Urstreit* with the *Sturm und Drang* imagery that he claims was prevalent during the Nazi era, although *Sturm und Drang* was a late eighteenth century movement in German philosophy, literature and music, with which Hamann, Goethe and Haydn were associated. It is possible that Young has mistaken this for the avowedly Nazi and racist ideology of *Blut und Boden*. Whatever he is referring to, the fact of the matter is that Young believes that the *Urstreit* is tainted by Nazi associations and is using the reference to *Sturm und Drang* as part of his thesis that Heidegger makes a decisive break with his Nazi affiliations and part of this break involves the jettisoning of the *Urstreit*.

But if Young’s dismissal of the *Urstreit* is, at the very least, questionable, there are other questions to be raised about the notion of *Ruhe*. Heidegger argues that the mode of

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. Heidegger’s emphasis.

movement determines the mode of rest: '*Je nach der Art der Bewegung ist die Weise der Ruhe.*'<sup>35</sup> Here, *je nach* means according to, or depending on, so that a literal translation might read something like, 'according to the type of movement is the manner of rest'. The implication is that movement has some kind of priority over rest. Movement determines the type of rest or rest itself. 'Only what moves can rest',<sup>36</sup> says Heidegger. When movement is just the changing in place of a body, then rest is merely the limit case of movement, but when rest can include movement then rest can be an inner collection of movement, he claims. But if movement determines rest, if rest rests only in accordance with movement, how can rest then include movement? This suggests that rest is determined by that which it includes, that which is a part of it. The priority of movement over rest seems to have shifted in favour of a rest that subsumes movement within itself. Rest is the limit case of movement but is also determined by it and movement is the condition of possibility of rest. However, perhaps we are just within the circle that, Heidegger says, characterises thinking about art and the work of art. At the beginning of 'The Origin', he says that we can only determine what art is from the work of art and that what the work is can only be determined out of an understanding of art, hence the circle. We have to move in this circle. Thinking in a circle is neither defective nor makeshift, but a strength and the feast of thought, he claims, and that '[n]ot only is the main step from work to art, like the step from art to work, a circle, but that every individual step that we attempt circles within this circle'.<sup>37</sup> Clearly, then rest and movement are part of this circle but, even if we are willing to accept this circularity, there is still the question of how and why rest should include movement. Heidegger just claims that there is a form of rest that includes movement but does not say how this can be. There seems to be an elision in the argument here. Heidegger gives us the case of rest as the limit case of movement when something merely changes its place, but he does not seem to do the equivalent for rest that includes movement. He merely asserts that there is such a thing and that this is the rest of the work that rests in itself. It is just this unified rest that we are trying to express when we reflect upon the work of art. It may well be that the argument is defective here, but the essential point is that this moving-

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.26/p.34.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p.2/p.3.

resting forms the composure of the work of art out of which truth is set forth and where, according to Heidegger, seeing the enigma of art becomes a possibility.

As has already been stated, Heidegger introduces the notion of enigma in the Afterword of the essay, with the implication that the essay has been intimately tied up with this question. The term enigma appears four times in a short paragraph at the beginning of the *Nachwort*. It appears nowhere else in the essay, nor does Heidegger give us a definition of the term here. This does not mean that we should merely dismiss it as a rhetorical flourish, nor should we take it to mean that art, in the final analysis, is multiply interpretable. Apart from the, perhaps, banal nature of such a statement, it is clear that Heidegger is not offering us an interpretation of a specific work of art, one that can take its place alongside other interpretations. Rather he is trying to say something about the essential nature of art, although he does discuss a painting of some shoes<sup>38</sup> by Van Gogh, without specifying which painting, and a temple at Paestum although, as Sallis points out<sup>39</sup>, he does not mention which of the three temples it is. In thinking of the enigma of art, in thinking the enigma - and perhaps to see the enigma is merely to allow thinking to approach it – it would be wrong to believe that art is some kind of object that can be described or classified, that can be related to a general aesthetics, or that it is part of the cultural process of connoisseurship and aesthetic appreciation. It remains outside the museum and the economy of exchange that constitute the art market. Heidegger makes this distinction in the *Nachwort* where there is a contrast between his thinking about art and the wrong turning taken by aesthetics. Is it a question, then, of the mode of being of the enigma, one in which the ‘is’ of ‘the enigma is’ becomes part of what is at stake, or where the enigma is a refusal of the metaphysical question ‘what is...?’? Can one say of the enigma what John Sallis writes of Plato’s other beginning, the unsaid or unthought in Plato’s text: ‘[I]t remains unsaid because it resists saying,

---

<sup>38</sup> Who owns the shoes and who has the right to speak about them formed the basis of a critique of Heidegger by the art historian, Meyer Schapiro, and a critique of that critique by Jacques Derrida. See Meyer Schapiro, ‘The Still-Life as a Personal Object: A note on Heidegger and Van Gogh’, in *The Reach of Mind: Essays in Memory of Kurt Goldstein*, New York, Springer Publishing, 1968, pp.203-209, and Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp.255-382.

<sup>39</sup> Sallis, *Transfigurements*, p.177.

because it withdraws from λόγος, refuses to submit to the question: τὶ ἐστὶ?, “What is...?” And yet, it is not simply unsayable but is somehow inscribed.’<sup>40</sup>

What is the claim that Heidegger is making? He claims that art is an enigma and that it is the task [*Aufgabe*] to see the enigma. He does not say whose task this is, although the implication is that it is a task for all of us, nor what kind of task it is. What is a task? As *Aufgabe*, it is a form of responsibility and it is a gift, something we are given to do. It is also a form of giving up, in terms of a giving over and a surrendering. Who or what has given us this task? Is it art itself that demands that we take up this responsibility or is it each work of art that reframes anew the demand that we attempt to see art for what it is, that is as enigma? There is also the question of whether it is possible to see the enigma of art in art itself or whether this seeing is only possible through a consideration of art, such as Heidegger has just given us, although he disclaims that he is attempting to solve the enigma. This does seem to be the implication of Heidegger’s comment that his essay on the origin of the work of art is an attempt to see the enigma. The suggestion is that the enigma is only accessible – in the limited way prescribed – through a form of commentary on art. At the end of the essay, he says that such reflections are necessary for art’s coming-to-be. Perhaps we can only see the enigma as enigma in the *Überlegungen* that we devote to art, which would give a curious priority to commentaries on art over and above the works of art themselves. It appears that in order for us to see the enigma as enigma, there has to be some sort of mediation. It is not a mediation that is determined by aesthetics, but it is a mediation nonetheless. Does the enigma, therefore, not happen in the work of art itself, does it not, indeed, come to presence in the way truth, and the strife of world and earth, are said to do?

Is it possible to identify the enigma with a specific aspect of Heidegger’s thinking on art, either with world and earth or, indeed, with truth for that matter? Kai Hammermeister thinks so and claims that Heidegger specifically links earth to enigma, with the enigma signalling the ultimate unknowability of art, as Hammermeister explains: ‘Heidegger, too, insists that art remains ultimately unknowable. Long before Adorno, he speaks

---

<sup>40</sup> John Sallis, *The Verge of Philosophy*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2008, p.27.

of...the enigma of art. Every work of art contains a moment that cannot be understood, that remains hidden and resists all attempts of elucidation. Heidegger calls this moment *earth*.<sup>41</sup> I do not think that it is so easy to link it to earth, as Hammermeister claims Heidegger does, for two reasons. Firstly, Heidegger himself says that it is *art* that is the enigma. This suggests that it is the unity that Heidegger claims art is that is being named as the enigma, not one specific part of it. Secondly, there would seem to be little point in introducing another term to cover the same thing. It would merely add another layer where it is unnecessary. However, as will be seen, the movement of truth and the movement of enigma exhibit distinct similarities which perhaps undermines such an easy dismissal of Hammermeister's claim here.

But if Heidegger does not give us an explicit definition, what does he mean? In plain terms, an enigma is something puzzling, mysterious or ambiguous. It comes from a Greek term meaning to speak allusively, obscurely, or in riddles. Ultimately it derives from the Greek term for fable, *αἶνος*, as discussed in the Introduction. I should, however, reiterate what I said there about an etymological account of the term enigma because one must not lose sight of the fact that we are dealing with the German term *Rätsel*, not the Greek-derived term enigma. Any examination of the term has to take this into account. Heidegger himself gives us just such an examination in the lecture on Hölderlin's poem 'The Ister'. Simon Critchley says that an enigma has perceptual and linguistic aspects: 'Perceptually, an enigma is something one cannot see through. It is *undurchsichtig*, obscure, opaque and not transparent. Linguistically, an enigma is a riddle.'<sup>42</sup> Gerald Bruns claims that for Heidegger an enigma is a dark saying, 'not a riddle or conundrum or a logical puzzle that we could eventually work out or whose answer we might guess, but a saying shrouded forever in darkness'.<sup>43</sup> For Heidegger, Bruns claims, the main point about an enigma is that it can never be penetrated or brought into an open view and, like Hammermeister, he equates it with the earth:

---

<sup>41</sup> Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.182. Hammermeister's emphasis.

<sup>42</sup> Simon Critchley, 'Enigma Variations: an Interpretation of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*', *Ratio (new series)*, Oxford, Blackwell, XV 2 June 2002, pp.154-175, pp.157-158.

<sup>43</sup> Gerald L. Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements: Language, Truth, and Poetry in the Later Writings*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1989, p.69.

‘[T]here is no way of shedding light on what it means in the sense of a content or message that can be conceptually retrieved. It resists philology of every sort, ancient, modern, or postmodern. It won’t be purified of its earthly character.’<sup>44</sup> McNeill makes a number of references to the enigma in *The Glance of the Eye*, whether it is the enigmatic way that the materiality of the temple emerges, or the nothing that emanates so enigmatically from the work of art. But he never seems to question the enigma as enigma. It is seemingly simply given. Veronique Foti sees the artwork in its created form as the withdrawal ‘from explanatory schemata into the enigma of its sheer “thatness” and “suchness”’<sup>45</sup> and equates the earthiness of the artwork with its enigmatic suchness.

The enigma is resistant to all conceptuality. Is Heidegger saying, therefore, that art is resistant to any concepts that we might bring to it? But again, in saying this, it may well be that all that is being said is that art is resistant to any final interpretation and this, perhaps, is to say very little. Certainly Hammermeister sees little in the enigma beyond this notion that art does not, and cannot, submit to a single, final interpretation: ‘Because all art contains this moment of earth, no one experience will ever come to terms with the work; no single interpretation will ever suffice.’<sup>46</sup> But in speaking of interpretations, we are perhaps falling back into the very aesthetics that Heidegger seeks to avoid. Certainly, Heidegger’s take on how we respond to art does not correspond to how we interpret it, in that our response is not the response of individual subjectivities. Nor does the enigma arise as a result of the activities of the artist. It is not something at which the artist consciously or unconsciously aims. Art’s enigmaticalness is indifferent to the claims of the artist and the role of the artist is put into question by Heidegger, as will be seen. It is not a question of the artist making the work difficult or obscure. To say that the poetry of Paul Celan is obscure – Celan sees obscurity as being assigned to poetry through difference and estrangement - is not the same as saying his poetry allows us to see the enigma as enigma. Heidegger does not intend to give us a defence of the necessity of

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Veronique M. Foti, *Heidegger and the Poets: Poiesis/Sophia/Techne*, Amherst New York, Humanity Books, 1992, p.57.

<sup>46</sup> Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, p.182.

obscurity in art. If art is an enigma, then its relation to the role of the artist might be one where the artist questions what a work of art is, what art is, which is probably the paradigmatic question of a modernist approach to art.

But if art is an enigma, and is always already an enigma, then this enigmaticalness exists prior to the work of the artist and the work of art. Irrespective of what the artist does, if a work of art is produced then art appears as enigmatic. But perhaps it is wrong to say that it *exists* prior to the work of the artist. It is not something that exists somewhere for the artist to pluck out of the air, in the same way that Heidegger says that truth does not exist in the heavens waiting for human beings to grab it. In a sense, the enigmaticalness of art is somehow prior, perhaps pre-phenomenally, or pre-originally, to the work of art but it appears, if in fact it could be said to appear at all, only after the fact of the work of art. The structure is one in which that which is logically anterior can only be discerned in that which comes after it. This is the structure of the pre-original, a term borrowed from the work of Emmanuel Levinas, where the pre-original is a non-phenomenal, non-cognitive and non-presentable movement. Not starting from itself, nor self-producing, the pre-original is dependent on a prior event and yet it is that which makes the event possible. It involves an immemorial past that can never be brought into the present but it is not another origin. Is it possible to apply this term to art? Is art the prior event that makes the work of art possible, but is also dependent on the work of art, does art itself rise up in the work of art?

Heidegger says that the task is not to solve the enigma. However, it is in the nature of an enigma that it cannot be solved, that no answer is adequate to the mysteriousness that it presents. An enigma that is capable of a solution is no longer an enigma, it is merely something that is in need of clarification and that can be clarified. This impossibility of solution is what creates the enigma as enigma, gives it its very structure and allows it to remain open. Yet, the absence of a solution also closes the enigma off to us. If art is an enigma, then art has this same structure. It is something that is not capable of being solved and therefore remains open, but at the same time is irrevocably closed, again because of the absence of a solution. In this, art, like the enigma, is always in the play of

this opening-closing. But in recognising that there is no solution, perhaps a solution can only be glimpsed through the presentation of this absence of solution, as Novalis indicates: ‘If the character of a given problem lies in its insolubility, then we solve the problem by presenting its insolubility.’<sup>47</sup> In an essay on Novalis, commenting on this and other passages from his work, Manfred Frank writes that the work of art ‘gives us the promise that it will be imperatively demanding, in that it does not place a result in our hands, it does not settle our minds, but rather agitates us’.<sup>48</sup> This agitation, he says, leads to an undetermined seeking for a foundation which is never found. How far is this from Adorno’s idea that the task of aesthetics is to comprehend the incomprehensibility of art, that the solution of the enigma is, at the same time, the maintenance of the enigma? In his consideration of the section from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ‘*Vom Gesicht und Räthsel*’, Heidegger says that what the enigma contains [*enthalten*] and hides [*verbergen*] only becomes open [*offenbar*] through the guess or surmise [*erraten*]. Any kind of calculation does not get near to it because what is discovered has already been calculated in advance. Instead, in *erraten*, ‘we take a leap, without guidelines, without the rungs of any ladder which anyone can clamber up anytime. To grasp [*fassen*] the enigma is to leap, especially when the enigma involves being as a whole’.<sup>49</sup> To catch hold of the enigma is to take flight, to leave the ground. The direction towards the enigma that is figured in *erraten* is the direction of a journey into unconcealment. In brief, the enigma is not calculable by metaphysical thought and it would be a complete [*gründlich*] misunderstanding of the enigma if we think that our encounter with it is a question of solving it. The *erraten* of the *Rätsel* is so that we can experience the fact that the enigma as enigma cannot be pushed to one side. The enigma has to be confronted through a journey into the open, he says.

But what kind of openness is this? It is, perhaps, to this openness that Heidegger refers when he says that it must remain open whether and how there is art at all. There can

---

<sup>47</sup> Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, translated by David W. Wood, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007, p.109.

<sup>48</sup> Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, translated by Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2004, p.54.

<sup>49</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche Volumes One and Two, Volume II*, translated by David Farrell Krell, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1991 (1984), p.37. Translation modified. *Nietzsche Band I*, Pfullingen, Verlag Günther Neske, 1961, pp.289-290.

never be a definitive decision as to whether art actually is or not. But he then claims that there is a place where there is no doubt that there is art: 'But since it must remain open whether and how there is art at all, we will attempt to discover the nature of art where there is no doubt that art genuinely prevails. Art presences in the art-work.'<sup>50</sup> But if we remain in the open question about if, or whether, and how art actually is at all, how is it possible to make the claim that art undoubtedly [*ungezweifelt*] appears in the work of art? We seem to move from a position of uncertainty of openness to one where there is no doubt in the space of a single sentence. Is this art's enigma then? That art genuinely prevails in the work of art yet we cannot say how or whether it actually is? That art is unspeakable could be the implication of the term *entsprechen*, which means to correspond, when Heidegger writes that art is just a word to which nothing real any longer corresponds. Perhaps art only arises in the conjunction of work and artist, but this arising is always both after the fact of work and artist and prior to it. To be able to speak of works of art and artists already presupposes the fact of art, for a decision about art to have already been made, but this decision can only be made on the basis of the work of art and the artist. This decision is one that can never be fixed in a rule and must be made anew, must begin again, each time a work of art is created afresh. What art is, whether art is, must always remain open but how and whether art is has always already been decided in the work of art and closed itself off. We cannot say what art is but we can identify art in the work of art. Art is somehow given in the work of art but this gift is unspeakable. But is it a giving that can never be resolved into a gift? Perhaps we should be thinking of *arting* rather than art, rather than trying to fix it into a concept.

In asking the question whether the enigma of art is the undecidability of whether and how art is and the fact that art undoubtedly is in the work of art, has the enigma of art been solved? Have we said what art is? By no means. All that has been stated is this undecidability, that structurally the enigma is this dual movement of withholding and giving. 'The Origin' is not meant to be a solution to the enigma and, as Froment-Meurice reminds us, 'Heidegger emphasizes that he is in no way responding to the

---

<sup>50</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.2/p.2.

“enigma” of art; he is not going to say what that might be’.<sup>51</sup> Heidegger repudiates the notion that the enigma of art could be an answer to the question of what art is. In the *Zusatz*, written twenty years after the essay, Heidegger writes: ‘What art may be is one of the questions to which the essay offers no answer. What may give the impression of such an answer are directions for questioning (compare the first sentences of the Afterword).’<sup>52</sup> The second sentence of this quotation refers to the sentences that introduce the notion of the enigma of art. Clearly Heidegger is cautioning us against the idea that the enigma is the answer to what art is. Rather the enigma is a direction that a questioning about art can take. But art is only a means to an end, says Heidegger: ‘Reflection on what *art* may be is completely and decisively directed solely toward the question of *being*. Art is accorded neither an area of cultural achievement nor an appearance of spirit; it belongs, rather, to the Event [*Ereignis*] out of which the “meaning of being”...is first determined.’<sup>53</sup> Reflections on the enigma of art are part of a reflection on the enigma of being, a reflection that is bound up with the enigma of the appearance of being.

The question of the decision of art is linked with the impossibility of a solution to the enigma’s insistent demand that one is sought for. The enigma is a demand for a solution from which we cannot be absolved. But, while submitting to the demand of finding a solution, we have always already been absolved from the possibility of meeting this demand. This sense of absolution is part of the very structure of an enigma but the absolution is never a final or definitive one. If it was, then there would be little point in confronting the enigma. This impossibility of absolution can never be mere paralysis. For the enigma to be an enigma, it has to hold open the promise of a solution, it has to admit that possibility. If this holding open, this possibility, was not structurally part of the enigma, then the enigma would not be what it is, an enigma. It would, in fact, be radically hermetic. John Sallis writes, in his book *Transfigurements*, of the *future* of the work of art<sup>54</sup>, of the promise of art, a promise that does not necessarily have to be made

---

<sup>51</sup> Froment-Meurice, *That is to Say*, p.149.

<sup>52</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.55/p.73.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Heidegger’s emphases.

<sup>54</sup> Sallis, *Transfigurements*, p.152.

by anyone, a promise that is made by art itself. It is a promise that is made from out of the future that resolves itself into a hope, rather than offering certainty or likelihood, he says. Art's promise concerns how the future may be shaped and art's own role in deciding what that shape might be.

A promise, says Sallis, is a setting forth of a pledge into the future. In a sense, it is a sending of a pledge. But it is also true to say that a promise is irrevocably mired in a past that did not take place. A promise relates to something that has not happened with the intention of putting right this non-happening. Therefore, even as it points towards the future, a promise is given over to a past that remains unfulfilled. A promise is an intimation, a hint that gestures to the future in marking the past. In a sense, the enigma offers a promise, a promise that a solution is possible – it always holds open the promise of a solution - but it is a promise that has always already been withdrawn. The promise arises only in this prior withdrawal. The promise of a solution is after the fact of its impossible resolution. The enigma points to a future that is always already immemorially past. Because the solution never arrives, because it is withdrawn, that is the promise is withdrawn, the solution already belongs to the past, therefore, a past that was never present and can never be recuperated. This is the radical powerlessness of the enigma, the powerlessness of art. The work of art points, or refers, back to art, tries to make a decision about art, but the work of art can never finally decide what art is. One could use a figure of speech that Emmanuel Levinas uses in *Otherwise than Being* and say that in the enigma the promise of a solution is the sound that can only be heard in the echo of its withdrawal, after the fact of that withdrawal having been made. Elsewhere, as I have shown in the Introduction, Levinas uses the term enigma to designate the way otherness manifests itself without manifestation. The enigma is a meaning beyond meaning inserted in the meaning that constitutes an order and which advances while retreating. 'In an enigma,' he writes, 'the exorbitant meaning is already effaced in its apparition.'<sup>55</sup> This captures, to an extent, what is being articulated here, but it is important to emphasise that the movement of advance and retreat is never simultaneous.

---

<sup>55</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, translated by Alphonso Lingus, Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987, p.66. *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2006, p.291

The retreat has already occurred prior to any advance. There is a kind of temporality at work in which that which is prior is only discernible after the fact of its withdrawal. The promise, the enigma's possibility of solution, is never something that could be present in terms of its being lived through. It, the enigma, remains immemorially past. The past has passed without the completion of a present. 'The supreme anachronism of a *past* that was never a *now*...is the enigma's word,' writes Levinas.<sup>56</sup> The enigma never comes to presence in the way that world and earth presence in their strife. The promise never appears as such at all, it is never a happening, an event.

What is the impact of this interruptive temporality, which is an anterior temporality, on the self-subsistence, the resting-in-itself, of the work of art? Is it a breach in the self-sufficiency of the work that disrupts the founding of truth in what Heidegger calls its threefold of bestowing, founding and beginning, something that remains improper in the proper happening of truth, or is it, in fact, truth itself? Directions towards answering these questions can only be given by returning to the question of the happening of truth in the work of art. So far, although truth has been mentioned here in relation to the work of art and to the strife of world and earth, there has been no attempt to explain in any detail either Heidegger's concept of truth or how the enigma of art is related to this conception if, indeed, it can be seen as a relation. How then does Heidegger define truth? First of all, truth is not the correctness of propositional statements ( $x$  is  $y$ ), truth as correspondence, or truth as the 'agreement of knowledge with the facts'.<sup>57</sup> This is not because these definitions are incorrect, but because they rely upon a prior truth, according to Heidegger, and it is this prior truth with which he is concerned. This prior truth is the condition of possibility for truth as it is ordinarily understood: 'In order, however, for knowledge, and for the sentence that forms and expresses it, to correspond to the facts it is necessary, first of all, that the fact which is to be binding on the sentence show itself to be such. And how is it to show itself if it is unable to stand out of concealment, unable to stand in the unconcealed?'<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p.73/p.301. Levinas's emphases.

<sup>57</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.28/p.38.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

The last word of this quotation translates Heidegger's term *Unverborgenheit* which is his translation and reconceptualisation of the ancient Greek term ἀλήθεια which was either translated as truth, or corresponded with the concept of truth. This alternative translation reflects both Heidegger's etymological understanding of the Greek and his contention that truth as unconcealment was unthought in both Greek and subsequent philosophy and, although unconcealment remained hidden in Greek philosophy, it did determine the presence of everything present. Heidegger, in 'The Origin', translates ἀλήθεια as the '*Unverborgenheit des Seienden*', the 'unconcealment of beings',<sup>59</sup> and what this means is that for truth to happen as correctness, there has to be a prior disclosure, a region or a world has to open up. A world is opened up in which beings can discover things and other beings in it, which they can interpret, and which sets the context for the kind of beings and things that can be discovered or interpreted in it. Discovery and interpretation are dependent upon this opening up of a context. It is important to note, however, that this is not the subjective creation of a world. Human beings are always already thrown into this world and, as human subjects, we do not presuppose the unconcealment of beings, says Heidegger: 'With all our correct representations [*Vorstellungen*] we would be nothing – we could never make the presupposition of there being something manifest to which we conform ourselves – if the unconcealment of beings had not already set us forth into that illuminated realm in which every being stands for us and from which it withdraws.'<sup>60</sup> The opening of a world is something that in its happening allows human beings 'access to those beings that we ourselves are not and admittance to the being that we ourselves are'.<sup>61</sup> Not only do we gain access to other beings but we also come into our own being. This access is by no means as clear cut as this description would suggest, however. In the midst of this openness, this *Lichtung*, variously translated as clearing or lighting, or sometimes both at the same time, something is held back, or hidden. Something is concealed in unconcealment, but this concealment, says Heidegger, can only occur here in the illuminated [*Gelichteten*]. This concealment reigns [*waltet*] in the midst of beings and does so in a twofold manner, he continues. It appears as both *Versagen*, refusal, and as

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p.28/p.37.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p.29/p.39.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p.30/p.40.

*Verstellen*, obstruction. Refusal is a refusal of the totality of being, says Fynsk, and it ‘appears in the conflict of truth as the self-closing of the earth, and it is the source of the work of art’s own withdrawal’.<sup>62</sup> This refusal is that which presents itself to us when ‘all we can say of a being is that it is’.<sup>63</sup> This is the beginning of the clearing of what is illuminated, says Heidegger, the fact that we can say that such and such a thing is. What that thing is is withdrawn from us in concealment as refusal.

Alongside concealment as refusal, there is also concealment as obstruction, although obstruction does not quite capture the full meaning of *Verstellen*. This term means to adjust or to change and to block or obstruct. In its link to *Stellen* it is an alienating of place or position. Through this root term, *Verstellen* is linked into a whole semantic network around presenting and positioning that is part of the language of ‘The Origin’, from *Aufstellung*, setting up, to *Herstellung*, setting forth, which are used in relation to world and earth, and from *Ausstellung*, exhibition, to *Erstellung*, construction. It is also the root word for *Darstellung* and *Vorstellung*, presentation and representation respectively, which are key terms in German aesthetic theory, and *Gestell*, enframing, which becomes an important term for Heidegger, especially in ‘The Question concerning Technology’ as the name for the essence of modern technology, which frames human beings as a usable reserve. Perhaps in seeing art in terms of *Verstellen*, rather than as *Darstellung* or *Vorstellung*, Heidegger is referencing his move away from an aesthetic standpoint, that *Verstellen* is not just a displacement in relation to unconcealment but also a displacement of aesthetics. *Verstellen* is usually translated as obstruction or dissembling in ‘The Origin’, but as Fynsk reminds us, it can also be understood as disguise. What he doesn’t say, though, is that this disguise relates to disguising the voice and in effect one could say that saying is disguised. Obstruction, however, is not quite the same as dissembling or disguise. Obstruction can simply mean one thing getting in the way of another by accident. Dissembling and disguise suggest that there is an ulterior motive to this obstruction, that there is a deliberate attempt to obscure or obstruct – to deceive - and that the motive is not quite seemly. There is a

---

<sup>62</sup> Fynsk, *Heidegger Thought and Historicity*, p.147.

<sup>63</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.30/p.40.

pretence and one's real motives remain hidden. Nothing is as it seems to be. Heidegger initially seems to suggest that this other manner of concealment is simply obstruction. In a jostling for position, one being may get in front of others and so hide them, or cast a shadow over them, so that many, or all, of the other beings are denied except one. This is not simply refusal, says Heidegger. Instead, a being appears [*erscheint*] which is other than what it is. To present oneself as other than what one is is to appear as something other. As appearance [*Schein*], a being can deceive us and this 'is the condition of the possibility of our deceiving ourselves rather than the other way round'.<sup>64</sup> That this is deception, that the being as appearance can deceive, and is not just obstruction is underlined by the fact that Heidegger here uses the words *trügen* and *täuschen*, which can mean deceive, betray or simply mistake, and not just *Verstellen*. Appearance can cause us to be mistaken in what we see and do, it can lead us astray and into transgression. It can make us overreach ourselves, says Heidegger. Fynsk links this deception, dissembling, disguise to the Heraclitus fragment which claims that φύσις loves to hide, a fragment which Heidegger concerns himself with in his writings on Heraclitus, and asks: 'But what would hiding, which surely cannot appear insofar as it hides itself (and it must appear in art), disguise itself as, except disguise, when disguise appears as disguise, when disguise appears? In art, concealment appears (*erscheint*) inasmuch as the event of truth – a play of concealment and unconcealment – somehow comes to show there. But it appears in disguise or as disguise. What else is art but Schein (semblance, mere appearance), even if this Schein must be thought as grounded within the horizon of truth? So in art, we think we see disguise...But according to Heidegger we see in fact reserve, withdrawal.'<sup>65</sup>

If someone or something appears in disguise or as disguise it is impossible to determine whether this person or thing is in disguise or is appearing as disguise. Disguise precludes this determination. If someone is in disguise, then this remains unknown, unless the disguise fails, in which case it is no longer disguise, or the disguise is torn off and the identity revealed, in which case disguise no longer appears as disguise. The fact of

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Fynsk, *Heidegger Thought and Historicity*, pp.149-150.

disguise remains veiled and this veiling is constitutive of the disguise. It remains hidden and in remaining hidden it can never be grasped. Disguise is always disguised and this disguised disguise constitutes a withdrawal prior to its appearance because it is non-appearing. If disguise poses as itself, then it always withdraws itself, precisely because to be seen as disguise is to see through it. Fynsk likens this disguise as disguise, what he calls the work's self-contrasting, to a theatrical performance, a kind of posing in a theatrical sense, he says, which is perhaps inseparable from it and Heidegger too brings in a theatrical metaphor when he states that the clearing 'is never a fixed stage with a permanently raised curtain on which the play of being enacts itself'.<sup>66</sup> But if it is a performance, it is a performance without dramatic irony. There is no privileged position from which the audience can see Iago's machinations while they remain hidden to Othello. Neither is there a final revelation at the end of the performance. Art, as *Schein*, remains in disguise, remains veiled, and we can never be sure, says Heidegger, whether concealment is either *Versagen* or *Verstellen* because concealment itself conceals and obstructs itself and the clearing only happens as this twofold concealment. In a later (1950) gloss on this happening, Heidegger terms it *Ereignis*. Perhaps we can begin to see a relation to enigma here. As we have seen, an enigma is a saying that in its saying says something other as this something other withdraws. It is never graspable, it stays out of reach. It is essentially undisclosable, but this is never disclosed as such; this disclosure has already withdrawn. It disguises itself. Enigma is a form of disguise, a mask, misdirection. It is a disguised saying. Is this to say, then, that art is always disguised in the work of art and that this disguise is impenetrable, in which case it is no longer seen as disguise? Is the enigma of art the fact that the work of art disguises art, without actually appearing as disguise?

This double concealment accounts for the strangeness of truth, what Bruns calls its estrangement: 'The otherness of truth is not merely an accidental divergence from essence, an error or mistake or falsehood. It is rather that truth itself is inscribed by a rift that splits it, so to say, lengthwise, joining the familiar and the strange, openness and refusal, clearing and dissembling, unconcealedness and withdrawal, darkness and

---

<sup>66</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.30/p.41.

light.’<sup>67</sup> There is something alien, or alienating, about truth whose essence is ruled by this twofold concealment, this denial, Heidegger calls it. This alienating effect is captured by Heidegger’s statement that the essence of truth is un-truth [*Un-wahrheit*]. If the hyphen doesn’t put us on our guard and alert us to the fact that we – as Bruns points out – shouldn’t take this statement as a propositional one, then Heidegger himself makes this clear: ‘We put it this way emphatically to indicate, with a perhaps off-putting directness, that refusal in the mode of concealing is intrinsic to unconcealment as clearing. On the other hand, the sentence “the essence of truth is un-truth” should not be taken to claim that truth, fundamentally, is falsehood. Equally little does it mean that truth is never itself but, dialectically represented, is always its opposite as well.’<sup>68</sup> Truth is never a simple opposition, nor is it a dialectical movement. Truth can only come forth as itself because the clearing that enables this to happen finds its origin in the concealing denial of *Versagen*, refusal. World is opened up by earth as refusal. *Verstellen*, obstruction, brings in the possibility of error because beings can be covered over. To be in the truth is to be capable of being wrong, of transgressing: ‘To the open belongs a world and the earth. But world is not simply the open which corresponds to the clearing, earth is not simply the closed that corresponds to concealment. World, rather, is the clearing of the paths of the essential directives with which every decision complies. Every decision, however, is grounded in something that cannot be mastered, something concealed, something disconcerting. Otherwise it would never be a decision. Earth is not simply the closed but that which rises up as self-closing.’<sup>69</sup> Truth happens only by establishing itself in the strife and space it itself opens up. In a sense, therefore, truth has already happened prior to its being established [*Einrichtung*]. This establishing is a kind of setting up into the one – the *Ein* of *Einrichtung*, which recalls the unity [*Einheit*] of the strife of world and earth. This is not to say that truth somehow exists elsewhere, among the stars as Heidegger frames it, for human beings to grasp it. It is the openness of beings that allows the place, enables the possibility of a somewhere. The clearing of the openness and establishment in the open belong together. This is the essence of the happening of truth, its historicity, says Heidegger.

---

<sup>67</sup> Bruns, *Heidegger’s Estrangements*, p.34.

<sup>68</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.31/p.41.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* p.31/p.42.

The work of art is one of the sites privileged by Heidegger for the happening of truth. But how does truth happen in the work of art? Truth is established in it through the bringing forth of a unique being, a unique happening or event: 'The establishment of truth in the work is the bringing forth of a being of a kind which never was before and never will be again.'<sup>70</sup> This being is brought into the open in a way that what is to be brought forth – the work of art – opens up the open into which it comes forth. The time, the place, necessary for any work of art to be brought forth is opened up by the work of art. For there to be a bringing forth, there has to be an open but this open can only be on the basis of a bringing forth. Each can only be on the basis of the other. Perhaps the musical analogy is again operative here. A fugue comes forth on the basis of its theme and countertheme, its countersubject. The theme could not be a theme without its countertheme. In a way, it is dependent on the latter as it only emerges as theme in the light of the countertheme. The same goes for the countertheme. It would not be what it is without the theme and the fugue could not come into its own without the play of theme and countertheme. Truth, as theme, could not be truth without the countertheme of untruth, world could not be world without earth. Thinking of truth in these musical terms also highlights something about the temporal structure. The theme only comes to be recognised as theme after the fact. By bringing in the countertheme we recognise the theme but only after it has happened. This movement of theme and countertheme, of counterpoint, is one in which each of them calls forth the other into their fullness, a call and response, wherein the call is first heard in the response and the response is only heard through the call. The being can only be on the basis of the open and the open on the basis of the being. A work of art is a work only on the basis that, in the bringing forth of the work of art, truth, as the openness of beings, is brought forth. This is what Heidegger calls creation [*Schaffen*]. Creation is the bringing forth of the openness of beings in a unique being and brings truth to happen in the work of art.

The work of art announces the fact that it is, claims Heidegger. The thrust that this work is and the unceasingness of this thrust constitute the constancy [*Beständigkeit*] of the

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p.37/p.50.

self-subsistence of the work. This thrust is the ‘that’ of createdness at its most pure. Any inquiry into the work’s self-subsistence [*Insichstehen*] has to take into account the fact that the work is as something worked, he says. Its reality [*Wirklichkeit*], its workly character, is dependent on the work of the artist, on the fact that it is produced by the artist. Heidegger makes a distinction between that which is made (i.e. by the craftsman) and that which is created by the artist. But this createdness is not determined by the creative activity of the artist but by the work itself. Creation is the allowing of something to come forth in what has been brought forth. This is a redefinition of the meaning of creation. For Heidegger it is not the artist’s creativity that is at issue, but the fact that it is his work – and for Heidegger it is probably always a ‘he’ – that allows the createdness of the work of art to shine forth. Creation is not a matter of someone putting something together to create a work of art, but something that inheres in the work itself. It is not a subjective activity, although this is not to deny that the artist does, indeed, produce something. It is that the essence of creation, or createdness, is in the work and it is the work that determines this createdness. In this movement of coming forth and bringing forth, creation or createdness, explains Heidegger, is a receiving [*Empfangen*] and a taking [*Entnehmen*], within the attraction [*Bezug*] towards unconcealment. Creation, therefore, is not so much an active doing, but more of a passive receptivity and acceptance. *Empfangen* means to receive, but it also means to greet or welcome. Creation is a welcoming receiving. *Entnehmen* means to take, with the movement being a taking out of, or from, a kind of removal or withdrawal, but still a taking on in that in removing or withdrawing, there is an acceptance of responsibility for what is being taken.

There are two essential determinations for createdness, says Heidegger. One is the curious notion of the *Riss*, which means both rift and tear, sketch and plan. The second is that createdness is explicitly created into what is created as creation arises out of the work. The notion of *Riss* has already been touched upon earlier in this chapter. It is that which brings together, while holding apart, the agon of world and earth. It is not a mere chasm, says Heidegger, rather it is that which figures the mutual dependency of the agonists. It is a unity, but not a unity that merely unites. The *Riss*, in being brought forth,

is entrusted back into the earth, into the paint of the painting, the stone of the sculpture or the wood of the carving, says Heidegger. Fynsk puts it like this: ‘The conflictual relation of world and earth, then, is traced out in the *Riss*, which, in turn, is fixed in place and set up in the work in figure or shape (*Gestalt*).’<sup>71</sup> It is a double movement in that the *Riss* both opens up the conflict and is set into this opening by the earth as it emerges in relation to the world. The *Riss*, says Fynsk, is not something that is either posited or presented by the work: ‘It is...unpresentable, for it is no thing that is. It appears only, and can only be...in the movement of repetition by which it is drawn out in the work’s setting forth of the earth...The work’s form essentially retraces this opening tracing that makes possible any delimiting form.’<sup>72</sup> Nor is it something that acts as a ground, says Bruns. He claims that the *Riss* is not something that we can finally make sense of. It is, he says, ‘a radically heterogeneous notion, a singular word, best understood as a parody of the concept of deep or basic structure’ and that it should not be idealised and converted ‘into a hidden unifying principle, as if beneath earth and world there were a transcendental ground or ultimate foundation’.<sup>73</sup> It is, perhaps, a letting-go of the ground, he concludes. What happens to art, Bruns asks, if the tradition is thought of as rift rather than ground? He answers: ‘Here it would not be enough to think of tradition as an allegorical process that integrates the other into an edifice of the same, say, a vast typological master narrative; it would also have to be thought of as a satirical process in which the other is encountered in its otherness as a radical difference, a singularity, a refusal of typology, a questioning of self-identity, a resistance to interpretation, an unsilenceable questioning.’<sup>74</sup>

As we have just seen, creation is a form of receptivity, an assumption, in the sense of taking possession of something, which is also a form of responsibility, and this ties in with Heidegger’s assertion that the work of art is not certified as such because it has been made by an artist: ‘That createdness stands forth out of the work does not mean

---

<sup>71</sup> Fynsk, *Heidegger Thought and Historicity*, p.144.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.144-145.

<sup>73</sup> Bruns, *Heidegger’s Estrangements*, p.31.

<sup>74</sup> Gerald L. Bruns, *Hermeneutics Ancient & Modern*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1992, p.208.

that it should be a salient feature of the work that it is made by a great artist.’<sup>75</sup> It is not that ‘*N.N fecit*’, Heidegger says, but ‘*factum est*’. It is not that *he made this* but that *it was made*. Heidegger likens creation to fetching or getting [*holen*], to the extent that all creation is a *Schöpfen*, which is translated as fetching, but also has an old meaning of create, as *schaffen*, in terms of creating a work of art. A *Schöpfer* is a creator, but it can also refer to God as creator. Generally, Heidegger uses *holen* for fetch or *bringen* for bring but uses *Schöpfen* in relation to creation in this sentence: ‘Because it is such a fetching-forth [*holen*], all creation is a fetching [*Schöpfen*], as in fetching [*holen*] water from a spring [*Quelle*].’<sup>76</sup> Clearly Heidegger wanted to underscore, or to give validity to, his notion of creation as a form of fetching by bringing in the term *Schöpfen*, with its old meaning of artistic creation, although *schöpfen* now means to draw, take or summon. Creation, then, comes not from the artist but from somewhere other. This being made, the *factum est*, is what is announced by the work of art. This ‘that’ of being-created signifies ‘that an unconcealment of beings has happened here and, as this happening, happens here for the first time; or this, that this work *is* rather than is not. The thrust that the work, as this work, is and the unceasingness of this inconspicuous thrust constitute the constancy of the self-subsistence of the work. Precisely where the artist and the process and circumstances of the work’s coming into being remain unknown, this thrust, this “that” of createdness, steps into view at its purest from the work’.<sup>77</sup> This passage has a number of important implications, as far as gaining an understanding of what is meant when Heidegger calls art an enigma. The fact that the work is means that truth happens in the work of art. But it is not a simple happening. In fact, truth happens only as having happened. In coming to the fact of truth we are already too late, it is already past. Truth speaks, but only as having spoken.

In his own meditations on the enigma, Levinas writes that what ‘is essential here is the way a meaning that is beyond meaning is inserted in the meaning that remains in an order, the way it advances while retreating’.<sup>78</sup> While Levinas would no doubt dispute

---

<sup>75</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.39/p.52.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p.48/p.63.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p.39/p.53. Heidegger’s emphasis.

<sup>78</sup> Levinas, ‘Phenomenon and Enigma’ p.66/p.291.

that this formula can be applied to Heidegger's thinking here, it does seem to me to capture something essential about what is being said about art and the work of art. Because truth has already happened, it could be said to be retreating while it advances as happening here for the first time. The non-recuperability of the having-happened of truth is underlined further by Heidegger when he talks about the coming together of the artist and the process and circumstances of the work's coming into being. The point where these three aspects of the work of art come together to produce the that of createdness is unknown, says Heidegger, and remains unknown [*unbekannt bleiben*]. The that of the work of art emerges out of unknowability, it is beyond cognition. What is more, it is in this unknowability, in this having-happened, where the work of art finds its self-subsistence, its *Insichruhen*. The repose, the composure, of the work of art rests in the unknown and in an irrecuperable past. Do we glimpse the enigma here? I want to quote from Levinas again, because it seems to me that he gets very close to what is happening in 'The Origin', although Levinas would not accept the point I'm making here. It is quite clear that in this essay, 'Phenomenon and Enigma', Levinas has a certain contempt for Heidegger's thought of being, even though he isn't referred to by name. In the run-up to the extract I quote, he likens being to a game of blind-man's buff where the call of presence penetrates even through the blindfold. He then goes on to say: 'But what in an enigma has signifyingness does not take refuge in a sphere that is present in its own way and awaits a concept capable of finding it and grasping it there. The signifyingness of an enigma comes from an irreversible, irrecuperable past which it has *perhaps* not left since it has already been absent from the very terms in which it was signalled ("perhaps" is the modality of an enigma, irreducible to the modalities of being and certainty).'<sup>79</sup> If art is an enigma, as it has been described here, then art is not there in a way that it can be found and grasped in a concept. It is, perhaps, already absent from the terms in which it is set up.

Creation, or createdness, is one aspect of the happening of truth in the work of art. The 'work cannot be without being created',<sup>80</sup> but nor can it come into being without

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p.71/p.298 Levinas's emphasis.

<sup>80</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.40/p.54.

preservers [*Bewahrenden*]. The relation of preservation to truth [*Wahrheit*] is clearly signalled by Heidegger's use of *Bewahrung* so that the preservers of the work of art stand in relation to truth. As with createdness, preservation is not to be seen as something that has been achieved, or as the action of a knowing subject that sets itself objectives and pursues them. Preservation is a form of passivity in that it is an allowing to be [*sein lassen*]. Who are the preservers? The preservers are human beings, but in our relation to the work of art we are not to be seen as an audience, as spectators who represent the art object to ourselves. This relation is not something that can be brought into the experience [*Erlebnis*] of a knowing subject, where knowing is merely ideas and opinions about something. For Heidegger, knowing is a willing and willing is a knowing, but this knowing is a form of passive allowing in which the human being [*Mensch*] lets himself stand out into the unconcealment of beings, an opening out into being, a letting-being-happen. What is preservation? It is, says Heidegger, the passive allowing [*lassen*] of a work of art to be a work. But in this passivity, a certain displacement takes place. We are taken out of where we are and transported somewhere other. The more that the non-violent thrust of the work of art proclaims that this work is, as this work, the more it is transported into the openness of beings, which it itself opened up, the more human beings are carried into the openness, says Heidegger. In being carried into this openness, the more we are taken out of the realm of the ordinary [*Gewöhnlichen*], the more we are thrust into the extraordinary [*Ungeheure*]. All familiar relations [*gewohnten Bezüge*] to world and earth are changed. As the work of art is thrust into the extraordinary, the 'more purely it seems to sever all ties [*Bezüge*] to human beings',<sup>81</sup> but, at the same time, it also seems to be most in need of human beings in terms of its preservation. The more solitary the work, the more it seems to stand in itself, the more it is a step into the open where it is preserved by the preservers. What they do is allow the work to be what it is for the first time. This means that preservation is a letting-happen of the happening of truth. But, as we have already seen, truth happens in the work as having happened: 'The work thrusts forth not the "truth" itself but rather the fact that truth has happened and happens in the work as having happened.'<sup>82</sup> This is

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Fynsk, *Heidegger Thought and Historicity*, p.135.

the createdness of the work of art and it is the createdness that the preservers preserve. We, as preservers, allow this createdness to happen in the work, we let truth happen as having happened. But if truth happens in the work of art as having already happened through createdness, what is the relation to truth that the preservers have? Is it an experience that is only experienced in its recollection? Heidegger says that preservation ‘does not individualize human beings down to their experiences but rather, brings them into a belonging [*Zugehörigkeit*] to the truth that happens in the work.’<sup>83</sup> But what is belonging when what it belongs to only happens as already having happened? Is there not a double displacement here, the displacement of createdness and then of preservation? Perhaps preservation brings us into proximity to the happening of truth, into proximity with the work art, while at the same time art itself remains oblique and the enigma of art is this obliquity, which is neither a naming or a calling. The knowing as willing that preservation is ‘does not take the work out of its self-subsistence’<sup>84</sup> and, as we have seen, this self-subsistence is the point at which art remains unknowable.

The way I have described preservation so far suggests that it is a simple passivity in the face of the work of art. This is to miss a fundamental aspect of what is at stake in preservation and this aspect is delimited by a certain semantic field around transportation. The work is transported [*entrückt*] into the openness of beings and at the same time it carries [*rückt*] us into the openness. Transport is a form of displacement [*Verrückung*], but it is more than a simple displacement. *Entrückt* can also mean enraptured, being transported into a form of ecstasy, to be rapt or lost in reverie, while *verrücken* can mean to disarrange and *verrückt* insane. How far is the rapture, the derangement, here from the rapture [*Entrückung*] that occurs in *Being and Time* in the *Augenblick* where ‘Dasein is carried away to whatever possibilities and circumstances are encountered in the Situation’?<sup>85</sup> This is what Heidegger calls the authentic present, where for the first time the human being, or Dasein, can encounter beings and be the being that it is. Can one ignore these meanings here? The proximity to a sense of

---

<sup>83</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.41/p.55.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford UK and Cambridge USA, Blackwell, 1962, p.387. *Sein und Zeit*, Siebzehnte Auflage, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993, p.338.

derangement, or a derangement of the senses, is very real here and I think that it is a proximity that Heidegger wants us to hear. After all, Heidegger could have used a number of words – *tragen* for instance – if he merely wanted to convey the idea of transport. What he wants to convey, it seems to me, is that there is a certain derangement involved with the notion of preservation, not only a derangement of the preservers, but also a derangement of aesthetics. The notion that a work of art transports its audience somewhere else is not a new one, nor is it one that has yet run its course – Vladimir Nabokov writes of ‘aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art...is the norm’<sup>86</sup> – but here Heidegger is not using it to suggest that the preservers are in some form of aesthetic rapture but that they have been displaced out of all reference to the familiar. It also suggests that preservation is entirely displaced from aesthetic appreciation. The thrust into the extraordinary is lost once it has been brought into the familiar which is precisely what aesthetic appreciation – as connoisseurship – and the art business do. This derangement takes us out of the usual and into the unfamiliar, swapping all ‘doing and prizing, knowing and looking’ for a dwelling [*verweilen*] ‘within the truth that is happening in the work of art’.<sup>87</sup> Although *verweilen* is translated as dwelling here, I think that a distinction needs to be made between this term and *wohnen*, which is often translated as dwelling in Heidegger’s work. *Verweilen* indicates more of a lingering, a tarrying or resting in a place, rather than a permanent dwelling. I think that we can see in these two responses to art – those of aesthetics and preservation – an echo of the terminology of *Being and Time* where Heidegger talks of authentic and inauthentic modes of being, where aesthetics is the inauthentic and preservation the authentic.

Art is the creative preservation of truth in the work, says Heidegger. All art is poetry, he continues, and poetry is the saying of the unconcealment of beings. Poetry’s essence is the founding [*Stiftung*] of truth and this founding works in a threefold manner as bestowing, grounding and beginning but these only become actual [*wirklich*] in preserving. Art is an origin in the sense that it allows something to arise. Art is ‘a

---

<sup>86</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel Jr, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1993, pp. 314-15.

<sup>87</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p.40/p54.

distinctive way in which truth comes into being, becomes, that is, historical'.<sup>88</sup> It is this idea of art as the origin of the work of art, of the artist and the preservers, that William McNeill claims Heidegger names as the enigma of art. McNeill says that the enigma of art is synonymous with the enigma of the world. This is not to say that there is something puzzling or enigmatic about the world but that it is 'nothing more and nothing less than the enigma that the world itself is'.<sup>89</sup> This enigma is 'the unmediated coming to pass of a world epoch from out of unconcealment, this event whereby a world begins'.<sup>90</sup> In this, art as origin is 'a letting-emerge, a letting-arrive that lets that which is to come – the work itself – come into being only as something that, at the very moment of its coming, of its arrival, has always already been'.<sup>91</sup> We can see this movement in McNeill's *The Glance of the Eye*, where he describes the temple from Heidegger's essay as 'the site and institution of an enigma',<sup>92</sup> in which the divine presence is enclosed and contained and where the enigmatic presencing of the god bestows on this temple its particular being. Here people come together in a historical community that arises out of the presencing of the divine. But the enigma always remains: 'The temple is the sacred site of a promise, of something that appears in concealing itself, of something that, as thus apparent in its enigmatic concealment, is yet to come.'<sup>93</sup> In the work of art, then, is the possibility of human praxis as such wherein 'the opening projection of a certain configuration of possibility, the antecedent delineation of a world as the horizon from out of which human beings first come to themselves, first approach and see themselves in terms of certain possibilities that already call or beckon them, configuring their calling or vocation. It is important to note here in passing that this first coming of humans to themselves is already a second coming, a coming back or return, a retrieval of having-been. This...is precisely the temporality of the work of art as origin'.<sup>94</sup>

This captures the temporal movement I have discussed above, in terms of world and earth and the happening of truth, but in identifying the enigma of art with the opening of

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.p.49/p.66.

<sup>89</sup> William McNeill, [www.desphilosophy.com/dpp/dpp\\_journal/paper2a/body.html](http://www.desphilosophy.com/dpp/dpp_journal/paper2a/body.html), p2. Accessed 2007.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p.8.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p.15

<sup>92</sup> McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye*, p.283.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> McNeill, [www.desphilosophy.com/dpp/dpp\\_journal/paper2a/body.html](http://www.desphilosophy.com/dpp/dpp_journal/paper2a/body.html), p.10.

the world, does something go missing? Does not art disappear? While human beings might retrieve their having-been, can the same be said of art? McNeill says that it is the temporality of the *work* of art that corresponds to the coming of humans to themselves in a retrieval of having-been. What is the temporality of *art*? Is it the same as the work of art or does the notion of the enigma of art introduce an anteriority, a temporality prior to the work? At the opening of 'The Origin' Heidegger had said that it must remain open whether and how there is art at all but he had no doubt that art genuinely prevails [*wirklich waltet*] in the work of art. Art has its own reality in the work, it is actual and holds sway, is the power over the work of art. In the *Zusatz*, written twenty years after 'The Origin', Heidegger claims that the nature of art, what it might be, is not one of the questions for which the essay offers an answer. It should also be recalled that at the very moment the 'that' of createdness comes into view in its most pure form in the work, that this is the point where the artist and the process and circumstances of the work's coming to being remain unknown. Art remains something that is unknown, that can never be grasped, that can never be brought into a concept. The work of art is art's residue, it remains, but it is a remainder without a trace, or a resonance of art. It is without this trace of art precisely because it has to remain open whether there is anything such as art at all. Is it the case that the enigma of art is the failure of art to appear as such, that each work of art marks this failure and that art itself can never be retrieved from its having-been because it is a black hole out of which nothing shines? Is saying that art is always already the past, that it is irretrievable, saying that art can never be the historical opening of a people that Heidegger claims it to be, that art, rather than being an origin, is the pre-originary, the condition and limit of the work of art but which itself does not appear? Is it possible to apprehend art as something present?

It is this last question, whether it is possible to perceive art as something present, that the question of the enigma of art is directed towards. It seems to me that there is a tension in 'The Origin' between the idea that art presences in the work of art and whether there is anything such as art at all, a tension between art as origin and art as pre-originary. This tension is encapsulated in the notion that art is an enigma. Art, says Heidegger, 'arises [*erspringt*] as the founding preservation of the truth of beings in the work. To allow

something to arise, to bring something into being from out of the essential source in the in the founding leap [*Sprung*] is what is meant by the word “origin [*Ursprung*]”<sup>95</sup> Art can be the origin of the work of art because, in its very nature, in its essence, art is an origin. But Heidegger also says that it must remain open whether and how there is art at all. The temporality at work in the enigma seems, on the face of it, to mirror the temporality of truth as it strifes through world and earth. The temporality of truth is a happening in which truth happens as having already happened. But truth does happen, a world does open up out of unconcealment, even if what opens up can never finally, definitively be brought to unconcealment. There is always the self-closing of earth but even this self-closing is an arising. The enigma has been discussed in terms of both a promise and a disguise. It was said of the promise that it promised a solution to the enigma but that this promise had already been withdrawn and that the promise appears, if it can be said to appear, only in this withdrawal. With disguise, it was said that disguise cannot appear as disguise because to do so would be to be seen through and therefore not to be disguise at all. Is it the case, then, that art never appears as such and that the enigma of art is this non-appearance? Is the work of art the place that art vacates and, if so, what happens in this vacated place?

---

<sup>95</sup> Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, pp.49/pp.65-66.

## Chapter 2

### The enigma of the river

In 'The Origin of the Work of Art' the word enigma is mentioned four times and then seemingly only as an afterthought in one short paragraph in an Afterword whose date of writing is unknown but which falls between 1935 and the essay's publication in book form twenty years later. In this retrospective glance at the essay, Heidegger hints at something fundamental about the enigma. The naming of the enigma of art only appears after the fact of art, after its happening. Whether the enigma genuinely appears in art is a question that still remains open. Heidegger himself says that the essay itself does not claim to be a solution to this enigma. The task is to see the enigma, not just in terms of art, but also in terms of being. This task is further ramified in a series of lectures that Heidegger gave on Hölderlin's river poem 'The Ister'. The lectures, delivered in 1942, were published in Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* in 1984. In a passage that follows his own definition of *Rätsel*, Heidegger claims that we should not wish to solve the enigma. One of the terms he uses is *dürfen* which carries with it the sense of allowance, of permission, so in a way we are being prohibited [*wir dürfen es nicht*] from wanting to solve the enigma. As to where this prohibition comes from, Heidegger does not specify. Perhaps it is the enigma itself which is its own prohibition. He also says, in a phrase that both echoes, and goes further than, the afterword to 'The Origin', that 'we must try to bring the enigma as enigma closer to us'<sup>1</sup>, which suggests that 'we' already stand in a relation of nearness to the enigma but that this relation involves a distance which needs to be overcome. It is an imperative upon us, a kind of demand that we cannot refuse. The enigma involves a prohibitive and imperative movement, both demand and refusal. Two other things need to be mentioned here. This passage in the lectures is not the first place that the enigma has been named. The other is that *lösen*, to solve, is wrapped around

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, translated by William McNeill and Julia Davis, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1996, p.35. *Gesamtausgabe II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1923-1944, Band 53, Hölderlins Hymn "Der Ister"*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1984, p.41.

with quotation marks, as if Heidegger wanted to abstract it from its ordinary sense, to put it into question, as if the solution was suspended.

Heidegger's use of *Rätsel* culminates in naming the river as an enigma. But in this bald saying, the word *Rätsel* is put into quotation marks. Before this citation it had come without such accessories, such as: *Das Tun des Stromes ist ein Rätsel*. What the river does, its activity, is an enigma. Why, just at the point that Heidegger is to give us his concept of enigma and, he claims, Hölderlin's as well, does he gather quotation marks around the term? Does this use of quotation marks serve as a kind of doubling, a desire to 'designate something other which resembles it, and of which it is, as it were, the metaphysical ghost',<sup>2</sup> as Derrida claims of Heidegger's use of quotation marks around *Geist*? Is it a way of suspending it, of abstracting it from the ordinary? Certainly he seems to want to move *Rätsel* away from its usual meaning and return it to a meaning which he considers older, more original [*ursprünglich*] and more proper or authentic [*eigentlich*]. Heidegger's claim is that the original meaning of *Rätsel* is akin to *raten*, that is to give counsel or advice, and that it is a caring reflection or thinking about a cared-for hiddenness: '*dem sorgenden Nachdenken umsorgte Verborgene*.'<sup>3</sup> This appeal to a kind of etymological truth in which the origin of a word usurps that word's usual meaning is a familiar strategy in Heidegger's thinking. The authority of the origin overrules the word's accepted meaning and its derivation is a falling off from its more authentic meaning, perhaps akin to the degeneration that characterises any springing-from [*entspringen*] as Heidegger wrote in *Being and Time*: 'The ontological source of Dasein's Being is not 'inferior' to what springs from it, but towers above it in power from the outset; in the field of ontology, any 'springing-from' is degeneration.'<sup>4</sup> Heidegger does acknowledge that *Rätsel* as *Kreuzworträtsel* may point to a deeper meaning than the latter word would imply, but this meaning as puzzle is not one that particularly concerns Heidegger, nor does he specify whether this deeper meaning is a

---

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit*, translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1989, p.24.

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.34/p.40.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, Oxford UK and Cambridge USA, Blackwell, 1962, p.383. *Sein und Zeit*, Siebzehnte Auflage, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993, p.334.

deepening of the meaning in terms of riddle or of counsel. It is true that *Rätsel* derives from *raten*, which comes from the Old High German term *ratān* and that it does mean to advise or to give counsel. It is also cognate with words from which the English *read* is derived, such as the old English *raedan*, which meant to advise, counsel, persuade, consult and decide. So there is something to be said for trying to bring back the meaning of counsel to *Rätsel* in the sense that the derivation from *raten* is accepted etymologically. Heidegger might say that it is a return to what is unthought in the thought of *Rätsel*. But why should a word's supposed original meaning have priority in this manner? Did the word *Rätsel* ever have the meaning that Heidegger wishes to ascribe to it in his lectures on 'The Ister' or is it a meaning that was never actually present to the word itself? If we accept Heidegger's assertion here, however, what can be said about giving counsel, what does to give counsel mean? How does Heidegger's demand that we read *Rätsel* in this old and originary, but new, way affect the meaning that was given to the enigma in chapter one? These questions can only be answered by being attentive to what is at stake in counselling [*raten*] or giving counsel [*Rat geben*].

Heidegger does not really address what giving counsel means, in the sense that he leaves the question of its structure open. In order to understand what is at stake, we need to examine this structure. To counsel is an orientation towards the future through a thinking about the past that is given in the moment; there is a clear tripartite temporal structure. But in thinking towards the future, there is always already a leaving open, it is never a definitive fore-telling, rather it is a saying into the future that can never predetermine itself as actual. Its actuality is never given at the time of the counsel, it can only come after the fact. It is an offering made in hope, in a radical indetermination. Giving counsel is a having-already-been being-ahead-of-oneself towards the other, towards the one to whom counsel is given. Counsel is always a conjecture, a throwing together, an intimation directed towards what is coming from out of what has been. As a conjectural moment, its validity is always indeterminable, that is its truth can never be given in the moment of the saying – giving counsel is never a form of ordering, says Heidegger - and its truth or otherwise can only be acknowledged after the fact. It is a saying which is always addressed to someone but which speaks into what is yet to come, precisely

because it is never binding on the addressee. After all, the addressee can ignore the advice but, in a way, this very act of ignoring is also a way of taking on the counsel, even if the taking on is a rejection. What is to come still remains open. It is never an answer, a definitive statement about that which is, because it is always on the way. It is a setting forth into language that is neither prescriptive nor is it the law. Giving counsel is to put oneself at the disposal of the other, because it is an act that is unreciprocated. It is not an exchange, it is an act of generosity, in a movement that is a demand from the other towards the self which then gives itself up to the other in an asymmetrical act.

This renaming of the enigma as counsel is the first move that Heidegger makes with regard to a re-orientation of the meaning of enigma, although in this re-orientation the counselling is still done from out of that which remains hidden. The enigma refers to something concealed, says Heidegger. There is a certain guardedness, something is withheld or kept back. The second move is to equate counsel [*Rat*] to care [*Sorge*]: ‘“*Rat*” heißt so viel wie “*Sorge*.”’ Counsel means as much as care, says Heidegger, and giving counsel [*Rat geben*] properly [*eigentlich*] means ‘to take into care, to retain therein that which we care about, and thus to ground our belonging to it’.<sup>5</sup> That is we ground our belonging to that which we take into care. But, as Heidegger acknowledges, giving counsel can also mean the opposite, i.e. giving an order and then leaving. It is merely an order or practical advice without any notion of care being attached to it. But the notion of utility is not the meaning that Heidegger wishes to be attached to it here. He merely raises it as a kind of counterpoint to the deeper, more original meaning that he wants us to hear in *Rätsel*. Whether there is a necessary connection between care and counsel is a question that remains open. Certainly Heidegger makes no connection between the two other than the assertion that counsel is equivalent to care. There is nothing in what he says that necessarily links the two, although the fact that counsel is given, that it is a gift, is suggestive of a relation that goes beyond mere utility.

In trying to determine the full force that Heidegger wishes to give to counsel, and to determine whether counsel says as much as care, there is a need to clarify what

---

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.34/p.41.

Heidegger means by care. The term that Heidegger uses is *Sorge*, which played an important role in *Being and Time*. *Sorge* indicates ‘the anxiety, worry arising out of apprehensions concerning the future and refers as much to the external cause as the inner state’,<sup>6</sup> and is differentiated from meanings such as caring for the sick [*Pflege*], care as supervision or responsibility [*Aufsicht*] and care as loving care or solicitude. Care [*Sorge*] is described in *Being and Time* essentially as being-in-the-world.<sup>7</sup> It is used to delimit Dasein’s ontological structural whole as a threefold unity of being-ahead-of-itself, being-already-in and being-alongside. According to Heidegger, it is not to be identified with the isolated attitude that the subject has towards itself because the self is always already care because it has already been characterised ontologically by being-ahead-of-itself. Care for oneself would be a tautology, says Heidegger, and it is only because Dasein is care that concern for others can be shown. Care is a tripartite temporal structure in which the three parts are jointly posited and belong together. Dasein, in being always already care, is an originary [*ursprünglich*] totality and care lies before any factual attitude or intuition of Dasein. This Dasein-centric thought of care is modified in later work.

In the *Beiträge*, for example, Heidegger writes that awe [*Scheu*], in its sense of *Ehrfurcht*, respect and reverence, is the way of becoming near and remaining in the nearness to what is most remote. This awe is ‘the opening of the simplicity and greatness of beings and the originally needed necessity of sheltering the truth of be-ing in beings’ which is what gives historical man a goal, namely becoming the founder [*Gründer*] and preserver [*Wahrer*] of the truth of being [*Seyn*] and to be the *Da* (there/here) that is the ground used by *das Wesen des Seyns*, translated as ‘be-ing’s essential sway’. This, for Heidegger, is to be care, not ‘as a minor concern with some arbitrary thing, nor as denial of exultation and power, but more originally [*ursprünglicher*] than that’, a care that is “‘for the sake of be-ing [*Seyn*]” – not the be-ing of man, but the be-ing of beings in the

---

<sup>6</sup> R.B. Farrell, *Dictionary of German Synonyms*, Third Edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p.56.

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp.235-241/pp.191-196.

whole'.<sup>8</sup> What care means as Dasein's basic trait [*Grundzug*] is summed up in three words – *Sucher*, *Wahrer*, *Wächter* – which mean respectively seeker or searcher, one who looks for, preserver, one who protects and preserves, and guardian or watchman, one who keeps an eye out. Care then is an attentive looking-out-for that looks-after, protects and preserves. To be the *Da* is to be care. *Da* in its *Wesen* needs to be taken over in a being, Dasein, which becomes the in-between between being [*Seyn*] and a being. In the *Da*, there is a kind of rift, conflict or gulf [*Zwiespältigkeit*] which Heidegger identifies as 'the inabiding sustaining of the essential swaying of the truth of be-ing [*das inständliche Ausstehen der Wesung der Wahrheit des Seyns*]'.<sup>9</sup> But there seems to be a lot more going on in this phrase. *Inständliche* includes meanings of maintaining, while *Ausstehen* is the nominalisation of a verb that transitively means to endure and intransitively means to be still to come, or appear and, of a solution, still to be found. It has a future orientation and a sense of the unknown which is important because, in this short passage from the *Beiträge*, Heidegger identifies the *Zwiespältigkeit* as a *Rätsel*, an enigma. It is through the truth of being [*Seyn*] that human beings are claimed originally and otherwise and thereby named as guardians of the truth of being, with human-being as care grounded in Dasein. Human being as the ground of the Dasein that is care has a triple function as the seeker of be-ing [*Seyn*], identified as *Ereignis*, the preserver of the truth of being and 'the guardian of the stillness of the passing of the last god'.<sup>10</sup> In each of the manifestations briefly described here, care is a tripartite structure which equates to the temporal modes of past, present and future. For example, *Sucher* is the future, *Wahrer* the past and *Wächter* the present. To what extent does giving counsel fit here? Giving counsel, as described, is a future-oriented saying given from out of the past in the conjectural moment. But it is also a moment in which the counsel given is at the disposal or the demand of the other. The act of giving counsel is an act that is unreciprocated and asymmetrical. It does not operate under the law of exchange but as an openness that remains open.

---

<sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1999 p.12. *Gesamtausgabe III. Abteilung: Unveröffentlichte Adhandlungen Band 65, Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1989, p.16. Heidegger's emphasis

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.240/p.342.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.208/p.294.

Does this radical openness, an openness that is constitutive of the enigma as outlined in the first chapter, fit with the meaning that Heidegger wants to give to *Rätsel*? Is Heidegger's definition compatible with the definition offered in the first chapter or are there grounds for saying that the definition given in this thesis says something essential about Heidegger's own? The whole force of Heidegger's argument rests entirely on a claim to etymological truth, a claim that insists it can necessarily demarcate and delimit the meaning of a word. The origin of words is hybrid and it is hard to see how this hybridity cannot begin to disturb the absolute meaning that Heidegger wants to give any particular word. In the case of *Rätsel* there is nothing to stop other meanings coming back to haunt his reconfiguration of the meaning of counsel as care. *Raten*, for example, also means to guess or conjecture – it is linked with *erraten* which means to guess, and which Heidegger equates with taking a leap without question in *Nietzsche* – and guessing is not the same as counselling. What guessing does have though is the same structural direction towards the future. Nor can we just ignore the fact of *Rätsel*'s meaning as riddle or enigma. All these meanings destabilise Heidegger's meaning and they are perhaps like spectres that return – and Derrida has asked whether etymology and ghosts aren't really the same question – to haunt the more careful thinking [*sorgfältigeres Denken*] of *Rätsel* that Heidegger says he has hinted at here, a careful thinking that is aimed at bringing the enigma closer to us. This task is to be accomplished through a consideration of what Heidegger calls an unpoetic assertion [*undichterische Aussage*]: 'The river is the locality of journeying. The river is the journeying of locality.'<sup>11</sup> What does this assertion mean?

To answer this question, we need to return to Hölderlin's poem 'The Ister' and to Heidegger's lectures on it, which form an accompaniment [*Beigabe*]<sup>12</sup> to the poem. The poem opens with an invocation: 'Jetzt komme, Feuer! Now come fire.' This is a calling, but a calling that is doubled in that the call calls on that which is called, but which does

---

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.35/p.42.

<sup>12</sup> This accompaniment, this given-alongside, could be said to form a semantic network alongside the task [*Aufgabe*] of seeing the enigma. The *Aufgabe* of the Ister is to bring the enigma closer to us and it is through the *Beigabe* that we are meant to see this.

not effect its coming, and the ones doing the calling. That which is called, the fire or the coming day, comes of its own accord, says Heidegger. The call is not instrumental in effecting the coming of the day. The futility of such a call also says that the ones doing the calling are ready to receive the call. Within the call something else is conceded, he continues. Those who are ready to receive the call are so because they have been called by the coming fire itself and are called to call by the call of the coming fire. They are summoned to hear because they are already determined as such. They are of a vocation [*Bestimmung*] to hear. While *Bestimmung* is here translated as vocation it can also be translated as the determined, the decided or the destined. It has ‘the sense of inducing a person to a course of action’;<sup>13</sup> that is, those at whom it is directed are, in some sense, passive receivers of such an inducement. But *Stimme* also means voice and perhaps it is in the sense of being called by a voice that vocation is used here. Being determined involves being voiced as those to whom the call is to be heard as they give voice to the call. Those people who are called into their determination and readiness to be called are the called [*Berufenen*], according to Heidegger.

Those who call the coming fire are simultaneously called into their calling by the call of the coming fire: ‘The call says: we, the ones thus calling, are ready. And something else is also concealed in such calling out: we are ready and are so only because we are called by the coming fire itself.’<sup>14</sup> This suggests a certain circularity in the calling and being called, similar to that found in the circle of art, artist and artwork in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’. Readiness to call and be called can only come out of the ‘Now come, fire!’ says Heidegger. To be ready, however, suggests a degree of preparedness that cannot just be put down to a certain simultaneity. To be ready to take on a task, to be ready to undergo a trial, one has had to have already undergone the preparation for it. Is it possible for such a preparedness to spring forth fully formed at the moment of being called? Those who are of such a calling to hear the call have been called into this calling prior to the call of ‘Now come, fire!’ and if, as Heidegger claims, those of such a calling are the poets then these poets have always already been called into their calling prior to

---

<sup>13</sup> Farrell, *Dictionary of German Synonyms*, p.90.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.7/p.6.

the call. In order to recognise the call of the coming fire, and therefore to be ready for it, the poet has to be as already-being-ready, otherwise it would not be possible for the poet to call. This kind of readiness has to have been already decided upon prior to the call into readiness. They have to be of a calling to be called. The decision to be of such a calling is not one that can be brought into thinking here. It is prior to that. Prior to the Now's pronouncement, the ones pronouncing it have been called by the coming fire, but it is not the call that is named in the Now. In a sense, the Now that marks the opening of the poem is an echo of the fire's calling of the callers. This echo echoes that which is prior to the poem, a priority that is never brought into the language of the poem. The calling of the fire to the callers is only heard in the call to the fire. The Now points back to a time that is prior to the poem, a time that is never brought into the poem itself. The Now calls forth a time that has been, as Maurice Blanchot writes in another context, '[e]ffaced before being written. If the word trace can be admitted, it is as the mark that would indicate as erased what was, however, never traced. All our writing... would be this: the anxious search for what was never written in the present, but in a past to come.'<sup>15</sup>

The Now is the mark of an unmarked mark, a time that lies before the Now but that is never brought into the Now. Heidegger continues: 'The "Now" names the time of calling of those who are of a calling, a time of poets. Such a time is determined [*bestimmt*] from out of that which the poets [*Dichter*] are called upon to poetize [*dichten*] in their poetry [*Dichtung*].'<sup>16</sup> But if, as has already been argued, the poets have always already been called prior to this calling, a pre-originary calling perhaps, if their preparedness amounts to a prior calling, a calling that is prior to the poem, what is the status of this Now? And also, what is the status of this poetry? The naming of the time of the poets only happens after the fact of the poets having always already been called. The poets are called to poetize the Now which determines the time they are called to poetize in their poetry, according to Heidegger. The time of the poets is thus named in the poem. But if this Now is dependent on a prior time of the past, a past that cannot be brought

---

<sup>15</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, translated by Lycette Nelson, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992, p.17.

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.8/p.8.

into the Now, then the time of the poets has already gone before the Now without ever having been. As Simon Critchley writes, in his essay on the enigma and *Sein und Zeit*, what is named in saying now is always the experience of, what he calls, ‘an irredeemable past, a past that constitutes the present as having a delay with respect to itself. Now is not the now when I say ‘now’. My relation to the present is one where I am always trying – and failing – to catch up with myself’.<sup>17</sup> This, it seems to me, is where the poets are, always trying to catch up with themselves.

For Heidegger, however, poetizing determines the time of the poets. Heidegger asks what poetizing [*dichten*] is. The German term *dichten* can mean merely to write or compose, but is translated in the Ister lectures by the more overwrought term, poetize. Heidegger says that what *dichten* means is to write something down [*niederschreiben*], a *vor-sagen* of something to be written down. *Dichten* is a saying [*sagen*] of something that has not yet been told [*gesagt*], says Heidegger. In this poetic saying [*dichterisch Gesagten*], lies a proper [*eigener*] beginning. But does this – the telling of a not-yet-told tale – quite capture what is going on here? Everything seems to hinge on *vorsagen* which Heidegger hyphenates here, a strategy that he often uses to emphasise the constituent parts of a word to bring out their meanings as those constituent words. Normally *vorsagen* means to recite, which means to repeat something from memory, a kind of summons of what has already been. It is to repeat that which has already been composed. In the English translation of the Ister lectures, the hyphenated *vor-sagen* is translated as fore-tell so that *dichten* becomes a telling beforehand, a fore-saying, of that which is to be written down so that when Heidegger says that *dichten* means to write down he qualifies it by saying that it is a fore-telling of something to be written down. Poetizing involves a fore-telling and a writing down. The act of writing is not what constitutes *dichten* as such but the fore-telling that is constitutive of the writing down. The fore-telling is only discernible in the writing down and it only appears after the fact of the writing down and is experienced only in this recollection.

---

<sup>17</sup> Simon Critchley, ‘Enigma Variations: an Interpretation of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*’, *Ratio (new series)*, Blackwell Oxford, XV 2 June 2002, pp.154-175, p.174.

In his essay, 'Andenken', Heidegger writes that the foretelling [*voraussagende*] word is in a strict sense prophetic, not in any Judeo-Christian biblical sense - prophecy is not soothsaying and the poet is not a seer - but in the sense that it opens up a space for the holy: 'The holy which is foretold poetically merely opens the time for an appearing of the gods, and points into the location of the dwelling of historical man on this earth...the "prophetic" element of this poetry must be grasped in terms of the being of the prophetic foretelling.'<sup>18</sup> When Heidegger says that the foretelling word must be taken in the strict sense of prophetic he refers in the text to the Greek term προφητεύειν, which means interpreter of the gods, someone who is an intermediary between gods and men and gives wise counsel. In its strict sense, however, it is a speaking before, or a prior appearing, as the term derives from προ, meaning before, and φαίνω, which means to make clear, to come to light, and appear. The prophetic is literally a fore-saying, or fore-appearing, a thinking forward that thinks back, that in thinking forward has already thought back. An orientation towards what is coming can only come from out of what has already preceded it. Heidegger says that the poets can compose what is prior to their poetry only if they say that which precedes [*vorausgehen*] everything that is actual [*Wirklich*]. It is this prophetic movement that points [*weisen*] towards the historical place on earth of human beings. The prophetic is a gesture. But, as Blanchot reminds us, in his essay 'Prophetic Speech', the prophetic is also a radical destabilising of what is actual. Prophecy is not just a future language, he says. It has a relation to time that is much more important than the simple discovery of future events. Prophetic speech 'makes the future it announces, because it announces it, something impossible, a future one would not know how to live and that must upset all the sure givens of existence. When speech becomes prophetic, it is not the future that is given, it is the present that is taken away, and with it any possibility of a firm, stable, lasting presence'.<sup>19</sup>

Is this destabilisation what Heidegger means when he writes in his essay on *Andenken* that the 'becoming-real of the possible, as the becoming-ideal of the actual...has the

---

<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, translated by Keith Hoeller, New York, Humanity Books, 2000, p.137. *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1944, p114.

<sup>19</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, translated by Charlotte Mandel, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 2003, p.79.

essential character of a dream'<sup>20</sup>? Is it this divine dream that the poets need to say but which also destabilises them? It throws them out of a carefree abode [*sorglosen Aufenthalt*] in familiar reality [*vertrauten Wirklichen*] into the terror of the nonreal [*in den Schrecken des Unwirklichen*]. But the nonreal is not a mere nullity, says Heidegger. This is because it can be either the no-longer-actual or the not-yet-actual. The nonreal contains both of these and largely remains undecided between them. Heidegger equates the unreal to the not-yet-real, which can also be called the possible, and which is the state between being and not-being. It is from out of the nonreal, where the poet has been thrown in his violent expulsion that he can utter his poetry. In fact, what Heidegger calls 'this divinely terrible nonreality [*dieses furchtbargöttliche Unwirkliche*]',<sup>21</sup> is the poem itself, a poem that cannot be composed in advance and which the poets have to say. The poem becomes, therefore, a kind of recitation from out of the nonreal. Not only that, the prophetic foretelling is the locality [*Ortschaft*] of the historical dwelling [*Wohnen*] of human beings, a dwelling that seems to take its distance from the desert that Blanchot says is the result of prophetic speech which 'endlessly awakens in us the terror, understanding and memory of the desert' and opposes 'all stillness, all settling, any taking root that would be rest'.<sup>22</sup>

In looking at the fore-telling word here, one needs to be mindful of the fact that, in the 'Andenken' essay, Heidegger uses the word *voraussagen*, which means to foretell, rather than *vorsagen*, as in the lecture on 'The Ister'. In this movement of fore-telling-writing-down, we can again see the movement that enables and is enabled in the call of the Now. The question here is whether what constitutes the Now has already been withdrawn and whether the trace has already been erased before it has been traced. This is to ask whether the Now belongs to a never written past, a past still to come, in which the poem is always the failure of poetry, that the poem marks, without marking, the site where poetry fails to appear. This is, in effect, the movement of the enigma that was outlined in the previous chapter. Does Heidegger himself recognise such a movement? He does write that 'this "Now" will never let itself be grasped "historiographically," for instance

---

<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, p.136/p.113.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p.79.

by attempting to establish the historical dates of well-known historical events and trying to relate the “Now” of the poem to those points in time by means of calculation’.<sup>23</sup>

However, while the Now escapes such calculative, metaphysical thinking it does, he says, name [*nennen*] the *Ereignis*, usually translated as the event or event of appropriation: ‘The distinctive significance of the “Now” demands that in this word of time we also come to hear something distinctly significant and await a concealed fullness of poetic time and of its truth.’<sup>24</sup> There is a fullness there, an accomplishment, even if it is still concealed.

However, the Now, it seems to me, is the non-marking mark not so much of a concealed fullness as of the impossibility of this fullness, of a lack of accomplishment, and if the Now names *Ereignis*, and the Now is as I’ve described it, then *Ereignis* too is marked by this same lack. Rather than foretelling opening up the time for the gods and granting humanity its historical dwelling, it refers back to the always already readiness of the poets, a readiness that is always prior to and determines the Now but without being brought into it. There is, perhaps, a suggestion that Heidegger has an understanding of this when he writes that to call out ‘Now come’ to that which is coming already ‘is a superfluous and futile act’<sup>25</sup> and yet the word Now as it is pronounced at the beginning of the poem ‘gives the entire poem its own singular [*eigenen und einzigen*] tone’.<sup>26</sup> The same word is simultaneously superfluous [*überflüssig*], unnecessary and futile, and yet it also provides the poem with its singularity and what is its own [*eigen*]. The poet is both superfluous and essential and, perhaps, the poem is the mark of this superfluous essentiality. Inserted into that which is most proper, there is an excess that overflows the proper, the ownmost. What also has to be marked here is the fact that Hölderlin never finished ‘The Ister’, he did not give it a name and nor did he publish it. As Heidegger acknowledges, the poem just breaks off and falls silent. This could suggest that for Hölderlin that there was never a fullness or accomplishment here. Perhaps Hölderlin recognised that poetry was essentially failure, that what he wanted to bring into the

---

<sup>23</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.9/p.9

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. P7/p.6.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. P.8/p.8.

poem was always already denied it. William S. Allen writes that Hölderlin's poetry exposes the poetic word as one that simultaneously offers and undermines a relation to what is. He goes on: 'This, for Hölderlin, would seem to constitute the tragic nature of poetry, in that its writing reveals its word to be endlessly evasive and resistant to that which it is attempting to reach.'<sup>27</sup> While Heidegger mentions the contingent status of 'The Ister', it does not trouble him unduly. It never becomes problematic as far as his thinking on the poem goes. He accepts quite readily that the title of 'The Ister' is an appropriate one, based on the fact that Hölderlin in the poem names the upper course of the river as the Ister, and the fact that there are other named river poems, such as 'The Rhine'.

We have seen that Heidegger wants to separate poetic time from any notion of calendrical time, that it is not the same as what he called ordinary time in *Being and Time*. But nor is it as simple as posing a poetic time in contradistinction to calendar time. Heidegger claims that the time of the activity of poetizing is not straightforwardly identical or even the same as the timespace of that which is poetized. Even further, poetic time is different in each case, that is each poet, or each *essential* poet, poetizes anew the essence of poetizing itself. Each poem is its own poetic time. Poetic time does not exist waiting for the poem to participate in it but comes as new into the poetry. This is singularly and especially true in the case of Hölderlin; he is the exemplary poet, according to Heidegger. No calendrical date can be given for the Now of Hölderlin's poetry, he says, although Heidegger himself is not averse to using the dates of the composition of poems as a way of linking those poems; he does this specifically with 'The Ister' and 'Andenken'. In fact, says Heidegger, the Now, the called and the calling, is a more originary [*ursprüngliches*] date, that which is given [*ein Gegebenes*] and a gift [*eine Gabe*], a gift that is given through the calling. While Heidegger does not mention it specifically here, perhaps because the etymology is Latin rather than ancient Greek, although there is a Greek cognate, this is another appeal to etymological truth. The German term *Datum* comes from *datus*, the past participle of the Latin *dare*, meaning

---

<sup>27</sup> William S. Allen, *Ellipsis: Of Poetry and the Experience of Language after Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Blanchot*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007, p.123.

give. A date is that which is given, a gift. Heidegger lets us know he knows this through his inter-linguistic punning. The Now is the originary date, the originary gift or given.

As with art in 'The Origin', the Now of poetic time does not come about because of the creative act of the poet. The Now is both a calling and a sending, a destiny as translated, and it is because of this sending that the Now cannot be captured in any kind of calendrical or calculative reckoning. The distinctive significance [*die Auszeichnung*] of the Now demands that we also hear [*vernehmen*] something distinctly significant [*etwas Ausgezeichnetes*] and that we await a concealed fullness of poetic time and its truth. The 'Now come' appears to speak from a present into a future, that is the Now as present names the come as future, but this naming is also a calling. However, says Heidegger, initially the Now speaks towards that which has passed, into that which has already happened. A decision has been made and it is this decision, in deciding what has already happened, that alone sustains [*tragen*] all relations [*Bezug*] to that which is coming. Only what has been enables any relation to what is coming to take place. The occurrence, and Heidegger brackets this off in quotation marks as if to suggest a certain non-occurrence, of this decision, this appropriation or event has always already happened and it is the Now that names this as *Ereignis*. The Now is a calling, a sending and a naming [*nennen*]. In this tripartite structure of the Now, there is the present (naming), the future (sending) and what has been (calling).

The poem names a Now, according to Heidegger, and in doing so it brings in poetic time as a naming-calling-sending. It is my contention, however, that the Now is the erased trace of a prior time that is never figured in the poem, a prior time that is never appropriate or appropriated. The structure of the Now can, I believe, also be traced in the Here, which Heidegger claims is also named in the poem. According to Heidegger, the Here names the locale [*Ort*] where human beings wish to build. This Here is determined by the river, he says, the river that is named the Ister. This is the Here where those calling, that is the poets, have come from the rivers. They build where the river makes the land fertile. This is what Hölderlin's poem says, according to Heidegger. The Here seems to be relatively simple to determine, compared to the Now, which involves a

complex echoing call and counter-call structure. Instead the Here is that place by the river which is enabled by the river. The river makes it possible to live in the fertile land. 'Here, however, we wish to build', says Hölderlin, in a line that 'stands proud and emphatic [*entschieden*] in the first strophe',<sup>28</sup> according to Heidegger. A decision is made here, the Here is the decisive vicinity in its determination [*bestimmt*] by the river. But, to echo the *aber* in Hölderlin's line '*Hier aber wollen wir bauen*', this does not quite tell the whole story. In Heidegger's accompaniment to the poem, a curious ellipsis occurs. Immediately prior to the line just quoted, we read the following:

We, however, sing from the Indus  
Arrived from afar and  
From Alpheus, long have  
We sought what is fitting,  
Not without pinions may  
Someone grasp at what is nearest  
Directly  
And reach the other side.  
Here, however, we wish to build.<sup>29</sup>

Heidegger avoids the lines from 'long have' to 'the other side'. Instead we have an ellipsis. What should we make of this omission? For a long time the poets have sought what is fitting [*das Schickliche*], that which is proper or appropriate to them. While the fitting has been sought, it is not something that can be grasped directly or without great difficulty, or perhaps not at all. It is only with wings [*Schwingen* – translated as pinions. The Hamburger translation has the prosaic 'wings'<sup>30</sup>] that one can get directly to the other side. The implication is that the poets do not have wings so there is no direct access to that which is nearest. The other side cannot be reached without a detour, *ohne*

---

<sup>28</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.10/p.9.

<sup>29</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, 'The Ister', quoted in Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.4.

<sup>30</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, translated by Michael Hamburger, London, Anvil Press Poetry, Third Edition 1994, p.513. 'Pinion' is, perhaps, a more apt translation in the light of the point I am making here. While pinion does mean wing, it also means to bind someone's arms, to restrain or immobilise them, and to make a bird incapable of flight by removing that part of the wing where the flight feathers grow. None of this is captured in the term *Schwingen*.

*Umweg* it says in the notes to the Beißner and Schmidt edition of Hölderlin's poetry.<sup>31</sup> Is there a suggestion here that that which is most fitting, that which is most proper or is one's own, is that which is most difficult to grasp or bring to oneself? Despite this difficulty, this is precisely where the poets wish to build, in the impossibility of grasping what is proper to them. One could argue that this is precisely the problem for Hölderlin, that poetry is this impossible building. Heidegger identifies the Here with the river and the land that abuts the river which, in turn, makes the land around it fit for living. He claims that Hölderlin's line '*Hier aber wollen wir bauen*' somehow stands apart from its context. If this was the case, there would be no need for an *aber*, a but. However, we wish to build here, here where the difficulty is at its greatest, where achieving the other side is impossible; the poet does not have wings after all. What is fitting for the poets has been sought long and hard and it is only possible to reach the other side directly with wings. What is fitting to the poets is ungraspable but it is precisely at this point, at the ungraspable, where they wish to build. That which is nearest to us can only be grasped in an impossible leap. They wish to place themselves in the place of grasping the ungraspable, of comprehending the incomprehensible, an impossible task. As already mentioned, Heidegger does not refer to this passage at all in his lectures on 'The Ister'. He does, however, briefly allude to it in his essay '*Andenken*' where he identifies the wings with the paths that enable the movement of passing over from one side to the other, a passing over that he identifies as being from the foreign [*Fremde*<sup>32</sup>] to the homely [*heimisch*<sup>33</sup>], which, although difficult, is not that insurmountable: 'And if we are permitted to think with the word *paths*, not only on striding and climbing, but also on stepping over and climbing over, then the paths name the transition for *passing over to the other side. Not without wings may...one* cross over from the side of the foreign to the side of home ("The Ister," IV, 220).'<sup>34</sup> It seems that Hölderlin's passage to the home is much more difficult than Heidegger perhaps allows, that the home is not just a case of

---

<sup>31</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Werke und Briefe, Band 3 Erläuterungen*, Herausgegeben von Friedrich Beißner und Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main, Insel Verlag, 1969, p.126.

<sup>32</sup> While this is translated as 'foreign' it can also mean 'unknown to one, not one's own, out of one's element', according to Farrell, which is pertinent to the meaning of the passage of 'The Ister' being discussed here.

<sup>33</sup> Farrell says that present day usage of *heimisch* is rare but it suggests feelings of being at home in a place.

<sup>34</sup> Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, p.134/p.111. Heidegger's emphasis.

building in the fertile land, that the fertile land may always already be a desert, that we are always already estranged from the home. In 1801 Hölderlin, in a letter to his friend Casimir Böhlendorff, writes: 'But what is our own has to be learnt just as much as what is foreign [*Fremde*]. For this reason the Greeks are indispensable to us. Only it is precisely in what is proper [*Eigenen*] to us, in the national, that we shall never match them because as I said, the *free* use of what is our *own* [*Eigenen*] is hardest of all.'<sup>35</sup>

If these considerations of the Now and the Here give clues to a reading of the enigma, a reading that perhaps goes against the grain of Heidegger's own thinking, then what Heidegger means by the enigma can begin to be glimpsed with his first mention of the word. It comes in an initially brief discussion of Hölderlin's poem 'Voice of the People', a discussion that focuses on two specific words, which, Heidegger says, present an enigma [*Rätselhaft sind diese beiden Namen*]. These two words are *die Schwindenden* and *die Ahnungsvollen*, translated as vanishing and full of intimation in the following extract from the poem:

You are God's voice, thus I once believed  
In holy youth; yes and I say so still!  
Unconcerned with our wisdom  
The rivers still rush on, and yet

Who loves them not? And always do they move  
My heart, when afar I hear them vanishing  
Full of intimation, hastening along not  
My path, yet more surely seaward.<sup>36</sup>

The rivers are 'full of intimation' and 'vanishing', with the former naming the relation to what is coming, the latter naming the rivers going away into what has been. Both are,

---

<sup>35</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, edited and translated by Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth, Penguin Books London, 2009, p.208. *Werke und Briefe Band II, Der Tod des Empedokles, Aufsätze, Übersetzungen, Briefe*, Herausgegeben von Friedrich Beißner und Jochen Schmidt, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1969, p.941. Hölderlin's emphasis.

<sup>36</sup> Hölderlin, 'Voice of the People', in Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, pp.11-12/pp.11-12.

says Heidegger, in a concealed, unitary relation to what has been and what is coming and, therefore, to time. Even more than this, not only are the rivers as intimate and vanishing timely, but they are time itself: ‘The flow of the rivers does not simply run its course “in time,” as if the latter were merely an indifferent framework extrinsic to the course of the rivers. The rivers intimate and vanish into time and do so in such a way that they themselves are thus of time and are time itself.’<sup>37</sup> But if the rivers are time in their vanishing and intimation, then time itself is an enigma, because these two terms present an enigma. Time, as the poetic rivers, is an enigma and it is in the vanishing and intimation that the enigma resides. Before examining these two terms in more detail, Heidegger further deepens our understanding of the enigma. After another excursion into how metaphysics interprets art, Heidegger proclaims that Hölderlin’s poetry is not concerned with symbolic images at all and, even more, that it stands entirely outside of metaphysics and aesthetics. While it is still possible to interpret this poetry from within metaphysics, he continues, any reading done in such a way would be in vain. This assertion arises out of Heidegger’s contention that Hölderlin’s hymns are not symbolic images and nor are they to count as symbols of a higher level or of a deeper, religious context.

Arising from this contention that the rivers and river poetry stand outside of metaphysics, Heidegger presents an argument about what the river does and what this doing signifies through the way the poem ends:

Yet what that one does, that river,  
No one knows.<sup>38</sup>

Heidegger claims that these lines tell us that the river’s [*Strom*] flowing [*Strömen*] is an activity that takes its own time [*ein Tun zu eigener Zeit*], that this activity is concealed and that in this concealment lies a distinction. The poet knows of the concealment because, if he did not, he would not be able to tell of it. The poet unveils the

---

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.12/p.12.

<sup>38</sup> Hölderlin, ‘The Ister’, in Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.6/p.5.

concealment of the river's activity and knows that this activity, its flowing, is concealed, but the poetic essence of the river remains concealed in the knowledge of the poet. What the river does, no one knows, not even the poet. Whatever the river does, though, says Heidegger, is an enigma [*Das Tun des Stromes ist ein Rätsel*]. In not knowing what the river does, the poet does not know the enigma. What constitutes the river's doing is its flowing, its 'rivering' [*sein Strömen*]. The river rivers. In this rivering is the river's actuality [*Wirklichkeit*], and the rivering is the actual [*wirklich*] river. But the *Strömen* of the river is not quite its *Tun*. Heidegger says that not even the poet knows what the river does [*tun*] but, even so, the poet knows its activity [*Tun*]. But if the poet does not know what the river does how does he then know its flowing when what the river does is its flowing? How can the poet not know what the river does and yet know it when what the river does is named as its flowing or rivering? The poet is suspended in the between of *Tun* and *Strömen*. Heidegger's claim is that what the poet does not know is not the flowing as such but what is decided in this flowing [*was in diesem Strömen sich entscheidet*]. A decision is made in the flowing but what this decision is is not given by Heidegger explicitly here and even if it was, there would always be something remaining: 'Every decision, however, is grounded in something that cannot be mastered, something concealed, something disconcerting. Otherwise it would not be a decision.'<sup>39</sup> In the event, we cannot begin to know what is decided in the flowing of the river without attending to what is said poetically of the river. We have to listen more carefully [*sorgfältiger*]. What can be said is that the poet, in knowing the flowing of the river, but not what is decided in this flowing, is in the position of awaiting the decision, a waiting that is a whiling. The poet must wait a while. What the river does is an enigma, says Heidegger, the river itself is an enigma, therefore the decision must reside in this enigma and remain in it.

This is, perhaps, the implication of the announcement at the beginning of the fourth strophe of 'The Rhine', which tells of the enigma that has purely sprung forth but, in such a way, that even song can scarcely unveil it. Heidegger claims that in this scarcely

---

<sup>39</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.31. *Holzwege*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1950, p.42.

[*kaum*] is the knowledge that only song can even begin to approach the telling of the origin of the source, springing forth and the flowing of the river. Therefore, only poetry can bring us closer to the enigma. But in this scarcely lies an insufficiency, an inadequacy, which Heidegger himself recognises, but which he does not explore, an insufficiency that potentially disables poetry in its approach to the enigma. In German, the lines read as follows:

*Ein Rätsel ist Reinentsprungenes. Auch  
Der Gesang kaum darf es enthüllen.<sup>40</sup>*

*Darf* is the singular present of *dürfen* and, as discussed above, has the sense of being permitted, being allowed, and it could be argued that song has to seek permission to tell of the enigma but that it is a permission that is withheld, the promise that is withdrawn prior to the giving of the promise. The enigma is beyond the capabilities of song or poetry in its saying. The question remains as to who or what is withholding permission, but perhaps it is the enigma itself that is the withholding if we think of the enigma as that which is the prior withdrawal of a promise that would have been already given.

In its activity, the river determines the dwelling place of human beings on the earth. This is what Hölderlin's line '*Hier aber wollen wir bauen*' tells us, according to Heidegger. Dwelling, he says, is not the mere practical and technical possessing of accommodation, although that is a part of it, but is the taking on of an abode [*nimmt eines Aufenthalt*] and the abiding [*ein Innehalten*] in this abode. The human being especially is held and maintained through abiding in an abode. *Aufenthalt* means residence or abode, but it can also mean stay, sojourn or wait. *Innehalten* means to pause or stop. Both of these terms suggest something that is not quite permanent, which Heidegger emphasises by saying that abiding is a whiling [*Der Aufenthalt ist ein Verweilen*], a kind of lingering, tarrying, or hanging around. It is in this whiling-lingering-tarrying that human beings find rest, says Heidegger, but, as in 'The Origin', this is a rest that does not involve the ceasing of

---

<sup>40</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Der Rhein' in *Werke und Briefe, Band 1 Gedichte Hyperion*, Herausgegeben von Friedrich Beißner und Jochen Schmidt, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1969, p.148.

activity: ‘Rest [*Ruhe*] is a grounded repose [*Beruhem*] in the steadfastness of one’s own essence. In rest, the human essence is preserved [*aufbewahrt*] in its inviolability.’<sup>41</sup> Heidegger links this inviolability to the Greek term ἡ ἀσυλία, the sanctuaries or asylums, which, he says, names the inviolability and holiness of the locale. This is a reference to Hölderlin’s Pindar fragment called ‘*Die Asyle*’, which consists of a translation from the Greek and a short commentary on the poem. Heidegger quotes extensively from this fragment and the language is a kind of echo of Heidegger’s own appropriation of Hölderlin’s language, in terms such as *Ruhestätten* and *die Ahnendes*,<sup>42</sup> places of rest and the intimate respectively. In this place, the human being finds sanctuary, free from being grasped. Heidegger says that Hölderlin does not refer to graves when speaking of asylums ‘but rather those locales [*die Orte*] where the activity and life of nature is “concentrated,” where “something intimate” gathers around human beings’.<sup>43</sup> In this manner, the abode has its locale. Heidegger names the way in which the locale determines the abode and the manner in which the locale is the locale in each case as the locality of the locale [*die Ortschaft des Ortes*]. It is the locality of the locale, the placeness of the place, that gives [*verschenken*] rest to the abode – in the *Parmenides* lectures Heidegger calls *Ortschaft* a gathering holding of what belongs together. It is by being in place that rest is granted to human beings in their abode. The abode derives its restfulness from out of the desire to build, but the river must have already provided such a place in order for the desire to build to take place. Human beings find their rest in the whiling of an abode. The locality of the locale, in this instance here by this river, is inviolable and holy and, in effect, grants these to the human beings who dwell there: ‘The river “*is*” the locality that pervades the abode of human beings upon the earth, determines them to where they belong and where they are homely [*heimisch*]. The river thus brings human beings into their own and maintains [*behält*] them in what is their own [*im Eigenen*].’<sup>44</sup> The *Eigene* of the human beings, to which they belong and have to belong if they are to be fulfilled in what is destined for them, is determined by the river. The river is essential for the *Eigene* of human beings. If

---

<sup>41</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.20/p.23.

<sup>42</sup> *Ahnen* and its variants operate across Hölderlin’s poetry and theoretical writings, including in the ‘Voice of the People’, the Pindar fragment and ‘On the different forms of poetic composition’.

<sup>43</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, pp.20-21/p.23.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p.21/p.23. Heidegger’s emphasis.

Heidegger suggests initially that coming into one's own is relatively straightforward, he immediately complicates it, echoing Hölderlin in his letter to Böhlendorff, by saying that 'to dwell in what is one's own is what comes last and is seldom successful and always remains what is most difficult. Yet if the river determines the locality of the homely, then it is of essential assistance in becoming homely [*Heimischwerden*] in what is one's own'.<sup>45</sup>

Before exploring the locality of the river further, and it is in the river's relation to its place and its wandering that we encounter the enigma further, it is worth going back to Hölderlin's Pindar fragment because, although Heidegger does not explore this here, it has relevance both to the sense of counsel that Heidegger wishes to give to *Rätsel* and also to the sense of enigma that this thesis is exploring. The fragment concerns Themis, daughter of Zeus, who is also his counsellor and advisor – Hölderlin calls her '*Die wohlrathende Themis*' – she who gathers together the Agora but is not the decision maker, says Catherine Burnett: '[S]he maintains the order of things and oversees the conservation of tradition. She secures the customs and the conventions, the collective conscience of society.'<sup>46</sup> Themis personifies justice in Greek mythology but she is distinct from her daughter Dike, who represents the individual order, while Themis represents the social order. It is she who orders and organises the affairs of humans in the community and it is this dual sense of gathering together and counselling that seems to be echoed in the gathering of humans by, and through, the river and in the caring-counselling that Heidegger wishes us to hear in *Rätsel*. It is the creation of sanctuaries where humans can rest and be free from seizure that the Pindar fragment is concerned with. By referencing this poem Heidegger suggests that here, where we wish to build, is equivalent to the sanctuaries that Themis, which literally means 'that which was put in place', gave birth to and which is celebrated in Hölderlin's translation of Pindar. In the poem they are called 'the gold-riveted', the 'shiningly fertilized places of rest'. In these *Ruhestätten* human beings are free from the foreign, the alien, [*denen nichts Fremdes*

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p.21/p24.

<sup>46</sup> Catherine Burnett, 'Justice: Myth and Symbol', *Legal Studies Forum*, Volume XI, Number 1 1987, pp.79-94, p.80.

*ankann*], according to Hölderlin's short commentary, 'because in them the working and life of nature was concentrated',<sup>47</sup> a line that Heidegger quotes directly and indirectly.

In the next clause of the commentary, which Heidegger does not quote, Hölderlin refers to *ein Ahnendes*, an intimation which is an experience of something that was experienced before, but seems to be experienced only in its recollection. It is an intimation as recollection [*wie erinnernd*]. *Ahnen* means to foresee or to know in terms of *voraussehen*, to foresee, but *Ahne* also means ancestor or forebear. So *ahnen* as intimation is a pointing towards the future as a pointing towards the past. While it suggests a certain foreseeing – and in Greek mythology Themis could foresee the future – it is a foreseeing that occurs as memory, as recollection. Dieter Henrich remarks, in an essay on Hölderlin's *Andenken* that foresight *is* only on the basis of recollection [*Erinnerung*]: 'Only those who can recollect are able to foresee. For foresight is not a mere apprehension of future events; rather we are always anticipating the future in relation to what lies in wait for it. This is why foresight is always the foresight of something soon to be past, and so of a recollection to come.'<sup>48</sup> But if foresight can only arise on the basis of recollection, the experience that is recollected can only be experienced as this recollection. It is an experience, says Blanchot, that is experienced as 'something which never yet takes place [but] happens nonetheless, as having long since already happened'.<sup>49</sup> But what kind of experience is it if the experience happens as memory, as having happened? Can the prior experience be said to be an experience at all if it is only experienced as its own memory? The status of this prior experience is such that one can no longer say definitively that it has happened before if it can only be experienced as recollection. Like the Now, which points to a time that cannot be incorporated into the Now, recollection points to an experience that it has only in this recollection.

---

<sup>47</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, 'The Sanctuaries', *Poems and Fragments*, p.645/p.673.

<sup>48</sup> Dieter Henrich, *The Course of Remembrance and Other Essays on Hölderlin*, edited by Eckhart Förster, translated by Taylor Carman, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1997, p.221.

<sup>49</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, translated by Ann Smock, Lincoln & London, University of Nebraska Press, 1995, p.14.

The meaning of *ahnen* becomes important for Heidegger in terms of his discussion of the river as enigma. I have already referred to the lines from ‘Voice of the People’ which introduces Heidegger’s thinking around Hölderlin’s terms *Ahnungsvollen* and *Schwindenden*, terms which effectively determine a thinking that claims the river is an enigma, and it is to these two terms that I return. From these lines, we learn that the rivers stand in an asymmetric relation to human beings. The rivers are unconcerned with human wisdom [*Weisheit*]. This is because, says Heidegger, they have their own, proper knowledge [*eigenes Wissen*] which he identifies with the spirit of the river [*Stromgeist*], that which determines the river on its proper path [*eigene Bahn*], which is almost torn [*Reißen*] free from any relation to human beings. Hölderlin himself writes that the river’s way is not the poet’s way. There is a relation, but it is a relation of love from the human towards the river. The river is a violent, tearing, rushing thing that has its own path that is not concerned with the way of humans and yet there is still a belongingness to the rivers and a going along with them [*ein Mitgehen mit ihnen*], but it is a belongingness that is violent: ‘It is precisely that which tears onward more surely in the rivers’ own path that tears human beings out of the habitual [*gewöhnliche*] midst of their lives, so that they may be in a center outside of themselves, that is, be excentric. The prelude to inhering [*Innehalten*] in the excentric midst of human existence, this “centric” and “central” abode [*Aufenthalt*] in the excentric, is love. The sphere proper [*eigentliche*] to standing in the excentric middle of life is death.’<sup>50</sup> Human beings are torn out of their comfortable existence, by the absolute demand of the rivers, into a centre that is not a centre, that displaces human beings out of the ordinary. The first step [*Vorstufe* – literally fore-step] towards an abiding [*Innehalten*] in the excentric abode is through love, a love that goes towards the rivers but which is not reciprocated. The violent indifference of the rivers is met with love, an all-encompassing love – who loves them not, writes Hölderlin – but it seems that the abode only becomes a proper abode and one can only dwell in this excentric centre through death. But death is not the path taken by the rivers, if death is the path of human beings that Heidegger refers to when he writes: ‘The vanishing rivers, full of intimation, do not take the path of human beings.’<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.28/p32-33.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* p.28/p.33.

This separation, says Heidegger, announces something extraordinary [*Ungeheure*], a word it could be argued that he takes from Hölderlin – it occurs later in the lecture in his examination of *Antigone* – because he then quotes from Hölderlin’s ‘*Anmerkungen zum Oedipus*’. He says that ‘the extraordinary [*Ungeheuren*] way “in which god and human are paired and the power of nature <the holy> and what is most intrinsic to human beings become limitlessly One in anger [*Zorn*]”’.<sup>52</sup> But, as with the elision of the wings in ‘The Ister’, Heidegger elides the fact that Hölderlin is here writing specifically about the tragic and how it is presented. He also elides the second part of this quote where Hölderlin writes that the boundless [*grenzenlos*] becoming-one cleanses itself through boundless separation which is given form in the always conflicting dialogue [*immer widerstreitende Dialog*] of tragic theatre. Everything is speech against speech, says Hölderlin, in which each one cancels [*aufheben*] the other out, a mutual co-cancelling. Hölderlin likens the drama to the Court of Inquisition. The conflict ends in a kind of radical forgetting, which is also a mutual radical infidelity [*Untreue*]. Heidegger picks up on this infidelity, or unfaithfulness, but seems to elide this mutuality. From what Heidegger says, it would seem that the power resides in the rivers and that the human being must give way. Through love, human beings can go along with the river but this *Mitgehen* does not involve taking the same path. Human beings must make way [*ausweichen*] for the path of the rivers. Not taking the same path is the way in which human beings make way and, as such, the way in which the power of nature and the spirit of the river can be grasped [*ergriffen*]. In a parenthesis, Heidegger again quotes from one of Hölderlin’s writings on Greek tragedy, this time *Anmerkungen zur Antigone*. Its purpose seems to be to identify the way in which a going along with the rivers is a making way [*ausweichen*] for them, with the way in which the highest state of consciousness makes way for consciousness. In giving way, human beings can, in some sense, harness this power. Strange perspectives [*Befremdliche Ausblicke*] on how this seizure, this grasping of the power of nature and the spirit of the river, can come about are opened up through the relationship of vanishing and intimation, says Heidegger. In its intimate vanishing, the river abandons the human landscape, an act of seeming unfaithfulness to that landscape. But it is out of this unfaithfulness, it seems, that the

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. <the holy> is Heidegger’s interpolation.

river can be maintained: 'It almost seems as though the spirit of the river could be best retained in the form of such vanishing, as though thoughtful remembrance proper [*das eigentliche Andenken*] belonged to this enigmatic unfaithfulness [*dieser rätselhaften Untreue*].'<sup>53</sup>

Rivers flow in a two-fold direction but this flowing is also a singular journey. Within this singularity and its two-folded direction is another doubling. In terms of vanishing, this is a being-underway into what has been [*das Gewesene*]. As intimation, it is a going into that which is coming [*das Kommende*]. But, as already mentioned, *ahnen* has a dual meaning in that it both points towards the future in terms of foreseeing and gestures towards the past in terms of a provenance. Janus-faced, *ahnen* seems to mark a chiasmus in which past and future join together in a looking forward that is also a looking back: '[W]e must here give thought to the fact that intimation does not simply relate to that which is coming, but at the same time relates to that which has been.'<sup>54</sup> Similarly, vanishing does not just disappear into the past. Instead, it involves an intimation of what has been which arises in *Erinnerung*, which is here translated as 'inner recollection' but which can also mean memory or remembrance. What has been [*das Gewesene*], as what has been and as that which essentially prevails [*das Wesende*], is only attained through this form of inner recollection but this attainment only occurs in what Heidegger calls genuine inner recollection [*echte Erinnerung*] which is both a turning towards the undisclosed and a turning inwards into what has been: 'Genuine inner recollection is intimation [*Ahnen*]',<sup>55</sup> says Heidegger, effectively saying that vanishing is intimation.

We are, perhaps, not far from the language and thought of Hölderlin's '*Die Asyle*', where intimation was, as remembering [*wie erinnernd*], an experience of that which had been experienced before. As Henrich points out, *Erinnerung* was important for Hölderlin, in that it combined 'thinking, remembering, intimacy, and a course of transformation'.<sup>56</sup> It should also be recalled that, for Adorno, the experience of the

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p.29/pp.33-34.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p.29/p.34.

<sup>56</sup> Henrich, *The Course of Remembrance*, p.220.

shudder is an *Erinnerung*. There seems to be an echo of 'Die Asyle' in the language and movement of memory here. Memory, as *Erinnerung*, is a foreseeing and Heidegger makes the claim that this type of memory is a more originary intimation than the intimation that is mere suspicion or assumption [*vermuten*]. But only perhaps, says Heidegger, although this perhaps appears to become more durable as he claims that inner recollection would become the profoundest intimation if that which is to come comes out of that which has been. *Erinnerung* is that through which we attain what has been as that which has been. But *Erinnerung* is not just about returning to something that has gone and staying there. It is also an intimation, that is a turning towards that which is undisclosed in the return. *Erinnerung* is, perhaps, a more originary intimation than that intimation which merely has a premonition of something coming [*das nur in ein Kommendes hinausvermutet*]. The most profound intimation is the intimation that sees in that which is to come the unthought in what has been. Genuine *Erinnerung* is, therefore, an intimation of the future drawn out of that which has been but which has been undisclosed in what has been. It is the renaming of the past into a future potentiality although figured as a return to what has been, which is the movement of the *Anfang*, as discussed below. *Erinnerung*, as this intimation, is the recollection out of the past into an unthought past that is still to come. Intimation, and especially the *Ahnungsvollen*, proceed and extend into what is coming and what has been. The *Ahnungsvollen* are those with genuine *Erinnerung* – the *Ahnungsvollen* will be renamed later as the poets – and it is essentially creative.

But if the river can be said to be both vanishing and full of intimation, from what standpoint does the river appear in its two-fold directionality? If we return to Hölderlin's 'Voice of the People', it is quite clear that the river in its vanishing and intimation stands in a relation to the poet. The poet both hears the *Schwindenden* and *Ahnungsvollen* and names them as such in a naming that comes from the poet, as Heidegger points out. Equally, Hölderlin, as poet, or the narrative 'I' of the poem, has an emotional response in that his own heart is moved [*und immer bewegen sie | Das Herz mir*] as he asks the question who does not love them, with the implied answer that everyone does. As Heidegger writes, the rivers designate a Here where human beings build. In this

building, does not the vanishing and the intimation depend on the standpoint of the human being? The rivers can only be said to be vanishing in one direction because *der Mensch* has taken up a position in relation to the river. The same is true of intimation. If the river is oriented in two directions, the vanishing and the intimate, then there has to be a position from which these two directions diverge and to which they converge because otherwise it would not be possible to say that one is vanishing and the other is intimate. The place is the human locale, the abode. It is only out of the abode that the river can be said to be oriented in two directions. In this sense then, it is the human abode that determines the river in its vanishing and its intimation. Equally, however, the human abode is possible only on the basis of the river. Here again we seem to have that co-originary moment in which the river determines the abode and the human while the river in its essence of intimation and vanishing, is determined by the human in its abiding. It seems to me that this is a co-originary mutually dependent relation between river and abode, between vanishing and intimation, a relation that opens up a place for human dwelling. It is similar to that mutual dependency of world and earth, even down to the fact that there is still conflict here; the river rips the human out of the familiar.

As we have seen, in naming the rivers as full of intimation and vanishing, Heidegger is adopting Hölderlin's terminology for the specific end of delineating what he claims is the essence of a journey. Intimation is an extension and procession into what has been and what is coming. Vanishing is a passing away into what is coming at the same time as having what has been entrusted to it. This simultaneous doubling is that which the river is, what is proper to the river and which Heidegger calls 'the essential fullness of a journey. The river is a journey in a singular and consummate way'.<sup>57</sup> Heidegger names this consummate essence of a journey a journeying [*Wanderschaft*] which corresponds with the naming of the locality [*Ortschaft*] of the locale. In this naming by Heidegger, we are meant to hear the naming which he ascribes to Hölderlin, a naming which means 'to call to its essence that which is named in the word of poetizing, and to ground this essence as poetic word'.<sup>58</sup> It is questionable whether Hölderlin does name in this

---

<sup>57</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.30/p.35.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p.21/p.24.

fashion, as Allen claims: ‘Although Hölderlin was aware of the linguistic kinship of holiness, healing, and making whole, this could not erase the fact for him that the saying of these words would always undermine their meaning. Naming seems to have a completely different meaning for Heidegger and Hölderlin.’<sup>59</sup> It seems to me that Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe is saying something similar when he writes of Hölderlin’s poetry that it signals the broken or lost possibility of naming, that it is ‘the forever withdrawn or truncated secret of the name, an empty nomination,’<sup>60</sup> which he contrasts with Heidegger’s belief in the possibility of naming. Heidegger believes that he is naming the poetic essence here as he begins to explain what he sees as the river’s essence, an essence that is distinct from any form of Christian or metaphysical perspective: ‘This journeying that the river itself *is* determines [*bestimmt*] the way in which the human beings come to be at home [*heimisch wird*] upon this earth.’<sup>61</sup> When referring to earth neither Heidegger nor, he claims, Hölderlin are referring to any Christo-metaphysical notion of an earthly realm as a way station prior to attaining the eternal. It is not something that remains to be surpassed or given up and thereby lost, says Heidegger. Instead, earth is a grounding of the homely: ‘The journeying that the river *is* prevails, and does so essentially, in its vocation [*Bestimmung*] of attaining the earth as the “ground” of the homely.’<sup>62</sup> Heidegger underscores this point by quoting from another poem by Hölderlin, ‘*Die Wanderung*’, ‘The Journey’, where he claims that the movement of the river is named in relation to the attaining of the earth, which he then links with ‘The Ister’ and its naming of Hertha, another name for Nerthus, the Germanic name for mother earth. However, when Hölderlin refers to his mother in ‘The Journey’ he is naming Swabia, the region in Germany where he was born, rather than specifically mentioning Hertha or mother earth. Be that as it may, Heidegger takes this as further evidence to back up the claim that it is journeying that ‘determines [*bestimmt*] our coming to be at home [*das Heimischwerden*] upon the earth’.<sup>63</sup> This coming to be at home is also divine [*göttlich*] but not in any Christian or religious sense: ‘Becoming

---

<sup>59</sup> Allen, *Ellipsis*, p.118.

<sup>60</sup> Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger and the Politics of Poetry*, translated by Jeff Fort, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2007, p.57.

<sup>61</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.30/p.35. Heidegger’s emphasis.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* Heidegger’s emphasis.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* p.31/p.36.

homely and dwelling upon the earth are of another essence. We may approach it in giving thought to the essence of the rivers. The river is the locality for dwelling. The river is the journeying of becoming homely. To put it more clearly: the river is that very locality that is attained in and through the journeying.<sup>64</sup> The journeying enables human beings to come back to that very place which is that journeying.

Journeying is the key to coming to be at home, to the abiding in an abode that is the essence of the here and now, and it is in journeying that the unity of vanishing and intimation come together: 'Because vanishing can also be directed into what is to come, and intimating into what has been, this naming of the rivers testifies to their rich, yet originally unitary essence [*ursprünglich einiges Wesen*], which we encapsulate in the name "journeying".<sup>65</sup> In this, there is a certain priority granted to journeying in terms of how the rivers are seen, as Heidegger says: '[T]he essence of the rivers as rivers is first to be perceived from out of the journeying. The river is the journeying of human beings as historical in their coming to be at home upon this earth.'<sup>66</sup> But becoming homely is not easy and at first 'what emerges is that any determination of the essence of the rivers must appear alienating [*befremden*]. Our claim is this: the river is the locality of the dwelling of human beings as historical upon this earth. The river is the journeying of a historical coming to be at home at the locale of this locality. The river is locality and journeying'.<sup>67</sup> It is from out of this that Heidegger gives us the chiasmic essence of the river, in a formula which he describes as an enigmatic unity. The formula is this: the river is the locality of journeying and the journeying of locality. Jean-François Mattéi calls a chiasmus 'the figure of the reversal of a proposition whose members are contained within both the initial proposition and the inverted one and produce a distinctive pattern of crossed overlapping'.<sup>68</sup> We can see quite clearly that this formula complies with this definition, with the river forming the crossing of the here and now and the inversion of the terms locality and journeying. Rodolphe Gasché, in his essay

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p.32/p.37.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p.32/pp.37-38.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p.33/p.39.

<sup>68</sup> Dominique Janicaud and Jean-François Mattéi, *Heidegger: From Metaphysics to Thought*, translated by Michael Gendre, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1995, p.41.

‘Reading Chiasms’, writes that a chiasmus ‘allows the drawing apart and bringing together of opposite functions or terms and entwines them within an identity of movements’.<sup>69</sup> In a chiasm, he says, opposites are paired through an underlying unity. Again, we can see this pattern here as what would appear to be two separate terms which are oppositional – in what sense is place a journey? – are brought together so that each, in a certain way, infects the other, so that the locality is only gained through the journeying and the journeying can only arise out of the locality. The chiasmus is that which brings the opposition into a unity. But if this is a chiasmus, and it is this chiasmatic formula that Heidegger claims enable us to know that the river is an enigma, that locality and journeying are an enigmatic unity, then the question arises as to whether this is a symmetrical or asymmetrical chiasmus. It would appear, from Heidegger’s granting of priority to journeying – the essence of the rivers first appears from out of the journeying and it is journeying that enables human beings to come to be at home – that the relation is asymmetrical. If we think back to how the enigma is structured, the structure of the insistent promise and its impossible solution, the way in which the solution is withdrawn prior to the promise, then it could be said that by saying the river is an enigma, that this formula represents such an enigma, then the formula does become asymmetric. However, if at first Heidegger appears to grant a priority to journeying, he then seems to modify this by making the locale, and hence the locality of the locale, in some way determinative of the river and so determinative of the journeying: ‘The river does not merely grant the locale, in the sense of the mere place, that is occupied by humans in their dwelling. The locale is intrinsic to the river itself [*Der Strom selbst hat den Ort inne*]. The river itself dwells.’<sup>70</sup> The river itself holds the place. The place is internal to the river. The locale is an essential aspect of the river and hence of the journeying. In fact, the essence of the locale is both where becoming-homely departs from and also where it enters and it is in arriving and departing that it journeys.

We should not rush to understand these statements about journeying and locality, says Heidegger. It is not a question of solving the enigma: ‘The said statements are always

---

<sup>69</sup> Rodolphe Gasché, *Of Minimal Things: Studies on the Notion of Relation*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1999, p.273.

<sup>70</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.35/p.42.

incomprehensible within a certain realm of comprehension, and there is an essential reason for this. The incomprehensibility of such statements is not grounded in some contingent lack of a knowledge that would be otherwise attainable.<sup>71</sup> As mentioned above, there is a certain prohibition about solving the enigma, a prohibition that comes from the structure of the enigma. The enigma does not permit a solution precisely because, in the terms in which the enigma is set up, a solution has always already been prohibited, in spite of the fact that the promise of a solution has to be held open. The solution would have been available if access to the solution had not already been closed off. But if we should not be seeking a solution to the enigma, we need to become mindful of it, to bring it nearer to us as enigma. Part of this mindfulness needs to take account of the enigma as it initially and genuinely appears [*Scheinen*] in that which is scarcely available to human thinking, says Heidegger. In this he is referring to those lines of 'The Ister' where the river appears to go backwards:

He appears [*scheinet*], however, almost  
To go backwards and  
I presume [*Ich mein*] he must come  
From the East.  
There would be  
Much to tell of this.<sup>72</sup>

Heidegger claims that this is not an appearance or illusion, but that in poetic thinking the river truthfully goes backwards. This is its provenance [*Herkunft*]. Instead of actually flowing from West to East, a deeper poetic truth is being told, of the necessity with which the river comes from the East. But it is also a necessity that we cannot yet know this flowing, we just have to be mindful of it. We are not permitted entrance at this stage into the poetic knowledge [*dichterisch Wissen*] of this journeying, a knowledge that is set against the knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] gained through cognition, that ascertains facts. Poetic presuming [*Meinen*] has its own [*eigene*] truth and this truth has its own measure

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. pp.33-34/p.40.

<sup>72</sup> Hölderlin, 'The Ister', quoted in Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p36/p43.

[*Maß*]. Later, Heidegger writes that the locale and the journey, a relation of to-ing and fro-ing between the foreign [*Fremd*] and the homely [*heimisch*], are alien [*befremdlich*] to us and we are not given anything with which we can immediately illuminate them. In fact, coming to be at home in what is one's own is that which is most difficult. 'Locality and journeying...relate to becoming homely in what is one's own. And this is so in the distinctive sense that one's own [*das Eigene*], finding one's own, and appropriating [*die Aneignung*] what one has found as one's own, is not that which is most self-evident or easiest but remains what is most difficult. As what is most difficult, it is taken into poetic care.'<sup>73</sup> As we know, taking into poetic care is a taking into the enigma. It is in the enigma, therefore, that we need to explore this moment of appropriation, of the difficulty of finding one's own. Perhaps it is this difficulty which is being expressed in the river flowing backwards, a flowing backwards which is also hinted at by Hölderlin's misnaming of the rivers. Hölderlin names the upper course of the river as 'Ister', a name which was given to the lower course of the river Donau by the Greeks and then the Romans. It is the lower course that the Greeks knew, according to Heidegger. The upper course of the Donau is usually known as Danubius. Heidegger claims that this reversal of names is indicative of the possibility that the lower Donau had returned to the upper and, in doing so, had therefore returned to its source. But can we not see in this misnaming also an estrangement from the source, an estrangement from the Greek that can never be appropriated or reappropriated? The upper course is that which is closest to the source, but the upper course is given the Greek name for the lower course by Hölderlin. The upper course was not known to the Greeks and therefore this naming of the upper course is a misappropriation of the Greek name, as if to say that we think we know the upper course of the river, we think we know the Greek source and in this thinking we give it the Greek name Ἰστρος. But the Greeks never knew the upper course and therefore could never have given it this name. Hölderlin is perhaps here demonstrating that what we think of as our Greek source is not that at all, that we are as far from it as we could possibly be. We have named the Greek river but this river was never named by the Greeks. Is this not saying that what we think of as being the Greek is not the Greek at all and that the Greek remains inaccessible? Lacoue-Labarthe writes,

---

<sup>73</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, pp.48-49/p.60.

apropos of Hölderlin and the Greeks that ‘*Greece*, as such, *Greece itself*, does not exist, that it is at least double, divided – even torn. And that what we know about it, which is perhaps what it was or what it manifested of itself, is not what it really was – which perhaps never appeared’.<sup>74</sup>

This movement between what is one’s own and what is not one’s own, between being at home and the foreign, is what is distinctive about the rivers in Hölderlin’s poetry for Heidegger. ‘The river determines the being at home of human beings as historical in their coming to be at home. The river is the locality of the locale of the home. The river at the same time determines the becoming of human beings as historical in their being at home. The river is the journeying of that journey in which the becoming of being at home has its essence.’<sup>75</sup> It is not, however, a question of the one being added to the other in a unity after the fact, but one already inscribed: ‘The river is at once locality and journeying in a concealed and originary unity. Such originary unity is different from the kind of unity that comes afterwards, merely unifying whatever is already present at hand by bringing things together. By contrast, originary unity first lets that which is unitary spring forth, yet without it springing free from the ground of this unity.’<sup>76</sup> This unity is a unity of the homely and the foreign, a unity that is always already a unity, one that involves a mutual co-dependence that echoes the unity of world and earth. Clearly, the locality cannot be without the journeying and the journeying cannot be without the locality. One can only become homely in the locality of the locale through journeying into the foreign. That the river has a relation to the Greek is something that Heidegger insists upon and it is the Greek that stands in a relation to Germany. But this relation, although clearly named, presents an enigma. Both the German and the Greek are named in the poem, he says. ‘Hertha’, for instance, is the German name for mother earth and the homeliness of this earth is clearly named in the second strophe of the poem. The German, therefore, is the homely, situated as it is on the banks of the Ister. That which is the foreign is clearly linked with Greece. Hercules, one of the heroes of Greek

---

<sup>74</sup> Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis Philosophy Politics*, edited by Christopher Fynsk, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1989, p.242. Lacoue-Labarthe’s emphasis.

<sup>75</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.42/p.51.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p.39/p.46.

mythology, is named and it is said in the poem that the Ister has invited him from Mount Olympus. The Greek river Alpheus is named, as is the Isthmus of Corinth, a small bridge linking the Greek mainland to Corinth. Alpheus is the name of a Greek river god and it is also the river that Hercules diverted in the fifth of his labours to clean out the Augean stables. The river Indus is named but while this is derived from a Greek name the river itself is not Greek; it runs through Pakistan. This Asian river, while named, is not considered any further by Heidegger. It is as if the Greek naming of the river has covered over this and appropriated the river to itself, as if this other foreign has somehow been subsumed by the Greek. Andrzej Warminski has argued that Heidegger consistently reduces what is, in Hölderlin's work, a tripartite structure to a binary one, in that he suppresses 'the radical difference of the nature of the Greeks: that is, to suppress the Orient, the East, Egypt',<sup>77</sup> a suppression that has implications for Heidegger's thinking of *Heimischwerden* and *Unheimischsein*. This thinking of the law of becoming homely in being unhomely is examined in relation to Antigone in the next chapter.

Finding one's own, appropriating one's own is, as we have already seen, considered by Heidegger the most difficult task, a thought that echoes Hölderlin's own thinking. It is in terms of this difficulty that coming to be at home in one's own is taken into poetic care, that is taken into the enigma. 'What is one's own in this case is whatever belongs to the fatherland of the Germans. Whatever is of the fatherland is itself at home with mother earth. This *coming to be* at home in one's own in itself entails that human beings are initially, and for a long time, and sometimes forever, not at home. And this in turn entails that human beings fail to recognize, that they deny, and perhaps even have to deny and flee what belongs to the home. Coming to be at home is thus a passage through the foreign. And if the becoming homely of a particular humankind sustains the historicity of its history, then the law of the law of the encounter between the foreign and one's own is the fundamental truth of history, a truth from out of which the essence of history must unveil itself.'<sup>78</sup> Despite its difficulty, for Heidegger there is still the possibility of coming to be at home. But it has to include a journey through the foreign

---

<sup>77</sup> Andrzej Warminski, 'Monstrous History', in *The Solid Letter: Readings of Friedrich Hölderlin*, edited by Aris Fioretos, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1999, pp.201-214/p.210.

<sup>78</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.49/p.60-61. Heidegger's emphasis.

and, therefore, any poetic meditation on becoming homely has to include a *Zwiesprache*, a dialogue, with foreign poets; in Hölderlin's case this is with Sophocles and Pindar. Heidegger claims that Hölderlin's poetry resonates with the poetic thought of these two poets and that without knowledge of this resonance Hölderlin's hymns remain incomprehensible. This is not a question of having influences, it is because great poets are capable of letting themselves be influenced, he says. Minor poets believe everything comes through their own originality [*Originalität*]. However, what the greats give does not come from such originality but from the fact that they are another origin [*Ursprung*], where something is allowed to arise in a founding leap, which enables them to listen to whatever is originary [*Ursprünglich*] in other greats. Hölderlin is in a singular position, unlike any of his contemporaries, of being able to be influenced by Pindar and Sophocles. This means, for Heidegger, being able 'to listen in an originary and obedient manner to whatever is originary in the foreign from out of his own origin'.<sup>79</sup> What this means is that each is an origin, the homely through Hölderlin and the foreign through, in this case, Pindar and Sophocles. It is only by going through these poets, via a journeying, that we can begin to understand the poetizing of the rivers in Hölderlin's river poetry and also come to be at home in the locality of the locale.

This is the tension in Hölderlin's river poetry. It is the one that he remarks on in his letter to Böhlendorff, it is the tension that Heidegger here has foregrounded and which he pursues in his own meditation on Sophocles's *Antigone*, through the rest of this lecture course. And it is a tension that Lacoue-Labarthe has remarked upon, a tension that exists between the natural and the cultural and that articulates the difference between the ancient and modern worlds. Lacoue-Labarthe believes that this tension is palpable and fundamental to Hölderlin: 'This tension is located with the categories of the proper and the non-proper, the "national" (natal or native, which is a most rigorous interpretation of the Schillerian Naïve) and the foreign. But a firm law – a destiny – governs it: any culture...can appropriate itself as such, return to itself – or rather come to itself, attain itself and establish itself – only if it has previously undergone its otherness and its foreignness. Only if it has been initially disappropriated. This means that

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p.50/p.62.

disappropriation (difference) is original, and appropriation, as Hegel will say – and if it can take place – is its “result”. Excepting this question (can appropriation, as such, occur?), we can see to what extent a logic like this resembles, almost to the point of being indistinguishable from, Logic itself – in other words, the speculative logic. This exception, however, precludes reducing Hölderlin’s very singular logic simply to the dialectical procedure.’<sup>80</sup>

The exclusionary question that Lacoue-Labarthe raises here – whether appropriation is possible at all – is, in turn, fundamental to an understanding of Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin, and it is this question that is posed by the enigma in terms of its structural movement whereby the promise of a solution would have already been withdrawn prior to the promise having been made. The possibility of appropriation would have already been disappropriated if the enigma operates as such. The whole thrust of Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin in these lectures is to bring us to this point where a journey through the foreign, through what is not one’s own, can be undertaken and it is through the river that such a journey is undertaken. The river determines where human beings belong on this earth, determining the abode to where it belongs and making it homely, thereby enabling the human being to come into this homeliness by abiding in this abode. This becoming homely is determined through the journeying of the river in its doubled structure. The river is a vanishing intimating and an intimating vanishing. This, according to Heidegger, is the essential fullness of a journey, which is what is proper to the river. But what the river does, what the river is, says Heidegger, is an enigma and it is precisely this that is named by the chiasmus that the river is the locality of journeying and the journeying of locality. This paratactic, antistrophic statement, if indeed statement it is, is always incomprehensible in a certain realm of comprehension, Heidegger claims. It is not to be seen to be on the same order as a statement that says ‘today is Tuesday’. The incomprehensibility of such a statement is not due to a lack of knowledge, a lack that can be addressed, but rather because we are excluded from such comprehension until we have undergone a transformation of our essence, says Heidegger. He goes on to say that this statement is not a preparation for this

---

<sup>80</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*, p.243.

transformation. Rather it enables us to say that the river is an enigma. Knowing that the river is an enigma enables us to name it as one.

Heidegger claims that the enigma genuinely appears in the river poem at the point it appears to go backwards. However, if this chiasmus of journeying and locality effectively names the enigma, and if this statement becomes comprehensible as a result of the transformation in our essence, then it follows that after such a transformation the enigma itself becomes understandable, that, in effect, it becomes soluble. He has already said that the chiasmic statement about the rivers cannot be understood in terms of predication but that such statements can be understood in a certain way at a certain time and that we are cut off from comprehending them until we have undergone an essential transformation. Here, comprehend translates Heidegger's nominalised verb *Begreifen* which, in its verbal form, means to comprehend, grasp or understand. It is also semantically linked to the German term *Begriff* which normally is translated as concept and the verb *greifen* means to grasp, seize or take hold of, which underlines the level of mastering involved in *begreifen*. Farrell says that *begreifen* involves effort in comprehending something, by bringing it into the understanding and asks the question whether it is thinkable and 'conceivable for the mind of the subject.'<sup>81</sup> Although Heidegger does not state that such chiasmic statements are comprehensible, it is clearly the implication when he writes that we are excluded from such comprehension so long as the change in our essence, that of coming into one's own, has not occurred [*ereignet*]. The effort involved in *begreifen* is the difficulty of coming into this essence through the journey into the foreign.

But if a solution is possible, it is not one that we are permitted to want to solve – '*Wir dürfen es nicht >>lösen<< wollen*'<sup>82</sup>. I have already commented on the prohibition of *dürfen*. *Wollen* is just as important in terms of a relation to the enigma. *Wollen* means to want, in terms of desire, the desire to see the existence of a thing, as well as to will, according to Farrell. There is a sense of the urgent and the demanding about it. In a way,

---

<sup>81</sup> Farrell, *Dictionary*, p.361.

<sup>82</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.35/p.41.

Heidegger is giving us a strong injunction against our demanding a solution. What all this seems to suggest, therefore, is that a solution to the enigma is possible but that this solution is not available to human agency. It is not something that human beings can make happen but it is something that can happen to human beings as a result of the transformation of human essence. It is a solution that is arrived at outside of any conscious willing or desiring, outside of any subjective stance towards it. We cannot yet comprehend such statements, but what we can do, through such statements, is to try to bring the enigma as enigma closer to us. The status of a solution to the enigma appears to be in flux, between the possibility of a solution and the injunction against seeking one. The pronouncement of the chiasmic statement enables us to know that the river is an enigma and perhaps it is in this knowledge that the enigma is brought nearer to us. This is the implication of Heidegger's contention that we choose this statement as a means towards this nearing. To know, and here Heidegger uses *wissen* which relates to a general knowledge or awareness, that the river is an enigma is not the same as comprehending [*begreifen*] the statement that admits us into the nearness of the enigma. Perhaps what we have here is a knowledge of the enigma that operates on two levels, a knowledge that at the level of *wissen* does not gain access to the solution of the enigma, only to the fact that it is an enigma. At the second level, the level of *begreifen*, an understanding of the chiasmus is graspable, but it is not an understanding that is freely graspable at all times, although it is graspable and capable of being brought into the understanding, but only when a transformation of the human essence has occurred. If this is the case, then the injunction not to want to solve the enigma could merely be in place as an injunction against such an attempt prior to the transformation in our essence. Wanting to solve the enigma before this is, perhaps, to fall back into a metaphysico-aesthetical subjective stance towards the question of the enigma.

The transformation of the human essence can only come about through a journey into the foreign. This journey begins at the moment when the river appears to flow backwards, at the point in the poem where, Heidegger claims, there is a genuine appearance of the enigma; the enigma appears in the work of art. What he says is this:

‘*Sie muß schon vor dem ersten, aber echten Scheinen des Rätsels haltmachen.*’<sup>83</sup> That is to say that the poet’s vision [*die Schau des Dichters*] has to pause before this first but genuine appearing of the enigma. The ‘watchful and guarded [*behutsame und behütete*] eye of the poet’<sup>84</sup> sees the backward movement of the river, takes it up into his care – *hüten* means to look after, keep watch over, guard or keep. He beholds it - in its root behold comes from *haldan* which means to tend, keep or watch over. In this beholding, the poet sees in a care-full watching-over the way in which the river goes backwards, but this can only be glimpsed [*in den Blick nehmen*] in a poetic vision. It is only through poetry, the poetic, that the river can be seen to go backwards. Instead of flowing to the East, the river appears to come from there. But this is not an illusion [*Schein*], says Heidegger. In truth, he claims, the river goes backwards. Its provenance [*Herkunft*] is of such a type. What in fact looks like its origin is its origin only in the sense that it is an origin that has come from elsewhere, an origin whose source already contains within itself the fact that it has already come from elsewhere. The thinking of the provenance of the river is one that can scarcely be ventured [*wagen*], or risked in human thought, according to Heidegger. Instead, we can only be mindful of such thinking. The term used here is *vermuten*, which means to suggest, presume or assume, but is translated as be mindful of, because it forms part of a semantic network with *Mut* and *Gemüt* which mean courage and mind, or cast of mind respectively. Rather than being a faculty of the mind it has the sense of disposition or attunement. A thinking that can barely be dared becomes a taking-heed of, a kind of taking into care. Poetry has a priority over thinking here. The poet’s vision is attuned to the river’s othered origin but thought can hardly dare to think it.

But if the river flowing backwards is the appearance of the enigma and if a thinking of this flowing backwards can scarcely be thought in human thought, then what is the status of this appearance? Perhaps all that really appears is what Lacoue-Labarthe calls the wreckage of poetry. Citing these lines of Hölderlin’s - *Der scheint aber fast | Rückwärts zu gehen* – he writes: ‘To be engulfed in a flood of poetry means that poetry itself sinks,

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p.36/p.43.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

drowns, that its own overflow dries in its very possibility – a source submerged in the flood that it brought forth itself.’<sup>85</sup> This seems to argue that instead of an appearing there is a disappearing in the very act of bringing forth. Marc Froment-Meurice argues that the essential point about this passage is the hesitant beginning in which orientation appears as other. It is a ‘return to a beginning necessarily lost in that there is no beginning to the quest for meaning/direction [*sens*], for the Occident, except in the experience of the loss of meaning/direction’.<sup>86</sup> In order to get to the bottom of this or, at the very least, to indicate the direction of travel, there is a need to go back to the *Scheinen* of the enigma that Heidegger claims is operative here. In order to illuminate the meaning of *Scheinen*, I want to examine briefly two works where Heidegger sets out a thinking of *Scheinen*. The first occurs in *Being and Time*, in a discussion of *Phänomen*, *Erscheinung* and *Scheinen*. The second is in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, in the section ‘Being and Seeming’.

*Being and Time* presents us with an explicit working out of *Scheinen* and its cognates *der Schein* and *das Scheinbare*. These are translated as seeming, semblance and semblant respectively in the Macquarrie and Robinson translation. Heidegger outlines three forms of appearing. Firstly, *Phänomen* – translated as phenomenon – is that which shows itself in itself, that which is manifest [*das Offenbare*]. *Scheinen* is structurally related to the *Phänomen*, says Heidegger. An entity can show itself from itself in many ways, he claims, depending upon the kind of access that we have to it. It is possible for an entity to show itself as something which it is not and in showing itself in this way it looks like something else. This showing itself as that which it is not Heidegger calls *Scheinen*. Only when something claims to be showing itself according to its meaning – that is, it is claiming to be a phenomenon – can that something show itself as that which it is not. *Scheinen* shows itself as something it is not by pretending to show itself, by pretending to be a phenomenon. Heidegger claims that *Scheinen* is the privative, secondary modification of *Phänomen* which is the positive and original [*ursprünglich*] meaning of the Greek term φαίνεσθαι. *Scheinen*, as privative, is the absence of the in

---

<sup>85</sup> Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poetry as Experience*, translated by Andrea Tarnowski, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, pp.23-24.

<sup>86</sup> Marc Froment-Meurice, *That Is to Say: Heidegger's Poetics*, translated by Jan Plug, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1998, pp.133-4.

itself, the phenomenon, the manifest. In a sense, *Scheinen* comes to us in disguise, showing itself as something which it is not. If we take Heidegger's own explanation of *Scheinen* as operative here in the lectures on 'The Ister', then it could be said that the enigma appears only as that which it is not, that it appears only in disguise but to appear in disguise is tantamount to not appearing at all, to being non-phenomenal.

This suggests that the appearance of the enigma in the poem is not straightforward. A further complication is added, if Heidegger's explanation of *Scheinen* in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* is taken into account. In this lecture course given in 1935, eight years after the publication of *Being and Time*, Heidegger at first outlines what he sees as the embedded philosophical distinction between *Sein* and *Scheinen*, being and seeming, where being is the constant and seeming is that which 'at times surfaces, and just as fleetingly and unsteadily disappears again'.<sup>87</sup> It is the opposition between the genuine and the non-genuine [*Echtes entgegen dem Unechten*]. However, according to Heidegger, this original disjunction between being and seeming hides a belonging together, which is the concealed unity of being and seeming. This concealed unity can be glimpsed in a phrase such as *die Sonne scheint*, which by saying that 'the sun shines' is saying that the sun makes itself manifest [*zum Vorschein kommt*]. Heidegger identifies three modes of *Schein*: firstly, it is lustre and glow; secondly, *Schein* is the appearing [*Erscheinen*] or manifestation of something [*Vor-schein*]; and finally it is the seeming or semblance [*Anschein*] presented by something. His claim is that the second mode of *Schein*, in its sense of self-showing, is the ground of the possibility of the other two. One could argue that, in shining, the sun is. This initial shining determines the appearing. Because the sun shines, it appears to go round the earth and this appearance can only appear because of the shining, the making manifest. This grounding is not an accidental characteristic, according to Heidegger: 'The essence of seeming lies in appearing. It is self-showing, self-setting-forth, standing-by, and lying-at-hand... We say the moon shines; this does not just mean that it has a shine, it casts a certain brightness, but that it stands in the heavens, it is present, it is. The stars shine: in glowing they are coming to

---

<sup>87</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2000, p.104. *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953, p.75. Heidegger's emphasis.

presence. *Seeming* [*Schein*] means exactly the same as *Being* here.<sup>88</sup> *Schein* is the same as *sein* here. The straightforward opposition between *Phänomen* and *Schein* is complicated in that *Schein* can mean the same as *Phänomen*, as it was defined in *Being and Time*. *Schein* has been rescued from its derivative, privative meaning, although it still does have this meaning as *Anschein*. *Schein* and *sein* are the same, says Heidegger, when the sun, the moon and the stars shine. But what is this shine? In a sense, what we see in the stars shining is that which is no longer. We are seeing the past of these stars, stars which, when we see them, might no longer exist. They are only in their having been. But, Heidegger would argue, as he does concerning the sun, this is to see the stars in a way which only a few astronomers, physicists and philosophers see them. He says that ‘the seeming [*Schein*] in which sun and Earth stand...is an appearing [*Erscheinen*]. This seeming is not nothing. Neither is it untrue. Neither is it an appearance of relations that in nature are really otherwise. This seeming is historical and it is history, uncovered and grounded in poetry and saga, and thus an essential domain of our world’.<sup>89</sup>

The connection between being and seeming can only be grasped fully if being is understood in an originary way and this can only come through a consideration of the Greek understanding of φύσις, Heidegger claims: ‘Being opens itself up to the Greeks as *phusis*. The emerging-abiding sway is in itself at the same time the appearing that seems [*das scheinende Erscheinen*].’<sup>90</sup> Heidegger’s strategy here is to link the roots of φύσις and φαίνεσθαι so that that which emerges and reposes in itself [φύειν] is the lighting-up, self-showing, appearing of φαίνεσθαι. Appearing is not derivative of being because being essentially unfolds as appearing, as *Erscheinen*. *Schein* and *Scheinen*, in the mode of *Erscheinen*, indicate whatever appears does so in a genuine appearance, a setting-forth, a coming to presence. But this does not mean that *Schein* cannot mean semblance or mere seeming [*Anschein*]. *Schein* can mean *Anschein* because being, φύσις, in appearing, which is essentially the offering of a look or of views, can appear in such a way that it covers and conceals what beings are in truth, in unconcealment, says Heidegger. Unconcealment always offers the possibility that there will be seeming but

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p.105/p.76 Heidegger’s emphasis.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p.110/p.80

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p.106/pp.76-77 Transliteration in translation.

where beings do stand in seeming in a prolonged and secure standing then this seeming can be penetrated and dispersed. The concealment that seeming is can break apart [*zerbrechen*] or decay [*zerfallen*], according to Heidegger. Even seeming can, therefore, become a genuine appearing. In view of Heidegger's definition of *scheinen* and the fact that when Heidegger writes of the appearance of the enigma that it is a *genuine* appearance [*echten Scheinen des Rätsels*], he is saying that the enigma shines and makes itself manifest at this point, that it appears as *Erscheinen* and not as *Anschein*, that is it is not a semblance. But does the enigma genuinely appear or is Heidegger merely asserting that it does? Has the enigma been appropriated into the poem, the work of art? These are questions that cannot be answered at this point. We have to follow the itinerary of the journey into the foreign, a journey that the lecture course makes through the foreign of the Greek, in this instance Sophocles. This itinerary will be traced in the next chapter.

Before coming to that, however, I want to say something about the propriety of the enigma. Heidegger has already told us that what the river is, and does, is an enigma. As the river determines the coming to be at home of human beings on earth, then this coming to be at home is bound up with the enigmatic. The relation of the foreign to the homely is also named as enigmatic by Heidegger. Now we have already seen that Heidegger has his own definition of the enigma, *das Rätsel*. He claims that he is using it in its former [*alten*] and originary meaning [*ursprünglichen Bedeutung*], according to which the enigma refers to something that is concealed [*Verborgene*] that we care about. He speaks of the pure, originary enigma as care that counsels or counsel that cares but in doing so has he delimited the thinking of the enigma? Heidegger claims that his definition of the enigma is the *eigentliche Rätsel*, the proper enigma. If there is a proper enigma, then surely there is an improper enigma. As Lacoue-Labarthe points out, prior to any appropriation is a disappropriation and Critchley writes of an originary inauthenticity in relation to the enigma: 'Authenticity always slips back into a prior inauthenticity from which it cannot escape but which it would like to evade.'<sup>91</sup> One has to have gone through the foreign to arrive at what is one's own. What of this improper enigma; is it the enigma that retains its meaning as dark saying and that is structurally

---

<sup>91</sup> Critchley, 'Enigma Variations', p.167.

the promise that is always already effaced prior to its promise? Does the improper erupt into the proper? Heidegger has already provided a way back for such a thought of the enigma by his statement that a more profound relation lies buried in the everyday language use of *Rätsel*. There is, then, something more profound in the notion of puzzle still inherent in the term *Rätsel*. It might be that Heidegger here is thinking of the meaning of care that he ascribes to *Rätsel*, but that is not what he explicitly says. The fact that he writes of a profounder meaning in the context of a puzzle could suggest that *Rätsel* is a more profound puzzle – the injunction not to solve it is, perhaps, indicative of this. Giorgio Agamben has written apropos the terms *eigentlich* and *uneigentlich* in *Being and Time* that ‘an attentive analysis shows not only that the co-originarity of the proper and improper is never disavowed, but even that several passages could be said to imply a primacy of the improper’.<sup>92</sup> He says that by merely attributing a simple primacy of the proper to Heidegger would prevent access to the thought of *Ereignis*. Could a primacy of the improper reign here with *Rätsel*? After all, even in the rewriting of the meaning of *Rätsel* it could be said that what is happening is a return from the foreign into the homely, into its own at the source. The meaning of counsel may have already been inscribed in the word but it is an inscription that can only be reached via a prior journey into the foreign of the enigma. In coming back, we return to the proper meaning in Heidegger’s terms, of *Rätsel*; but is this proper meaning always already disappropriated?

---

<sup>92</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, edited and translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1999, p.197.

## Chapter 3

### The enigma of Antigone

The journey that the rivers make is the journey into the foreign and, for Heidegger, as far as his encounter with Hölderlin is concerned, this is a journey into Greek tragedy, specifically Sophocles's *Antigone*, in which he follows a path taken by Hölderlin: 'The pure fulfillment of this poetic necessity in the foreign land of the Greeks is a choral song in the Antigone tragedy by Sophocles. Hölderlin must have "lived" in a constant dialogue with this choral song, such that the word of his hymnal poetizing speaks from out of this dialogue and articulates it.'<sup>1</sup> Both these claims are open to question, but it is true that Hölderlin translated the ode on at least two occasions, once as part of a translation of the whole play, and that he engaged in a dialogue with tragedy in general and with Sophoclean tragedy in particular. The focus of this chapter is on what Heidegger does with the δεινόν from this choral song. The enigmatic equivocality [*rätselhaften Mehrdeutigkeit*] of τὸ δεινόν determines the essence of his journey, he says, and it is a word whose impact on Heidegger's texts is highlighted with an appropriate force in an endnote from Derrida's *Of Spirit*, which concerns the question of the translation of δεινόν and its importance to Heidegger: '[T]he enigma of the *deinon* leaves its mark on all [Heidegger's] texts we shall have to approach.'<sup>2</sup> To what extent the δεινόν is the enigma as it has been discussed in this thesis, or whether it is just a crucial aspect of its operation is a question that this chapter will reflect upon.

The tragedy of Antigone is a well-worn path trodden by a number of philosophers, including Hegel and Kierkegaard, as well as Derrida in his commentary on Hegel in *Glas*. From around 1790 to 1905, says George Steiner in his book *Antigones*, 'it was widely held by European poets, philosophers, scholars that Sophocles' *Antigone* was not

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, translated by William McNeill and Julia Davis, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1996, p.65. *Gesamtausgabe II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1923-1944, Band 53, Hölderlins Hymn "Der Ister"*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1984, p.79.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit*, translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1989, p.116. The transliteration of the Greek term is in the English text.

only the finest of Greek tragedies, but a work of art nearer to perfection than any other produced by the human spirit'.<sup>3</sup> In his *Aesthetics*, Hegel pronounced it to be one of the most sublime works of art ever created. Heidegger himself addressed the play at length twice and this chapter will focus on the reading given in Heidegger's lectures from 1942 on 'The Ister'. It will be mindful, however, of his 1935 reading from the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. The reasons behind this focus are that the question of the enigma seemingly plays no part in the earlier discussion, and the question of becoming homely in being unhomely does not have the same force and complexity in the 1935 lectures as it does in 'The Ister' lectures. As Clare Pearson Geiman has convincingly argued<sup>4</sup>, the second reading amounts to a fundamental repudiation of the first and, as such, it bears less of a relation to the thinking that will be drawn out in this chapter. It is, she says, a move away from the violence of a creative founding to a more meditative thinking of letting things be. Veronique Foti also sees the 1935 reading as being preoccupied with the ontological relationships of power and the Promethean character of human beings, a preoccupation not shared by the later reading: 'The tragic conflict is no longer played out between *techne* and *dike*, but rather between two modalities of homelessness and homecoming; and, in keeping with this shift, the entire rhetoric has changed from a rhetoric of power to a rhetoric of alienation. Homelessness or homecoming characterize the human being which is now the locus of contrariety.'<sup>5</sup> Dennis J. Schmidt, in *On Germans and Other Greeks*, highlights Heidegger's key preoccupation in the 1942 lectures as the estrangement of human beings into their essential homelessness. It is also not my intention to investigate a Heideggerian theory of tragedy, if there is such a thing. Heidegger provides hints and intimations that a specific understanding of tragedy and the tragic inheres in his thought, writes Robert S. Gall, but he 'nowhere explicitly sets about giving us a theory of tragedy or a detailed analysis of the essence of tragedy'.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> George Steiner, *Antigones*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Clare Pearson Geiman, 'Heidegger's *Antigones*', in *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, edited by Richard Polt and Gregory Fried, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2001, pp.161-182.

<sup>5</sup> Veronique M. Foti, 'Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Sophoclean Tragedy', in *Heidegger toward the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s*, edited by James Risser, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999, pp.163-186, p.173. Transliterations of the Greek in the original text.

<sup>6</sup> Robert S. Gall, 'Interrupting speculation: The thinking of Heidegger and Greek tragedy', *Continental Philosophy Review*, Volume 36, pp.177-194, 2003, p.177.

Schmidt argues that Heidegger addresses ‘the topic of tragedy most of all in the context of those concerns which Hegel first articulated, namely, within the context of *history*’,<sup>7</sup> rather than engaging with tragedy as such.

The play itself appears to be relatively straightforward in terms of its action and dramatic trajectory. At the opening of the drama, nearly all the relevant action has taken place. Antigone’s brothers, Polynices and Eteocles, are both dead, having killed each other in the fight over Thebes. Polynices had led the rebellion against the city while his brother remained loyal in its defence. In light of this, Creon, the city’s ruler, has decreed that Eteocles be buried with full military honours, while Polynices must be left to rot, unburied, on open ground. It is the latter part of the decree that Antigone has decided cannot be honoured and she has already determined her course of action to bury Polynices before we meet her on stage. We are not presented with her thinking behind this decision as part of the dramatic action. There is none of the agonised indecision that haunts Hamlet, for example; her justification comes later. It is as if she has already been called into the decision and it is merely a question of her taking responsibility for it. It is Antigone’s relation to the deed that is vital, according to John Jones: ‘[H]er heroism and her solitude rest in her appropriation of the deed: in her exclusion of her sister from any share in it...and in her claiming it for herself when she is brought before Creon.’<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that Sophocles has failed in not giving us the psychological motivations for Antigone’s action, merely that these are not presented. It is true to say that Greek tragedy is less about individual psychology and more about the individual’s place within a wider network, as Schmidt says: ‘Tragedy takes up the riddle that each individual is as a singular being, but in Greece it could do this only by asking about the place of the individual in the community. Such a situation, an impossible situation, is ultimately the root of the crisis that animates Greek tragedy.’<sup>9</sup> In the case of *Antigone*, it is the public law of Thebes which comes into conflict with family law and it is the relation of Antigone and Creon to these two kinds of law that is dramatised in the play with

---

<sup>7</sup> Dennis J. Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2001, p.226. Schmidt’s emphasis.

<sup>8</sup> John Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1962, p.198.

<sup>9</sup> Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks*, p.112.

Antigone's decision leading to her conflict with Creon and eventually her death. All she has to do is to act upon her decision and the play dramatises this act and its consequences; the conflict, says Jones, is dramatised in and through the act of burial. Heidegger's main focus is on the choral ode and his purpose is to think towards illuminating the essence of the river, that is to illuminate the fundamental law [*Grundgesetz*] of becoming homely [*Heimischwerden*]. For Heidegger, the essential ground of the tragedy of Antigone is contained in two lines (333-334 in the Greek text), and the decisive word within these two lines is τὸ δεινόν. What is decisive about this word hinges entirely on Heidegger's translation and appropriation of it thereby into his thinking of becoming homely in being unhomely. Heidegger translates the enigmatic word τὸ δεινόν as *das Unheimliche*, which is usually translated into English as the uncanny. This latter translation misses a crucial component of the German word *heim*, which means home, although it also has connotations of secrecy and mystery. *Heimlich* can mean secret or furtive and *Geheimnis* means mystery, so there is a certain equivocality in the home. It forms part of a semantic network which is essential to Heidegger's whole illumination of the law of becoming homely, including *heimisch* and *unheimisch* as well as *heimischwerden* and *heimischsein*. Uncanny, through the root word canny, is related to knowing, as canny is a kind of practical knowing. This translation into English, however, should be kept in reserve and even when it is used the German term should always be kept in mind.<sup>10</sup> What is of more importance is Heidegger's translation itself, which he admits is at first alien, violent and even philologically wrong, although both *philologisch* and *falsch* are cordoned off in quotation marks, as if to suggest that neither of these terms is particularly apt. This translation, he says, can only be justified through an interpretation [*Auslegung*], that is the translation cannot stand alone in and of itself, it is not autonomous.

Before considering Heidegger's translation of τὸ δεινόν, it is important to set out his thoughts on translation with which he prefaces his explanation of this specific term. For

---

<sup>10</sup> Michael Lewis makes a virtue of keeping a number of Heidegger's terms untranslated in order to preserve 'the discreet echoes of the original'. Nor should Heidegger's polysemic words be translated to make explicit all of their meanings, he says. The 'resonances should remain implicit'. See Michael Lewis, *Heidegger and the Place of Ethics*, London New York, Continuum, 2005, p.xiii. Lewis's emphasis.

Heidegger, a dictionary is only ever an indication [*Hinweise*] towards understanding a word; it is never the final authority. The information in a dictionary is always based on a prior interpretation of the contexts in which a word appears, although Heidegger concedes that in most cases it does provide the correct information about the meaning of a word – he doesn't say that it provides the *correct meaning* – although this correctness is not a guarantee of any insight into the truth of this meaning. In effect, what he is saying is that in a translation from a dictionary the meaning of a word is related to the words that provide the context for its appearance. A dictionary is only one interpretation which, in terms of its methods and limits, remains largely opaque, he claims, and once language is reduced to the level of communication and exchange then the meanings provided by such a word book are 'binding "without further ado"'. Viewed with regard to the historical spirit of a language as a whole, on the other hand, every dictionary lacks any immediate or binding standards of measure'.<sup>11</sup> Translation that sees the dictionary as authoritative, he seems to be saying, is not based on what these words meant to the Greeks but on what they mean to us now, and that something essential about their meaning is lost thereby.

All translation is an interpretation and all interpretation a translation, says Heidegger. Translation is not the substitution of one word in one language for another in the other. The impossibility of such a substitution is not the failure of translation – indeed Heidegger says that translation can bring to light connections that were merely implicit in the language being translated.<sup>12</sup> Translation goes further, as this quote from his lectures on Parmenides makes clear. The translating of the word ἀλήθεια 'occurs only when the translating word "unconcealedness [*Unverborgenheit*]" transports us into the domain of experience and the mode of experience out of which the Greeks or, in the case at hand, the primordial thinker Parmenides say the word ἀλήθεια'.<sup>13</sup> Translation is a

---

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.62/p.75.

<sup>12</sup> It could be argued that the translation of '*Schwingen*' by 'pinions', as commented on above in Chapter 2, in the McNeill and Davis translation of 'The Ister' is an example of this. Michael Hamburger translates the word as 'wings'. See Friedrich Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, translated by Michael Hamburger, London, Anvil Press Poetry, Third Edition, 1994, p.513.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, translated by Andre Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1992, p.11. *Gesamtausgabe II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1923-1944, Band 54, Parmenides*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1982, p.16.

thinking return into the thought of the language being translated and a means of unveiling the truth of a work from out of ‘the blind obstinacy of habitual opinion’.<sup>14</sup> John Sallis writes that the translator’s task involves a certain abandonment so that one is ‘translated into the domain in which what is to be translated was originally said’.<sup>15</sup> In addition, as well as returning to the truth of the translated language, our own language is more fully revealed, says Heidegger: ‘[T]ranslation is more an awakening, clarification, and unfolding of one’s own language with the help of an encounter with the foreign language...Thought in terms of historical reflection, translation is an encounter with a foreign language for the sake of appropriating one’s own language [*der Aneignung der eigenen*].’<sup>16</sup> This thinking of translation as a journey into the foreign as a way of coming back into a more proper relation with one’s own language chimes with a thinking that sees a journey into the foreign as essential in terms of becoming homely in what is one’s own. The choice for Heidegger is whether language is used as a mere technical instrument or whether it is honoured ‘as the concealed shrine that, in belonging to being, preserves within it the essence of human beings’.<sup>17</sup> This choice must also operate within a language itself if, as Heidegger asserts, translation, as interpretation, is operative within it. The interpretation of Hölderlin’s hymns is an example of a translation within the German language, which is perhaps Heidegger’s way of justifying his own interpretation of these hymns. Equally, a study of ancient Greek is not to be undertaken for the sake of appearing cultured; it is to be done so that the singular essence of the Greek world is acknowledged in its singularity and, in doing so, ‘that the concealed essence of our own historical commencement can find its way into the clarity of our world’.<sup>18</sup>

In his terms, therefore, Heidegger’s translation of τὸ δεινόν as *das Unheimliche* is a thinking into the realm of experience of Greek tragedy as a way of coming into one’s own. The key claim is that his translation is a unity of the multiple meanings that δεινόν has, with unity [*Einheit*] being the experience of ‘the ground of their originary

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.63/p.76.

<sup>15</sup> John Sallis, *On Translation*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2002, p.18.

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, pp.65-66/p.80.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p.66/p.81.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

and reciprocally counterturning belonging-together'.<sup>19</sup> Structurally, there are three doubled meanings which the overarching word *das Unheimliche* gathers together. First of all, the δεινόν is the fearful [*Furchtbare*] and this fearfulness is, on the one hand, the fear of that which is frightful, which leads to trembling, attempts to avoid the frightful, cowardice and taking flight. On the other hand, fearfulness is also reverence [*die Ehrfurcht*] and awe [*die Scheu*]. The δεινόν in its fearfulness is both that which repels – the taking fright and flight – and that which attracts – awe and reverence – and in this latter aspect it can 'become binding and take one into its concealed protection'.<sup>20</sup> In the counterturning, therefore, there is a dual movement of attraction and repulsion. The second meaning of δεινόν seems to arise out of the first, suggesting a certain hierarchy, even though it is meant to be a gathered unity. Whether it is frightful or awe-inspiring, the δεινόν is always the powerful [*das Gewaltige*], says Heidegger. As the powerful that towers over us, it is again worthy of honour but when the powerful becomes the violent [*das Gewalttätige*] it becomes fearful in terms of the frightful. As with the *Furchtbare*, there is this double movement of attraction and repulsion, a movement that goes away but also comes towards, similar perhaps to the rivers in their vanishing and intimation.

This almost passing reference to the violent – it is merely one counterturn in the triptych of meanings that make up the δεινόν - is in stark contrast to the priority that is granted to violence in the interpretation of this word in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. In the earlier lectures, the violent is the overwhelming sway [*des überwältigenden Waltens*], which causes fear, panic and anxiety, as well as awe, and which Heidegger identifies with beings as a whole. Concomitant to this is the one who uses violence, to whom violence is a need, one who has violence as the basic trait of his Dasein, which is the human being. Human beings react violently against that which is overwhelming. The human being is also δεινόν in the sense that while he remains exposed to the overwhelming sway, he also belongs to being. The necessity of violence is a consequence of the fact, says Geiman, that it 'is only in terms of power that we can understand Being, since Being in its difference from beings can never be grasped

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.68/p.83.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p.63/p.77.

through any given actuality...but only as the source of potentiality that is prior to and exceeds all actuality. It is, similarly, only in terms of power that we can understand human Being, since human Being in its temporality is given only in and through possibilities or potentialities'.<sup>21</sup> As Mark Wigley puts it: 'On the one hand, man is violent, violating both enclosure and structure...and violently domesticating things with technology...in defining a home. On the other hand, there is the "overpowering" violence of Being, which the familiar space of the home attempts to cover over but which compels a certain panic and fear within it, and inevitably forces man out of it. The endless conflict between these two forms of violence is constitutional rather than simply a historical event.'<sup>22</sup> None of this thinking of the violent is, it seems, present in 'The Ister' lectures and rather than power being the determinant, it is the play of concealment and unconcealment which comes to determine 'the inherent tension and movement that belong to the human being as the essentially most unsettling being, who is "un-at-home" amidst what is "homely"'.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1942 lectures, the third meaning of the δεινόν arises out of the powerful. The powerful, says Heidegger, is always in excess of our usual and habitual powers and abilities. In this, therefore, the δεινόν is *Ungewöhnliche*, which is translated as inusual but corresponds more to unusual or not ordinary. This is both the skilled in everything [*Allgeschicklichkeit*] and *Ungeheure*, translated as extraordinary, but also meaning monstrous. Both of these are then related to a third term, *Gewohnheit*, which means habit or the habitual. That which is out of the ordinary [*das Außergewöhnliche*] does not necessarily lie outside the habitual, says Heidegger, unlike the *Ungeheure*, which immediately and essentially exceeds the habitual. On the other hand, the all-skilful is both outside and inside the *Ungewöhnliche*, he says. This is presumably because to be skilled in everything is to be unusual, out of the ordinary [*außergewöhnlich*], while the perfection of a skill requires repetition until it becomes habitual. That we are to see the *Ungeheure* and the *Allgeschicklichkeit* as being outside

---

<sup>21</sup> Geiman, 'Heidegger's *Antigones*', p.166.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction Derrida's Haunt*, Cambridge Massachusetts, London England, The MIT Press, 1993, p.111.

<sup>23</sup> Geiman, 'Heidegger's *Antigones*', p.175.

in different ways is signalled by Heidegger when he puts the word outside in quotation marks when referring to being skilled in everything, which suggests that the *Ungeheure* is absolutely outside, unlike the all-skilful. This structure of the *Ungewöhnliche*, however, seems to be different to the structure of *das Furchtbare* and *das Gewaltige*. *Das Furchtbare* stands by itself and turns to fear or awe in its counterturning, as does *das Gewaltige*. This third meaning of the δεινόν does not have the same dynamic of attraction and repulsion, which marks the other two. The fearful and the powerful elicit responses to them, presumably from human beings, of cowardice or reverence, giving honour or taking fright. In addition, there is no equivalent term to *Gewohnheit* for the fearful or the powerful and neither is prefixed with the privative *un-*, which seems to make it necessary for Heidegger to introduce the positive term. What is more important is the relation of *Ungeheure* to *Ungewöhnliche*. Because it lies outside the habitual, and immediately and essentially exceeds the ordinary, it could be said that *Ungeheure* does not stand in a relation to *Ungewöhnliche* at all. This double structure of the outside does not pertain to the fearful and the powerful. It seems as if the *Ungeheure* is an interruption of the pattern established with the first two definitions, thereby destabilising the δεινόν itself through the *Ungeheure*. It exceeds the habitual, the usual, the ordinary and the inhabitual and stands absolutely outside them. It inserts the monstrous into the *Unheimliche*, which seemingly cannot contain it.

But if there is an instability introduced into the *Unheimliche* by the *Ungeheure*, there is also an instability in the word *unheimlich* and its relation to *heimlich*, as Freud's essay '*Das Unheimliche*' tells us: 'In general we are reminded that the word '*heimlich*' is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight.'<sup>24</sup> *Heimlich* means secret or clandestine, something furtive, rather than referring to being homely. Farrell underlines its fundamental hiddenness: 'It is more frequently applied to that which happens to be hidden or is by its nature hidden. It evokes the atmosphere of secrecy or seclusion both

---

<sup>24</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Pelican Freud Library Volume 14 Art and Literature*, translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey, the present volume edited by Albert Dickson, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1985, p.345.

in persons and in things.’<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the home is that which loves to hide, or is that which remains hidden. As far as Heidegger is concerned, it seems we are meant to think of home when we hear the term *heim* in *heimlich* and, as is made explicit in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, the simple distinction of *unheimlich* and *heimlich* in terms of the homely is what Heidegger is after: ‘We understand the un-canny [*Un-heimliche*] as that which throws one out of the “canny” [*Heimlichen*], that is, the homely [*Heimischen*], the accustomed [*Gewohnten*], the usual, the unendangered. The unhomely [*Unheimische*] does not allow us to be at home [*einheimisch sein*].’<sup>26</sup> However, it may well be that Heidegger also wants us to think of this meaning even when considering the homely or the home. That there is something hidden in the home, or that the home itself is hidden, that it hides its true nature, that the home itself can never be grasped, could be implied in the formulation of becoming homely in being unhomely.

Putting this question of instability to one side, to summarise Heidegger’s position, these three terms, the fearful, the powerful and the unusual are the meanings that go to make up the *Unheimliche*. However, the *Unheimliche* does not take it in turns to be one of them, he says. Rather, it gathers them together into an originary unity [*ursprünglichen Einheit*] so that *das Unheimliche* ‘grasps the concealed ground of the unity of the manifold meanings of δεινόν, thus grasping the δεινόν itself in its concealed essence’,<sup>27</sup> an essence that was probably also concealed from the Greeks. Heidegger claims that *das Unheimliche* probably goes beyond the Greek in terms of its explicitness. But if any one of these meanings does not have a priority over any of the others, there does seem to be an implicit level of valorisation within each of the meanings themselves. The fear that calls for reverence, for example, is not one that calls for avoidance or flight ‘but rather a turning toward something in heed and respect’.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the powerful as commanding respect seems to be valued more highly than the merely violent. With regard to the unusual, it is the extraordinary that seems to have priority because it is the extraordinary

---

<sup>25</sup> R.B. Farrell, *Dictionary of German Synonyms*, Third Edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p.290.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2000, p.161. *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953, pp.115-116.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.64/p.78.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p.63/p.77.

that leads us to the home, to the *heim* of the *unheimisch* and the *heimisch*, to the *Unheimliche* itself.

The movement, whereby the *Ungeheure* becomes the *Unheimische*, or *Un-heimische*, comes during a consideration of Hölderlin's translations of the choral ode from *Antigone*. Hölderlin produced two versions of this ode, and it is in his full translation of Sophocles's play where  $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{o}\nu$  is translated as *ungeheuer*, having previously been translated as *gewaltige*. Heidegger considers the contemporary meaning of *Ungeheure* to be 'immense', in which the idea of quantity has priority and which is essentially measurelessness. Heidegger equates this measurelessness with ahistoricity and with what he calls Americanism and Bolshevism. The *Ungeheure* becomes vital in overcoming this ahistoricity. It requires us, says Heidegger, to recognise, in the extraordinary as the immense, the concealed essence of the extraordinary. That essence is effectively the not-ordinary, the not-familiar [*Nicht-Geheure*]. The familiar as the ordinary is characterised by Heidegger as *der Vertraute*, which is a kind of trusting intimacy, and which is identified with the homely. To be unhomely, however, is to be *Ungeheure*, extraordinary, monstrous. The *Ungeheure* is both an eruptive force in the uncanny and is the unhomely. In order to see how the *Ungeheure* works through the *Unheimliche*, we now need to consider *unheimlich* in relation to becoming homely and being unhomely which, for Heidegger, is what Sophocles's play addresses and is the key question of these lectures. It is entirely what Hölderlin's river poetry is about, says Heidegger: 'Hölderlin, in his telling of the rivers, poetizes the becoming homely yet simultaneous being unhomely of human beings as historical.'<sup>29</sup> The choral ode from *Antigone* shines out of Hölderlin's hymnal poetry like a rare and foreign stone in an otherwise familiar piece of jewellery, says Heidegger. This implies, although Heidegger does not say this, that the ode remains hard and impenetrable within the poetry. Any attempt to break into the stone in search of its meaning would be futile, if one follows the argument from 'The Origin', where Heidegger describes the stone of the temple which manifests its impenetrable heaviness. If the stone is smashed, nothing inward is ever revealed. The stone merely shows itself as fragments. Nor would the determination

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p.64/p.79.

of its carat grant us a true picture of its weight. Before we get to the ode itself, a certain impenetrability has been marked by Heidegger. The rare and foreign stone shines in the familiar but it is a shining in which something essential is undisclosable.

To understand this becoming homely through being unhomely requires that we come to understand the enigmatic unity of locality and journeying. This involves an excursion into the choral ode, that is an excursion into the foreign, so that the essence of the rivers can be illuminated and, in this illumination, there is an enquiry into the fundamental law of becoming homely in being unhomely. The unity of locality and journeying can be grasped through a thoughtful reflection on the essence of history. The historicity of history consists [*bestehen*] in this being as this becoming. Being unhomely [*Unheimischsein*] is becoming homely, in being unhomely lies the possibility of becoming homely, not as an attribute of it but as its essence: ‘Locality and journeying bear the essence of becoming homely. Therein lies the historicity of human beings. Historicity is the distinctive mark of that humankind whose poets are Sophocles and Hölderlin – for something having the character of a commencement [*Anfängliches*] once occurred in the Greek world, and that which has the character of a commencement alone grounds history.’<sup>30</sup> For Hölderlin, says Heidegger, that essence is concealed in the becoming homely [*Heimischwerden*] of human beings. Therefore, we human beings can learn to grasp the enigma that the river is, the enigma that is the unity of locality and journeying, only through a becoming homely and human beings can only become homely, Heidegger continues, via a passage and encounter [*Auseinandersetzung*] with the foreign [*die Fremde*]. The foreign, however, is a particular type of foreign: ‘That foreign, of course, through which the return home journeys, is not some arbitrary “foreign” in the sense of whatever is merely and indeterminately not one’s own. The *foreign* that relates to the return home, that is, is one with it, is the *provenance* of such return and is that which has been at the commencement [*Anfängliche*] with regard to what is one’s own and the homely.’<sup>31</sup> The foreign, therefore, is already in an intimate relation with the home and what is one’s own. The home and the foreign are

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p.55-6/p.69.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.54/p.67. Heidegger’s emphasis. The quotation marks around foreign appear in the English text only. They are not in the German.

complicated by Heidegger through their co-implication. The foreign is there at the beginning of the journey and is where the return comes from. In a sense, the foreign determines one's own and becoming homely. For Heidegger, *die Fremde* is on the way to where it can remain in its wandering. In an essay from 1953 on George Trakl, he links *fremd* to the Old High German term *fram* so that what the term actually means is 'forward to somewhere else, underway toward...., onward to the encounter with what is kept in store for it. The foreign goes forth, ahead. But it does not roam aimlessly, without any kind of determination. The foreign element goes in its search toward the site [*Ort*] where it may stay [*bleiben*] in its wandering. Almost unknown to itself, the "foreign" is already following the call that calls it on the way into its own'.<sup>32</sup> What we would ordinarily understand by *fremd* is altered by Heidegger so that it is seen more as a movement towards where it can remain as a wandering. But it is a wandering that has always already been called towards its own, into becoming homely, and it is a wandering that always has a specific end in mind, that is being. To wander, says Heidegger, is to be on the way home to being, even if this way home is a wandering. Becoming homely is always a possibility for Heidegger even if the achievement of such a homeliness is fraught with difficulty and danger.

The homely always stands [*bleiben*] in a relation to the unhomely in such a way that the unhomely is present [*anwesen*] in the homely. The fact that Heidegger regards the human being as the most unhomely is underlined by his contention that the human being is the uncanniest of the uncanny. The uncanny is multiple in kind, according to Heidegger's interpretation of the phrase *πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ* which opens the choral ode. The *πολλὰ* does not indicate a mere number, rather the uncanny is all sorts of things, [*das Vielerlei*], diverse [*das Mannigfaltige*] and manifold [*das Vielfältige*], he says. Heidegger italicises the second part of this word to underline the sheer foldedness of the uncanny, its layering and leveling, its disclosure and concealment – to fold is always to hide - its pleatedness, doubledness and entanglement: 'Multiply folded, that is, placed together and thus individuated and, as thus folded, simultaneously interwoven and

---

<sup>32</sup> Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter D. Hertz, New York, Harper and Row, 1971, p.163. *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1959, p.41. I have translated *fremd* as foreign rather than strange, as it is in the book, for the sake of consistency.

hidden, is the uncanny.’<sup>33</sup> Out of this folding arises *das Unheimlichste des Unheimlichen*, the human being whose particular kind of uncanniness comes to light in the choral ode. An intrinsic relation is established between the becoming homely of human beings and the human being who is the most uncanny, τὸ δεινότατον. So Heidegger’s claim is that the uncanniest of the uncanny has a relation to becoming homely, which is to say being unhomely, and that the uncanny is meant as that which is not at home, not homely in that which is homely. For Heidegger, human beings are not homely in a singular sense but their care is to become homely.

The journey into the foreign is not an adventure, however. The human being who, in Heidegger’s translation of the ode is venturing forth and is always underway everywhere, is not an adventurer, who finds fulfillment in the mere fact of travelling. The human being belongs in a higher realm of the δεινόν, which the adventurer does not attain. Here, Heidegger establishes a dual form of venturing forth [*ausfahren*], an improper venturing forth for the adventurer, who remains homeless because of his rootlessness, and for whom the fact of his homelessness is not an issue, and a proper one for the human being. In the latter form of *ausfahren*, ‘the sea and the land and the wilderness are those realms that human beings transform with all their skillfulness, use and make their own [*Seinigen macht*], so that they may find their own vicinity through such realms’.<sup>34</sup> Despite this, however, the striving, that is the mark of a human being who seeks to establish itself within an environment, a dwelling place, precisely does not enable the human being to attain the homely, which remains out of reach. The homely is not found in establishing oneself among beings in a specific site. In this, the human being remains unhomely but this is not to say that the unhomely human being is the same as the adventurer. The unhomely one cannot be a mere adventurer, who could not be δεινός because he is merely odd and interesting and as such is merely not-homely [*nicht-heimisch*]. According to Heidegger, for the adventurer the distinction between the homely and the unhomely is lost. The adventurer is a thrillseeker, one who searches out danger but who in fact cannot see that the real danger lies elsewhere.

---

<sup>33</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.68/p.83.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.73/p.89.

For the δεινότητος, the most uncanny, unhomely and *Ungeheure* being, there is, however, a specific manner of being homely [*Heimischsein*]. Within the essence of the most uncanny being is the inability to find a way into this essence, which is essentially closed off to it. This is what constitutes the properly unhomely [*eigentlich Unheimische*], for Heidegger. Even so, the properly unhomely still has a relation to the homely but it is one in which the homely is not attained. The relation is one of deprivation [*entbehren*], but a deprivation in which the one possesses the other in a mutual possessing, albeit with a certain priority given to the homely possessing the unhomely: '[D]eprivation is the way in which the unhomely one possesses [*besitzen*] the homely, or to put it more precisely, the way in which whatever is homely possesses the unhomely one.'<sup>35</sup> The homely possesses the unhomely but only in the sense that the unhomely is possessed by what is absent. This is the essence of the uncanny, the *Unheimlichkeit*, presencing in the manner of an absencing, 'in such a way that whatever presences and absences here is itself simultaneously the open realm of all presencing and absencing'.<sup>36</sup> Even though the homely is unattainable, it still possesses the unhomely – therefore the uncanny – as an exclusion, a privation, an impossibility. Essentially, one is exiled from one's own essence, cast out from it without any way back, and one experiences one's essence as its withdrawal.

This experience of the essence, in terms of the counterturning character of the uncanny, is announced, says Heidegger, in the παντοπόρος ἄπορος of the choral ode. Putting aside the contentiousness of this join – Heidegger elides the colon between the two words – I want to focus on what he makes out of it. What this phrase signifies for Heidegger is a being that experiences everything and yet remains experienceless, in that this being is unable to translate these experiences into an insight into its essence. That being is the human being and all human activity, therefore, is a form of displacement, because what human beings do can never bring them to a place where their essence can become their own. This is because death is unavoidable in fact and all the pursuits that

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.75/p.92.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

human beings undertake are ways of evading facing up to death – according to Heidegger human beings only know of death through its evasion. By evading it, they exclude themselves from their own essence. For Heidegger, however, death is the means of entry into one's essence: 'Human beings, however, mostly know of this essential trait of themselves only in the manner of evading it and thereby conceding their exclusion from entry into their own essence.'<sup>37</sup> Becoming homely is related to death and in order to enter into one's own essence one needs to find a way to evade the evasion of death, a double evasion that is a confrontation. In evading death, human beings busy themselves with beings and are driven out of being as a result, although they still think of themselves as being at home.

It is the uncanniness of human beings which allows them to encounter beings and therefore to forget being and through forgetting to stand outside of being, says Heidegger. It is this aspect of the uncanny that is identified with unhomeliness which, says Heidegger, exceeds all other forms of the uncanny. It occurs because, through their uncanniness, human beings encounter other beings and, as a result forget being, although the fact that they encounter beings means that they have a relation to being. However, because being is only seen in relation to beings, being itself withdraws so that any understanding of being proceeds via beings. In being amongst beings, human beings believe themselves to be at home but this is the moment when they are precisely not at home. It is the distinction of human beings to see the open of being, even though the content of this open became lost as a fundamental experience. To understand being and, therefore, in a sense, to know it, is to be excluded from it, if this understanding comes from beings. The human essence is the extreme uncanny, the uncanniest of the uncanny, precisely because in their concern with, and for, beings, the human being forgets being, forgets the home, which is being, and mistakes the homely for a futile wandering. This is, according to Heidegger, literally a catastrophe in the sense of a turning away or a reversal. The human being is the sole catastrophe amongst beings. Heidegger here uses the Greek term *καταστροφή* to emphasise that we should not see catastrophe as necessarily destructive. In ancient Greek, *καταστροφή* referred to an overturning, a

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. pp.75-76/pp.92-93.

subjugation, reduction, or an end. Heidegger wants to signify an overturning or reversal [*Umkehrung*]. The disastrous or pessimistic meaning that catastrophe now has he sees as a result of the Christian misunderstanding of the Greek world. This negative moment of the uncanny has something of a lesser status within the metaphysics of the West that begins with Plato and which forms part of the Christian tradition, according to Heidegger.

For him, what is laid open in the Sophoclean moment is the essential Greek experience of human beings in the commencement [*Anfang*]: ‘The history of the Greek world attains the pinnacle of its essence at that very point where it preserves and brings to appear the counterturning in being itself. For here alone is there the necessity of remaining within the grounds of that which is counterturning, instead of taking flight into one or the other side. At that historical moment when one side of the counterturning character of being is devalued as the lesser and the lower, the Greek world falls out of the orbit of its essence and its downfall has been decided.’<sup>38</sup> The Greek world falls at precisely that moment when it could have turned towards being. Instead, it turns away from being towards beings and, in doing so, it forfeits the home, it becomes the uncanniest and the most unhomely. This turning away constitutes the entire Western philosophical tradition, according to Heidegger, and the greatness of the Greek moment is the possibility of a turn towards being and the home, a turn that has yet to be taken. According to Heidegger, Sophocles dramatises the moment of the counterturning in the παντοπόρος ἄπορος, the eruption of autonomous power and the rise of the being that experiences without experiencing. The human being that forgets being, that pursues the homely amongst beings, is the mistaken legacy of this dramatic moment. As unhomely, the human being is that homely ‘that seeks yet does not find itself, because it seeks itself by way of a distancing [*Entfernung*] and alienation [*Entfremdung*] from itself’.<sup>39</sup> The human being, in whom the counterturning is essentially constituted, always turns away from what it is fundamentally seeking.

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p.77/p.95.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p.84/p.103.

Heidegger deepens this counterturning through another, possibly dubious, conjunction, ὑψίπολις ἄπολις. Ὑψίπολις is to tower high above the site and ἄπολις is to forfeit the site, according to Heidegger. This phrase speaks of a specific realm in which human action is accomplished, he says. This realm is the political but we are not to see the political in terms of how we interpret the city state, or what we think politics is today. Rather, the πόλις is the place where ‘all beings and all relational comportment towards beings is gathered’.<sup>40</sup> The πόλις is the place where human beings appear and is the site of their essence. As ὑψίπολις, the human being is always overreaching itself, but as ἄπολις, it is always its own downfall. These are not attributes of the human being, they are their possibilities. Human beings are placed into the site of their essence, while at the same time they are turned away from it. They both govern this place and are lost in it, that is any rising high within the πόλις is a plunging into its depths. The veiled ground of this unity of rising and falling is the uncanny and because human beings both overreach and lose themselves they are the most uncanny beings. The πόλις is the site of human being in the midst of being and is essentially bound up with being unhomely. The human being does not determine the unhomely, however. Rather, it is the unhomely which determines what human beings are and what they might become. This does not mean that taking up the δεινόν is a passive acceptance, it is an active taking on of responsibility. This is the exemplary role for Antigone, as Schmidt says. She is this ‘because she does not deny the force of human destiny and the impossible situation it may unfold’.<sup>41</sup> This is what makes her uncanny for Heidegger: ‘The uncanny is nothing other than this: the fact that she takes as her all-determinative point of departure that against which nothing can avail, because it is that appearing that is destined for her...and of which no one knows whence it has arisen.’<sup>42</sup> In a sense, she chooses to be chosen by her destiny, that is to be the protector of the memory of Polynices through his burial, and because this choice comes like a voice from elsewhere no argument can be brooked against it. By pursuing this path, Antigone is extracted from all human possibilities and comes into ‘direct conflict over the site of all beings and into a sublation of the

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.86/p.106.

<sup>41</sup> Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks*, p.257.

<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.103/p.128.

subsistence of her own life'.<sup>43</sup> It is not that her life becomes worthless or not worth living. Her life becomes subservient to the task that she has assumed. In this decision, she is the unhomeliest of the unhomely. Antigone goes beyond beings, stepping out of the site of all beings, and she knows that her action will lead to her death but, says Heidegger, her death is a belonging to being, it is her becoming homely within and out of being unhomely. As the most unhomely being, Antigone is the most uncanny. As such, argues Heidegger, Antigone must be the one referred to at the end of the choral ode, where the chorus, the Theban elders, proclaims that the uncanniest of the uncanny should be an outcast from the hearth and not be allowed into the knowing of the chorus.

Heidegger fixes on this notion of the hearth, the ἔστιά. The ἔστιά is the site of being-homely, says Heidegger, in all its welcoming force. It 'essentially prevails as lighting, illuminating, warming, nourishing, purifying, refining, glowing'.<sup>44</sup> Ἐστία derives its meaning from radiate or burn and Heidegger plays upon the welcoming warmth of the hearth: 'Through this fire, the hearth is the enduring ground and determinative middle – the site of all sites, as it were, the homestead pure and simple, toward which everything presences alongside and together with everything else and thus first is.'<sup>45</sup> But is there not a hint of danger here, even in the fire itself? And what of the welcome, is it always as it seems? As Derrida points out, who or what does the welcoming assumes an authority and may not always have the purest of motives: 'To dare to say welcome is perhaps to insinuate that one is at home here, that one knows what it means to be at home, and that at home one receives, invites, or offers hospitality, thus appropriating for oneself a place to *welcome* the other, or, worse, *welcoming* the other in order to appropriate for oneself a place and then speak the language of hospitality.'<sup>46</sup> Through the hyperbole with which Heidegger describes the hearth, he does seem to be suggesting that this is a place of welcome and that it is possible to be at home here, a possibility that earlier in the lectures he seemed to counsel against.

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p.105/p.130.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p.105/pp.130-131.

<sup>46</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Adieu To Emmanuel Levinas*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Stanford California, Stanford University Press 1999, p.15. Derrida's emphases.

The Theban elders presume to speak for the hearth but, in order to do so, they have to 'be able to appeal to a belonging to the hearth. They must be the homely ones',<sup>47</sup> says Heidegger. To speak of expelling someone from the hearth they must belong to and have a knowledge of it. He questions their right to such a speech but he seems to suspend this question in favour of the claim that a knowledge of the homely speaks from out of the choral song precisely because a knowledge of the δεινόν is inscribed there. Heidegger goes further; because there is a knowledge of the uncanny in the choral song then this knowledge must already go beyond the uncanny even to the extent of a knowledge beyond the uncanniest being. Such knowledge knows more than 'the mere fact that human beings are the most uncanny of all beings. And if the most uncanny consists in being unhomely, then this knowledge must be closer to the un-homely, indeed closer to the homely, and from such nearness have some intimation [*ahnen*] of the law of being unhomely'.<sup>48</sup> The Theban elders who expel the uncanniest one from the hearth make such an appeal to this knowledge, says Heidegger, when they say at the end of the choral ode that the delusions of the uncanniest of the uncanny cannot be shared with the knowing of the elders. Heidegger believes these words mean that the uncanniest one is excluded from a proper knowledge [*das eigentliche Wissen*] of the hearth, a proper knowledge that seems to belong to the Theban elders. The word that Sophocles uses for knowledge is φρονῶν, from φρονεῖν, which was used to indicate a kind of practical wisdom as opposed to the more theoretical knowledge indicated by σοφία. Heidegger's claim is that, although this knowledge cannot be discerned from the content of the ode, it speaks of it through what is unsaid in the ode and that a knowledge of the hearth is that which determines what is said therein: 'The choral song speaks this word concerning the "hearth" not merely at the end; rather, everything that it says is first thought and already spoken from the perspective of this final word...The closing words first tell of that knowledge from out of which every word of the choral song is spoken.'<sup>49</sup> It is only because there is this knowledge of the hearth that the choral ode can speak of the uncanny at all. As the hearth is the place [*Ort*] of being homely it is also the place of the homely itself: 'All knowledge of the δεινόν, of the uncanny, is sustained, guided,

---

<sup>47</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.105/p.131.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p.107/p.133.

illuminated, and articulated by that knowing that knows of the hearth.’<sup>50</sup> Because knowledge of the uncanny can only come out of a knowledge of the homely, then the meaning of the uncanny as the unhomely is the only meaning that can be given to it, Heidegger claims. Even more, because knowledge of the δεινόν can only come out of a knowledge of the hearth, then all speaking of this δεινόν must have already thought well beyond it in the direction of the homely. But it is a thinking that does not directly pronounce itself. Instead it is, claims Heidegger, picking up on the Greek term φρονεῖν, a pondering and meditating [*Sinnen und Sichbesinnen*] that comes from the absolute centre of human essence, but which is fundamentally different from the calculated thinking [*rechnenden Verstandes*] of metaphysical thought.

Heidegger claims that being is the homely, and that however far from being the human being appears to roam, the human being always remains in a relation to being. Heidegger links the δεινόν with πέλειν, which he translates as looming or stirring, and φύσις, the Greek term which Heidegger specifically identifies with being [*Sein*] in this passage. Through these linkages, he claims that the choral ode’s opening line says that: ‘In whatever direction that which is most uncanny ventures as that which is most unhomely, insofar as it still is as the most unhomely, it everywhere remains within the sphere of being. No matter where that which is most uncanny seeks a way out, no matter to where it is thrust back and cast down, it falls back into the sphere of being.’<sup>51</sup> Heidegger then makes the curious claim that although being does not set any limits [*Grenzen*] to human activities, it is being that is constantly restricting [*beschränken*] and knocking them down [*niederschlagen*] at the same time as opening all doors to them. What is a restriction if it is not a limit? If being is continually putting barriers in place that deliberately thwart the activities of human beings then how is this different to a limit? Is it because human activities that only lead to beings forget being but that even in this forgetting the human being remains under the influence of being? This would appear to be Heidegger’s meaning: ‘For all its unhomeliness, the unhomely remains within the

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p.108/p.135.

sphere of being. The unhomely remains related to the homely.<sup>52</sup> What is the status of this remaining? What remains of the unhomely if it is always already within the sphere of the homely, of being? Perhaps the unhomely has already been subsumed by the homely in such a way that it has always already been domesticated, that it is a kind of homely unhomeliness and that this unhomeliness is not really a risk at all. As with the foreign that is always already infiltrated by that which is one's own, it could be argued that the stakes have already been decided prior to any break out by the uncanniest of the uncanny. This is perhaps what Andrzej Warminski means when he argues that Heidegger, in his interrogation of Hölderlin, misses the triple structure of the foreign and one's own that the poet formulates, a structure that is named with the terms Greece, Egypt (the Orient) and Hesperia (Europe): '[T]he Egyptians can never be *our* other because they are somebody else's (i.e. the Greeks') other – *our other's other* – and precisely because they are that, because our other (the Greeks) is divided against itself, it (the Greeks) in turn can never be *our* other. In other words, we invent our other – “our” Greeks – by suppressing *its* otherness (i.e. The Egyptians, the Orient) in it.<sup>53</sup> The Greeks are never our other – we are not far here from Lacoue-Labarthe's contention that the proper of the Greeks is inimitable because it never took place - so we have to invent them and Heidegger's version of the Greeks is just another invention.

Perhaps Heidegger here also opens himself up to the charge that Emmanuel Levinas makes about the relation to being: 'The detour of ideality leads to coinciding with oneself, that is, to certainty, which remains the guide and guarantee of the whole spiritual adventure of being. But this is why the adventure is no adventure. It is never dangerous; it is self-possession, sovereignty, ἀρχή. Anything unknown that can occur to it is in advance disclosed, open, manifest and cannot be a complete surprise.'<sup>54</sup> Home always has the priority, it is always home that determines the not at home. As Robert Mugerauer puts it : 'Only what has been or has the possibility of being at home can lose

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Andrzej Warminski, *Readings in Interpretation: Hölderlin, Hegel, Heidegger*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp.54-55. His emphasis.

<sup>54</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, The Hague/Boston/London, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981, p.99. *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1974, p.157.

it; only what has had or might have a home is homeless. While homeless, we are connected with the no-longer-at-home and the not-yet-at-home.’<sup>55</sup> If Levinas is correct, then homelessness is never a surprise, it can be dealt with, indeed has always already been dealt with. The loss has already been recuperated. Homelessness always presupposes homecoming, as Mugerauer seems to imply here: ‘[H]omelessness would be the passing away of belonging and the passing out of the between in which we might dwell. Homecoming would be the event of passage back to the belonging together of what is yet bound together even when held apart and in opposition.’<sup>56</sup> But in that case, the priority is with homelessness. One has to be homeless in order to be able to create a home. Only those without a home can found and consequently come into the home. This reversal, however, gets us nowhere. Home is always already a possibility whether one starts from the home or from homelessness. There has to be a home in order to be homeless and even if one never gets home, the home still remains. Even when one is deprived of the home, the home remains in, or is, this deprivation. Is it the case then that there always has to be the adventure of the home and homelessness or is it possible to think a place or time that is prior to the home and homelessness, a thinking that presupposes neither?

Before coming to that, it is necessary to return to the hearth because it is through the hearth that we begin to see a proper and an improper unhomeliness. That the home is the hearth and that the hearth is being is quite clear from these words of Heidegger’s: ‘The hearth is accordingly the middle of beings, to which all beings, because and insofar as they are beings, are drawn in the commencement. This hearth of the middle of beings is being. Being is the hearth.’<sup>57</sup> Within the hearth, we are welcomed and comforted: ‘The hearth, the homestead of the homely, is being itself, in whose light and radiance, glow and warmth, all beings have in each case already gathered. Παρέστιος is the one who, tarrying in the sphere of the hearth, belongs to those who are entrusted with the hearth, so that everyone who belongs to the hearth is someone entrusted, whether they are

---

<sup>55</sup> Robert Mugerauer, *Heidegger and Homecoming: The Leitmotif in the Later Writings*, Toronto Buffalo London, University of Toronto Press, 2008, p.61.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid p.100.

<sup>57</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, pp.112/p.140.

“living” or dead.’<sup>58</sup> Because it is in the hearth that everything homely is grounded, there is first revealed the ground of the unhomely and the inner essence of being properly unhomely [*eigentlichen Unheimischseins*] is determined. In being expelled from the hearth, we in fact become attentive to the homely and the risk pertaining to it, according to Heidegger, and in being attentive to the homely the true nature of being unhomely emerges as that which is something more than just being merely an addition to the human being: ‘Being unhomely shows itself as a not yet awakened, not yet decided, not yet assumed potential for being homely and becoming homely. It is precisely this being unhomely that Antigone takes upon herself...In becoming homely, being unhomely is first accomplished...Antigone’s becoming homely first brings to light the essence of being unhomely. Becoming homely makes manifest the essential ambiguity of being unhomely.’<sup>59</sup> This essential ambiguity leads to the doubled meaning of unhomeliness. On the one hand, says Heidegger, one can be unhomely amongst beings, busying ourselves with our activities and yet coming to nothing and never approaching the homely: ‘The unhomely one shall not be someone homely, so long as they stick merely and solely to their being unhomely and thus let themselves be driven about amid beings, without any constancy.’<sup>60</sup> On the other, Antigone assumes a proper unhomeliness when she acts on behalf of her brother, not because of blood ties or her duty to the dead, but because of the immutable, unwritten and divine edict that always already prevails. In this, Heidegger claims, Antigone names being and the tragedy of *Antigone* is the ‘counterplay...between being unhomely in the sense of being driven about amid beings without any way out, and being unhomely as becoming homely from out of a belonging to being.’<sup>61</sup>

The improper unhomely stays amidst beings, allows beings to dictate its activities and remains alienated from being. The proper unhomely is the path that Antigone takes, turning her back on beings to say being. She names becoming homely in the introductory dialogue between herself and her sister, Ismene, when she says παθεῖν τὸ

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. pp.114-115/p.143.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p.115/p.144.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p.117/p.146

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p.118/p.147

δεινὸν τοῦτο, according to Heidegger, which in the English translation of his German says ‘to take up into my own essence the uncanny’.<sup>62</sup> This is Antigone’s essential act for Heidegger. In saying this, she passes through being unhomely amidst beings into a becoming homely through being unhomely. By doing so, she also escapes the expulsion from the hearth that is announced at the end of the choral ode, Heidegger claims. Only those who are unhomely in the sense of being amid beings are expelled from the hearth. Antigone remains in a relation to the hearth. This is not because she stands outside the δεινόν but because ‘she properly is the most uncanny in the supreme manner [*höchsten Weise*], namely in such a way that she takes it upon her in its full essence, in taking it upon herself to become homely within being’.<sup>63</sup> Thus, far from being the one that is expelled from the hearth, which is what Heidegger intimated earlier in his exposition, Antigone belongs to the hearth. She epitomises the properly unhomely and, in so doing, brings about the home. Rodolphe Gasché puts it this way: ‘Bringing the essence of unhomeliness to light as a way of being in which athomeness has not yet been realized, Antigone, in taking unhomeliness upon herself, thus accomplishes and realizes it in the first place.’<sup>64</sup> Rather than the home being determined by human beings, it is from being that the home derives: ‘Homeliness and the home is to be thought from the perspective of Being, which determines the essence of the human being. In its most primordial sense, the home is not a place where one is common, a stable place where, secluded and protected, one can be in and for oneself.’<sup>65</sup> To be at home is to be out of the ordinary: ‘Consequently, the home or abode in which humans dwell – in other words the *ethos* of humanity – is the site in which that which unsettles everything ordinary shines forth – the god, for Heraclitus; Being, for Heidegger. In it the human being is at home insofar as he or she comports toward this otherness, which in turn unhomes him or her.’<sup>66</sup> Gasché says that unhomeliness is never overcome because it becomes the true home of the human being. But is the home as unwelcoming as this? Is it unsecluded and unprotected? After all, the hearth is the home, as we have already seen, and the description of the

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p.99/p.123

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p.117/p.146.

<sup>64</sup> Rodolphe Gasché, *Europe, or the Infinite Task: A Study of a Philosophical Concept*, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 2009, p.187.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p.188.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Transliteration in the text.

hearth given by Heidegger suggests that it does seclude and protect. The fire in the hearth in its welcoming glow is *Nähren*, that which feeds, nurtures and nourishes. It is also *Wärmen*, that which brings warmth and restores. The hearth is the bringer of light, the absolute homestead [*die Heimstaat schlechthin*], says Heidegger.

It would seem that Antigone, however, does not find it so welcoming. She says: 'For everywhere shall I experience nothing of the fact | that not to being my dying must belong [*daß nicht zum Sein gehören muß mein Sterben*].'<sup>67</sup> According to my reading of Heidegger's translation from the Greek, Antigone is lamenting the fact that her death will not belong to being and nor will she be able to experience this death. Her death takes place outside of being and outside any experience of it. Is this compatible with Heidegger's contention that Antigone says being? In this saying, Antigone names [*nennen*] being, according to Heidegger. She gives being its proper name and, in doing so, Antigone grounds being homely, the hearth. However, in saying that her death does not belong to being, Antigone appears to be saying that she will be estranged from experience, from death and from being, not that she is coming into proximity with being. Rather than becoming homely in being, she seems to be condemning herself to an eternal wandering without rest, alienated from both life and death. Perhaps it is possible to say of Antigone what Levinas says of Phaedra, that she 'discovers the impossibility of death, the eternal responsibility of her being, in a full universe in which her existence is bound by an unbreakable commitment, an existence no longer in any way private'.<sup>68</sup> As Blanchot remarks, the impossibility of death 'is what I cannot grasp, what is not linked to *me* by any relation of any sort. It is that which never comes and toward which I do not direct myself'.<sup>69</sup> In saying what she does here, Antigone seems to be saying that she stands outside any possible relation to her death, to the hearth and to being.

---

<sup>67</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.99/p.123.

<sup>68</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Duquesne University Press, 1978, p.58. *De L'Existence à L'Existant*, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1963, p.102.

<sup>69</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, translated by Ann Smock, Lincoln, London, University of Nebraska Press, 1982, p.104. Blanchot's emphasis.

This notion of her standing outside of any relation to death or to being is given further impetus through the way she describes herself as ‘living’. Paul Hammond says that ‘there is no *heimlich* world for Antigone, as right from the beginning she is displaced, and the world around her rejects her – or she rejects it’.<sup>70</sup> When Antigone claims that the law against burying Polynices was not proclaimed to her specifically and nor did it come from Zeus or Dike, the word that Antigone uses for living is ξύνοικος which, as Hammond points out, contains the root word of οἶκος which means home or dwelling. This implies, according to Hammond, that Antigone is perhaps preparing for herself ‘an alternative source of value to the home which is no longer her home’.<sup>71</sup> In a later speech, as Hammond again reminds us, the word that Antigone uses to describe herself as ‘living’ in the phrase ‘living...neither with the living or the dead’ is μέτοικος which refers to an alien resident in a foreign city who does not have any citizenship rights, which suggests that in ‘Antigone’s case it is part of a negative statement: she is not even an alien resident among either the living or the dead’.<sup>72</sup> The alien resident does not feel at home in the foreign city and her alienation would extend even into the possibility of a return home. The word itself literally means beyond the home and also refers to being a settler or emigrant, a sojourner. It belongs in a semantic network in which meanings of changing one’s abode, emigrating and settling elsewhere, of removal and migration, of settling in a foreign place, circulate. Antigone uses the same word to describe her residence in the underworld with her parents ‘so even here she will be a sojourner in another’s house, still not a citizen’.<sup>73</sup> When the Chorus describes Antigone as being deprived of her residence in the world above ground, the same word - μέτοικος - is used. Not only is she already alienated, but even this alien status is to be torn from her. Antigone seems to be suspended, neither alive nor dead, neither at home or not at home. She seems to be a wanderer without any exit from her wandering. Jacques Lacan says that from ‘Antigone’s point of view life can only be approached, can only be lived or thought about, from the place of that limit where her life is already lost, where she is

---

<sup>70</sup> Paul Hammond, *The Strangeness of Tragedy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p.93.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p.95.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p.96.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

already on the other side. But from that place she can see it and live it in the form of something already lost'.<sup>74</sup>

The οἶκος is not just a simple home. It forms a community and continuity, as John Jones points out, in his discussion of Aeschylus's *The Orestia*. The οἶκος, he says, 'is at once house and household, building and family, land and chattels, slaves and domestic animals, hearth and ancestral grave: psycho-physical community of the living and the dead and the unborn'.<sup>75</sup> If, as he later says about Sophocles, that in his plays there is a sharpening and a narrowing of 'the subversion of the *oikos* into a theme of personal usurpation',<sup>76</sup> it is still very clear that Antigone stands in a relation to the οἶκος - Creon calls insubordination the destroyer of the οἶκος - and that as μέτοικος she is excluded from everything that pertains to the οἶκος. As Valerie Reed argues, Antigone's relation to the home is fundamentally unstable. She does not belong in the place she happens to be. As she moves towards her death and a home in the underworld, the kind of residence that will be becomes more and more uncertain: '[I]t is as if she is always moving towards a home which itself is perpetually displaced or receding. And as she approaches death, it comes to seem that the problem lies not in her distance from her home, but in the possibility that she might never arrive; that even if she does, she will not truly belong there; perhaps even more fundamentally, that her home simply cannot be located.'<sup>77</sup> In fact, as Reed points out, the whole question of the οἶκος and Antigone's relation to it, is one that is elided by Heidegger. The undecidability of this relation has important consequences for Heidegger's reading of the play, she argues, and, therefore, the whole movement of becoming homely in being unhomely: '[E]very turn that Antigone makes toward her home is also a turn away from it; every act that she performs on behalf of her οἶκος duty also acts, in some sense, against that duty. And in this way, she embodies a different kind of *Unheimlichkeit* – a radical uncertainty, and not just a perpetual becoming homely, that is suggested throughout the play and cemented by the singularity

---

<sup>74</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960 The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Dennis Porter, London, Routledge, 1992, p.280.

<sup>75</sup> Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy*, pp.83-84.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. pp.148-149. Transliteration of Greek in the text.

<sup>77</sup> Valerie Reed, 'Bringing Antigone Home?', in *Comparative Literature Studies*, Volume 45, No.3, 2008, pp.316-339, p.325.

of her death.’<sup>78</sup> It is, perhaps, a remarkable elision that, in a discussion in which the home, becoming homely and being unhomely play such a crucial role, the Greek term for home - οἶκος - plays no role at all, especially when so many other Greek terms are made the subject of extended considerations and especially when Antigone defines herself, however negatively, in relation to the οἶκος. Having said that, Heidegger does focus on the hearth, the ἑστία, which is at the centre of the οἶκος.

As she goes towards her death, Antigone names the place where she is to die in three ways as her tomb, her bridal chamber and her deep dug home, where she will join those who are her own, that is her father, mother and brothers. But even these simple terms – father, mother, brother – are fraught with their own alienation. After all, Antigone is both daughter and sister to Oedipus, her mother is also her grandmother and her brothers her uncles. This doubled rupturing of all her familial relationships suggests that there is no simple return to what is her own, no untroubled resting place even before her suicide in the chamber provided for her death. There is no own, no proper to which to return from a sojourn into the foreign for Antigone, nor, it would appear, can the fact of her suicide be said to name being. If, in her death, Antigone both names being and grants the hearth, then how is it possible for the hearth to be the warming, welcoming, nourishing place that Heidegger describes? There is nothing warming or nourishing about this death, which is abject in its root sense – Antigone as the one who is cast away – nor does it seem possible to say that this is the honourable death that Antigone foresaw in her dialogue with Ismene. Her suicide is radically unsettling and Heidegger does not discuss it and, as far as I am aware, the question of suicide is not addressed in Heidegger’s thinking. Reed argues that, as the play concludes, we are left completely uncertain as to Antigone’s fate, that even after her body has been cut down by Haemon, she is still ‘suspended, hanging between the earth and the world of the dead’.<sup>79</sup> As Hammond points out, Antigone describes herself as a desolate figure with the repetitive use of the privative alpha prefix; she is unwept for and unmarried. In the naming of being, rather than the plenitude of the hearth, do we not see the fractured or lost possibility of naming

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p.338.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p.326.

which, Lacoue-Labarthe avers, is what Hölderlin names in his naming, the impossibility of naming?

If her familial relations are ruptured, then in a similar way, she seems to stand in a rupture of the law. In her dialogue with Creon when she is charged with justifying her decision to bury Polynices, she claims that as neither the father of the gods, Zeus, nor justice, Dike, was responsible for the proclamation banning burial, then she was under no obligation to follow it. Nor did she think that Creon's law was strong enough to overturn the unwritten rules that have always already existed, laws which seem to belong to an immemorial past. Froment-Meurice writes that 'Antigone transgresses the written laws, but in the name of other laws, laws *without name* that she essentially cannot cite'.<sup>80</sup> According to Heidegger, this is what determines Antigone in her being, it is that which attunes human beings as human beings: 'At no time can what is determinative here be encountered anywhere as something first posited on a particular occasion, and yet it has already appeared before all else, without anyone being able to name a particular being from which it has sprung forth. It is to that which is unconcealed in this way that the essence of Antigone belongs.'<sup>81</sup> That to which she belongs is, of course, being, according to Heidegger. Antigone names being, he says. But if she names being and belongs to being, then the statement, that no one knows where it first appeared, refers to being, which is surely Heidegger's implication, and she would then know, in terms of the knowing signified by  $\phi\rho\nu\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu$ , where this edict springs from.

What Antigone says here about the appearance of the law that determines her action is, it seems to me, of crucial significance for Heidegger because it is, for him, what determines [*bestimmen*] Antigone in her being – what gives her her voice, in effect – and what attunes [*durchstimmen*] human beings as human beings. In the Loeb edition of the play, this is what Antigone says: 'Yes, for it was not Zeus who made this proclamation, nor was it Justice who lives with the gods below that established such laws among men, nor did I think your proclamations strong enough to have power to overrule, mortal as

---

<sup>80</sup> Marc Froment-Meurice, *That Is to Say: Heidegger's Poetics*, translated by Jan Plug, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1998 p.143. Froment-Meurice's emphasis.

<sup>81</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, pp. 116-117/pp.145-146.

they were, the unwritten and unfailing ordinances of the gods. For these have life, not simply today and yesterday, but for ever [ποτε], and no one knows how long ago they were revealed.<sup>82</sup> This law, which Hegel claims is the divine or ethical law, that which is pre-given and beyond the individual, was not ordained by Zeus or Dike and yet its provenance is still divine. It is a law that is unwritten and unchangeable – *wankellosen* [unshakeable, constant] – according to Antigone. The term that Antigone uses for law is νόμιμα which comes from νόμιμος which means conformable to custom, usage or law, customary, prescriptive, established, lawful, rightful. The law that Antigone refers to is something that has arisen through use or tradition, something that has become established from out of a kind of practice, a ritual that has grown up around the commemoration of the dead. At the beginning of the play, Antigone refers to the fact that Eteocles has been buried according to both justice [δίκη] and custom [νομός]. But, says Antigone, this is a law that has never belonged to the present, nor has it appeared in a past that was ever present, precisely because it is a law whose provenance is unknown, where it first appeared or was revealed is not something that can be seen, and which has always lived and will always continue to live. Ποτε which is translated as ‘for ever’ is a word that points both towards the past and the future. It is, therefore, a law outside of any event, any deed or proclamation that may have brought it into being. The origin of what becomes custom is always inaccessible in that it is impossible to locate the point at which what was once a singular event becomes a custom.

The word translated as ‘revealed’ in the Loeb edition and which Heidegger translates as *erscheinen*, and which is given as ‘appeared’ in the English translation of the lectures is φάνη, the infinitive of which is φαίνω, and which means to bring to light or to make appear. It can also mean to come into being. Φαίνεσθαι states that something is manifestly such and such a thing. The question of φαίνω and φαίνεσθαι is one which Heidegger dwells on extensively – in *Being and Time* for example in the discussion of phenomenology as a method – and in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* he explicitly links these terms to φύσις: ‘The roots *phu-* and *pha-* name the same thing. *Phuein*, the

---

<sup>82</sup> Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *II Antigone, The Women of Trachis, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus*, Loeb Classical Library, edited and translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1994, reprinted with corrections 1998, p.45.

emerging that reposes in itself, is *phainesthai*, lighting-up, self-showing, appearing [*erscheinen*].<sup>83</sup> Heidegger identifies φύσις as the way being opens itself up to the Greeks and through which beings first show themselves and remain in the light and this appearing, as making manifest, he indicates through the word *erscheinen*. This is what is happening here in Antigone's speech, according to Heidegger, where 'Being essentially unfolds as *phusis*. The emerging sway is an appearing. As such, it makes manifest. This already implies that Being, appearing, is a letting-step-forth from concealment'.<sup>84</sup> The immutable, unwritten and divine edict has been allowed to step forth from concealment. By following this edict, Antigone has become sheltered and homely in unconcealment, having gone through being unhomely amongst beings. This is what is happening to her, according to Heidegger, when she takes up the uncanny into her essence, thereby becoming properly unhomely amid beings and, consequently, becoming homely in being.

But the question remains as to whether the law, the edict, the νόμιμα, is made manifest in the way that Heidegger claims. When Antigone says that no one knows where or when the law first appeared, she uses the word οἶδεν which comes from the verb εἶδω, which means to know. It also means to see, look at, or perceive. What Antigone is claiming here is that the law was not seen in its coming into the light, its appearance was not one that was available as a phenomenon. The law that Antigone follows is, then, a non-phenomenal phenomenon. As a law which belongs neither to the past or the present but has always prevailed and in whose prevailing no one can say that it ever appeared as such – the law itself is unwritten – it could be said that it belongs to the interminable, that it is both endless and still to come, that it is without beginning, anarchic in a literal sense. Perhaps what Antigone describes here is not so much a becoming homely in being unhomely, not so much a resting in the glowing warmth and welcome of the hearth, but rather what Blanchot calls “the terrifyingly ancient”, there where nothing was ever present’.<sup>85</sup> He continues: ‘If, in the “terrifyingly ancient”, nothing was ever present, and

---

<sup>83</sup> Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p.106/p.77. Transliterations are in the English translation.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p.107/p.77. Transliterations are in the English translation.

<sup>85</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, translated by Lycette Nelson, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992, p.14.

if, having barely produced itself, the event, by the absolute fall, fragile, at once falls into it, as the mark of irrevocability announces to us, it is because (whence our cold presentiment) the event that we thought we had lived was itself never in a relation of presence to us nor to anything whatsoever.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps it is a law without relation, an interruption of time in time. Time here is the essence of waiting, waiting for a time that is still to come. Antigone herself seems to belong to this waiting. Hammond writes that ‘Antigone seems to exist in a different temporal dimension from other characters. She does not live in the same time as Ismene, telling her that her life has long been dead’.<sup>87</sup> Veronique Foti claims that the eccentricity of Antigone’s actions mean that her ‘*difference cannot be subsumed under some aspect of the ontological Differing*, or her singularity construed in terms of the binary (if ambiguous) opposition between two modalities of estrangement and homecoming’,<sup>88</sup> and in her book *Epochal Discordance* she explicitly claims that Heidegger’s ‘analysis does not do justice to Antigone’s desolation’,<sup>89</sup> even if Heidegger may briefly, and in an obscure way, acknowledge this desolation. Antigone later claims that she is being taken to Hades while still alive to become the bride of Acheron, but without the benefit of any bridal song. She lives, she says, neither among mortals nor as a shade among the shades, neither with the living nor the dead. Even in her tomb she is still waiting, watching, eternally vigilant over the city of Thebes, the ever watchful tomb of Antigone, as Hammond interprets it. Here, then, in the law that has not been written, whose provenance is unknown, which is both irrevocably past and also still to come, is perhaps the enigma, the enigma of an immutable law that has already been erased before it has been written, a law that would have been erased prior to the impossibility of its having been written.

The figure of Antigone, therefore, seems to be emblematic of a condition that is neither a matter of simply being at home nor being homeless, but who exists in a transitory state, just as the poet does. For Heidegger it is the poet who is the privileged site of becoming homely precisely because becoming homely can only happen poetically: ‘[T]he Ister

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p.15

<sup>87</sup> Hammond, *The Strangeness of Tragedy*, p.100.

<sup>88</sup> Foti, ‘Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Sophoclean Tragedy’, p.175. Foti’s emphasis.

<sup>89</sup> Veronique M. Foti, *Epochal Discordance: Hölderlin’s Philosophy of Tragedy*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2006, p.102.

hymn...tells of a becoming homely, of a becoming homely that can properly occur only poetically so that it requires the poet above all.’<sup>90</sup> The poet, Heidegger reminds us, should not be seen in aesthetic terms and that all psychological, historiographical and critical responses – what he calls *fallende Gerede* – to the poet are out of bounds when considering the becoming homely of human beings on earth or human dwelling, a dwelling that occurs only poetically. But if the poet is the one who authorises becoming homely, we are left with the question as to how. Heidegger’s answer, following his reading of Hölderlin, is that the poet is a sign. Quoting ‘The Ister’ and ‘Mnemosyne’, which both refer to *Zeichen* or sign, Heidegger claims that the poet is the ‘enigmatic “sign”’, that is not ‘something designated by a sign, by the rivers. The poet himself would be a sign [*Zeichen*], yet not for designating [*Bezeichnung*] something else but in such a way that as poet, he is a “sign”.’<sup>91</sup> The poet is the sign as sign, the sign itself. Not only that, says Heidegger, but the poet is the only one who can decide about poetry, just as the thinker is the only one who can decide about thinking.

The poet, therefore, is a sign. That this sign is necessary, and therefore the poet is needed, is the injunction that Heidegger takes from these words from ‘The Ister’:

Namely, they are  
 To be to language. A sign is needed,  
 Nothing else, plain and simple, so that sun  
 And moon may be borne in mind, inseparable,  
 And pass on, day and night too, and  
 The heavenly feel themselves warm by one another.<sup>92</sup>

Heidegger admits that his equation of sign, first with a demigod and then with the poet, could be considered violent. It is a presupposition of his that Hölderlin’s poetic word ‘remains and should remain in the realm of the enigmatic [*Rätselhaften*]...After all, Hölderlin’s word is not meant to be assimilated to the commonplace realm of everyday

---

<sup>90</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.151/p.188.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p.150/pp.187-188.

<sup>92</sup> Hölderlin, ‘The Ister’, quoted in Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.148/p.184.

opinion'.<sup>93</sup> Here Heidegger appeals to the enigma, explicitly claiming that it in some way licenses his interpretation of the poet as the sign. Because his thinking, he claims, takes *Dichtung* as its measure, he is able to pursue the line of thinking that moves from the sign to the demigod and then the poet: 'If the sign referred to here bears the "world" in its mind and, standing between human beings and the heavenly, is the demigod, and if Hölderlin "thinks demigods" in the essence of the rivers and comprehends the demigod as the essence of the poet, then the sign can only be the name for the poet.'<sup>94</sup> Because a sign is needed, this means that a poet and poets have to be, according to Heidegger. They are essential for becoming homely.

But if the poet is a sign, then what kind of sign is he? Heidegger has already cautioned us against the aestheticisation of the poet and we should be wary therefore of seeing the sign as a symbol or symbolic image. The essence of the poet is, according to Heidegger, supremely set down in this line from Hölderlin's poem 'Andenken', 'Remembrance'. It is the last line of the poem: 'Was bleibt aber, stiften die Dichter'. 'Yet what remains, the poets found'. What is left, the remains, is established by the poets. In his essay on this poem, Heidegger writes that what remains is that which is lasting, that which abides [*das Bleibende*]. The remains are permanent: 'Hence, only that remains which does not vanish, which does not pass away because it is imperishable.'<sup>95</sup> *Stiften* has the sense of creating something that is intended to be permanent, according to Farrell. Remaining is the becoming homely in coming back from the journey into the foreign: 'The remaining in what is one's own is the path to the source. This is the origin from which arises all dwelling of the sons of the earth. Remaining means going to the nearness of the origin. Whoever dwells in the nearness realizes the essence of remaining.'<sup>96</sup> In his lectures on 'The Ister', Heidegger reiterates this valorisation of the remains [*bleiben*]. Saying 'all that remains' is not a form of fatalism but is 'the first historical path into the commencements of Western historicity, a path that has not at all been ventured

---

<sup>93</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, p.150/pp.187-188.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p.150/p.187.

<sup>95</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, translated by Keith Hoeller, New York, Humanity Books, 2000, p.166. *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1944, p.144

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p.167/p.145

hitherto'.<sup>97</sup> But *bleiben* also has the sense of being left over, of being superfluous or excessive, uncontainable, unassimilable, or of being the only alternative left. What then is the status of what is left over? One could equally argue that all that remains, what is left over is partial, fragmentary, not whole, the detritus. What we are left with may well be that which lasts but it may well be just the husk that is left over. The poets then found something outside, beyond the pale. Heidegger does not address this line in the lectures on 'The Ister' – he says that he will not go into their truth. He merely notes that it occurs in the poem 'Remembrance' and that remembrance means both the journeying into the foreign, that is that which has been, and that which is to come, that is a thinking ahead to the place of the homely [*Ortschaft des Heimischen*] and the founding of its ground [*zu stiftenden Grundes*]. In this he ties 'Remembrance' to 'The Ister' in its vanishing and its intimation.

This thoughtful remembrance, says Heidegger, is a pointing [*Hinzeigen*] and it is the poet who points. In pointing, the poet is a sign, but not some thing-like sign, but a sign with a soul and a mind. This pointing is not a mere indication but is a showing: 'The showing [*Zeigen*] is of such a kind as to first let appear [*erscheinen*] that which is to be shown [*Zuzeitende*]. Yet such a sign can, in saying, let appear that which is to be said only because it has already been shone upon by that which thus appears as what is to be poetized. This sign must therefore be struck and blinded in the face of the "fire". This is why it is initially unable to find the word, so it seems as though this showing had lost its tongue.'<sup>98</sup> Here we are back with the '*Jetzt komme, Feuer!*' of the opening of 'The Ister' with the poets called into their calling by the coming of the morning sun. But we are also in another poem of Hölderlin's, 'Mnemosyne', which Heidegger goes on to quote in his lecture on 'The Ister'. The passage is from the second version of this poem, and it appears in neither of the other two versions. The poem opens as follows:

*Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos*  
*Schmerzlos sind wir und haben fast*

---

<sup>97</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, pp.53-54./p.66.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p.151/p.189.

*Die Sprache in der Fremde verloren.*<sup>99</sup>

This could be translated as follows: ‘We are an unreadable sign, we are beyond pain and have almost lost our language in foreign parts.’ For Heidegger, the poets are the sign, it is they who have almost lost their language, their tongue, in the foreign. Hölderlin himself recognised the danger to his own language that an excursion into the foreign could entail. In 1794, he wrote to Christian Ludwig Neuffer about Neuffer’s translation of Sallust’s *Catiline*: ‘Our language is the organ of *our* minds, *our* hearts, the sign of *our* imaginings, *our* ideas; it must obey *us*. If it has lived too long in foreign service there is, I think, the danger that it will never again become quite the free and pure expression of our minds, shaped entirely from within, thus and not otherwise, that it should be.’<sup>100</sup> But his conception of the possibility of this free and pure expression was to change. In his letter to Böhlendorff, he writes that the most difficult task is the free use of what is one’s own. The instability on the part of the poets from ‘Mnemosyne’ has the same resonance, Heidegger says, as the line from a draft of ‘Bread and Wine’, where *der Beseeler*, that is the poet on Heidegger’s interpretation, would almost be scorched [*verbrandt*] by his proximity to the source. For Heidegger it is that ‘almost’ which is crucial in that what this passage means is that the poet is not yet capable of reading the sign that he is but that, having now returned from the foreign and being underway into the homely, it only remains for the poet to seek what is his own and to learn to use it freely. The poets are ‘at the beginning and are still overwhelmed by the foreign fire, “we,” the poets, are as yet unread – we are not yet able to read and to show. We are almost as though consumed by fire so that “the pain” has yet to stir. Pain, however, is that knowing proper to being distinct, in which the belonging to one another of human beings and gods first attains the separation of distance, and thereby the possibility of proximity, and thus the fortune of appearing.’<sup>101</sup> Heidegger goes on to say that pain belongs to the ability to show and that it belongs to the poet as the knowledge of his own essence. Heidegger is claiming that

---

<sup>99</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Werke und Briefe Band I Gedichte Hyperion*, Herausgegeben von Friedrich Beißner und Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main, Insel Verlag, 1969, p.199.

<sup>100</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, edited and translated by Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth, London, Penguin Books, 2009, p.26. *Werke und Briefe Band II: Der Tod des Empedokles, Aufsätze, Übersetzungen, Briefe*, Herausgegeben von Friedrich Beißner und Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main, Insel Verlag, 1969, p.824. His emphases.

<sup>101</sup> Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister”*, p.153/p.190.

here Hölderlin demonstrates that the poets are not yet ready, but that they will be, that they are at the beginning of their journey and that in their return to the homely they will ground the homely. This is true, says Heidegger, of all Hölderlin's river poetry: 'The sign, the demigod, the river, the poet: all these name poetically the one and singular ground of the becoming homely of human beings as historical and the founding of the ground by the poet. Because, in Hölderlin's poetizing of the rivers, these relations constantly stand in a poetic vision from the outset, they return ever anew in the richest poetic variations.'<sup>102</sup>

But is it just the case that the reason the poet is almost speechless and unread is because he is merely at the beginning or is the situation graver? The poet is a sign, assuming that Heidegger is correct in equating the poet with the sign, but he is a sign that is *deutungslos* which, while translated as 'unreadable' also means 'uninterpretable'. The sign is one that cannot be interpreted and one that remains uninterpretable. In the Beißner and Schmidt edition of Hölderlin's poetry, it is claimed that, like the word *Schmerzlos*, *deutungslos* is negative in the sense of '*insensibilis*'<sup>103</sup> that is it involves the loss of the faculty of sensation [*Empfindungsvermögen*]. In fact, the sign, in its loss of *Deutung*, is now a dead hieroglyph [*toten Hieroglyphe*], a sign that can no longer be interpreted, that comes from a dead language. In effect, the poet is a dead Egyptian. They go on to claim that the loss of the *Sprache* belongs to this atrophy of meaning, of readability, of interpretation, a complete loss of relation or reference in the face of an alienated world. Is this not a description of Antigone as well? If the poet is an unreadable sign, then rather than being at the beginning of his journey, the poet is already lost, incapable of understanding but still speaking, still summoned to speak but unable to explain that summons nor to communicate what is contained in the summons. The poet is a voice crying in the wilderness, a wilderness that is indistinguishable from the fertile land. As David Michael Kleinberg-Levin puts it: '[T]he poet can say only that, though we may have once received a sign, or measure, and become thus ourselves a sign embodying the divine measure, we have since that immemorial time lost the language

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. p.154/p.192.

<sup>103</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Werke und Briefe Band III Erläuterungen*, Herausgegeben von Friedrich Beißner und Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main, Insel Verlag, 1969, p.129.

that would connect us to what it signifies.’<sup>104</sup> It is as if, he says, that we have been given an historical task, one that is unrealisable and doomed to failure. The poet stands at the threshold of an aposiopesis, a becoming silent, or on the way to becoming silent. Aposiopesis is a rhetorical figure in which speech breaks off abruptly and the sentence is never finished. It is an abrupt fall into silence. Antigone herself is this silence. Her last word is on line 940 in the Greek text with over 400 lines still left in the drama. Perhaps it would be more proper to say that the poet is the aposiopesis, a speech that is always about to fall silent, an interminable speech awaiting oblivion. Whatever the poet is underway to, it is not a destination that can ever be reached, a destination that is always on the way, an incessant wandering, but not the wandering that Heidegger characterises as inauthentic adventuring.

Heidegger returns to this passage from ‘Mnemosyne’ almost a decade later in the lecture series *What is Called Thinking* where the identification of the ‘we’ is not so much with the poet but mankind in general, ‘the men of today, of a “today” that has lasted since long ago and will still last for a long time’<sup>105</sup> and is a pointing into what withdraws, a pointing into the withdrawal in which the human is first human. Man’s essential nature is being this sign. Jacques Derrida, reflecting on this passage from Hölderlin as it appears in *What is Called Thinking*, cites the translation from the French edition:

*Nous sommes un monstre [Zeichen] privé de sens*  
*Nous sommes hors douleur*  
*Et nous avons perdu*  
*Presque la lange à l'étranger.*<sup>106</sup>

*Monstre* means monster but it also means show, as in *montrer*, as Derrida reminds us, hence the decision to translate *Zeichen* as *monstre*. We become both a monster deprived

---

<sup>104</sup> David Michael Kleinberg-Levin, *Gestures of Ethical Life: Reading Hölderlin's Question of Measure After Heidegger*, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 2005, p.33.

<sup>105</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, translated by J. Glenn Grey and Fred Wieck, New York, Harper and Row, 1968, p.11. *Was Heisst Denken*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1954, p.7.

<sup>106</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘Heidegger’s Hand (*Geschlecht II*)’, *Psyche Inventions of the Other Volume II*, edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 2008, p.33.

of sense or meaning and a meaningless showing. A monstrous, uninterpretable sign, monstrous precisely because it is uninterpretable, because to be such a sign is to undermine its very meaning; to be an uninterpretable sign is not to be a sign at all. As Derrida puts it: '[W]e are a sign – showing, informing, warning, pointing as sign toward, but in truth toward nothing, a remote sign, at a distance from the sign, a display that deviates from the display or monstration, a monster that shows nothing. Isn't such a gap in the sign's relation to itself and to its so-called normal function already a monstrosity of monstrosity, a monstrosity of monstration?'<sup>107</sup>

The sign, then, is the monstrous, the monstrous becoming sign, a monstrosity that recalls Hölderlin's translation of the choral ode from *Antigone* where τὸ δεινόν is translated as *Ungeheure*, one of whose meanings is monstrous. We should also recall that *Ungeheure* appeared as an eruption in the *unheimlich* and as the *unheimisch*. Derrida asks whether man is the monster and, as Stanley Cavell says, it is only the human that is capable of being monstrous: 'But only what is human can be inhuman. – Can only the human be monstrous? If something is monstrous, and we do not believe that there are monsters, then only the human is a candidate for the monstrous.'<sup>108</sup> George Steiner points out that *Ungeheure* literally means monstrous, 'whose uncanniness derives from alien enormity'.<sup>109</sup> For Steiner, Antigone becomes monstrous in her 'suicidal commerce with the divine...when she assumes the role of an *Antitheos*'.<sup>110</sup> If the poet is the sign, and the sign is monstrous, then the poet is monstrous, the poet who is called from out of the enigma, the enigmatic sign, the one who speaks out of the enigma. Does this make the enigma monstrous? Is the poet as sign, which is impossible to read, uninterpretable not because he is not yet ready but because the enigma holds him back? The monstrosity of the poet is not that he is a sign that is not yet read and which, in its return to the hearth, is merely awaiting its becoming homely, but because the poet is a sign that can never be read, that remains entirely within the promise of the enigma that is withdrawn prior to the promise having been made.

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. p.34.

<sup>108</sup> Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy*, New York Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979, p.418.

<sup>109</sup> Steiner, *Antigones*, p.90.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. Transliteration in the text.

If this is the case, the poet, that is the human, in his monstrosity as unreadable sign, is homeless or, more precisely, exists prior to the possibility of home in a form of nomadism that holds out the promise of a homecoming, but as the enigma of the homecoming is the enigma of the promise that has already been withdrawn prior to the promise having been made, then homecoming has always already been withdrawn. On Heidegger's reading, Antigone, as the uncanniest, is exiled from beings but, as a consequence, becomes homely in being, becomes homely in being unhomely. But if the enigma of the *δεινόν* is the enigma of homecoming, then the question arises as to what kind of homecoming and home these are. This is not just a question of exile, even of the exile described by Andrzej Warminski: '[W]e are not at home not because we are exiled *from* Greece but, rather, because we are exiled *by* Greece from ourselves: the Orient, the East, Egypt, and so on. Again: it is not just that we are not at home, but rather that we are not at home in relation to not being at home; or, better we are not just exiled...but rather exiled *from* exile...as Blanchot puts it in writing on Kafka.'<sup>111</sup> In exile, the promise of homecoming always remains, it has not been withdrawn, even if the home remains unattainable. In exile, the withdrawal of the promise is not constitutive of that exile and attaining the home always remains a realisable possibility. Exile can only exist in relation to the home, in relation to a promised or potential homecoming, or, at the very least, it relates to a fixed place which admits of the possibility of return. Exile is never enigmatic. One has to have somewhere to leave in order to be able to leave it. This is because exile is a wandering away, it is always a movement away and one has to move away from somewhere and, as such, homecoming, or return, always remains a possibility of exile. One can always wander back. To be exiled is to have been thrown out or to have experienced the necessity of leaving, or the fact of having left, even if this having left now only belongs to a tradition.

The nomad always already stands outside or prior to all relations to the home and to homecoming. It is not a question of the nomadic being merely opposed to the home; it is

---

<sup>111</sup> Andrzej Warminski, 'Monstrous History', in *The Solid Letter Readings of Friedrich Hölderlin*, edited by Aris Fioretos, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1999, p.212. Warminski's emphasis.

a question of how the nomadic arises out of the νομός. In her invocation of the law, Antigone leads us to the law itself, the νομός, and points to an essential instability in the νομός, perhaps even to its enigma. The νομός forms part of a semantic network, including νομάς, which means both wandering and roaming in search of pasture, νέμω, which means to distribute and to graze, νομαδικός, which means of or for a herdsman's life, the nomadic, pastoral. Νέμειν means to distribute, to apportion, to share out. Νομός itself names pasture land, an allotted dwelling place, custom and law. The word and its cognates indicate an inherent instability, an undecidability between custom and law, between dwelling and wandering, between place and placelessness. To be in the νομός is to be always already dwelling and wandering. In contrast, law and *Gesetz*, in their very terminology, are a setting in place, a laying down. The νομός has been masked in its appropriation by our language where νομός becomes law and therefore prescriptive and proscriptive. The journey into the Greek language that brings us such terms as agronomy, autonomy and economy covers up the enigmatic meaning of the νομός, a meaning that still remains to be explored, Derrida claims: '[T]he Greek tongue would doubtless tell us much about the strange relation between law, wandering, and nonidentification with the self, the common root – *nemein* – of division, naming and nomadism.'<sup>112</sup>

Is the law of becoming homely in being unhomely this unstable νομός, which Antigone appeals to? Tanja Staehler argues that *Antigone* is pre-eminently a play about the law in that it performs the problematic nature of the human in terms of a tension between different types of law. What emerges from this tragedy, she says, is an understanding that an entanglement in law is constitutive of the human being and that this law is never identical to itself: 'On the one hand, it is the nature of law that it has to be conceived as something unchangeable, like the sacred laws which Antigone invokes to justify her actions. On the other hand, laws are either created by humans or at least receive their specific formulations from humans, and in that sense, they are open to criticism and

---

<sup>112</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass, London, Routledge, 1978, p.69. Transliteration of the Greek term is in the translated text.

modification.’<sup>113</sup> Law is both mutable and immutable, and necessary and contingent. She says that every law, even the most contingent one, has to exhibit a certain necessity. There is an irresolvable tension inherent in law between the divine law, which she identifies with the ethical realm, and the law that is created and interpreted by human beings, this law being identified with the political and legal realms. It is the mutable human law that demands its execution without exceptions; a law that can be changed demands strict adherence. Judith Butler, in her reading of *Antigone*, asks whether the law that justifies *Antigone*’s act is beyond conceptualisation, whether it is ‘an epistemic scandal... a law that cannot be translated... a breakage in law performed... by a legality that remains uncontained by any and all positive and generalizable law?’<sup>114</sup> It is, she says, a law without origin, ‘a law whose trace can take no form, whose authority is not directly communicable through written language’.<sup>115</sup>

Heidegger does not consider the law as νόμος in either of his discussions of *Antigone*, which is curious considering his examination of the choral ode is meant to illuminate the fundamental *law* of becoming homely as the *law* of being unhomely. He does, however, examine the νόμος in the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’: ‘Only so far as the human being, existing into the truth of being, belongs to being can there come from being itself the assignment [*Zuweisung*] of those directives [*Weisung*] that must become law and rule for human beings. In Greek, to assign [*zuweisen*] is νέμειν. Νόμος is not only law but more originally [*ursprünglicher*] the assignment contained in the dispensation [*Schickung*] of being. Only this assignment is capable of enjoining humans into being. Only such enjoining is capable of supporting and obligating. Otherwise all law remains merely something fabricated by human reason. More essential than instituting rules is that human beings find the way to their abode [*Aufenthalt*] in the truth of being.’<sup>116</sup> For

---

<sup>113</sup> Tanja Staehler, ‘*Antigone* and the Nature of Law’, in *Law and Philosophy, Current Legal Issues 2007, Volume 10*, edited by Michael Freeman and Ross Harrison, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp.137-155, p.138.

<sup>114</sup> Judith Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2000, p.33.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* p.38.

<sup>116</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill, translated by Frank A Capuzzi, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.274. *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1976, pp.360-361.

Heidegger, it is not the creation or fabrication of laws that is important, but that human beings find their way into a form of dwelling in the truth of being and this comes about through the assignment that νομός is. Prior to its becoming law, νομός names a more original apportioning. One of the meanings of νομός is to be assigned an abode or dwelling place, so, in a sense, the assignment here is the abode of human beings in being. What Heidegger is saying is that the law is contained, or sheltered, in the sending of being and that it is only the assignment that νομός is that enables human beings to be joined with being. Without νομός there is no joining. But in joining beings to being it still has to be determined what this abode is. Heidegger uses the term *Aufenthalt*, which does mean residence or abode, but it also has the sense of a stop, delay or wait, where the stop is temporary, a resting place before moving on. In literary terms, the *Aufenthalt* is a sojourn, a staying somewhere temporarily. The abode then is provisional, never actually fixed. It is not necessarily a place in which a certain rootedness takes place. There seems to be an echo here of the journeying of locality and the locality of journeying which is where the enigma of the river is said to abide. In addition, *Aufenthalt*, as the dwelling place [*Ort des Wohnens*], is specifically equated by Heidegger with ἦθος, this being the open realm where human beings live, so that for any thinking of the ἦθος we have to bear in mind the meanings that have just been delineated for *Aufenthalt*. In one of its meanings, the νομός points towards a relation to shepherding, pasture and the pastoral. Just as the shepherd guides his flock in search of grazing land, a guidance that gathers into itself a caring for both the flock and the land itself, so the *Schickung des Seins*, translated as the dispensation of being, is a guiding of, and caring for, being. In its sending - *schicken* means to send - being assigns beings to being, into the providential care that is the *Schickung*. In literary terms, *Schickung* means act of providence, where providence can be seen as a form of futural care, of foresight. In the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’, Heidegger calls the human being ‘the shepherd of being’,<sup>117</sup> the one who is called to the preservation of the truth of being and who is called to live in its neighbourhood, a neighbourhood in which we still remain wanderers on the way [*auf dem Weg als Wanderer*]. The call to live or to dwell in the nearness of

---

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p.260/p.342.

being ‘comes as the throw from which the thrownness of Da-sein derives’.<sup>118</sup> In Heidegger’s thinking of the νομός, is it possible then to discern a sense of the instability contained in that word, a sense that in his thinking of home and homecoming, there is already a thinking of the unstable νομός?

In the reading of the ambiguity of the νομός, the law only becomes law through having been established as custom. The law has come into the law but, in its taking up into the law, it has masked its impossible origin. What is customary is only law through having been established in a past, the experience of which can never be experienced as such, a law whose trace has never been traced, the unwritten law, the writing of which would have already been erased in the impossibility of its writing. It is only when the νομός becomes law, when it is institutionalised in rules and regulations, that its writing becomes possible. That Greek law is essentially unstable is figured in the nomadic wandering of the νομός as it shuttles its meanings back and forth between wandering and grazing, between custom, tradition and the law, into a nomadism that abides only in its wandering, a wandering that does not depart from, nor return to, the welcome of the hearth, but perhaps only dwells in its nearness, a wandering that is always on the way, but is not just a wandering that marks the path of the adventurer. The poet is the enigmatic *unheimlich*, just like Antigone the eternal wanderer between two deaths. The poet is the wanderer who is fissured between place and placelessness, dwelling and journeying. Here, then, it seems to me, is the enigma of Antigone, the eruption of the enigmatic νομός. Antigone, subject to an infinite, irrecusable demand, exposed to the an-archic, is estranged from the hearth and the home, abject, an alien resident who has even lost her status as this μέτοικος. The νομός never allows her position to be fixed – she is both at home and abroad, caught between custom and law and between wandering and remaining.

Is it, then, just a question of affirming the nomadic as distinct from the home? Mark C. Taylor, commenting on Derrida’s notion of the trace, compares its ceaseless, errant wandering, obviously affirmatively, to the temporary roaming of estranged exiles and,

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. pp.260-261/p.342.

implicitly, to the fixed point that is the home. He says: 'Never able to identify beginning, middle or end, the wanderer is not sure where he comes from, where he is, or where he is going. The impossibility of locating an unambiguous center leaves the wanderer rootless and homeless; he is forever *sans terre*.'<sup>119</sup> Maurice Blanchot affirms 'nomadic truth',<sup>120</sup> as 'the exigency of uprooting', a certain Judaism in contrast to paganism. Nomadism, he says, 'answers to a relation that possession cannot satisfy'<sup>121</sup> outside any fixed place or certainty in the land. In his thinking towards the nomadic, Blanchot invests the pagan with the fixed, where one is planted in the earth in a permanence that authorises sojourn, whereas being Jewish is a dispersion, 'a call to a sojourn without place, just as it ruins every fixed relation of force with *one* individual, *one* group, or *one* state – it is because dispersion, faced with the exigency of the whole, also clears the way for a different exigency and finally forbids the temptation of Unity-Identity'.<sup>122</sup> He then asks a question which, while not mentioning his name, seems to be aimed at Heidegger, at claiming that he is entirely bound up with such a fixed relation, that he falls prey to the temptation of unity and identity: 'Doesn't this nomadic movement (wherein is inscribed the idea of division and separation) affirm itself not as the eternal privation of a sojourn, but rather as an authentic manner of residing, of a residence that does not bind us to the determination of place or to settling close to a reality forever and already founded, sure, and permanent? As though the sedentary state were necessarily the aim of every action! As though truth itself were necessarily sedentary!'<sup>123</sup> If we return to Antigone at this point, this would be to say that rather than naming being, Antigone fractures the name. Bruns glosses Blanchot's meaning to be that truth, in not being reducible to being, stands outside the alternatives of being and non-being, 'that is, outside the logical determinations of presence and absence. Hence the resonance of the metaphors of exile and traversal... So being Jewish opens onto the order of existence without being, the *il y a*; but notice that in this context [the context of Blanchot's essay] there is no experience of horror – or, more exactly, the horror of existence without being

---

<sup>119</sup> Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*, Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press, 1984, p.156.

<sup>120</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, translated by Susan Hanson, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p.125.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* p.125.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* pp.125-126. Blanchot's emphasis.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* p.127.

is not part of the Jewish experience of being Jewish (why not joy?). Rather the horror, one might say, is what is felt by the Greek'.<sup>124</sup> The Greek experience of the nomadic is one of horror, according to Bruns. Is this what the tragedy of Antigone tells us, of the horror of the nomadic? Is the eruptive force of the νομός, which I find expressed in Sophocles drama, a force from which the Greek recoils in horror but which has to be affirmed rather than negated, if Blanchot is right? Is the enigma of Antigone, then, the impossibility of a return home to being? Is it the necessity of a taking up of the nomadic?

If it is true that Heidegger does fall for the temptation of unity and identity, it is also true that, as we have already seen in the discussion of the νομός and its relation to *Aufenthalt*, perhaps there is not such a sure fixing into place in Heidegger as Blanchot implies and that the rigid dichotomy between affirmation and horror is not really sustainable. Perhaps Froment-Meurice is nearer the mark when he writes: 'Every fundamental position is exposed to being but a wandering, all the more since it wishes it were solid and certain of itself and of its "truth".'<sup>125</sup> In affirming the nomadic, it could be argued that the welcome of the home or the hearth is transposed into a welcoming towards the nomadic. And who are we to propose such a welcome? Does not the affirmation of the nomadic fall prey to the very thing that Derrida writes of the welcome? That one knows what it is to be a nomad, that one is at home in one's nomadism, that one has always already appropriated it into some form of settlement? It could also be argued that in settling on this fixed meaning of the nomadic, one is betraying the νομός itself in its enigmatic instability. Perhaps it is the case that the position that Heidegger takes in relation to Antigone – that throughout 'The Ister' lectures it is always a case of *becoming* homely whilst being *unhomely*, that is, in the midst of this becoming, one is always decentred, deracinated and exposed, *Ungeheure*, that it is always a striving rather than a settlement – could be seen as a form of nomadism, that is not a mere aimless wandering but is radically unstable, between home and homelessness, wandering in its fixity and fixed in its wandering.

---

<sup>124</sup> Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy*, Baltimore & London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, p.218.

<sup>125</sup> Froment-Meurice, *That Is to Say*, p.128.

Heidegger's definition of *fram*, referred to above, points towards a sense of always being on the way, but always on the way towards a home that, to a certain extent, does not offer any kind of easy recognition, as Gasché points out. In a discussion of Heidegger's characterisation of Hölderlin as the poet of homecoming he contends that:

'Consequently, the home of a historical people – the Germans, in this case – is not a given: it is no existing geographical or cultural entity, and if, therefore, such a home has in principle first to be found and won, the home in which a historical people can come to be at home cannot be of a territorial order to begin with.'<sup>126</sup> In fact, he argues, Heidegger's insight is that, in mistaking home with a geographical, historical, political, empirical locality, human beings miss what is essential here precisely because coming to be at home is too demanding and unsettling. William McNeill claims that human dwelling is not a fixed state or predicament: 'Dwelling is itself, rather, a task to be undertaken and accomplished, a challenge that has to be undergone ever anew – accomplished and brought about in and through the temporality of human experience.'<sup>127</sup> Fred Dallmayr, in thinking through Heidegger's relation to Hölderlin, writes that the 'home or homecoming for Heidegger is by no means a native possession but only the farthest horizon of the soul's journey abroad. This journey, one should note, transgresses not only the limits of chauvinism but also the borders of a self-enclosed humanism or anthropocentrism'.<sup>128</sup> He says that Hölderlin's fatherland – and implicitly Heidegger's too – is not a fixed abode 'but a peculiar "in-between" place of transit – a zone located between self and other, between proximity and distance, and also between mortals and immortals',<sup>129</sup> which echoes the thinking of the *νομός* which has been laid out here. This unsettling nature of the home could also be seen in the welcoming warmth of the fire of the hearth, the fire that nourishes, warms and restores. But the flame of the fire is also destructive; it too can never be finally settled, as Heidegger writes in an essay on Georg Trakl: '[F]lame is the *ek-stasis* which lightens and calls forth radiance, but

---

<sup>126</sup> Gasché, *Europe, or the Infinite Task*, p.192.

<sup>127</sup> William McNeill, *The Time of Life: Heidegger and Ethos*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2006, p.145.

<sup>128</sup> Fred Dallmayr, *The Other Heidegger*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1993, p.176.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* pp.159-160.

which may also go on consuming and reduce all to white ashes.’<sup>130</sup> It is, perhaps, a question of how near and how far one gets to the fire that determines whether it is nourishing or destructive.

It might be that the νομός, that is prior to an opposition between home and homelessness, can be formulated through a consideration of the *es gibt* as a non-locatable, unfixable givenness. A brief itinerary will be elucidated here as a preliminary to a more detailed consideration of the *es gibt* in the next chapter, in relation to Heidegger’s writings on Parmenides. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes that ‘only as long as Dasein is... ‘is there’ [*gibt es*] Being’.<sup>131</sup> He later glosses this in the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’ to indicate that what he means here is not that ‘being is’ but that the *gibt* is to be understood as ‘gives’ and that ‘the “it” that here “gives” is being itself. The “gives” names the essence of being that is giving, granting its truth. The self-giving into the open, along with the open region itself’.<sup>132</sup> *Es gibt* is used because to say ‘being is’ would be to say that being is a being and to represent it ‘after the fashion of the familiar sorts of beings that act as causes and are actualized as effects’.<sup>133</sup> Nor does it mean that it is human being through which being is fashioned. Rather, being is conveyed to human beings through the clearing [*Lichtung*] of being. This is the dispensation of being [*Schickung des Seins*] itself. For Heidegger, the essential mystery for all thinking is contained in Parmenides’s phrase ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι, ‘for there is being’, a phrase which, he says, is still unthought. Whether and how being is has to remain an open question for thinking and *es gibt* is still only a provisional term for how being is. Further light is shed on the *es gibt* in his essay ‘The Way to Language’ where *Ereignis* is seen as that which makes possible the *es gibt*: ‘The appropriating event [*Ereignis*] is not the outcome [*Ergebnis*] (result) of something else, but the giving yield [*Er-gebnis*] whose giving reach [*reichendes Geben*] alone is what gives us such things as a “there is” [*es gibt*], a

---

<sup>130</sup> Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p.179/p.60.

<sup>131</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, Oxford UK & Cambridge USA, Blackwell, 1962, p.255. *Sein und Zeit*, Siebzehnte Auflage, Tübingen, 1993, Max Niemeyer Verlag, p.212. Heidegger’s emphasis.

<sup>132</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, pp.254-255/p.334.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, p.255/p.334.

“there is” of which even Being itself stands in need to come into its own as presence.’<sup>134</sup> Being needs [*bedürfen*] the *es gibt* in order to come into its own as presence [*Anwesen*] as being there. This would seem to suggest that being is no longer the ‘it’ of the ‘it gives being’ and this would appear to be confirmed in ‘Time and Being’, where Heidegger speaks of the ‘enigmatic It’ of the *es gibt*, the It that names a presence of absence [*ein Anwesen von Abwesen*], an It that cannot just be equated with being because that again would be to identify being with a being. It would be to say that ‘being is’ but, says Heidegger, ‘Being “is” just as little as time “is”’.<sup>135</sup> Here he seems to speak of an anonymous giving – Heidegger acknowledges the danger of arbitrarily positing an indeterminate power as the It - and of the enigma of the It being preserved in its anonymity.

Before coming to this, however, I would like to review briefly what this chapter has said about the enigma. As δεινόν, the *unheimlich*, the uncanny, the enigma is always doubled but in its doubling it never settles firmly into the priority of one over the other, that is it never fixes itself into a determinate opposition, one part of which can be absolutely affirmed against the other. Within this doubling, there is a double movement which both goes towards and retreats, a kind of attraction and repulsion. Again, this movement is never settled, it never becomes fixed. Within the δεινόν, there is also the eruption of *Ungeheure*, the monstrous or the extraordinary, which doesn’t seem to fit the pattern established by Heidegger in terms of the meaning of *unheimlich*. The *Ungeheure* points towards an enigma that both erupts and disrupts and which again seems to indicate an inherent instability, an instability that can also be discerned in the manifoldness of the uncanny enigma, its pleatedness, its multiple doubledness and entanglement. The counterturning doubling that Heidegger discerns in the δεινόν becomes the enigma which is always folded or folding in on itself, a folding in which the outside becomes the inside and the inside the outside. In its folding, that which was open becomes closed, that which appeared becomes hidden. Which side is which is an issue that can never,

---

<sup>134</sup> Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p.127/p.258.

<sup>135</sup> Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1972, p.18. *Zur Sache Des Denkens*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969, p.19.

finally, be decided. It is simultaneously individuated and interwoven and hidden. This hiddenness can also be seen in the enigma as immutable law, the law that Antigone invokes as justification for her action, the law that has already been erased before it has been written, a law that would have been erased prior to the impossibility of its having been written. Perhaps it might be better to say that the law unwrites itself before it has been written. The enigma as law becomes a palimpsest, wherein that which has been erased is irretrievable. In this, the enigma becomes the νόμος, the νόμος that layers its meanings and consequently opens up a space that is between dwelling and wandering, proximity and distance, custom and law, and that can never finally settle as each is folded back onto the other. It is an in-between space, always in transit. It is a νόμος that abides only in its waiting. Here, the poet becomes the exemplary sign of the enigma, a sign that is unreadable, uninterpretable and always falling silent. The sign that can never be read is the promise of the enigma that is withdrawn prior to the promise having been made.

## Chapter 4

### The enigma of Parmenides

In the beginning being was called presencing and presencing, in its turn, was called enduring out of concealment. Thus wrote Martin Heidegger at the end of 'Logos', his essay on Heraclitus, first given as a lecture in 1951. Being, as *Sein* or "*Sein*", as Heidegger writes it, was at first, originally [*anfänglich*] called "*Anwesen*" and this *Anwesen* is *hervor-währen in die Unverborgenheit*. Presencing is the lasting presencing, that which endures, interminable in the sense that *währen* expresses 'the mere passing of time, in the sense of 'go on'',<sup>1</sup> where the going on does not require a stated time. It is, perhaps, a kind of whiling and no doubt we are meant to hear in the *währen* an echo of the truth [*Wahrheit*] and also a sense of something being looked after, of solicitude [*wahren*]. But if *Anwesen* is a word from the beginning, whose meaning has become hidden, it is a word whose thinking is still to come. The word that Heidegger uses to mean presencing, as it is translated, no longer has this meaning in ordinary German. As a noun, *Anwesen* now means estate, which is suggestive of a certain type of presence, an imposition rather than a dispossession. Michael Inwood says: '[I]t is the nominalized infinitive of a now defunct verb, *anwesen*, 'to be there, in, at or involved in something'.'<sup>2</sup> It was a being there that was bound up with the environment to which it belonged. There are, however, still traces of this meaning through the adjective *anwesend*, meaning present, in the sense of someone being present at a meeting, for example, and the verb form *anwesend sein*, to be present, being present, and in the noun for presence, *Anwesenheit*. The meaning of *Anwesen* has been erased and a new one overlaid, like a palimpsest. In the beginning, it meant presencing and in the retrieval of this meaning Heidegger is perhaps pointing to the larger strategy of retrieving Parmenides's meaning through his readings.

But if being was originally called presencing, it was also the enigma. In the same essay, Heidegger writes: 'The enigma [*Rätsel*] has long been [*seit langsam*]

---

<sup>1</sup> R.B. Farrell, *Dictionary of German Synonyms*, Third Edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p.181.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1999, p.174.

propounded [*zugesagt*] to us in the word “Being”. In this matter “Being” remains only the provisional [*vorläufige*] word.’<sup>3</sup> For a long time, from time immemorial perhaps, the enigma has been said to us in the word being, has been promised – *zusagen* means promise – in this word. Being is the promise of the enigma which has been promised as being but being itself only has a provisional status, it is only temporary, conditional, it is the word that has run ahead, the forerunner, which always falls away. The provisional is something that points towards an other, an indication or even just a hint. It is never the thing itself. It is the word that stands in for something else before this something else can come forward. The provisional is never quite adequate for the task at hand but is a making do for the moment, until it is replaced. In fact, the possibility of being replaced is constitutive of the provisional. The instability of the word being as the promise of the enigma is announced in this provisionality. Thinking changes [*verändern*] the world, says Heidegger, it makes it other, but it ‘changes it in the ever darker depths of an enigma, depths which as they grow darker offer promise [*Versprechen*] of a greater brightness’.<sup>4</sup> The enigma is the promise of an illumination in the movement towards a greater darkness and the enigma as promise is named only in an interim fashion as being, which Heidegger cordons off with quotation marks and which he immediately qualifies as presencing. Our thinking, says Heidegger, should not run [*laufen*] blindly after the provisional [*vorläufige*] word that being is. Being is already being withdrawn even as it runs forward, even as it tells us of the promise. How are we to think being, to think the enigma that is promised in the word being? Thinking is surely a peculiar matter [*eigene Sache*], says Heidegger. How to translate this *eigene*? Thinking is its own, proper matter, its own singular matter? Thinkers themselves have no authority, he says. Their words have no knowledge of authors [*Autoren*], they have no writers [*Schriftsteller*]. Thinking is ‘not picturesque’, *bildarm*, literally picture-poor, nor is it charming. It is *ohne Reiz*, says Heidegger. That we think we know what thinking is, but that we have, in fact, stopped thinking, as far as Heidegger is concerned, is clear when he says that once at the beginning of Western thinking with Heraclitus, the essence of language was illuminated in the light of being. But this moment was lost and rather than standing [*stellen*] in the storm of being, we prefer to drive these

---

<sup>3</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, translated by David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi, San Francisco, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975, p.78. Translation modified. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1954, p.221.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Translation modified.

storms away. We want calmness [*Ruhe*] in the face of the storm, just as we want a settled place in the violence of the rivers. But instead of this calm, we do not find real peace but only anaesthesia [*Betäubung*]. It is the numbing of *Angst* in the face of thinking. *Betäubung* is a numbing or a deadening, it is the killing of pain, anaesthetic or narcotic. We use thinking as a narcotic, but for Heidegger it is a way of sobering up [*Ernüchterung*], but it is not merely a stimulant [*Reiz*]. Thinking is disillusionment [*Ernüchterung*], a dis-illusionment which is the putting away of illusions, the movement away from mere appearances, disabling illusion so that thinking can begin anew, with a clarity unobscured by narcotics or stimulants. Standing in the storm obviously demands this clarity, but the storm itself does not go away and it is never anything other than unsettling. There is always this question of a settling or settlement that is never settled. Thinking for Heidegger ‘does not mean here the course of psychologically represented acts of thought but the historical process in which a thinker arises, says his word, and so provides to truth a place within a historical humanity’.<sup>5</sup> The dark promise of the enigma is the relation of thinking and being and this enigma comes to us out of a past thinking that has still to be thought. But even though it is still to be thought, the relation of thinking to being sets on the way [*bewegen*] all Western reflection [*Besinnung*], says Heidegger: ‘It remains the durable touchstone for determining to what extent and in what way we have been granted both the privilege and the capacity to approach that which addresses itself to historical man as to-be-thought.’<sup>6</sup> It is the relation named by Parmenides in saying being and thinking are the same.

Heidegger approaches the relation of being and thinking in his many reflections on Parmenides. I will not cover all of these in this chapter. My itinerary will follow a number of key terms. In the essay ‘Moira’, first published in 1954 and based on an undelivered portion of the lectures that became *What is Called Thinking*, Heidegger explores the enigmatic relation between being and thinking. His claim is that it is not just a vague connection but an essential one, which determines the whole of Western thinking and philosophy. Heidegger contends that philosophy has subsumed Parmenides’ thought into its own thinking and then declared him a primitive

---

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, translated by André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1992, p.7. *Gesamtausgabe II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1923-1944, Band 54, Parmenides*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1982, p.9.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, p.79/p.223.

forerunner of that thought, one who has been surpassed. What these philosophers, especially Hegel, have done is to apply their own thinking onto Parmenides, rather than returning to his word. In his essay 'Hegel and the Greeks', Heidegger claims that Hegel characterises ancient Greek thought purely in terms of its being a primitive stage on the way towards the sovereignty of subjectivity: 'Hegel sees in the sentence of Parmenides a first step towards Descartes, with whose philosophy there first begins [*beginnt*] the determination of being on the basis of the explicitly posited subject.'<sup>7</sup> Philosophers have failed to let the thought of Parmenides think from out of its own time: 'But this historical kinship of the modern proposition and the ancient saying at the same time has its proper foundation in a difference between what is said and thought in our times and what was said and thought at that time – a difference which could hardly be more decisive.'<sup>8</sup> According to Heidegger, the thinkers of Western philosophy fail to think the Greek saying as an apprehending that gathers [*versammelnde Vernehmen*], that assigns thinking to being understood as *Anwesen*. The philosophical reception of Parmenides is, in effect, a form of wishful thinking which enables those philosophers coming after Parmenides to point to themselves as having progressed to a higher level of philosophy. In his essay, 'Anaximander's Saying', Heidegger contends that what has come to be called Presocratic is judged entirely from the standpoint of Plato and Aristotle. It is they who set the standard for reading Parmenides, Anaximander and Heraclitus and have effectively foreclosed on *Anwesen*, which he now aims to recuperate in his own thought.

It is not my purpose to assess Heidegger's interpretation of Parmenides in relation to how he has been interpreted by philosophy. Instead, I will be tracing the thought of the enigma in relation to presencing and appearing, as it arises in Heidegger's writings on the Greek thinker. To put Heidegger's discussion in context, however, I will give a brief, and necessarily partial, summary of the Parmenidian corpus, which could not hope to reflect the complexity of the debate around his work. Parmenides has been accepted as the first ontologist, as Charles Kahn says: 'Parmenides may reasonably be regarded as the founder of ontology and metaphysics at once. For he is the first to have articulated the concept of Being or Reality as a distinct topic for

---

<sup>7</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.329. *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1976, p.436.

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, p.83/p.228.

philosophic discussion.<sup>9</sup> His thought is contained in a fragmentary poem, which is in the form of a narrative of a journey by an unnamed youth to the house of an unnamed goddess who speaks to him of the various ways of enquiry. The poem has generally been split into three parts: the prologue, or proem; the way of, or to, truth [ἀλήθεια], although the goddess never refers to it as such; and the way of seeming [δόξα]. The proem has been preserved in its entirety, with a substantial proportion of the way of truth extant. The way of seeming is much more fragmentary. The proem has often been regarded as mere scene-setting, an allegory and non-philosophical, although this might be a projection from our own time rather than being what Parmenides thought. Lisa Atwood Wilkinson argues that ‘distinguishing philosophy from poetry in the ancient world is complicated by the fact that even as late as the fourth century the distinction between *logos* and *muthos*, and the one who speaks each, is not consistently maintained in...philosophical writing’.<sup>10</sup> Philosophy has concentrated on the ἀλήθεια section, from where the fragments Heidegger writes on are drawn. For Kahn, the problem that Parmenides raises is the problem of the search for knowledge and the choice between the ways that knowledge can be acquired. The poem’s argument, say Kirk, Raven and Schofield, is that in any investigation there are two logically coherent, and mutually exclusive, possibilities, that the subject of the investigation exists, or it does not, and that the second alternative is unintelligible. They say that Parmenides berates human beings because ‘they never make the choice between the two ways ‘is’ and ‘is not’, but follow *both* without discrimination’.<sup>11</sup> In a recent study, John Palmer identifies Parmenides as the first philosopher to have distinguished with sufficient rigour the modalities of necessity, impossibility and contingency, leading to what Palmer calls ‘the unprecedented question: what must what must be be like?’.<sup>12</sup>

Heidegger’s interpretation of Parmenides in the ‘Moirai’ essay concerns two specific fragments of the poem where Parmenides says that being and thinking are the same.

The first is Fragment 3 (F3):

---

<sup>9</sup> Charles H. Kahn, *Essays on Being*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p.143.

<sup>10</sup> Lisa Atwood Wilkinson, *Parmenides and To Eon: Reconsidering Muthos and Logos*, London, Continuum, 2009, pp.71-72. Transliteration in text.

<sup>11</sup> G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, Second Edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.241. Their emphasis.

<sup>12</sup> John Palmer, *Parmenides & Presocratic Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p.45.

τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἔστιν τε καὶ εἶναι.

This is translated as: ‘*Denn dasselbe ist Denken und Sein* [For thinking and Being are the same].’<sup>13</sup> In a lecture from 1957, subsequently published as *Identity and Difference*, it is translated as ‘*Das Selbe nämlich ist Vernehmen (Denken) sowohl als auch Sein* [For the same perceiving (thinking) as well as being].’<sup>14</sup> Fragment 8 (F8) has it as: ταὐτὸν δ’ ἔστι νοεῖν τε καὶ οὐνεκεν ἔστι νόημα; and the German literally translates as thinking and the thought, that IS is, are the same. As Krzysztof Ziarek remarks, the key word for Heidegger here is the same, that is τὸ αὐτό, and what it names is ‘the way in which thinking belongs to Being, and in which thinking, in the sense of primordial *Denken*, and Being belong “to each other” prior to any representational thinking, reflection, consciousness, or knowledge’.<sup>15</sup> This is the enigmatic word for Heidegger in this essay, the enigma as a belonging together, which arises out of the enigma. This emphasis on τὸ αὐτό, and its figuration as the enigma, does not arise in the lecture that formed part of the *What is Called Thinking* series. However, even here, it is named as the ‘as yet unthought *essence* of Ἀλήθεια, inasmuch as this essence unfolds into the twofold of the ἐόν’.<sup>16</sup> In *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger writes that this sentence or proposition [*Satz*] accompanies us [*Geleit geben*] into the belonging together, in which it is the belonging that takes precedence over the together, and in which both thinking and being belong to an identity [*Identität*], the essence of which arises from the letting-belong-together that is the *Ereignis*. Identity is the *Eigentum* of *Ereignis*, he says, that is identity is the property of, or belongs to, *Ereignis*. There seems, therefore, to be a doubled priority. Belonging is prior to the together so that, prior to the together of being and thinking, there is a belonging. But this would also suggest that belonging is also prior to thinking and being because there is already a belonging into which they arise.

---

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, p.79/p.223.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, p.27/p.90.

<sup>15</sup> Krzysztof Ziarek, *Inflected Language: Towards a Hermeneutics of Nearness*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994, p.36.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Heidegger, ‘The Last, Undelivered Lecture (XII) from Summer Semester 1952’, translated by Will McNeill, in *The Presocratics after Heidegger*, edited by David Jacobs, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1999, pp.171-184, p.181. ‘Colloquium Über Dialektik, Anhang: Letzte, Nicht Vorgetragene Vorlesung Aus Dem Sommersemester 1952’, *Hegelen Studien, Band 25, 1990*, pp.9-40, p.32. Heidegger’s emphasis.

What these so called, says Heidegger, propositions of Parmenides mean is precisely the question which Heidegger will pursue throughout the ‘Moira’ essay. It is not a question, however, which can be answered by metaphysics: ‘[E]very interpretation of the Greek saying that moves within the context of modern thinking goes awry from the start.’<sup>17</sup> It has already been noted how Hegel sees Parmenides as part of the history of subjectivity, on Heidegger’s reading. He further claims that there are three viewpoints from which philosophy as metaphysics attempts to make the thinking of Parmenides accessible and bolster its own self image as having progressed to a higher level of philosophy. None of these three, whether it is being as the object of a subject, Plato’s nonsensible ideas, or seeing thinking as something at hand among other beings, get near to the matter in question for Heidegger. Instead, he calls a proper enquiry [*eigens nachzufragen*] one that is ‘a dialogue in which the ways of hearing and points of view of ancient thinking are contemplated according to their essential origin [*Wesensherkunft*], so that the call [*Geheiß*] under which past, present, and future thinking – each in its own way – all stand, might begin to announce itself’.<sup>18</sup> It is a question of advancing a thinking that is alive to the beginning [*Anfang*].

In the two Fragments that concern us, Heidegger’s initial claim is that, in using the terms εἶναι (F8) and εἶναι (F3), Parmenides is not thinking in terms of beings in themselves or being for itself - εἶναι is the infinitive ‘to be’, while εἶναι is ‘being’ – ‘as though it were incumbent upon the thinker to set the nonsensible essential nature of Being apart from, and in opposition to, beings which are sensible. Rather εἶναι, being, is thought here in its twofold [*Zwiefalt*] as Being and beings, and is participially expressed – although the grammatical concept has not yet come explicitly into the grasp of linguistic science’.<sup>19</sup> εἶναι is not to be understood as the whole to which thinking, as a being among beings, would then belong. The thought of Parmenides as it relates to the twofold of being and beings is, however, fated to fall by the wayside despite the fact that thinking from its Greek beginnings has always moved [*bewegen*] in the unfolding [*Entfalteten*] of the twofold [*Zwiefalt*],

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, p.84/p.229.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.86/p.231.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.86/p.232. Translation modified. I have translated *Zwiefalt* consistently as ‘twofold’ whereas the translators of this volume translate it sometimes as ‘duality’ and sometimes as ‘twofold’.

says Heidegger, just as the relation between thinking and being has been the forgotten movement behind all of Western philosophy: ‘What takes place at the beginning [*Beginn*] of Western thought is the unobserved decline of the twofold. But this decline is not nothing. Indeed it imparts to Greek thinking the character of a beginning [*Beginn*], in that the lighting of the Being of beings, as lighting, is concealed. The hiddenness of this decline of the twofold reigns in essentially the same way as that into which the twofold itself falls.’<sup>20</sup> Not only does the twofold fall away – into oblivion, says Heidegger, *Vergessenheit* - but the fact of this decline is also hidden. Parmenides’s thought is, essentially, lost but it is a loss that cannot be seen or considered by a philosophical tradition which believes it has already surpassed this thought. The enduring reign of the oblivion, into which the twofold falls, conceals itself as λήθη, says Heidegger. The twofold is in concealment to which ἀλήθεια belongs with such immediacy that λήθη withdraws in favour of ἀλήθεια, leaving pure disclosure to it, as though concealment was unnecessary for disclosure, he continues. In the oblivion of the twofold, therefore, we find a disclosure that has abandoned concealment – the λήθη of ἀλήθεια has been forgotten – but in this apparently vain disclosure prevails a darkness in which the unfolding of the twofold [*die Entfaltung der Zwiefalt*] is still as hidden as its decline [*Wegfall*] for beginning thought. Western philosophy thinks that it has disclosed the twofold in its thinking of φύσις, λόγος and ἔν, whereas it has, in fact, yet to think it, says Heidegger. Michael Lewis captures this well when he writes: ‘[T]he history of the West amounts to the unfolding of this withdrawal [of being] as the eradication of all traces of the first time it was forgotten, in Greece, in the glories of the systems of Plato and Aristotle, so glorious that they disguise the fact that in them an original withdrawal conceals itself, a withdrawal upon which their radiance is premised. It is this covering over that is forgotten in the later philosophy that unfolds on the basis of this Platonico-Aristotelianism.’<sup>21</sup> Western philosophy has forgotten its beginning, and forgotten this forgetting, and has erected the architecture of its own thought upon this doubled forgetting. The claim is that it is only through a thinking return to the beginning thought of Greek thinking that this doubled forgetting can be retrieved and the twofold and its unfolding can be thought.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p.87/pp.232-233.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Lewis, *Heidegger and the Place of Ethics*, London and New York, Continuum, 2005, p.80.

What is the beginning and what would constitute its rethinking? Heidegger's lectures on Parmenides from around ten years prior to 'Moira' are instructive. Here he identifies two beginnings. The first, the *Beginn*, which is translated as outset, refers merely to chronology so that on one level Heraclitus and Parmenides belong together at the outset of Western thought because they were contemporaries. On another level, Parmenides and Heraclitus are linked, not because they were contemporaries but because they belong together [*Zusammengehörigkeit*] in thinking the true [*Wahre*] and, as such, 'experience the true in its essence and, in such essential experience, to know the truth of what is true'.<sup>22</sup> Even though these two Greek thinkers are now separated from us by over 2,500 years, their thought has remained resistant to its being buried by time, not because it is eternal, but because it is what Heidegger calls the genuinely historical [*eigentlich Geschichtliche*]. Genuine history is not the narrative of past events but that which precedes and determines all history. Heidegger calls this preceding-determining history the beginning, *das Anfängliche*, which does not lie back in the past but in what is to come. It is precisely [*eigens*], and repeatedly, a gift to an age, he says. In a remarkable inversion, Heidegger claims that the beginning comes last, that is the beginning is always still to be thought and it appears as veiled [*Verhüllung*] in its own, singular [*eigentümlich*] way. The beginning, then, is not an event, it is not an occurrence in history, nor is it removed from history, but that which precedes history and establishes that history as what it is. Western thought is not only chronologically distant from the *Beginn*, it is also distant from the *Anfang* in its thinking. Thus thinkers such as Heraclitus and Parmenides have been left behind in the past, superseded by the progressive march of philosophical thinking. Equally, the *Anfang*, in its Heideggerian sense, has yet to be thought – indeed cannot be thought – by Western metaphysical thinking and, as such, remains hidden in an immemorial past. The beginning, as *Anfängliche*, is, therefore withdrawn at the outset [*Beginn*] and, in a way, is promised in the yet to come. The *Anfang* is promised in its withdrawal. Is this the promise of the enigma, that is withdrawn prior to the act of promising? Or is it a promise that, as John Sallis writes, offers 'something [that] will advance toward us from out of the future, perhaps something transfigured and transfiguring, something renewed and renewing, opening

---

<sup>22</sup> Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p.1/p.1.

up unheard-of possibilities’?<sup>23</sup> Does the promise of the *Anfang*, as Sallis says of the promise of art, hold out the possibility of a transfiguring renewal able to engender thought, to adapt Sallis’s words, unprecedented in its effect?

I raise the *Anfang* here because Heidegger, in all of his reflections on the poem of Parmenides, seems to return to this beginning, whether it is through a thinking of the τὸ αὐτό, ἀλήθεια or the ἔστι, just as the choral ode of Sophocles was a delineation of the human being at the beginning. It is also important that *anfängliche*, translated usually as primordial or original in the texts under discussion, resonates with the thinking of the beginning that Heidegger gives it in the Parmenides lectures. This thinking is also developed in the *Beiträge*, but I cannot really do justice to the thought of the *Anfang* as it occurs therein, except to note certain things. Here he distinguishes between the first beginning and the other beginning and it is the other beginning which corresponds to what he describes as *anfängliche* in the lectures on Parmenides. The first beginning is that of the Greeks, a beginning that still needs to be won back, writes Heidegger, and which the other beginning needs to encounter in order that the other beginning can be unfolded. In other words, the other beginning is a return to, and retrieval of, the first beginning to uncover what was unthought in the thought of the ancient Greeks. As John Sallis writes: ‘Thus the other beginning, beginning beyond the end of metaphysics, is at the same time a return to the first beginning, a return that enters into the first beginning so as to grasp it more originarily than in the first beginning, so as to grasp somehow that which, though essential to the first beginning, remained – in the first beginning – concealed.’<sup>24</sup> In effect, Western philosophy begins in the first beginning, but fails to think it by abandoning being for beings so that it becomes necessary to return to rethink the beginning. This is precisely the move that Heidegger is making in his work on Parmenides. In this other beginning, Heidegger sees a move away from ontology and metaphysics because the question guiding ontology no longer sets the standard for thinking, and thinking no longer starts out from beings.

---

<sup>23</sup> John Sallis, *Transfigurements: On the True Sense of Art*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2008, p.152.

<sup>24</sup> John Sallis, *The Verge of Philosophy*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2008, p.15.

The question to which we return first is how to think the belonging together of being and thinking, to think the relationality of the ‘and’. What is it that characterises this belonging together, Heidegger asks? But in asking this question we have come too late, he says. The answer has already been given prior to our asking of the question. What is more, the answer itself is not an answer. The answer that arrives prior to the question and that does not give an answer is the word that begins Parmenides’ saying. That word is τὸ αὐτό, *das Selbe*, the same. The answer does not answer because by determining [*Bestimmung*] two things as the same, the possibility of belonging together has already been ruled out, because only things that are different can belong together, says Heidegger. In addition, the same has nothing to say about from which viewpoint [*Hinsicht*] and out of which ground [*Grund*] sameness agrees with difference, he says. If belonging together is a characteristic of thinking and being then they cannot be the same. Equally, merely calling thinking and being the same does not enable us to see how sameness came to be equated with difference. It is because of this seeming paradox that Heidegger identifies τὸ αὐτό as the enigmatic word, which governs these two fragments, and, he says, possibly the entirety of Parmenides’ thought.

The same, however, is not the identical [*Identische*] or identity [*Identität*], says Heidegger. To think in this way, to see identity as ‘the most transparent presupposition for the thinkability of whatever is thinkable, then by this opinion we become progressively more deaf to the key word, assuming that we have ever heard its call’.<sup>25</sup> The enigma fades into inaudibility if we equate the same with identity. When Heidegger refers to identity here he is thinking of it in terms of how it has been thought metaphysically, where identity is a trait [*Zug*] of being. The sameness that Parmenides refers to should not be thought in this way: ‘The Sameness of thinking and Being that speaks in Parmenides’ fragment [*Satz*] stems from further back than the kind of identity defined by metaphysics in terms of Being as a characteristic of Being.’<sup>26</sup> To think τὸ αὐτό as identity is to misread this word. If the same, *das Selbe*, marks the relation of being to thinking, so the enigma is this same mark, if the τὸ αὐτό is the enigmatic word. The same, as the enigma, is the relation of being and thinking. What, then, is meant by thinking and what is meant by being?

<sup>25</sup> Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, p.88/p.234.

<sup>26</sup> Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p.28./p.91.

And what is the relation if it is an enigma? Heidegger says that Parmenides more clearly says in F8 how the being to which νοεῖν belongs should be thought. In F3 the word for being is εἶναι; in F8 it is εἶόν. It is in εἶόν that Parmenides names the twofold, according to Heidegger. He translates εἶόν as *das Seiend*, a being. Εἶναι is the infinitive of εἶμί, i.e. to be or being. Equally, νοεῖν, thinking, brings to mind νοήμα, he says, that which is to be perceived or thought. Νοεῖν is pure thought, νοήμα the matter of that thought. Heidegger gives his own specific gloss on νοήμα as that which has been taken heed of [*in die Acht Genommene*], by a respectful, attentive apprehending [*achtenden Vernehmen*]. But *vernehmen* also means to hear - *vernehmbar* means audible or perceptible - and perhaps we are meant to hear this resonance here, in line with Heidegger's contention that we need to listen for a saying, if we are to think the enigma. *Vernehmen* is used, rather than *hören*, so that we can hear the resonance between *in die Acht nehmen* and *vernehmen*. *Acht* is a form of caring attention to and, although *nehmen* means to take, we are clearly not meant to see this as the grasping of a subject in the violence of apprehension, especially when considering that *nehmen* can be used in constructions such as to take something in hand, take care of, or look after. In the lectures on Parmenides, Heidegger writes that, for the Greeks, perception as *vernehmen* is a kind of original consent given to being, what he calls a beginning understanding [*anfänglichen Einvernehmen*]. Νοεῖν is, therefore, thinking that is a taking-heed-of in a heedful hearing and it comes to presence on the basis of the εἶσι. Εἶόν, being, is named as that which is for the sake of thought.

But if Parmenides says εἶόν and εἶναι, an experience of the twofold is still some way off, according to Heidegger. While thinking comes to presence because of the twofold – although this is still unsaid, says Heidegger – this presencing is on the way to the twofold of being and beings. What is clear, though, is that it is only the twofold that makes thought necessary: '[A] "being in itself," does not make thinking mandatory, nor does "Being for itself" necessitate thought. Neither, taken separately, will ever let it be known to what extent "Being" calls for thinking. But because of their twofold, because of the εἶόν, thinking comes to presence. The taking-heed of Being comes to presence on the way to the twofold. In such a presencing [*An-wesen*]

thinking belongs to Being.’<sup>27</sup> The twofold presences in taking-heed-of, that is thinking, and allows the twofold to come to presence, with presence understood as the enduring-here-before. But in order for this thinking to let the twofold come to presence there has to be a prior λέγειν, says Heidegger. *In-die-Acht-nehmen* [νοεῖν] is already gathered [*versammeln*] to the twofold through a prior λέγειν, which Heidegger translates as *Vorliegenlassen* which becomes letting-lie-before in English. *Vorliegen* has the sense of being available, to be already out there. Λέγειν therefore becomes a letting-be available: ‘Νοεῖν, whose belonging-together with εἶν we should like to contemplate, is grounded [*gründen*] in and comes to presence from λέγειν. In λέγειν the letting-lie-before of what is present in its presencing occurs. Only as thus lying-before can what is present as such admit the νοεῖν, the taking heed of.’<sup>28</sup> Thinking arises because it is the twofold where human beings find themselves in thinking and which demands such thinking for itself and which enables taking-heed-of to be gathered to the twofold. This gathering happens because of a prior λέγειν, which establishes a prior availability, in which there is a letting-lie-before. Availability “available” itself in order for the gathering of the twofold and the taking-heed-of. Λέγειν is related to the λόγος and has a range of meanings around saying, speaking, discourse and word and it is as saying or speaking that the word is generally translated in F6. Thinking, however, does not come to presence on account of εἶντα (beings in themselves) nor for the sake of εἶναι (being for itself). Neither of these is sufficient on its own to let it be known the extent to which being demands thinking. It is the twofold of the εἶν that enables thinking to come to presence. Being and taking-heed-of presence up to the twofold, says Heidegger, and in such presencing, thinking belongs to being.

Heidegger questions how Parmenides characterises this belonging and implies that it is in these Parmenidian words - νοεῖν πεφρατισμένον ἐν τῷ εἶντι - that this belonging occurs. In German this translates as ‘*das Denken, das als Ausgesprochenes im Seienden ist.* [Thinking, which as something uttered is in being]’.<sup>29</sup> *Aussprechen* means to pronounce, but it can also mean to grant, as in granting a separation, or to give a warning or deliver praise. It is a giving voice to something. Thinking, as

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, p.89/p.235. Heidegger’s emphasis.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

something that is given a voice, is in being. Heidegger says that we cannot begin to understand this *Ausgesprochensein*, this having been uttered, without coming to terms with what is meant here by *Gesprochenes*, *sprechen* and *Sprache*. Equally, as long as we take εὖν to mean *a* being then the meaning of being will remain undetermined. That is, we have to question the relation of the πεφρατισμένον to νοεῖν as it has been accepted in the philosophical tradition. Thus the belonging together of νοεῖν and εὖν is grounded in and presences [*wesen*] out of λέγειν, so that it is prior to what is present in its presencing, a primordial availability. Only what is present as such in its lying-before [*Vorliegendes*] can admit the νοεῖν, the taking-heed-of. Therefore, λέγειν becomes crucial for a thinking that seeks to address the belonging together of thinking and being. Because the essence of saying rests in λέγειν, the νοεῖν is essentially something said: ‘In the Greek experience, the essence of saying rests in λέγειν. On that account νοεῖν is essentially – not peripherally or accidentally – something said [*Gesagtes*].’<sup>30</sup> But not every said is a *Gesprochenes*, says Heidegger. There are times when it is a silence and when it has to be a silence. The said can appear as the spoken or as silence. The question that Heidegger asks is why Parmenides marks νοούμενον, that which is thought, and νοεῖν, thinking, as the πεφρατισμένον. This latter word Heidegger says is correctly translated as *Gesprochenes*, but its meaning can only be obtained by turning to the πεφρατισμένον and working out how this word gets its meaning, he claims. He links it to φάσκειν and φάναι. Φάσκο means to say, affirm, assert, sometimes with notions of alleging or pretending. It can also mean to promise. Φάναι is the infinitive of φημί – I say – and the aorist infinitive, which indicates a past action without determining whether the action was momentary or continuous. Φάινο means to bring to light, to make appear. Heidegger here wants to stress that utterance is not the subject vocalising his or her thoughts; it is not a question of phonetics and semantics, which would be completely remote from Greek thought. Rather, uttering has its essence in letting something appear. In responding with language, it is language which allows the bringing into view: ‘Φάσκειν implies [*liegen*]: “to invoke,” [*anrufen*] “to name with praise,” [*rühmend nennen*] “to call upon,” [*heißen*] all of which depend upon the fact that the verb has its essence in letting something appear. Φάσμα is the shining of the stars and the moon...Φάσις is the saying; to say means to bring forward into view.

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Φημί, “I say,” has the same [*selbe*] (though not identical [*gleich*]) essence as λέγω: to bring what is present in its presencing forward into shining appearance, into lying before.<sup>31</sup> Just as thinking and being are the same, so are φημί, I say, and λέγω, letting-lie-before. Φάσις is the saying, says Heidegger and to say is *zum Vorschein bringen*, which means to bring to light or to appear. These words point towards a form of prior opening, the originary promise that allows anything to appear at all.

Parmenides, Heidegger says, wishes [*liegen daran*] to discuss [*erörten*] where νοεῖν belongs. That the placing of νοεῖν is important is signalled by *erörten* which echoes *Ort*, place or position and *orten* to locate or fix the position of, and which calls to mind the *Ortschaft* of the rivers. It is a question of orienting ourselves because it is only by discovering where νοεῖν belongs and where it is at home [*von Hause*] that we can experience the proximity of thinking’s belonging with being. Thinking, as νοεῖν, is both a possibility and a demand of the twofold of *Anwesen* and *Anwesende*. That is, thinking is both able to, and has to, come to light [*zum Vorschein kommen*] to an extent in the twofold. It comes to light to the extent that the unfolding of the twofold of presencing and present beings invokes [*hervorrufen*] λέγειν, says Heidegger. The unfolding is a calling that calls something out. In this case, λέγειν is called out by the joint unfolding of *Anwesen* and *Anwesende*. The unfolding of the twofold invokes, calls upon and gives voice to λέγειν, which is made available in the unfolding of the twofold ‘and with the released letting-lie of what lies before us [*entlassen Vorliegen des Vorliegenden*], grants [*gibt*] νοεῖν something it can take heed of [*in die Acht nehmen*] and thus preserve [*verwahren*].<sup>32</sup> The unfolding of the twofold is a giving through λέγειν, a giving of presencing and present beings so that these can be brought into the safe keeping of thought as νοεῖν. However, according to Heidegger, Parmenides is not yet thinking the twofold, as such. But what he does say in F8, in Heidegger’s translation, is that thinking cannot be found apart from the twofold. Heidegger is translating εἶναι here as the twofold whereas it is usually translated as ‘what is’. Only on the basis of what is will νοεῖν be found, and only as that which is uttered. This is because thinking belongs with εἶναι in the gathering that εἶναι calls for [*geheissen*], which thinking itself, resting in λέγειν, accomplishes. The

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.90/p.236.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p.91/p.237.

gathering that is called for is completed by thinking and in this way thinking responds to its belonging to εὖν as a belonging that εὖν uses: ‘For νοεῖν takes up [vernimmt], not just anything at random, but only the One designated in Fragment VI: εὖν ἔμμεναι, whatever is present in its presencing.’<sup>33</sup> This taking up, this *vernehmen*, is a hearing, perceiving and understanding thinking. The line is:

Χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ’ εὖν ἔμμεναι. ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι.

Heidegger’s translators point out that ἔμμεναι is a variant of ἔμμεναι, both of which are from the verb to be, εἶναι. However, although Heidegger does not mention this, a shift in the accent of ἔμμεναι gives us a word that means to abide in a place, or to dwell. It can be used of things to mean to stand fast, hold good, be fixed. Bearing in mind previous discussions around abiding and the *Aufenthalt*, it is possibly not accidental that Heidegger uses this variant throughout his quotations from the Parmenidian text, even if he makes nothing of it. The second point, which will be discussed later in the chapter, relates to the final three words, ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι, which has been translated as ‘for [it] is there to be’,<sup>34</sup> and ‘for it is to be’.<sup>35</sup> In the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’, Heidegger writes that the primal mystery for all thinking is contained in this phrase and that it still remains unthought today. In the Letter, Heidegger translates it as ‘*Es ist nämlich Sein* [for there is being]’.<sup>36</sup>

The essence of language has to be thought out of the saying, says Heidegger, and this saying is both λόγος – as letting-lie-before or making available – and as φάσις – that is a bringing to appearance. This bringing into view remains difficult because the illumination almost immediately vanishes into a *Verhüllung*, a veiling darkness as it is translated. *Verhüllung* means veiling, masking or disguising, while the root word *hüllen* means to wrap or to shroud. For Heidegger, then, this first illumination of the essence of language, that is in Parmenides’s text, is almost immediately covered over. It is veiled and the essence of language appears as something else, as what Heidegger calls vocalisation [*Verlautbarung*], a system of signs and significations,

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> David Gallop, *Parmenides of Elea: Fragments*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984, p.61.

<sup>35</sup> Palmer, *Parmenides & Presocratic Philosophy*, p.367.

<sup>36</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p.255/p.335.

and finally as data and information. The essence of language covers itself up, it dons a disguise which enables metaphysics to come in and claim the essence of language for itself. Rather than language being that which brings things into view, it becomes the calculative reasoning tool of metaphysics. But what is veiling? Is it interchangeable with masking or disguise? In the first chapter, I wrote about disguise and the inability of disguise to appear as disguise because to appear as disguise is to disclose the disguise and therefore disguise no longer appears. Is the essence of language the enigma of *Verhüllung*? I will mark this for the moment and will discuss disguise later in the chapter. Thinking and being, and the way in which they belong together, have been more clearly brought to light, says Heidegger, but this light is also a darkness. It is the darkness of the *Verhüllung*. Thinking and being belong together in the *Gesprochene*, which is both λόγος and φάσις and, as such, is both prior to a language that is a system of signs and meanings but, because it has been covered over, is also still to come. In a sense, the saying is a form of exposure in that it lays itself bare in the *Vorliegen-lassen* and the *zum Vorschein bringen*, that is it offers, it gives itself. In another sense, it is exposure as *ex-position*, in that it is outside the metaphysical economy of positing and position.

Despite the fact that the relation of belonging [*Zugehörigkeit*] of thinking to being has been made clearer, says Heidegger, the enigmatic saying τὸ αὐτό can still not be heard [*hören*] in all its enigmatic fullness. This is not a search for a solution to the enigma, more a case of seeing the enigma in all its, perhaps, impenetrable complexity. To perceive the enigma as enigma, is to hear it in its fullness as it permeates the thinking of the proximity of thinking and being, of the *and* of being and thinking. Heidegger writes that the twofold of the εἶόν, that is the presencing of what is present, gathers thinking to itself and, in so doing, it perhaps gives a hint of what is hidden [*verbergen*] by the word the same, which is ordinarily empty of meaning, he says. Heidegger asks the question whether it is from the unfolding of the twofold that the twofold calls thinking onto the way [*Weg*] of *Ihretwegen*, that is for its own sake, and thus makes necessary the belonging together of thinking and the presencing of what is present. He does not answer this question immediately but implies that it does by then enquiring into the unfolding itself, in terms of what it is and how it happens. He concludes that there is nothing that immediately comes to

mind in Parmenides's saying that leads to a proper enquiry into the unfolding of the twofold, 'or for hearing what is essential to the unfolding in what the enigmatic key word [i.e. τὸ αὐτό] of the saying silently conceals [*verschweigt*]',<sup>37</sup> The enigma, as the same, conceals itself through a silencing, keeping its own counsel. The enigma silences the essence of the unfolding but, if we follow Heidegger's thinking on the utterance then this silence is already something said. The enigma says something in this silence and this silence is a call from out of the unfolding of the twofold.

In terms of the saying that is said in the twofold, Heidegger links this to φάσις, which is discussed above, as that which prevails [*walten*] in the twofold. This saying is the calling [*rufende*], demanding [*verlangende*] bringing into view. *Rufen* literally means to produce a sound, and its most frequent implication is that it conveys a message, an order or a summons. Thus the saying is a calling-invoking, a demanding-insisting-desiring bringing into appearance. Heidegger claims that what Heraclitus calls the λόγος, Parmenides thinks as φάσις, and he asks the following – rhetorical? – questions: 'What happens in Φάσις and in Λόγος? Could the gathering-calling [*versammelnd-rufende*] saying which reigns in them be that bringing which brings forth a shining [*Scheinen*]? Which gives [*gewährt*] the lighting in whose endurance [*Währen*] presencing is first illuminated, so that in its light what is present appears, thus governing the twofold of both? Could the unfolding of the twofold consist in this, that a shining which illuminates itself comes to pass?'<sup>38</sup> The answer to these questions is a clearly unequivocal 'yes' because Heidegger immediately goes on to claim that the Greeks experience the basic character of what has just been described as disclosure [*Entbergen*] and that the Greek name for disclosure is ἀλήθεια. It is disclosure, he says, that reigns in the unfolding of the twofold.

*Entbergung*, disclosure, is a Heideggerian coinage. *Bergen* has a range of meanings, including to save or rescue, shelter, hold or hide, as well as to get or gather, as in gathering the harvest. The prefix *Ent-* can be either a freeing or an intensification. In this instance, it is both a freeing from hiddenness and an intensification of the gathering-sheltering-saving. The translation as disclosure cannot hope to encompass

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, p.92/p.238.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p.93/p.239.

all these meanings, nor can it reference the terminology Heidegger uses around concealment and unconcealment, that is *verbergen*, *Verbergung*, *Verborgenheit* and *Unverborgenheit*. Heidegger equates *Entbergung* with ἀλήθεια which, as truth, is the unfolding of the twofold. Parmenides was thinking within the unfolding in relation to ἀλήθεια, says Heidegger, but he leaves unthought where the essence of truth might be grounded. This remains unthought in Greek thought in the same way that τὸ αὐτό as the enigma is unthought, he says. The unfolding of the twofold as the disclosure of the presencing of what is present is that which is silent in the same, τὸ αὐτό. What is given to the thinker to think, however, remains veiled with regard to its essential provenance, but this veiling is an affirmation that it is disclosure that points towards the to-be-thought and this is named in τὸ αὐτό, in the enigma of the same, a naming that is also a silence. But to think the silent unfolding of the twofold in the same is not an advance beyond the thought of Parmenides, says Heidegger, but a going back into the *Anfang*, that which has to be thought more originally, or more ‘beginningly’ [*anfänglicher zu-Denkende*].

Heidegger claims that τὸ αὐτό is the subject of the sentence in F3. In addition, ἐστίν does not just mean is, but in fact means presences [*wesen*] and endures [*währen*] and that which, moreover, bestows or grants that which endures [*gewährend aus dem Gewährenden*]. As such, the same reigns as the unfolding of the twofold as *Entbergung*. The enigma, therefore, is the unfolding of the twofold as disclosure, as ἀλήθεια. Τὸ ἕόν names the twofold and there is no presencing of what is present outside of it, because presencing as such rests upon the twofold and shines or appears in its unfolded light. Λέγειν and νοεῖν let what is present in the light of *Anwesen* be available [*vor-liegen*]. As such, λέγειν and νοεῖν lie [*liegen*] opposite *Anwesen* but not as objects existing independently. It is not as something present in the whole of presencing, in terms of everything that is present, that thinking is to be classified: ‘Thus thinking does not belong together with Being because it is *also* something present and therefore to be counted in the totality of presencing – which means here the whole of what is present.’<sup>39</sup> Λέγειν and νοεῖν are not objectively available to a subjective positioning. Heidegger says that Parmenides seems to support the interpretation that thinking is something objectively present, but that this is to

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p.95/pp.241-242. Heidegger’s emphasis.

misread the εἶναι as beings rather than as the twofold. He claims that what Parmenides says in F8 is that outside the twofold there is nothing else in being. The presencing of what is present cannot happen outside it, because presencing rests on [*beruhen*] the twofold and comes out it. Parmenides gives this explanation, says Heidegger, because the name νοεῖν appears to be something other [*anders lautend*] than εἶναι and is therefore opposite and outside of being. However, the name as *Wortlaut*, and as what it has named, indicates that thinking holds itself [*aufhalten*] alongside and outside of εἶναι.

This appearance [*Anschein*] is not mere semblance [*Schein*] because it points to the way in which λέγειν and νοεῖν relate to presencing. Their joining together [*das Gefüge*] liberates [*geben frei*] the εἶναι ἔμμεναι for perception [*vernehmen*]. The conjunction of thinking with saying, as λέγειν can be translated, is that which freely gives presencing in its appearance to perception. It is that which makes available the appearance of the presencing. In doing so, says Heidegger, however, it holds itself apart [*heraushalten*] from εἶναι. Thinking is outside the twofold and yet remains on the way [*unterwegs bleiben*] towards it in terms of both being demanded by it and corresponding to it. But this outside is also an inside, and is, therefore, non-placeable. In the very act of remaining on the way to the twofold, thinking is interior to the twofold. Thinking is both exterior, and interior, to the twofold through the *unterwegs zu*, and this twofold ‘is never simply an indifferently represented distinction between Being and beings, but rather comes to presence from the revealing unfolding [*entbergenden Entfaltung*]’.<sup>40</sup> Unfolding as disclosure, therefore as ἀλήθεια, is the granting of light to the presencing wherein that which is present can appear. But disclosure is dependent on both the *vorliegen-Lassen*, on the letting-be-available, and perception [*Vernehmen*], if that which is present is to appear and, in being so, retains thinking in its belonging to the twofold. Therefore, says Heidegger, it is not possible for something to be present outside the twofold. But what is this interiority that is also an exteriority, that is only interior to the extent that it is underway? It is not possible for something to be present outside the twofold, says Heidegger, but thinking is outside the twofold, *in einer Hinsicht*, in a certain way, but by being underway, he also says that thinking is interior to the twofold. Thinking

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.96/p.242.

therefore exists in this doubled relationship to the twofold. It crosses from the outside to the inside via a remaining underway. Or it remains in the chiasmus that is the crossing of exterior to interior, that is it remains impossible to situate, lacking a fixed settlement. Thinking is only interior to the twofold as a movement towards it. If thinking remains underway, it can never be said to have arrived at its destination. It is, then, a sojourn, an *Aufenthalt*, that is always underway, never finally at rest.

This sense of always being underway is further elaborated in the way that Moira is described in what Heidegger calls the supreme sentence [*Satz*] of Parmenides, in F8:

ἐπεὶ τό γε Μοῖρ' ἐπέδησεν οὐλον ἀκίνητόν τ' ἔμμεναι.

The fact that this sentence occurs in a subordinate clause [*Nebensatz*] is significant for Heidegger. There is a suggestion that the marginality of a ‘casually attached [*angefügten*] dependent clause’<sup>41</sup> says something about the way the thought of Parmenides has not really been attended to. It is, he says, an imperceptible shining and the play of the calling, unfolding and growing light is not properly visible, as if, in appearing, it has already withdrawn. The subordinate clause withdraws itself behind the main clause and is, therefore, missed. Heidegger gives Kranz’s German translation and which in English translations of Parmenides has been given as ‘since Fate bound it to be whole and unmoved’<sup>42</sup> or, similarly, as ‘since it was just this that Fate did shackle to be whole and changeless’.<sup>43</sup> Μοῖρα is generally translated as fate but it means part, portion or apportionment and it is as this, as *Zuteilung*, that Heidegger translates it. Here, claims Heidegger, Parmenides speaks not of beings but of presencing and the twofold and it is through Μοῖρα, through allocation or apportionment, in an act of granting or bestowing, that the twofold is unfolded: ‘Apportionment is the dispensation [*Schickung*] of presencing, as the presencing of what is present, which is gathered in itself and therefore unfolds of itself.’<sup>44</sup> Apportionment sends out presencing as a form of gift [*beschenken*] and as provision [*versehen*] and thus unfolds the twofold. Apportionment is gathered into itself and is the unfolding sending of presencing of what is present: ‘Μοῖρα is the destining

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.96/p.243.

<sup>42</sup> Palmer, *Parmenides & Presocratic Philosophy*, p.371.

<sup>43</sup> Gallop, *Parmenides of Elea* p.71.

<sup>44</sup> Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, p.97/pp.243-244.

[*Geschick*] of “Being”, in the sense of εἶναι. Μοῖρα has dispensed [*entbunden*] the destiny of Being, τό γε, into the twofold, and thus has bound [*gebunden*] it to totality and immobility [*Ruhe*], from which and in which the presencing of what is present comes to pass [*ereignet*].<sup>45</sup>

In the sending of the twofold, both it and its unfolding remain hidden, says Heidegger. All that appears is what is present and only presencing reaches [*gelangen*] shining. It is, however, *das Geschick*, the sending, which conceals the twofold and its unfolding. The sending holds onto the twofold and keeps its unfolding completely concealed. The unfolding of the twofold is not made manifest nor is it made available as an appearance, it remains beyond *Schein* and *Erscheinen*. Truth withdraws, it remains veiled [*verhüllen*]. But if it remains veiled then this means that truth is already veiled prior to the *Geschick* and that it remains in this veiling. What does come out into visibility [*Sichtbarkeit*] is the presencing of what is present as appearance [*Aussehen*] and look [*Gesicht*]. Both terms refer to perception as something seen. *Aussehen* is used when one judges something by its appearance, with the implication that the appearance is hiding something. Heidegger equates *Aussehen* with the Platonic term εἶδος, how something looks, and *Gesicht* with ἰδέα, which refers to the visual aspect of a thing. Throughout the ‘Moira’ essay, Heidegger has used the term *vernehmen*, which can mean to hear, for perception. The terminology sets up a distinction as to the kind of response that is called for, hearing and heeding the call, and seeing where truth metamorphoses into the certainty of self-consciousness, where the illumination of reason already presupposes the disclosure of the twofold. The enlightenment, with other epochs, such as the Augustinian and the medieval, share this presupposition, says Heidegger, and therefore never inquire into an ἀλήθεια that is in the destining of the twofold.

This contrast between philosophy and Heideggerian thinking in terms of seeing [*Sehen*], εἰδέναι, for the former, and speaking, hearing and listening, for the latter, is made more explicit by Heidegger when he writes of the saying of being, *daß Sein besagt*. Being says, and for the history [*Geschichte*] of being to be spoken, thinking must first consider this saying and what it says, which is the presencing of what is

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p.97/p.244.

present, that is the twofold, he says. But he does not quite say it in this way. Instead he announces it paratactically: *Anwesen des Anwesenden: Zwiefalt*. They are placed side by side rather than being joined by the ‘is’. History is the destining [*Geschick*] of the twofold. History is how being appears. It is ‘never a sequence of events which Being traverses for itself. It is certainly not an “object” which might offer new possibilities of historical representation, willing to put itself in the place of prior observations of the history of metaphysics with the presumption of knowing better than they.’<sup>46</sup> In the earlier lectures on Parmenides, Heidegger links history with sending and destiny: ‘But happening [*Geschehen*] and history [*Geschichte*] actually mean destiny [*Geschick*], destining [*Schickung*], assignment. Genuinely formulated in German, we may not speak of history, in the sense of coming to pass, but of sending [*Geschicht*], in the sense of the assignment of Being.’<sup>47</sup> In his saying about Moira, Parmenides reveals to us, or more precisely to the thinker [*Denker*], says Heidegger, the breadth of vision, the *Ausblick* – the outlook or looking out for – for the way (of thought) that has fatefully [*geschicklich*] been granted, decided or summoned [*bescheiden*]. But the question that has not yet been fully explained is what exactly does the destining [*schickend*] Moira apportion or share out [*verteilen*]. In order to get the measure [*ermessen*] of this question, and what Parmenides has to say about it, it is necessary to return to the unfolding of the twofold in its prevailing as φάσις, as a saying that brings forward into view, says Heidegger. It is in saying, and in what saying can be, that there can be seen both the possibility of a thinking that has been called by ἀλήθεια and a thinking that turns away from such a call, or a thinking that is, in a certain sense, abandoned by this call.

Heidegger identifies two types of saying. Firstly there is the thoughtful saying [*das denkende Sagen*] that corresponds to [*entsprechen*] the twofold, which is the λέγειν, the letting-lie-before, and which only occurs on the thoughtway [*Denkweg*] of the thinker [*Denker*] who has been called by ἀλήθεια. It is this saying that properly attends to presencing as such, to being. This is the saying that prevails as disclosing destiny [*entbergenden Geschick*]. But this is also the saying that has been abandoned by Western philosophy. Human beings are claimed [*beanspruchen*] by beings rather than being in correspondence [*entsprechen*] with being and give themselves up to

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p.98/pp.244-245.

<sup>47</sup> Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p.55/p.81.

this abandonment. In the unfolding of the twofold, human beings concern themselves with beings, what is present in presencing, and not with being. They give themselves up [*vergeben*] to ordinary perceptions [*gewohntermaßen Vernommene*] rather than to a perception [*Vernehmen*] of the twofold. This abandonment of the *Geschick* is the second form of saying and it is not a λέγειν. It is the ordinary [*gewöhnliche*] saying of human beings, a saying that does not consider presencing and, as such, does not think, says Heidegger. It is, instead, the speaking of names [*Sagen von Namen*], in which saying becomes terminology and language becomes representational. Saying becomes word signs and, in this emaciation of language, the possibility of attending to presencing is lost. The gathering taking-heed-of is shattered, says Heidegger. The focus shifts to one in which human beings name things, establishing a terminology that limits what can be said or thought. Perception is measured by the usual. The thinking of the twofold is replaced by the seeds of a propositional, calculative thinking that comes to dominate Western philosophy. It is in the following lines from Parmenides (F8) that Heidegger sees the beginning of such a philosophy:

to it all things have been given as names,  
 all that mortals have established in their conviction that they are genuine,  
 both coming to be [γίγνεσθαί] and perishing [ὄλλυσθαί], both being and  
 not.<sup>48</sup>

How does this happen? Why should the *Geschick* abandon [*überlassen*] the unfolding of the twofold to the ordinary perception of human beings, as Heidegger states? The perception of what is present only fleetingly knows presencing, as well as non-presencing, but it does not know this latter in the way that thinking does, says Heidegger, which knows it as that which is withheld [*Vorenthalt*] from the twofold. Ordinary perception perceives what is present in terms of coming to be [γίγνεσθαί] and passing away [ὄλλυσθαί], says Heidegger, but it ‘never perceives place [*Ort*], τόπος, as an abode [*Ortschaft*], as what the twofold offers as a home [*Heimat*] to the presencing of what is present. In the “as well as,” the ordinary opinion of mortals merely follows the “here and there” (ἀλλάσσειν, VIII, 41) of particular “places”

---

<sup>48</sup> Palmer, *Parmenides & Presocratic Philosophy*, p.371.

[*Plätze*].<sup>49</sup> Here we seem to be back in the world of the adventurer, who takes his pleasure in a mere travelling around and who fails to see the more fundamental notion of place that Heidegger expressed as *die Ortschaft der Wanderschaft und Wanderschaft der Ortschaft*. It is not, it seems to me, a question here of highlighting the rootlessness of the metaphysical in favour of a more grounded residing in being. Rather, it is a question of identifying the types of journeying, one that is a mere wandering, the other that is a sojourning, a tarrying in the proximity of thoughtful saying, which, if we recall, remains standing in the storm of being. Ordinary perception moves within the gaudiness of the present moment and is caught up by the immediacy of the kaleidoscope of lived experience, and takes no heed of the light that comes from the twofold.

The disclosure of what is present is not really a disclosure at all, says Heidegger, but it still arises through Moira, the sending of the disclosure of the twofold. Saying may arise as  $\phi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$  but it also comes forward as name-words [*nennenden Wörtern*] which Heidegger says is the speech of human beings. What is present is given up to human beings by Moira and this giving up occurs because the twofold and its unfolding remain hidden [*verborgen bleiben*]. In the midst of disclosure [*Entbergen*], self-concealment [*Sichverbergen*] prevails. Parmenides experienced this thought of self-concealment in relation to ἀλήθεια but only as something unthought, according to Heidegger, and, in doing so, he found himself thinking in the spatiality [*Weite*] of the enigma, which is itself hidden or withheld silently [*verschweigen*] in the enigmatic αὐτό. As such, the enigma is ‘the relation of thinking to Being, as the truth of Being in the sense of the disclosure of the twofold, and as withholding [*Vorenhalt*] from the twofold (μη ἐόν)’.<sup>50</sup> In a sense, to think the enigma is to think towards the abode [*Aufenthalt*] of withholding [*Vorenhalt*]. In order to examine what is at stake in ἀλήθεια, I want to turn to Heidegger’s 1942-43 lectures on Parmenides, where the discussion centres on its relation to λήθη and ψεῦδος. Heidegger sees it as a fundamental word for Parmenides, one ignored by Hegel he claims, and in the lectures he names the goddess from Parmenides’s poem as Ἀλήθεια, although this is just one of a number of names that have been offered in interpretations of the poem. As Wilkinson points out, she has been named as Aphrodite, Persephone, Themis and

<sup>49</sup> Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, pp.99-100/p.247.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* p.100/p.248.

Night, amongst others, but ‘neither the goddess nor the youth *name themselves or are so named* throughout the entire poem’.<sup>51</sup> The importance of ἀλήθεια in terms of the enigma are reinforced by Heidegger’s later comments on ἀλήθεια in the essay ‘Hegel and the Greeks’ where he talks of it not as a crude key that unlocks every enigma of thinking, but as the enigma itself. This is, he says, the very matter [*Sache*] of thinking, and as that which has not yet been thought. It is prior to the history of philosophy, but this priority is manifested in its being withheld from philosophical determinability, but which also demands a thinking that arises from it. If the enigma is the authority [*Befugnis*], as Heidegger says, then the enigma of ἀλήθεια is the authority for the matter of thought.

In the lectures, Heidegger translates ἀλήθεια as *Unverborgenheit*, even though he also contends *Entbergung* might be closer to its essence. Throughout his thinking, Heidegger consistently translated the Greek term as *Unverborgenheit*, from *Being and Time* in 1927 to ‘The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking’ in 1964, for example. This translation has been challenged, specifically by Paul Friedländer, to whom Heidegger responded on a number of occasions, including in the two essays just mentioned.<sup>52</sup> The two main charges were firstly that the interpretation as *Unverborgenheit* was unsupported by the evidence and that ἀλήθεια<sup>53</sup> meant truth as correctness. The second charge relates to Heidegger’s essay, ‘Plato’s Doctrine of Truth’, and the untenability of Heidegger’s contention that the transformation of the meaning of ἀλήθεια from unconcealment to truth as correctness occurred in Plato’s allegory of the cave. The first charge was later withdrawn and Friedländer acknowledged that, although the meaning of correctness was there, unconcealment

---

<sup>51</sup> Wilkinson, *Parmenides and To Eon*, p.73. Wilkinson’s emphasis.

<sup>52</sup> I cannot give a full description of the ins and outs of the debate between Heidegger and Friedländer. See Paul Friedländer, *Plato: I. An Introduction*, translated by Hans Meyerhoff, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958 and *Plato: I. An Introduction*, translated by Hans Meyerhoff, Second Edition, Princeton, Bollingen Series LIX Princeton University Press, 1969. Both Robert Bernasconi and John Sallis provide very good summaries. See Robert Bernasconi, *The Question of Language in Heidegger’s History of Being*, Amherst New York, Humanity Books, 1985, and John Sallis, *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics*, Second, Expanded Edition, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1995. See John Sallis, *The Verge of Philosophy*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2008, for a discussion of the implications for Heidegger’s reading of Plato.

<sup>53</sup> Palmer argues that when Parmenides uses the terms ἀλήθειν and ἀληθής they should not be translated as truth or true but as reality, real or genuine. Rather than trying to isolate ‘the conditions of true speech and thought’, Parmenides’s ‘inquiry is directed towards apprehension of whatever is...that is, whatever is and cannot not be’. See Palmer, *Parmenides & Presocratic Philosophy*, p.90.

was also evident early on in Greek writing and thinking. Heidegger seemed to accept the second charge, although, as Bernasconi has shown, this was not to abandon the thought of ἀλήθεια. He argues that when Heidegger writes ἀλήθεια in ‘The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking’ this is not to do with etymology but to show that λήθη ‘is the oblivion of being which belongs to metaphysics’.<sup>54</sup> The word was spoken by Parmenides at the beginning but it is only heard at the end of metaphysics with the raising of the question of being: ‘To be sure, it is no longer raised as it was once raised at the beginning of metaphysics. It is now only raised as itself questionable in its inability to speak to us.’<sup>55</sup> When Heidegger returns to the issue in the late seminars at Le Thor and Zähringen, it is to claim that the Greeks were prevented from thinking ἀλήθεια, unconcealment, because ἀλήθεια had at first, and decisively been understood from out of the λόγος. When Parmenides names ἀλήθεια he is not thinking ἀλήθεια as such, or speaking about λήθη, but rather ‘the presencing of presencing, both in respect of the experience and what it grants’.<sup>56</sup> This is the first word, when metaphysics is not yet, Bernasconi continues, which has a kinship with the no-longer metaphysical: ‘[T]his kinship arises because the latter listens to what is unsaid in what Parmenides says. Parmenides says *aletheia* and *aletheia* is heard. It is because metaphysics has passed in between that the word now speaks differently and the concealment of Being within metaphysics comes to be heard from beyond metaphysics.’<sup>57</sup> A thinking that comes after metaphysics, that hears ἀλήθεια in the ἀλήθεια, is returning to the Parmenidian word to rehear it anew.

The question of unconcealedness remains central to Heidegger’s thought, therefore, and in *Parmenides* the enquiry is directed towards *Verborgenheit*, concealedness. It is a thinking towards the λήθη, which remains undetermined, Heidegger says, not only for us but also for the Greeks, who only genuinely experience and say unconcealedness. Concealedness, he continues, is known in multiple ways as veiling [*Verhüllung*], as masking [*Verschleierung*] and as covering [*Verdeckung*]. *Verhüllung* is usually translated as veiling; *hüllen* means to wrap and in constructions

---

<sup>54</sup> Bernasconi, *The Question of Language in Heidegger’s History of Being*, p.24.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. Transliterations in the quoted text.

such as *in Dunkel gehüllt*, which means shrouded in darkness, and *in Schweigen hüllen*, meaning to remain silent, there is the sense of being cloaked or shrouded. *Schleier* can also mean veil, as in *den Schleier nehmen*, to take the veil, as well as mist or haze. *Decken* means to cover while *verdecken* means to hide or conceal, to block a view or cover something up. There are, therefore, various layers of covering or hiding, layers which can mask to a certain extent, which can cover entirely, while still being open about that covering. The veil, for example, can be seen, even if that which is veiled cannot. Alternatively, the veil provides only a misted or frosted covering so that what is beneath the veil can be seen in a partial way. Access, while not totally denied, is not totally forthcoming either. A mask is different to the veil in that the mask cannot be seen through, but the mask itself appears as a mask and that which it covers appears as something covered, even if it remains behind the mask. A covering may not be a concealment at all, or a concealment that is not intended to conceal. When a bed is covered with a duvet, it is not to disguise it.

These three terms, *Verhüllung*, *Verschleierung* and *Verdeckung*, are the main ways in which Heidegger conveys the meaning of *Verborgenheit*. Concealedness denotes an inaccessibility, something that cannot be reached or attained. There is a sense of reserve, both a keeping back and a setting aside, and a sense of restraint, of reticence or silence. With unconcealedness we also get the notion that in the Greek experience of what is meant by truth there is a suspension [*Aufhebung*] or cancellation of concealedness. The *un-* prefix, corresponding to the Greek  $\alpha\prime$ -, is a privative and this gives rise to two possibilities: “Un-concealedness” can mean concealedness is taken away, cancelled, evicted, or banned...“Un-concealedness” can also mean concealedness is not allowed at all, that, although possible and a constant menace, it does not exist and may not arise. From this multiplicity of meanings of the prefix “un” it is easy to see that...un-concealedness is difficult to determine.’<sup>58</sup> In this indeterminacy, however, something significant arises and that is that in truth as unconcealedness there is a conflict [*Streit*] between concealedness and unconcealedness. Truth is only ever available through strife, says Heidegger, unconcealedness having to be wrested from concealment.

---

<sup>58</sup> Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p.14/p.20.

To understand what is happening in this strife, it is necessary to look at the fact that falsity, τὸ ψεῦδος, is a form of concealment, says Heidegger. This is because it appears as one of the opposites to truth in Greek thinking and to get to concealedness from unconcealedness it is not possible to cross out the ἀ- of ἀλήθεια to get to λήθεις. This is because the Greeks do not use this word for the opposite of truth, says Heidegger, using τὸ ψεῦδος instead. This leads us to the enigma at the heart of the Greek essence of truth. Τὸ ψεῦδος has its own privative opposition, ἀψεῦδές - the unfalse - which leads to the following claim: ‘If for the Greeks the counter-essence to unconcealedness is falsity and accordingly truth is unfalsity, then concealedness must be determined on the basis of falsity. If, in addition to this, concealedness permeates the essence of unconcealedness, then the enigma arises that in the Greek sense the essence of truth receives its character from the essence of falsity.’<sup>59</sup> Ἀλήθεια is the experience of this enigma, says Heidegger, that concealedness and the conflict with it are decisive for this essence. Ἀλήθεια, as the positive, springs from the negative. The enigma is identified with the negative and with concealedness and the conflict that is involved with it. Because the Greek essence of truth stems from the negative, says Heidegger, then there should be an appropriate counterword to unconcealedness. Because ψεῦδος has a privative formed using the same stem, Heidegger’s argument is that ἀλήθεια as the privative must have its non-privative counterpart, that is λήθη, but this appears not to be the case.

This lack is only apparent, however, because the too easy translation of the word λανθάνομαι<sup>60</sup> as *vergessen*, forgetting, has covered over the counterword, says Heidegger. To get to the counterword of ἀληθές, it is necessary, he says, to understand the extent to which being concealed [*Verborgensein*] is an essential aspect of the appearance of beings [*Erscheinen des Seienden*]. Using some passages from *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, Heidegger makes the point that concealing is not the action of a subject but a basic feature of the presence of human beings among other human beings. Being concealed and being unconcealed are not characteristics that the subject brings to bear on a being, but are characteristics of the being itself.

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p.22/p.32.

<sup>60</sup> Friedländer notes that from Homer on ἀληθής was associated with λαθ-, ληθ- and λανθ- by the Greeks, an ‘association that persisted in poetry and prose without objection’. See Friedländer, *Plato: I. An Introduction*, Second Edition, p.222.

Concealing and concealedness are decisive for the Greeks in terms of beings and human comportment towards beings. What λανθάνομαι says is that ‘I am concealed from myself in relation to something which would otherwise be unconcealed to me. This is thereby, for its part, concealed, just as I am in my relation to it’.<sup>61</sup> This says that I am not aware of something that is happening around me and I am not aware of this lack of awareness. Not only is something being concealed but this being concealed is also concealed. In one of the Homeric examples Heidegger quotes, Hector does not see Athena giving Achilles his lance back. The fact of the giving back is concealed from Hector and Hector remains oblivious of this fact. In his relation to the concealment by Athena, Hector falls into concealment with regard to that relation. In another, Odysseus covers his head to hide his tears, but what the Greeks say is that he was concealed to the others as the one crying. What these examples show for Heidegger is that there is a concealment around the characters in Homer’s epic poems and that the Greeks experienced forgetting as a happening of concealment. Michael Naas makes the point that, when words such as ἀλήθεια and ψεῦδος and their cognates appear in Homer, it is always in relation to narratives of revealing and concealing. What this means is that truth and falsity always stand in a relation to disclosure and withdrawal: ‘[T]he event of concealment or unconcealment is almost always revealed *as* a concealment or unconcealment and the narrative revolves around this difference.’<sup>62</sup> It is a case of the staging of the tension between concealment and unconcealment, where two different stories are competing in the narrative for the attention and trust of human beings: ‘[W]hat is significant is not only that one thing is revealed rather than another but that this revelation, this tension between concealment and unconcealment, is revealed and staged.’<sup>63</sup>

What the Homeric examples show for Heidegger is that, for the Greeks, the essence of concealment prevails essentially in terms of their standing in the midst of beings and that from this we can have a better intimation [*ahnen*] that they experience and think truth in the sense of unconcealedness. It follows, he says, that το ψεῦδος can also be determined on the basis of concealment because it is the most common

---

<sup>61</sup> Heidegger, *Parmenides*, Ibid. p.24/p.36.

<sup>62</sup> Michael Naas, ‘Keeping Homer’s Word: Heidegger and the Epic of Truth’, *The Presocratics after Heidegger*, edited by David C. Jacobs, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999, pp.73-99, p.85. Naas’s emphasis.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p.88.

opposition to truth, even though it is not related to λαθ. Therefore, τὸ ψεῦδος still has something to say about the essence of concealment, even if falsity does not cover it. Through a consideration of the ψεῦδος in pseudonym, Heidegger contends that ψεῦδος represents a covering [*verdecken*] which also unveils [*enthüllen*] something recondite [*Hintergründiges*] in a recondite way, so that what is unveiled remains in the background. It is an unveiling that unveils the hidden as hidden but this unveiling still lets the unveiled come forward as it truly is, such as the difference between a false name and a pseudonym, he says. A pseudonym says something essential while a false name covers up, making plain only that which is façade-like and unrecondite [*Vordergründiges*]. It is a question of background or foreground, that which is cryptic is revealed as such and that which is merely appearance is also revealed as such: ‘Ψεῦδος pertains to the essential realm of covering [*Verdecken*], hence it is a kind of concealing [*Verbergen*]. The covering involved in ψεῦδος, however, is always at the same moment an unveiling [*enthüllen*], a showing, and a bringing into appearance.’<sup>64</sup>

To further clarify how ψεῦδος relates to concealing and unconcealing, Heidegger again reverts to Homer. In a passage from *The Iliad*, the question arises as to whether some signs or portents sent by Zeus are intended to deceive. Fixing on the Greek term, ὑπόσχεσις, Heidegger contends that this ‘means a holding out and holding forth, a showing which holds forth and at the same time holds something back, and hence does not show. It belongs to the essence of the ση̂μα, the sign, that it itself shines (shows itself) and in this appearing also indicates something else: the sign, in appearing itself, lets something else appear’.<sup>65</sup> This showing, which is at the same time a not showing [*nicht zeigen*], is a kind of veiling [*verhüllen*]. Something appears in the sign, says Heidegger, something unconcealed but simultaneously the sign also conceals, while appearing as sign, in that it indicates [*anzeigen*] and points out [*hinweisen*] but never openly displays what it refers to. A sign is a concealing that shows, in Zeus’s case, a *Verstellen*: ‘The guiding basic meaning [*Grundbedeutung*] of Ψεῦδος resides [*liegen*] in dissembling (obstructing or disguising).’<sup>66</sup> It is the translators who provide the additional gloss in brackets on the meaning of *Verstellen*,

<sup>64</sup> Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p.30/p.45.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p.31/p.46.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p.32/p.47.

which means to disguise, block or obstruct, or to move out of position, to act or play a part or to hide one's real feelings, like Iago in his relation to Othello, or Hamlet's 'antic disposition'. It can also mean to move or adjust, to shift out of position, misplace, or put in the wrong place, a dis-positioning. The question of place, of what is the appropriate or proper place, is one that looms large in *Verstellen*, especially as the root word *stellen* means to put or to place and *Stelle* means place. What it is not is the self-disguise [*Sichverstellen*] of a person, says Heidegger, it is not the deceptive character of an individual, a comportment of the subject. It is, instead, an objective happening [*Geschehen*] that occurs [*ereignen*] in the realm of beings. There seem to be a number of levels to *verstellen*, from an object obstructing the view of a landscape, to hiding a door in the wall by putting a cupboard in front of it, to the extent that the cupboard disguises the door and distorts [*entstellen*] the actual state of the wall. The cupboard presents as a cupboard and conceals the door behind it and so is said to pretend that there is no door there at all. Where the cupboard is placed [*stellen*] leads to the disguising [*verstellen*] of that which is concealed by it. Disguise is a question of place and displacement.

Having said that, however, the question remains as to how disguise can appear, in what place and from what place? If the disguise remains in disguise then surely the disguise cannot appear at all. As discussed in the first chapter, disguise only appears if it fails and it can only fail if it is seen through. Without the failure of disguise, disguise cannot appear and, having failed, it has not then appeared. The door disguised by the cupboard can only appear if the cupboard is moved but if the cupboard is moved then there is no longer disguise. If the disguise does not fail, that is if the cupboard remains in place, then neither the door appears nor does disguise because the cupboard appears to be the actual wall. Heidegger says that disguise [*Verstellung*] lets something, which it has both set up [*hinstellen*] and set out [*aufstellen*], appear as something other than it is in truth. Disguise itself – and what would disguise itself be? – lets something appear as other, as other than itself, an other that is not itself. In disguise, the other is a masquerade, but it is a masquerade that does not appear as a masquerade. The masquerade is a disguise that puts itself in the place of something else so that the something else no longer appears as such. It appears as the masquerade but without the masquerade itself being an appearance. Disguise is impenetrable and unapproachable. At the very moment the disguise is

ripped off, disguise itself has already fled the scene because disguise has been destroyed. The cupboard is bare. Disguise can only appear as that which it is not and once the disguise is revealed it no longer is. While it is true that disguise can let other things appear and is therefore a form of disclosure, disguise itself cannot appear because to appear as disguise would have already overthrown that disguise. It is always something other than it is and to reveal disguise is not to reveal it, because what is revealed is that which was in disguise, not the disguise itself. Disguise is never a phenomenon. In the structure of concealment – disguise gets its essence from concealment – disguise is that which can unveil and let appear but which itself always remains beyond this movement of concealing and unconcealing. Disguise is a placing that cannot be placed.

The other mode of concealment for Greek thinking, which ranks above ψεύδος in priority, says Heidegger, is λανθάνειν. This priority is expressed and understood in Greek thought through the phrase λανθάνω ἤχων, which Heidegger translates as *ich bleibe im Verborgenen als der Kommende*, ‘I remain (I am) in hiddenness as the coming (one)’. I am left behind, I stay in hiddenness, I am reserved, held back or withdrawn even in my approach. It is not a question, as it is with *Verstellen*, of covering over something and thereby hiding it, as well as covering over the covering over, but rather a question of keeping something back. Because this Greek phrase determines the appearance of beings in terms of both concealedness and unconcealedness, Heidegger claims that disclosure and concealment are a basic feature of being. The essence of the prevailing of concealment is expressed, says Heidegger, in the word λανθάνεσθαι or ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι, whose usual translation as *Vergessen*, forgetting, misconstrues the Greek essence, as discussed briefly above in relation to Hector and Odysseus: ‘The forgotten is, in the experience of the Greeks, what has sunk away into concealedness, specifically in such a fashion that the sinking away, i.e., the concealing, remains concealed to the very one who has forgotten...the forgetter is concealed to himself in relation to what is happening here to that which we then call, on account of this happening, the forgotten.’<sup>67</sup> The thing that is forgotten is lost, but equally the relation to this thing is lost so that the fact of the forgotten is also forgotten. Rather than using *Vergessen*, which he believes

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p.71/p.105.

pertains to the subject, Heidegger uses *Vergessenheit*, oblivion, or the obsolete word *Vergessung*, translated as obliviation, which Heidegger glosses as the event [*Ereignis*] of oblivion. Obliviation seems to be a combination of oblivion and obviate, and suggests a doing away or falling away into the forgotten, and this sense of falling away accords with Heidegger's gloss on *Vergessung* as a falling into oblivion [*etwas gerät in die Vergessenheit*] where *geraten* has the sense of being accidental rather than intentional. Obliviation, says Heidegger, the event of oblivion, is the concealedness that belongs to a singular [*eigentlich*] concealment. In this, it is the first approach to λήθη: 'Λήθη, obliviation [*Vergessung*], is a concealment that withdraws what is essential and alienates man from himself, i.e., from the possibility of dwelling [*wohnen*] within his own essence.'<sup>68</sup> Human beings are in the position of being unaware they are no longer in their essence and unaware of this lack of awareness: 'This falling away is a kind of being-away and being-absent. What falls away no longer returns to what is present, and yet this "away" [*Weg*"] turns, in its turning away, against what is present, and specifically in the uncanny [*unheimlichen*] fashion that it takes no notice of it.'<sup>69</sup> Obliviation is an absence that absents itself, that reserves the absence and any relation to this absence. It 'is the concealment that lets the past, present, and the future fall into the path [*Weg*] of a self-absenting absence. And with that it sets man himself away into concealedness in relation to this withdrawal, precisely in such a manner that this concealment for its part does not, on the whole, appear'.<sup>70</sup>

The withdrawal withdraws but conceals this withdrawal so that any relation to the withdrawing is withheld. λήθη is the concealment that conceals its concealment and although nothing is allowed to emerge in it, it still, says Heidegger, is the preparation for the essential grounding of disclosure and as such prevails in unconcealedness. In *The Iliad*, the unconcealedness of a battle is, he claims, founded unambiguously on a μενέωτο, which is mistranslated, says Heidegger, as not forgetting. In Greek, it has the sense of remember, remind, or recall. For Heidegger, it is the counter-essence to ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι, which is determined by λήθη, and in the original understanding of μιμνήσκειν, remembrance, there is the sense of keeping, or holding, of the

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. p.72/p.107. Translation modified.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p.73/p.107.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p.83/p.123.

unconcealed. This is not to say that holding is merely noticing but that it is a ‘letting oneself be held by unconcealedness, dwelling [*Aufenthalt*] in it as that which secures [*verwahrt*] the unconcealed against the withdrawal of concealment’.<sup>71</sup> It is a kind of hanging on to unconcealment in spite of the prevailing of concealment. This *Aufenthalt*, which is never a simple settlement, is the transition from λήθη, from the *Aufenthalt* that is λήθη, to another: ‘Λήθη is πεδίων, field, region, the essence of the place [*Ortes*] and sojourn [*Aufenthaltes*] from which there is a sudden transition to a place and a sojourn that, as the unconcealedness of beings, envelops the mortal course of man.’<sup>72</sup> In a way equivalent to the falling away of λήθη, ἀλήθεια as unconcealedness is a keeping, holding and retaining. But it is also a saving: ‘The unconcealed is originarily [*anfänglich*] what is saved from withdrawing concealment and hence is secured in dis-closure and as such is uneluded [*Unentgangene*].’<sup>73</sup> It is not as if a veil had simply been removed, rather the unconcealed is the *Unabwesende*, the unabsent, where the prevailing of concealment has been withdrawn. It is pure self-appearance and is an entrance [*Eingangene*] into the look where the emerged and the unconcealed are saved and secured [*geborgen*] by it. Therefore, it is from λήθη, as withdrawing concealment, that disclosure gets its initial impetus. Disclosure is not just an unveiling, it is not purely oppositional, it is not the mere removal [*Wegnahme*] or disposal [*Beseitigung*] of concealment, says Heidegger. It must be thought of in the same way as something like *Entzünden*, discharge, which involves a form of release in which the *Ent-* triggers the *Zündung*, that is it triggers the ignition that sets off the charge to create the discharge. Similarly, with *Ent-falten*, display, unfold or open, it is a case of a folding [*falten*] that initially lets the manifoldness [*Mannigfaltigen*] come out in its many facets [*Vielfalt*].

With this release, there is also an intensification. Thus with *Entbergung* what we see is an intensification of *Bergung*, here understood in terms of sheltering, gathering and saving. The translation gives us *Entbergen* as both *disclosure* and *enclosure* to emphasise the sense of protecting, sheltering and gathering in safety. An enclosure is a way of keeping safe and bringing into care. It is to protect the unconcealed in

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p.129/p.191.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p.126/p.187.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p.132/p.197.

unconcealedness: ‘The word “dis-closure” is essentially and advisedly ambiguous in that it expresses a two-fold [*Zwiefache*] with an intrinsic unity: on the one hand, as *disclosure* it is the removal [*Aufheben*] of concealment and precisely a removal first of the withdrawing concealment (λήθη) and then also of distortion [*verstellenden*] and displacement [*entstellenden*] (ψεῦδος); on the other hand, however, as *disclosure* it is a sheltering en-closure, i.e., an assuming and preserving in unconcealedness.’<sup>74</sup> The full essence of disclosure therefore is the unveiling, sheltering enclosure of the unveiled in unconcealedness. Even so, disclosure itself is of a concealed essence and this can be seen through the prevailing of λήθη which, in withdrawing into absence, points to a falling away and a falling out [*Weg- und Hinausfall*], but does not grant access to it. Λήθη is the self-concealed concealing and, as such, falls away. In this movement of λήθη and ἀλήθεια, we return to the *Streit*, the conflict, from which ἀλήθεια is unified in its essence. Ἀλήθεια is against concealing closure, says Heidegger, and is for sheltering enclosure. The for can only be on the basis of an against and, as such, it is only on the basis of λήθη that ἀλήθεια can determine itself and come to presence in the unconcealed. In the midst of truth as presencing lies absencing as obliviation.

But if disclosure is a more essential way of thinking unconcealedness then it is the open [*Offene*] which prevails in unconcealedness, says Heidegger. The open, he says, is not conceptualised in Greek thinking or experience but is hinted at. Taking his cue from Sophocles’s play, *Ajax*, Heidegger quotes lines 646-647, which appear in the English translation of the lectures as: ‘The broad, incalculable sweep of time lets emerge everything that is not open [*Unoffenbares*] as well as concealing [*verbirgt*] (again) in itself what has appeared.’<sup>75</sup> This enables Heidegger to think of time, the χρόνος, as the Greeks thought it, not as a series of now-points but as something in which every being has its time, a time that can be appropriate [*geeignete*] or inappropriate [*ungeeignete*]. Time is the place [*Stelle*], the locale [*Ort*] ‘to which an appearance in its appearing belongs temporally at any “time” [*je-“weils”*].’<sup>76</sup> *Je-weils* indicates that, for Heidegger, time is a kind of whiling, of tarrying, a kind of staying that is not permanently fixed – *weilen* means to stay or tarry, but it can also

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p.133/p.198. Heidegger’s emphasis.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p.140/p.209.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p.141/p.209.

mean to be, so that tarrying or staying is being. In ‘Time and Being’, Heidegger again writes that in naming time, we say ‘every thing has its time. This means: everything which actually is, every being comes and goes at the right time and remains for a time during the time allotted to it’.<sup>77</sup> The distinction made here between time as a series of now-points and time as a kind of tarrying-staying-abiding recalls the distinction in *Being and Time* between the ordinary concept of time and originary temporality, whose contrast formed the basis of Derrida’s critique in ‘Ousia and Gramme’. Here, though, Heidegger understands time in its Greek manifestation as corresponding to place, τόπος, which is to understand it as a somewhere to which something belongs. Τόπος orders the belongingness of the presencing of a being in the same way that χρόνος orders the whiling of the appearing and disappearing to a then and a when: ‘For primordial [*anfänglich*] Greek thinking, on the contrary, time, always as dispensing and dispensed time, takes man and all beings essentially into its ordering and in every case orders the appearance and disappearance of beings. Time discloses and conceals.’<sup>78</sup>

While Sophocles does not use the term ἀλήθεια, and nor does he say that time lets the concealed come forth in terms of φύσις, he does use the term ἄδηλα, says Heidegger, which he translates as *Unoffenbare*, the un-open – δηλον means to make manifest, disclose or show. His argument is that because the concealed corresponds to the unconcealed, the unopen must correspond to the open so what Sophocles is saying is that time allows the unconcealed to come out of the concealed into the open, into appearance. Effectively, Heidegger grants a kind of lapidary status to these words of Sophocles, giving them the standing of a *Spruch*, a saying or aphorism, the same term he uses to describe Parmenides’s saying discussed earlier in this chapter. It is as if it is a kind of writ, perhaps not quite holy, that authorises the meaning that Heidegger wishes to draw out of it. Whether Sophocles can bear the weight is not the issue at stake here. What is, is the question of the open and what openness is. What these are is a question that the Greeks remain silent on, says Heidegger, but this is not to say that they are unanswerable questions. Disclosure, as a letting-appear in the open, he says, can only come about through a prior giving of the open which,

<sup>77</sup> Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1972, p.3. *Zur Sache Des Denkens*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969, p.2.

<sup>78</sup> Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p.142/p.211.

therefore, opens itself and is in essence open and, as such, it is the free. The still veiled essence of the open is freedom, he says. This is not the freedom of the will, of an autonomous subject, however: ‘The free is the guarantee, the sheltering place [*Stätte*], for the Being of beings. The open, as the free, shelters and salvages Being.’<sup>79</sup>

For Heidegger, ἀλήθεια refers to the essence of the open and openness and, although the Greeks did not explicitly think the open as ἀλήθεια, it was a constant experience for them in one aspect, that of light as brightness, which enables the possibility of the look, which can give us either the encountering look or the grasping look. This is not simply to say that the Greeks were visual people, says Heidegger. Sight is not the result of having eyes. It is because we see that we have eyes, he claims. Without the ability, the faculty, of seeing then any light would be superfluous. There has to be an already established relation of the human being to visible beings: ‘If man did not already have Being in view, then he could not even think the nothing, let alone experience beings...But what else is this relation of Being to the essence of man than the clearing [*Lichtung*] and the open which has lighted [*gelichtet*] itself for the unconcealed? If such clearing did not come into play as the open of Being itself, then a human eye could never become and be what it is, namely the way man looks at the demeanor of the encountering being, the demeanor as a look in which the being is revealed.’<sup>80</sup> The looking of human beings is a response to being in the light, not a way of representing that light to themselves. Michel Haar writes: ‘Man finds himself carried to *Vernehmen*, to apprehending, by this “look” proceeding from being that is none other than its very lighting, the *Lichtung* without which we could not see.’<sup>81</sup> By looking, human beings open up a way to that which is unconcealed. It is because ἀλήθεια, as the open, is the essence of truth and being that the Greeks could use the eye as paradigmatic of the relation of human beings to beings. The Greeks could only be visual because the relation of their humanity to being is determined by ἀλήθεια. Rather than the grasping, mastering look of representation, the Greeks respond to the open through the encountering look. As Derrida writes, in ‘Envoi’, ‘for the Greeks, according to Heidegger, the world is not essentially *Bild*, an available image, a

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p.143/p.213.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p.146/p.217.

<sup>81</sup> Michel Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, translated by William McNeill, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1993, p.150.

spectacular form offered to the gaze or perception of a subject'.<sup>82</sup> However, he goes on, it was necessary for this world of representation to have already declared itself among the Greeks, essentially as Platonism: 'The determination of the being of what is as *eidōs* is not yet its determination as *Bild*, but the *eidōs* (aspect, look, visible figure) would be the distant condition, the presupposition, the secret mediation that would one day permit the world to become representation.'<sup>83</sup>

Heidegger describes this movement in the lectures on Parmenides in terms of the look. In Greek, he says, the look [*Anblick*], that is a looking at or on, is θέα, the look of being as it looks into beings. On the other hand, the grasping look [*erfassende Blick*] has the sense of seeing [*Sehen*]. This is ὁράω, says Heidegger. In effect, it is a kind of registering of placeness. To see the encountering look is an amalgamation of these two terms into what becomes θεωρία, so that what is meant by the word *theory* is the perceptual [*vernehmenden*] relation of man to being, which is not produced [*herstellt*] by man but is a relation in which being first places [*stellt*] or posits man. As we have seen, time is the *Stelle* or *Offene* and it is in this *Stelle* that man is placed by being. But if this is how theory first arises in the beginning, then everything about this beginning [*Anfängliche*] is forgotten, says Heidegger. The theoretical becomes an event [*Veranstaltung*] of human subjectivity, of the representing [*vorstellenden*] subject, wherein a distinction is drawn between the theoretical and the practical, as William McNeill describes: '[*T*]heoria in modernity thus becomes world-representational thinking, a "seeing" that occupies an imagined third-person, spectatorial position from which it sees everything and to which it relates everything back.'<sup>84</sup> The fall of θεωρία from its meaning as seeing the encountering look to its representational meaning as that which is need of practical proof to back up its claims arises from a series of displacings, in which the *Stelle* of being becomes the *Vorstellung* of human beings, so that being itself is displaced. The Greek experience of θεωρία does not prioritise seeing and looking, says Heidegger, it 'testifies above

---

<sup>82</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume I*, edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, translated by Peter and Mary Ann Caws, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 2007, p.109.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. Transliteration in published text.

<sup>84</sup> William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999, p.221. Transliteration in published text.

all to the primordial holding sway of the essence of ἀλήθεια, in which there dwells something like the clearing, the lighted, and the open'.<sup>85</sup>

The open is the light of the self-lighting, says Heidegger, which is freedom. But this is neither the freedom of the human being, nor the metaphysical thought of freedom. This form of freedom only arises on the basis of a prior, originary freedom. Understanding what this open is, what freedom is, cannot be derived from the ordinary understanding of freedom: 'Strictly speaking, the essence of the open reveals itself only to a thinking that attempts to think Being itself in the way that it is presaged to our destiny [*Geschick*] in the history [*Geschichte*] of the West as what is to be thought in the name and essence of ἀλήθεια.'<sup>86</sup> Only those willing to use ἀλήθεια as their guiding word in thinking of being will approach this understanding. What is required is a simple wakefulness in the nearness [*Nähe*] to any being, an awakening that suddenly [*Erwachen plötzlich*] sees that the being *is*. In essence, a thinking of being is the *coup de foudre* of the *es ist*, the *it is*. Being, as the *it is* of beings shows itself as an eruption into appearance from out of non-appearance. Heidegger gives us Greek terms, meaning suddenly, ἐξαίφνης and ἐξαφάνης, both of which in their etymology refer to φαίνω, from which the term phenomenon derives. The Greek term itself means out of non-appearing. This is what the thinking of being is: 'The awakening for this "it is" of a being, and above all the remaining awake for the "it is", and the watching over the clearing of beings – that constitutes the essence of essential thinking.'<sup>87</sup> The sudden eruption of being into beings, which only appear as beings, has an equivalent correspondence on the part of the human being who no longer turns to beings but thinks being, says Heidegger. The human being has a *Verhalten* towards being. *Verhalten* means behaviour or conduct, as a verb it means to hold and as an adjective it means restrained, a sort of holding back. The human being's conduct towards being is a kind of holding that holds back, it is not a holding that grasps or masters but takes up a place in the *Aufenthalt* of being. To arrive at the open, to come into freedom, it is necessary to think the *it is*, it is necessary to think being. To think being is to think the *it is*, but this is not the thinking of calculation but a proper [*eigentliche*] thinking that progresses by leaps

---

<sup>85</sup> Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p.148/p.220.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* p.149/p.222.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

and bounds, that forswears the supporting structures of explanations [*Erklärens*], says Heidegger, because explanations remain on the ground of facts, because a thinking of calculation only ever derives beings out of beings, not being. Every time that the focus is on beings, being falls into *Vergessung*. The thought of beings is the event of being's obliviation.

To think being, to think the it is, is to leap [*abspringen*] into the groundless, says Heidegger and all genuine thinking is always groundless. This ground is the *Boden* rather than the *Grund*. *Boden* can mean soil or land, as well as ground, and Heidegger's contemporary audience might well have heard the *Blut und Boden* of National Socialist ideology here, and perhaps Heidegger's use of such a term marks an attempt to repudiate such an ideology. A detailed reading of Heidegger's use of *Boden* in relation to National Socialism is beyond the scope of what I am pursuing here. I merely mark it as a potential instance of Heidegger distancing himself both from the regime itself and the position he had taken within it about ten years earlier as Rector of Freiburg University. Being, says Heidegger, is not a ground [*Boden*] but is in fact groundless [*Boden-lose*], because from the beginning [*anfänglich*], it is removed from both *Boden* and *Grund* because neither are necessary to it. Implicitly, it is Western metaphysics that stays mired in the *Boden* as a thinking that always needs the bridges [*Brücken*], railings and ladders of explanation to support itself. But this ground is not the ground that metaphysics thinks it is; it is *brüchig*, brittle, he says. Its bridges are broken. This groundlessness is only a lack when seen in relation to beings and the pursuit of beings, says Heidegger. It is this very pursuit of a ground in beings that constitutes the absence of ground. Through this pursuit, human beings never make the leap into being or escape the oblivion of being, although being is always in close proximity and the possibility of thinking the 'it is' as the free in the lighting is always open. Being is the unsecured securing. As groundless, it is the originary, *anfänglich*, sheltering, but it is not the equivalent of a sanctuary or a refuge where human beings can settle themselves among beings. Instead, it is the *Wesensstätte*, the essential place, of human beings in relation to the self-illumination of being. All unconcealedness of beings is secured by being in the open but this securing also conceals the originary decision of being's giving of the unconcealedness of human beings, the truth of beings as a whole. History begins in this decision, says Heidegger, and the historical human being always belongs in the

*Zufügung* of being, translated as bestowal. But *zufügen* means to cause or to add or enclose. *Fügen* is a kind of placing, so it could be said that being here places and encloses the human being.

Heidegger takes up the question of the *it is* again in the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’ where he claims that Parmenides’s saying ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι – for there is being – is still to be thought and contains the *anfänglich* mystery for all thinking. The fact that being is is approached by Heidegger through the idiomatic phrase *es gibt* – there is or there are – which he uses to avoid saying that ‘being is’. But, as with being in relation to *Anwesen* and the enigma, *es gibt* is *vorläufig*, that is, it is a provisional word in relation to this avoidance, the implication being that sooner rather than later the ‘is’ will have to be addressed. In the meantime, it is necessary to avoid saying being is because, by doing so, being is confused with beings and the human being busies itself with beings to the exclusion of being which inevitably leads to the obliviation of being: ‘Perhaps “is” can be said only of being in an appropriate [*gemäßen*] way, so that no individual being ever properly [*eigentlich*] “is”. But because thinking should be directed only toward saying being in its truth, instead of explaining [*erklären*] it as a particular being in terms of beings, whether and how being is must remain an open question for the careful attention of thinking.’<sup>88</sup> It is a question of getting the measure of being in terms of the ‘is’ but in a way that the question always remains open for thinking. Philosophy’s progress can be measured by how it stands in relation to this saying of Parmenides. Progress, however, is a mistake. Essential thinking, that which attends to Parmenides’s saying, stays in the same place [*Stelle*] thinking the same [*dasselbe*], says Heidegger. Thinking as progress is merely the shadow that follows essential thinking. Philosophy is such a thinking, a shadow play. The thinking of essential thinkers revolves around the *es gibt* as the destiny [*Geschick*] of being and, as such, this thinking into the truth of being, is historical, says Heidegger, in the sense that it belongs to the history of being and is a remembrance [*Andenken*] of it. History, as we know, is not the happening of past events: ‘The happening of history occurs essentially as the destiny of the truth of being and from it...Being comes to its destiny in that It, being, gives itself...this

---

<sup>88</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p.255/pp.334-335.

says: It gives itself and refuses itself simultaneously.’<sup>89</sup> All other history - Hegelian, Marxian, Nietzschean - while neither true nor false, is merely metaphysical. These belong to the history of the truth of being, that is they testify to the truth of being, without essentially being a thinking of being. The relation of being to beings is of homelessness [*Heimatlosigkeit*] where beings are abandoned by being and this homelessness is a sign [*Zeichen*] of the oblivion of being [*Seinsvergessenheit*]. Home [*Heimat*] is not thought here along nationalistic lines but as a historical dwelling in the nearness of being, says Heidegger, and human beings are the shepherd of being, the shepherd that both belongs to being and preserves its truth.

The saying of Parmenides has yet to be thought [*noch ungedacht*], says Heidegger, so any thinking of *es gibt* is still unthought. Heidegger’s entire thought of being seems to rest in this *noch*, this yet or still. In the essay, ‘The Nature of Language’, we return to the ‘is’ [*ist*] where the question is again of the is of the is. This *is* is nowhere to be found, says Heidegger, it is not a thing attached to a thing. But in this thought of the seeming absence of the ‘is’, we are suddenly awoken [*plötzlich erwachen*] and catch sight of something other. This is the *coup de foudre* of essential thinking described above, using the same two words. In this essay, Heidegger is discussing a line from a poem by Stefan George, ‘The Word’ – *Kein Ding sei wo das Wort gebracht*, ‘No thing may be where the word is lacking’. Neither the word, or the is, is, neither come into thinghood, being, says Heidegger: ‘What the poetic experience with language says of the word implies the relation between the “is” which itself is not, and the word which is in the same case of not being a being.’<sup>90</sup> We say is but in the very moment of its saying the is escapes us. The poetic experience is of what there is [*es gibt*] and yet is not. The *es gibt* points to the fact that what is is not: ‘If our thinking does justice to the matter, then we may never say of the word that it is, but rather that it gives – not in the sense that words are given by an “it,” but that the word itself gives. The word itself is the giver. What does it give? To go by the poetic experience and by the most ancient tradition of thinking, the word gives being [*gibt das Wort: das Sein*].’<sup>91</sup> Our thinking has to seek in every *es*, *das gibt* the giving that is never given, or the giver that is never given. As Gerald Bruns points out, the

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p.255/p.335.

<sup>90</sup> Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter D. Hertz, New York, Harper and Row, 1971, p.87. *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1959, p.193.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p.88/p.193.

English translation turns Heidegger's appositional phrase - *gibt das Wort: das Sein* – into a propositional one, the paratactic into the syntactic: 'Heidegger inscribes the expression paratactically – in imitation, evidently, of the ancients, that is, the Pre-Socratics, who did not (Heidegger says) organize their thinking into little totalities of simultaneous gatherings (*syntaxes*) but rather were inclined to leave things open, as if in a space where there are no words – as if in that place into which we are drawn when words fail us or withdraw themselves, leaving us bereft of speech, not knowing what to say, as in the region of *parataxis*.'<sup>92</sup> As William Allen says, Heidegger often departs from the syntactic into 'a paratactic suspension of relation between words, which are then intercut by colons to indicate the unknown and open nature of their relation'.<sup>93</sup> The way that *es gibt* is used here in Heidegger's reflections is to say not that there is the word but that it, the word, gives. The word is the giving that gives: 'This simple, ungraspable [*ungreifbare*] situation which we call up with the phrase "it, the word, gives," reveals [*enthüllt*] itself as what is properly worthy of thought, but for whose definition [*Bestimmung*] all standards [*Maße*] are still lacking in every way.'<sup>94</sup> There are no measures to determine the *es gibt*. In the unveiling of the *es gibt* as that which is most thought-worthy, it is withdrawn into measurelessness.

Heidegger returns to the *es gibt* five years later in the lecture 'Time and Being', with Parmenides's saying, ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι, again playing a pivotal role in his reflections on this German idiom. The ἔστι in Parmenides's saying, says Heidegger, cannot be taken as representing [*vorstellen*] being as a being because, although everything of which we say 'it is' [*es sei*] is taken to be a being, being itself is not a being therefore the ἔστι has to mean literally 'it is'. ἔστι names being but not as a being. Heidegger, however, can hear in this ἔστι what the Greeks thought thereby and which he says can be paraphrased as *Es vermag*. *Vermögen* means to be able, to be capable, so that the ἔστι becomes a kind of initiating capability because, although the Greeks did not think this capability – it remained unthought as the It which is capable of being – being capable of being means to yield and give being [*Sein vermögen heißt: Sein ergeben und geben*]. *Ergeben* is both to produce and to give up, to surrender and to

<sup>92</sup> Gerald L. Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements: Language, Truth, and Poetry in the Later Writings*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1989, pp.133-134.

<sup>93</sup> William S. Allen, *Ellipsis: Of Poetry and the Experience of Language after Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Blanchot*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007, p178.

<sup>94</sup> Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p.88/p.194.

reveal. As an adjective, it means devoted, humble or submissive. Being is, therefore, a giving and a giving up. On the basis of identifying this capability, Heidegger claims that the ἔστι is the *es gibt*: ‘In the beginning [*Beginn*] of Western thinking, Being is thought, but not the “It gives” as such. The latter withdraws in favor of the gift which It gives. That gift is thought and conceptualized from then on exclusively as Being with regard to beings.’<sup>95</sup> Being is what is sent in this giving, in this gift, and Heidegger defines sending [*Geschick*], or names sending more precisely, as a giving which gives only its gift, but which in the giving holds itself back [*zurückhalten*] and withdraws [*entziehen*]. What is sent in this sending is being, being is what is given, what the It gives, but being on this basis is not the giving, nor is it the It that gives. Both the sending and the It that sends hold back from self-showing.

Heidegger defines the idea of an epoch as a kind of holding back, using the Greek term ἐποχή, which means halt or cessation but, as derived from ἐπέχω, means to hold back or to check. An epoch of being is not a specific period in time but is the basic trait of sending in the destiny of being [*Seinsgeschickes*], in which being is held back in favour of the gift’s being perceptible [*Vernehmbarkeit*] as being’s grounding of beings. Thus an epoch of being is one where being itself is not thought, or rather is thought as the being of beings, rather than being itself, or the *es gibt*, being thought. Throughout this epochal history, and there have been a number of epochs rather than just one, being as *Anwesenheit*, as presence or presencing, has been covered up [*verdecken*] in many ways, says Heidegger. To think being, it is necessary to forego being as the ground of beings and to think of the giving, that is to think the *es gibt*. Giving is concealed in *Entbergen*, disclosure, and being is the gift of this giving, the gift of the *es gibt*. Being is an allowing to presence. Being, as the gift of the *es gibt*, belongs in the giving and, as a gift, it is not thrown out of the giving. Being, presencing is transformed. As an allowing to presence, it belongs in disclosure but as the gift of such disclosure, being remains kept back in the giving. As Jean-Luc Marion writes: ‘The giving is held back from the gift, from its visibility and its availability, precisely because in giving it it undoes itself and withdraws from it, therefore turns itself away from the gift and abandons it to itself. By an inescapable

---

<sup>95</sup> Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p.8/p.8

consequence, the giving can never appear *with*, or still less *as* the gift given by it, since to give it not only does it leave it behind; it also differs from it.’<sup>96</sup>

Being is not, says Heidegger. Being is given as the disclosure of presencing but being itself is not this disclosure. Being stays in the *als* of *as* disclosure, because being never appears as such, it only appears as the disclosure of presencing. Being is withdrawn in the allowing to presence, which is: ‘[T]o unconceal [*Entbergen*], to bring to openness. In unconcealing prevails a giving, the giving that gives presencing, that is, Being, in letting-presence.’<sup>97</sup> Giving is a *spielen*, a being-at-play, in disclosure and from out of disclosure there speaks a giving, an *es gibt*: ‘[W]hat is peculiar [*Eigentümliche*] to Being, that to which Being belongs and in which it remains retained [*einbehalten bleibt*], shows itself in the It gives and its giving as sending.’<sup>98</sup> Being belongs to, and is retained in, its own specificity and while this is shown in the It and in the giving, being is held back. Being’s specificity, its singular property, is, however, not being-like [*Seinsartiges*]. What is ownmost to being does not have the character of being, says Heidegger. To think specifically [*eigens*] about being is in fact to move away from being. To think in such a manner is to be on the way [*Weg*] to the destiny, or sending, of being as the gift. To think being is no longer to think being but of the gift [*Gabe*] of the *es gibt*. As Marion writes, ‘it is no longer a question of thinking Being directly as such (in the fashion of a being), but rather its withdrawal as such, since this withdrawal is given as Being’.<sup>99</sup> It is the promise that would have already been withdrawn prior to the promise having been made.

But if being is not the giving, or the It that gives, is it possible to say what is? Could it be that time is ‘the It which gives Being, which determines Being as presencing and allowing-to-presence’?<sup>100</sup> This is the second strand that Heidegger follows in this essay in his attempt to think the giving and the It of *es gibt*. Time, just as much as being, is implicated in presence and coming to presence and, just as being is not a being, time is not *Zeitlich*, temporal or timely. Time, of course, is no mere seriality,

---

<sup>96</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Towards a Phenomenology of Givenness*, translated by Jeffrey L. Kosky, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 2002, p.35. *Étant donné: Essai d’une phénoménologie de la donation*, Paris, Quadrige/PUF, 1997, p.55. His emphases.

<sup>97</sup> Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p.5/p.5.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* p.10/p.10.

<sup>99</sup> Marion, *Being Given*, p.36/pp.55-56.

<sup>100</sup> Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p.10/p.10.

nor can time as presence be determined by time as the now or as a series of nows. The question that Heidegger asks in relation to time is what matter [*Sache*] are we thinking when we say presencing [*Anwesen*]? He answers: 'To presence [*Wesen*] means to last [*Währen*]. But we are too quickly content to conceive lasting as mere duration, and to conceive duration in terms of the customary representation of time as a span of time from one now to a subsequent now. To talk of presencing, however, requires that we perceive biding [*Weilen*] and abiding [*Verweilen*] in lasting as lasting [*Anwähren*] in present being. What is present concerns us, the present, that is: what, lasting, comes toward us, us human beings.'<sup>101</sup> Presencing is a tarrying-staying-dwelling-whiling. It is an enduring sojourning, an abiding, that approaches the human being, reaches [*reichen*] him and extends [*erreichen*] towards him. Human beings receive the gift of presencing, that is given in the *es gibt*, through the perception [*vernehmen*] of that which appears in *Anwesenlassen*, the allowing of presence.

Presencing is not just the presencing of what is present. It is just as intimately involved with the presencing of absence, both in terms of what has been and what is yet to come so that time is the mutual byplay of past, present and future: 'But prior to all calculation of time and independent of such calculation, what is germane [*Eigene*] to the time-space of true [*eigentlichen*] time consists in the mutual reaching out and opening up of future, past and present. Accordingly, what we call dimension and dimensionality in a way easily misconstrued, belongs [*eignet*] to true time and to it alone. Dimensionality consists in a reaching [*Reichen*] out that opens up, in which futural approaching brings about what has been, what has been brings about futural approaching, and the reciprocal relation of both brings about the opening up of openness.'<sup>102</sup> Dimension here is reaching, giving and opening up, and the unity of time's three dimensions consists in a mutual, tripartite interplay [*Zuspiel*]. This *Zuspiel* proves to be true time, what Heidegger calls *die eigentliche Zeit*, time that is its own, proper time and it is the interplay that plays in time's ownness [*im Eigenen der Zeit*], that is the playing and reaching that constitutes time and is the fourth dimension of time: 'But the dimension which we call the fourth in our count is...the first, that is, the giving that determines all. In future, in past, in the present, that

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p.12/p.12.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. pp.14-15/p.15.

giving brings about to each its own presencing, holds them apart thus opened and so holds them toward one another in the nearness by which the three dimensions remain near one another.’<sup>103</sup>

The fourth dimension is the first dimension, says Heidegger, the dimension that gives forward into mutual play the not yet, the having been and the present. This fourth dimension which, as *anfängliche*, that which belongs to the beginning as beginning, is the inceptive [*an-fangende*] reaching or extension [*Reichen*] wherein is founded [*beruhen*], the unity of *eigentlich* time. Heidegger calls this original inception ‘nearing nearness’ [*nähernde Nähe*] or nearhood [*Nähe*] which involves a nearness that is also a distance, in which the past, present and future are brought together but only by keeping them apart. What has been is held open by nearhood while it refuses its future as present, or refuses its arrival as the present: ‘This nearing of nearness keeps open the approach [*Ankommen*] coming from the future [*Zukunft*] by withholding the present in the approach [*Kommen*]. Nearing nearness has the character of denial and withholding. It unifies in advance the ways in which what has-been, what is about to be, and the present reach out toward each other.’<sup>104</sup> Time, therefore does not have the character of the ‘is’, rather there is a giving of time, *es gibt* time. Time is given by nearness, but this nearness is both a withholding [*Vorenthalt*] and a refusal: ‘It grants the openness of time-space and preserves what remains denied in what has-been, what is held in approach. We call the giving which gives true time an extending which opens and conceals. As extending is itself a giving, the giving of a giving is concealed in true time.’<sup>105</sup> True time, proper time, time in its singularity, is the unitary threefold lighting nearness of the present, having been and the to-come. Human beings stand within [*innestehen*] this threefold *Reichen*, and endure [*ausstehen*] the nearness which determines the *Reichen* in its denying and withholding. As Ziarek points out, *Reichen* is ‘the radical temporality beyond the division into present, past, and future, and therefore time understood as reaching must be discerned from the three-dimensional time that makes it possible

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. p.15/p.16.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. pp.15-16/p.16.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p.16./p.16.

for presence and absence to be “reached”...Only in the context of this originary reaching does time disclose its four-dimensional character’.<sup>106</sup>

Have we now reached the point that we can say with confidence what the It is? No, because with both being and time what has been elucidated is the giving of time and being. The giving of *es gibt Sein* is a sending and destining of presence in its epochal transformations, while the giving of time is a lighting-clearing-extending [*lichtendes*] reaching of the four-dimensional realm. The It here still remains enigmatic, says Heidegger. The enigma here is the It and while it may appear that time is the It that gives being, because being lies in time’s extension, time itself is also given by an it and therefore cannot be the It. The It remains as the enigma and, as yet, has not been determined. Nor has the relation – effectively the ‘and’ - between time and being been determined either. It is in naming the It and determining the ‘and’ that Heidegger makes his move to *Ereignis*. Firstly, for Heidegger, the It names the presence of absence, the *Anwesen* of *Abwesen*, so that whatever the It names is naming the presence of absence. The It is a gathering in belongingness in that what is singular to being and time, in coming into their own, comes into their belonging together. The It is named in a passage that is almost untranslatable, because of the way the words echo back and forth: ‘In the sending [*Schicken*] of the destiny [*Geschickes*] of Being, in the extending [*Reichen*] of time, there becomes manifest [*sich zeigt*] a dedication [*Zueignen*], a delivering [*Übereignen*] over into what is their own [*Eigenes*], namely of Being as presence and of time as the realm [*Bereich*] of the open. What determines both, time and Being, in their own, that is in their belonging together, we shall call [*nennen*]: *Ereignis*.’<sup>107</sup> In its first appearance in the translation, *Ereignis* is not translated but it is then translated as ‘event’, its standard German meaning, or as ‘event of appropriation’, a commonly accepted term in Heidegger translations. But it is never a happening or occurrence, says Heidegger. It is not an event, as such. It is that which gives but is not the given. But to say what it is and what it is not is already, in a way, to betray it. To say the It of *es gibt* is *Ereignis* is to represent it as a being, which is to cover up the matter at hand. The statement that the It is *Ereignis* is both correct [*richtig*] and untrue [*unwahr*], he says.

---

<sup>106</sup> Ziarek, *Inflected Language*, pp.49-50.

<sup>107</sup> Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p.19/p.20.

What can be said about it then? Firstly, *Ereignis* appears to be a kind of gathering, and intensification, around the *Eigen*, around what is one's own, or what is singular or proper to one. We can see this in the *Zueignen* and the *Übereignen*, both of which are nominalised verbs where Heidegger eschews the use of the nouns associated with these terms, and which suggests an essential movement within *Ereignis*, a movement within and around giving. Secondly, to come into one's own, that which is determined by *Ereignis*, is to come into a co-belonging. At the very moment of singularity, the moment of the *Eigen*, there is a togetherness, brought about through a prior belonging. Being and time are determined in their relation, in the *and* that points to this relation, at the precise moment that they come into their own, so that coming into one's own is always already a relation to the other, to that which is not one's own. In coming into one's own, being and time come into a prior belonging, in the same way that τὸ αὐτό names the prior belonging of thinking and being. Time and being are related in terms of the *Eigen* that each of them comes into. *Ereignis* names this relation of *Eigen* and maintains being and time in their belonging together: 'What lets the two matters belong together, what brings the two into their own and, even more, maintains and holds them in their belonging together – the way the two matters stand, the matter at stake – is Appropriation [*Ereignis*].'<sup>108</sup> The attempt to say what *Ereignis* is is, however, seemingly impossible because the propositional statement poses the question of *Ereignis* in a way that obscures it. If being is not a being and time is nothing timely, then it would follow that the event is not an event. Nor is it a question of erecting *Ereignis* as 'the encompassing general concept under which Being and time could be subsumed'.<sup>109</sup> It is not a question of logic: 'For as we think Being itself and follow what is its own, Being proves to be destiny's gift of presence, the gift granted by the giving of time. The gift of presence is the property of Appropriating [*Eigentum des Ereignens*]. Being vanishes in Appropriation. In the phrase "Being as Appropriation," the word "as" now means: Being, letting-presence sent in Appropriating, time extended in Appropriating. Time and Being appropriated in Appropriation.'<sup>110</sup> As Ziarek writes, by writing being and time into *Ereignis*, Heidegger moves away from prioritising being to a position where both being and time are the necessary givens for any disclosure. His thought

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p.21/p.22.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. pp.21-22/pp.22-23.

becomes located within the proximity of time and being. It shows, he says, an impossible naming, ‘the impossibility of finding or writing the one, the correct, word that could name “what has been called ‘Being’ up to now”’.<sup>111</sup>

*Ereignis* is the marking of the own of time and being, that gathers together what is proper to being and time, that brings their singularity into relationality and holds them within that relation. Being and time are brought into their own in the bringing that is *Ereignis*, which itself is concealed in destiny and the lighting, that is the opening, extending. But this coming into one’s own is just as much a withdrawal, just as much a keeping back. Giving as sending always involves a keeping back, says Heidegger, in which the denial and withholding of the present are at play within the having-been and the to-come. It is because withdrawal determines *Schicken* and *Reichen*, which rest in *Ereignis*, that withdrawal itself is a singular property [*Eigentümlich*] of *Ereignis*: ‘Appropriating makes manifest its peculiar property [*Eigentümliche*], that Appropriation withdraws what is most fully its own from boundless unconcealment. Thought in terms of Appropriating, this means: in that sense it expropriates [*enteignet*] itself of itself. Expropriation [*Enteignis*] belongs to Appropriation as such. By this expropriation, Appropriation does not abandon itself [*aufgeben*] – rather, it preserves [*bewahrt*] what is its own [*Eigentum*].’<sup>112</sup> So within appropriation is expropriation, within the coming into one’s own lies a kind of disabling or dislocating of what is one’s own. Thus, where time and being come into their own, there is already a relation, a belonging, that dispossesses them, that displaces the ownership of the own such that this belonging together can only be a belonging of difference, a belonging of difference in the same, τὸ αὐτό. A shifting takes place or place becomes a certain shifting. *Ereignis* does not give itself up, it does not surrender itself, it neither offers itself nor does it abandon itself. It keeps itself to itself. Its own remains concealed. Does it keep its own counsel? In the giving of being and time, neither of which *is*, the It that gives does not give itself.

In naming the It the enigmatic It, and then naming this It as *Ereignis*, has Heidegger then solved the enigma? Or has he reinscribed the enigma into the heart of the *es gibt* and essentially rendered the enigma insoluble and the *es gibt* as enigmatic? Has he,

---

<sup>111</sup> Ziarek, *Inflected Language*, p.47.

<sup>112</sup> Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, pp.22-3/p.23.

as Marion argues, done precisely what he warned against, that is posited the enigmatic It arbitrarily as ‘an indeterminate power which is supposed to bring about all giving of Being and of time’?<sup>113</sup> Marion’s argument, in a broader one which claims that Heidegger draws back from givenness as phenomenological principle, even though he reverts to givenness and espouses its function as principle, is that by naming the It as *Ereignis* Heidegger violates its anonymity and obscures the enigma. Heidegger uses the properties of givenness ‘but without admitting that they arise from givenness’.<sup>114</sup> The enigmatic It must remain anonymous and indeterminate, says Marion, because otherwise it would turn into a being, if not the supreme being. In essence, Heidegger is making two moves, says Marion, the first wherein presence, as being, is reduced to a gift appropriate to givenness, and the second, which completes and annuls the first, wherein givenness is abolished in the *Ereignis*. But is this what is happening here? Heidegger himself is at pains to point out that *Ereignis* is not an all-encompassing concept [*umgreifende Oberbegriff*] which swallows up being and time, nor should we understand it as an event as such, as *Vorkommnis* and *Geschehnis*, that is an incident, occurrence or happening, a point he made in *Identity and Difference*, where he also describes it as a pure singularity, a *singulare tantum*, and as untranslatable as the *λόγος* or the Tao. Bruns says *Ereignis* is as unspeakable and uncontainable as a pun which cannot be caught in a term or a statement. It is no longer simply what it names. It has become rifted or dif-ferent. Marion translates the term as *avènement* which means accession, such as a king acceding to the throne, or advent where the advent is of something significant, even Messianic; *événement* is usually translated as event and has more mundane connotations. *Avènement* is cognate with *avenir*, the future, so that there is always a sense of something still to come with *avènement*. To translate *Ereignis*, which, despite Heidegger’s use, still refers to an ordinary event, as *avènement*, is to have already interpreted it in a certain way, as something portentous or ominous, values which the German word may not have. Nor does Marion question the term itself, he does not venture into ‘the polysemy of *eigen* and *eignen*’, as Ziarek puts it,<sup>115</sup> or, indeed, of the *äugen*,<sup>116</sup> of

---

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. p.17/p.17.

<sup>114</sup> Marion, *Being Given*, p.38/p.59.

<sup>115</sup> Ziarek, *Inflected Language*, p.50.

<sup>116</sup> Françoise Dastur argues that it is to the *Auge* that one must first look in thinking *Ereignis*. *Ereignis* ‘means to eye’, she says, and is a ‘bringing to ownness by making visible’. See Françoise Dastur, *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, translated by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew, Amherst New York, Humanity Books, 1999, p.64.

being called into the *Blick*, the look, as Heidegger says in *Identity and Difference*. Here, *Ereignis* is linked with *er-äugen* which is linked to the *Blick*, via the ‘as’ of *er-äugen* as *erblicken*.

It is true that an exhortation by Heidegger not to read *Ereignis* in a certain way is not a guarantee that it cannot be read in that way and if this was all there was to it then the matter should end there. Equally, the terminology Heidegger uses can lead to charges, such as those of Marion’s. As Blanchot writes, granting that *eigen* does not have to mean ‘property or ‘appropriation’: ‘But why *eigen*, why “proper” (how else can this word be translated?), and not “improper”? Why this word? Why “presence” in its stubborn (patient) affirmation, which makes us repudiate “absence”?’<sup>117</sup> Certainly Heidegger’s remarks would seem to indicate that he was fully aware of the danger that Marion describes, especially when considering his comments at the end of ‘Time and Being’ when he says that the very form of a lecture hinders the saying of *Ereignis* and that the lecture itself spoke merely in propositional statements [*Aussagesätzen*]. As Michael Lewis points out, the very idea of a thesis on being is one that Heidegger moves away from: ‘The immediate presentation of a *thesis* on being is exactly what Heidegger realized to be *impossible* as he came to think being as always already having withdrawn from the totality and therefore from man, as a *pre-original* withdrawal in whose wake the entire metaphysical tradition must exist in a constantly frustrated attempt to understand its own loss.’<sup>118</sup> What is more, *Ereignis* is also *Enteignis*, that is power or possession is also powerlessness or dispossession, appropriation is also expropriation, position: dis-position. As Dastur remarks, it is because *Ereignis* is not structured as a self and can only be thought as *Schicken* - a giving of givenness as a holding back and withdrawal – ‘that it is in itself *Enteignis*, that is, the groundless ground of Being, its abyss’.<sup>119</sup> In so far as the sending of being rests in the reach, or extension, of time, and in so far as time and being rest in *Ereignis*, the singularness [*Eigentümliche*] of *Ereignis* manifests itself, announces itself, as that which withdraws from unbounded unconcealment, that is it withdraws into concealment. *Ereignis* is the play of withdrawal in manifestation, of dispossession in possession, of holding in withholding, of concealment in

---

<sup>117</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, translated by Ann Smock, Nebraska and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1986, 1995, p.98.

<sup>118</sup> Lewis, *Heidegger and the Place of Ethics*, p.67. His emphases.

<sup>119</sup> Dastur, *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, p.65.

unconcealment. Does not this doubled movement trouble the identification of *Ereignis* with an indeterminate power? Does it not question the very idea of power where power is a keeping to itself, a kind of refusal that preserves itself in itself? It should be recalled that Heidegger identified *Ereignis* with the Now of 'The Ister', which I claimed marked the erased trace of a prior time that could never be figured into the poem. In so far as *Ereignis* names the It, therefore, the naming is more of a gathering, a drawing together of the *eigen* and the *eignen*, in which it names the coming into one's own by gathering what is ownmost into itself. This gathering, says Dastur, is not a subject taking possession of something other but an allowing of something to be what it is. If the givenness of being and time rests in their coming into their own, then the naming of the It as *Ereignis* is perhaps just a way of showing this movement rather than it being the ultimate prime mover.

In his thinking in and around the poem of Parmenides, Heidegger has resorted more and more to the figure of the enigma, referring to it far more than he had done with the origin of the work of art, the enigma of the rivers or the uncanny. The enigma marks τὸ αὐτό, ἀλήθεια, and ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι. It marks the *es gibt* and *Ereignis*. His thought seems to be constantly moving in the place of the enigma and Heidegger has inscribed it at the very heart of the possibility of appearing, at the very heart of being and truth, being and thinking, time and being. More than anywhere else there is a sense of the provisional, the temporary, at work here, that the name that Heidegger uses, whether it is being or presencing, unconcealment or disclosure, are only ever interim names, measures for which there is no measure. It is perhaps not accidental that the poem of Parmenides is used as the context for the provisionality of the name. As Wilkinson notes, the speech of the goddess in the poem is completely lacking in names: 'Just as the goddess does not name or describe herself or the "House" in which she abides, neither does the goddess name the subject of her speech. Perhaps this is the quest for all who hear the goddess' speech: for hers is a *muthos* without names.'<sup>120</sup> The enigma, as the withdrawn promise, is the mark of this provisionality, the settlement that is never settled, the position that is always dis-position, the place that is always displaced. It is not a question of saying 'the enigma is being' or 'the enigma is truth'. This would be to make the enigma another being and to make the

---

<sup>120</sup> Wilkinson, *Parmenides and To Eon*, p.79. Transliteration in text.

enigma another metaphysical concept. The enigma is a promise that a name can be found, but this name is always already withdrawn in the prior withdrawal of the promise. Being was only ever a provisional word for the enigma, the one that runs ahead, announcing it in its non-announcing. Perhaps *Ereignis* is just another provisional name for the enigma, something that will do for the time being. Rather than being the naming of an absolute advent, it is a non-locatable, unfixable givenness that can only be said paratactically. Or perhaps it can only be said tautologically. In the 1973 Zähringen seminar, Heidegger describes Parmenides's ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι as a genuine tautology and the domain of the inapparent, *das Unscheinbare*. This tautology, as a λέγειν of τὸ αὐτό, is a speaking of the same: *Sein: Anwesen: Es gibt: Ereignis: Rätsel*.

## Epilogue

### A time and place for us

I want to start this epilogue by looking at two short stories; one, by Franz Kafka, published posthumously as one of a number of *Betrachtungen*, reflections or observations, is merely a single sentence; the other, 'In the Fertile Land', by Gabriel Josipovici, barely covers two pages. Despite their brevity, both of them, however, seem to say something about the enigma, in terms of its timing and placing, as it arises in this thesis in relation to the work of Martin Heidegger. The story by Kafka is short enough to be given in full:

'Leopards break into the temple and drink the sacrificial vessels dry; this is repeated [*wiederholt*] over and over again [*immer wieder*]; finally [*schießlich*] it can be calculated in advance [*vorausberechnen*] and it becomes a part [*Teil*] of the ceremony.'<sup>1</sup>

What begins as a savage interruption, as a sacrilegious eruption and disturbance, in that the sacrificial cups are emptied of their liquid, is incorporated into the ritual and closed off, in a sense. After the invasion by the leopards has happened enough times – and the question of this enough has to be reckoned - their entrance and activity can be predicted so that what was once disturbance can become performance. In essence, the ritual absorbs this strange intrusion and makes it its own, without ever actually possessing it because, while their entrance can be formalised ritually, the ceremony does not control it; it only marks their time. The ritual takes account of the intrusion without necessarily being able to give an account of it, because no narrative can be given which makes sense of it. In a sense, the leopards remain outside the ceremony while taking part within it. Their part [*Teil*] in the ritual never becomes a judgement [*Urteil*]. The leopards share in the ceremony, without being shared, and the

---

<sup>1</sup> Franz Kafka, *The Great Wall of China and Other Short Works*, translated by Malcolm Pasley, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1973, p.82. *Gesammelte Werke: Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande und andere Prosa aus dem Nachlass*, herausgegeben von Max Brod, Frankfurt am Main, S Fischer Verlag Lizenzausgabe von Schocken Books, New York, 1953, p.41.

acknowledgement, the reckoning, of the leopards that is contained within the *vorausberechnen* stops short of being knowledge.

What remains enigmatic, it seems to me, is precisely the point at which the entrance of the leopards moves from being disturbing to being foreseen, from being a rupture in the ceremony to being ceremonialised. The now when the leopards become part of the ceremony is never a now that it is possible to experience precisely because in saying now, the now has already gone. It has already been decided prior to this now and they are already part of the ceremony by the time that part has been formalised. As I argued, in relation to the ‘*Jetzt komme, Feuer*’, which marks the beginning of Hölderlin’s ‘The Ister’, and which Heidegger related to the time of the poets, this now marks a time that has already passed. The poets have already been called prior to the now of the calling. By the time it has been decided that the leopards will form part of the ceremony they have always already been part of the ceremony. The repetition [*wiederholen*] of the action cannot be retrieved [*wiederholen*] as an origin of the action. Equally, one can see the movement of the νόμος here, in the way that the laws that Antigone was acting in the name of were never an appearance. They became law beyond or outside this non-appearance. The unwritten and unfailing laws came out of a time that was never a phenomenon. The experience of the now when the leopards are incorporated into the ceremony can only be experienced as, and in, its recollection. It is a past that is never present to itself.

If Kafka’s story says something about the time of the enigma, then Josipovici’s story says something about the place. A nameless narrator begins this story, and even in this non-naming, we can perhaps begin to glimpse the enigma as enigma: ‘We live in a fertile land. Here we have all we want. Beyond the borders, far away, lies the desert, where nothing grows.’<sup>2</sup> The fertile land is full of everything the narrator needs, everything grows there, human beings are free to live up to and exceed their potential. Everything is plenitude and bountiful. The narrator’s place here is certain, fixed and grounded. People are settled in the settlement that is the fertile land. The inhabitants of this land are always talking in an endless round of chatter and there is always an abundance of things to talk about. As a counterpoint to the fertile land,

---

<sup>2</sup> Gabriel Josipovici, ‘In the Fertile Land’, *In the Fertile Land*, Manchester, Carcanet, 1987, p.61.

however, there is the desert, which is barren and harsh, where nothing grows, where the possibility of life is impossible to imagine, and where everything is silent apart from the wind that whistles across the sand. On the one hand, it can be said of the fertile land that its centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere, but, on the other hand, the reverse can be said, that the circumference is everywhere and the centre nowhere. In this reversal, there is the desert. This desert exerts a fascination on the inhabitants of the fertile land to such a disturbing effect, that a law has been passed forbidding the mention of the desert. But this law cannot stop the narrator dreaming about the desert, a desert whose limits he or she finds it impossible to imagine, where near and far have different meanings to those they have in the fertile land, a desert whose silence contrasts with the continuous talk of the fertile land. But in the endless talk, talk that cannot mention the very subject it wants to talk about, because of the fear of contravening the law, talk that begins to become disturbing, oppressive, the thought comes to the narrator 'that perhaps I am actually in the desert already, that I have crossed over and not returned, and that what the desert is really like is this, a place where everyone talks but where no one speaks of what concerns him most'.<sup>3</sup> These thoughts are typical of the fertility of the land, the narrator concludes.

A story that begins certain of its place, that knows where it is, that is secure in its dwelling, ends in insecurity, uncertain of its place, not knowing whether it is in the fertile land or in the desert, whether the desert is always already the fertile land and the fertile land the desert. The narrator has been displaced, but it is not a question of merely reversing the places, saying that rather than being in the fertile land the narrator is in the desert. The narrator dwells in the impossibility of saying where he or she might possibly be dwelling, in a place that is neither the fertile land nor the desert and yet, at the same time, it is both the desert and the fertile land. What was thought to be a safe and secure home, far away from the troubling and disturbing desert, is no longer so safe or secure. The desert's farness has become a nearness or, rather, its nearness is its farness and its farness its nearness. The borders that used to guarantee a safe distance from the desert have become porous. The desert and the fertile land bleed into each other. Rather than being grounded in a place that is known intimately, the narrator is staring into the abyss, into the possibility of an

---

<sup>3</sup> Josipovici, p.62.

absence of ground, a ground that can never be secured. What was once a putting into place is a being displaced. The story enacts the thought of a placing that is also a displacing. This, it seems to me, says something about the operation of the enigma, an enigma that refuses placement in its placing, that can never be finally settled into a here, just as it can never finally be timed into a now. It is never secure in time and place. The enigma is an anachronism and an anapism, or anachorism, where the χρόνος is out of time and the τόπος and χώρος name the place that is out of place, just as the here and now of 'The Ister' marked the time and place of the poem. The enigma is that which is out of its proper place and time, because it is always already improper.

What both these stories suggest, for me, is a sense of insecurity, of an insecurity in security where this insecurity and in-security are never settled. But if the question of insecurity is at the heart of the enigma, the question is what this insecurity does to a thought that thinks the enigma in its very core. The question of the *Rätsel* is one that looms large in the thought of Martin Heidegger, but it is a question that is seemingly endlessly deferred, in that he never asks the question of the meaning of the enigma, or the truth of the enigma, and yet it always seems to accompany him along his path of thought. It seems to be both central to his thought and, at the same time, marginal. For such a term to be referenced so many times, and yet barely examined as such, appears to be an oversight, a lacuna. All the other terms that seem to relate to the enigma – art, being, presencing, unconcealment and so on – become the focus of an exegesis, but such an exegesis is lacking for the enigma. In this lack is its marginality but it is a margin that always seems to exceed its margin. A margin always frames the text, provides the space for the text to be, but never actually appears in the text itself. The text, however, could not appear without it, so that the margin's appearance in the text is, precisely, its non-appearance. The appearance of the text rests precisely on this non-appearance. In a similar fashion, the enigma does not appear and, in view of its non-appearance, perhaps one can only approach the enigma in the way that Heidegger does, that is by not approaching it by way of an *Überlegung*, such as the consideration that he gave art in 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. In the first dialogue in *Country Path Conversations*, the enigma appeared at the point in the dialogue where thinking was wandering away from the discussants or they were wandering away from thinking. It was by not thinking about it that the thought of it arose. The

way to approach the enigma, therefore, would seem to be to approach it obliquely. Heidegger's approach would seem to be through the examination of other words, of other names, so that the question of the truth of being, the origin of the work of art, the question of concealment and unconcealment, of ἀλήθεια, become ways in which to see the enigma as enigma. Perhaps one can only approach the enigma through the provisionality of other names and then only in this perhaps which, as Levinas writes, is the modality of the enigma, its mode or manner, which can never be reduced to either being or certainty – these two terms being synonymous for Levinas.

A thinking of the enigma, therefore, is both marginal and central to the thought of Heidegger. In his essay, 'Hegel and the Greeks', Heidegger marks the *Befugnis*, the authority, of the enigma by way of a footnote. The authority of *Befugnis* is the authority that is conferred on somebody or something, by virtue of the office that he or she holds, or by specific circumstances. Its authority is somehow fitting for it. In this authoritative thinking, the enigma is somehow given its authority as enigma by the enigma. It is an entitlement and is itself its own authority, but whose authorisation does not belong in an experience that can be specifically placed. It is an authority that unauthorises itself. Perhaps its authority is such that the enigma itself and its authority are unthinkable. It is, perhaps, the unthinkable that gives the measure for a thought that is a more thoughtful thought, as a *Denken* that is *denkender*, as Heidegger writes: '[T]he more thoughtful a thinking is, that is, the more that it is claimed by its language, the more authoritative [*maßgebender*] what is unthought becomes for it, and even what is unthinkable for it.'<sup>4</sup> The more thinking thinks about the enigma, the more that thinking is given the measure by the enigma. But if it is the measure then, in a sense, it is also the measureless, as unthinkable. It is both this measurelessness and this measure, in the same way that it is both a centrality and marginality. It is both circumference and centre and centre and circumference, and the impossibility of deciding which is which.

It is clear that, from the very beginning of his thought, Heidegger was making an appeal to the enigma, or was being called by the enigma. As Simon Critchley has

---

<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.333. *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1976, p.440.

pointed out,<sup>5</sup> the *Rättsel* had already figured in *Being and Time*; he counted at least ten occurrences of the word therein as it related to Dasein's being-in-the-world. As this thesis has shown, the enigma was a constant reference point from the 1930s to the 1960s, whether it appeared merely as an afterthought to a work or whether it was more intimately interlaced within a work. In the thinking from the 1930s onwards, the enigma moves away from being Dasein-centric to being more of a question about the appearance of being itself, rather than Dasein's thrown projection. Throughout this time, however, Heidegger only once, as far as I am aware, gave a description of his understanding of the enigma and, only then, as an etymological interpretation of the term *Rättsel*, which he related to care. Coupled with this explanation was an injunction, an injunction that was repeated at various stages in his thinking. This was the injunction that we should not seek to solve the enigma, we should only seek to see the enigma as enigma. We were, in some way, prohibited from solving the enigma. The solution was forbidden territory, a place and a time where it is not permissible to go. Where the prohibition came from is not disclosed, but perhaps the unthinkable-ness of the enigma is this prohibition.

But, if the enigma was forbidden territory, it was still necessary to engage with it and this engagement is, clearly, not incidental to Heidegger's thought, or it is incidental but in a significant way. It is inscribed at the very heart of his thinking and is related to key terms within that thought. What the term ἀλήθεια names, he says, is not an answer to what is enigmatic in thinking, it is not a crude key that unlocks the enigmas of thought, but is the enigma itself, what he calls the matter of thinking, *die Sache des Denkens*, the principle or cause of thinking. With regard to art, it is art itself which is labelled as enigmatic, art wherein world and earth strive to allow truth to arise. What this means is that the truth of the work of art, the truth that arises in the work of art is an enigma. It is here, where art is conceived as an origin, that the enigma operates. Art, as an allowing of truth to arise, is an origin and, therefore, the origin is an enigma. Whether art is at this point is still open to question, says Heidegger at the end of 'The Origin of the Work of Art', but the reflections that are contained in his essay are necessary for this question to be answered. Despite what he has written in this essay, the question of the possibility of art is still open, whether

---

<sup>5</sup> Simon Critchley, 'Enigma Variations: an Interpretation of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*', *Ratio (new series)*, Oxford, Blackwell, XV 2 June 2002, pp.154-175.

it is an origin or merely culture is undecided. Reflections of the sort contained in ‘The Origin’ are *vorläufig*, that is they are only interim and provisional reflections, the forerunner of what is still to come.

The necessity of engaging with the enigma arises again in relation to Hölderlin’s river poems. The rivers are said to be vanishing and full of intimation, that is they stretch out into the past and into the future. They are where human beings dwell, but, in building their home there, they are building in the most difficult terrain. The now is proclaimed by the poet where the river is as this intimation and vanishing. What the rivers do is an enigma, says Heidegger, but this activity illustrates a fundamental law, that of the law of becoming homely in being unhomely. It is the fundamental law for human beings. This law, that pertains to the possibility of being at home, is an enigma and the enigma of this law is taken further in relation to Antigone as the most uncanny being, the being who, as μέτοικος and νομός, is *ungeheuer* and *unheimlich*, and seems to be beyond the possibility of a fixed and stable home and beyond the possibility of a fixed and stable law that can be decided once and for all. In this, Antigone, as the most uncanny, is the enigma.

Then there is the question of the promise of being. In his writings on the ancient Greek thinkers, Heidegger describes how being is the provisional [*vorläufig*] word that has been put forward as the forerunner for the enigma of *Anwesen*, the enigma of presencing. In this word being, the enigma has been promised to us and this promise can be seen in all the words that Heidegger uses in his attempts to name presencing, whether it is the ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι of Parmenides, the ἀλήθεια of Greek thought, or whether it is the *es gibt* or *Ereignis* of his own thought. The enigma is the promise of this naming, a naming that marks the emergence of what is named, that allows it to take its place in a complex of relations with other names. Naming brings into being, it situates and fixes, and makes intelligible. Heidegger writes in ‘Logos’ that the enigma has long been promised to us in the word being. This promise is the *zusagen* and the question of what is promised by the enigma, or of what kind of promise the enigma is, has been a theme running throughout this thesis. It is in this promise that I want to conclude because it is in the enigma as promise that tells us how the enigma is to be read in Heidegger’s thought and how, in the light of this promise, this thought is to be read. A promise is a giving towards the future, it is an openness

towards the future, and is a form of assurance and an undertaking. The promisor assures the promisee that something will be done at a future date, or that something will happen. It is a question of creating expectations, of guaranteeing, at least implicitly if not explicitly, that a forthcoming event will take place. It is to say that the potential will become actual. In a way, the promise is a giving, but it is a giving that, as promise, always covers a lack. The promise seeks to make present an absence so that what is not there yet will come about. A future state of affairs will resolve whatever is at issue in the current state of affairs. In its very terminology, a promise is a sending forth, a sending forth that always expects to be met and fulfilled. Even so, however, there is still a certain provisionality about the promise, it can never be definitively pinned down. After all, a promise can be broken but, usually, the expectation is that the promise will be kept.

The promise of the enigma, however, unsettles this movement, and perhaps unsettles it in this very keeping. To keep a promise is to ensure that the promise is fulfilled, but to keep also means to hold something back, to not let it go. In this sense, the promise keeps itself to itself and refuses to send itself forth. An enigma is a promise, the promise that a solution can be found to the enigma, that would have been withdrawn prior to the promise having been made. Its withdrawal exists in a future that has already happened even before the making of the promise, but the promise can only have been made in a past that is not available to any kind of experience. The promise is only experienced as the recollection of this experience. It is never an experience as such, only its memory or memorial. In the term being, the enigma has been promised to us, but it is a promise that can never be fulfilled. Being, as the promise, has been sent forth but, in this sending forth, it has already been withdrawn. The withdrawal occurs in a past that has not yet been but this past is still prior to the promise having been made. The enigma is this impossible promise, precisely because it is constituted as insoluble, but it is still a promise that retains its status as promise, even though the promise of a solution has been withdrawn. But if the enigma has been promised in the origin of the work of art, in the name being, it has also been promised as ἀλήθεια, *es gibt* and *Ereignis*. Each name attempts to name the enigma but in the promise of this naming lies the withdrawal of the name. In the tensions and torsions of the enigma rests the settlement that can never be settled.

## Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor W. *Ästhetische Theorie*, herausgegeben von Gretel Adorno und Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970.

Adorno, Theodor W. *Philosophische Frühschriften*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973.

Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory*, translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor, London, New York, Continuum, 1997

Adorno, Theodor W. *The Adorno Reader*, edited by Brian O'Connor, translated by Benjamin Snow, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2000.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, edited and translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1999.

Allen, William S. *Ellipsis: Of Poetry and the Experience of Language after Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Blanchot*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007.

Bernasconi, Robert. *The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of Being*, Amherst New York, Humanity Books, 1985.

Bernstein, J.M. *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno*, Cambridge, Oxford, Polity Press, 1992.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Space of Literature*, translated by Ann Smock, Lincoln, London, University of Nebraska Press, 1982.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Step Not Beyond*, translated by Lycette Nelson, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Infinite Conversation*, translated by Susan Hanson, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Writing of the Disaster*, translated by Ann Smock, Lincoln & London, University of Nebraska Press, 1995.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Book to Come*, translated by Charlotte Mandel, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 2003.

Browne, Sir Thomas. *The Major Works*, edited by C.A. Patrides, London, Penguin Books, 1977.

- Bruns, Gerald L. *Heidegger's Estrangements: Language, Truth, and Poetry in the Later Writings*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1989.
- Bruns, Gerald L. *Hermeneutics Ancient & Modern*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1992.
- Bruns, Gerald L. *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy*, Baltimore & London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Burnett, Catherine. 'Justice: Myth and Symbol', *Legal Studies Forum*, Volume XI, Number 1 1987, pp.79-94.
- Butler, Judith. *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Cavell, Stanley. *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy*, New York Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Celan, Paul. *Der Meridian und andere Prosa*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983.
- Celan, Paul. *Collected Prose*, translated by Rosmarie Waldrop, Manchester, PN Review Carcanet, 1986.
- Critchley, Simon. 'Enigma Variations: an Interpretation of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*', *Ratio (new series)*, Oxford, Blackwell, XV 2 June 2002, pp.154-175.
- Dallmayr, Fred. *The Other Heidegger*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Dastur, Françoise. *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, translated by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew, Amherst New York, Humanity Books, 1999.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass, London, Routledge, 1978.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Spirit*, translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Adieu To Emmanuel Levinas*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume I*, edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, translated by Peter and Mary Ann Caws, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 2007.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Psyche Inventions of the Other Volume II*, edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 2008.

- Durrell, Lawrence. *Quinx or The Ripper's Tale*, London & Boston, Faber and Faber, 1985.
- Düttmann, Alexander García. *The Memory of Thought: An Essay on Heidegger and Adorno*, translated by Nicholas Walker, London, New York, Continuum, 2002.
- Farrell, R.B. *Dictionary of German Synonyms*, Third Edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Finlayson, James Gordon. 'Normativity and Metaphysics in Adorno and Hegel', [www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/jgf21/research/NAM/rtf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/jgf21/research/NAM/rtf) accessed 10/3/2011.
- Foti, Veronique M. *Heidegger and the Poets: Poiesis/Sophia/Techne*, Amherst New York, Humanity Books, 1992.
- Foti, Veronique M. 'Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Sophoclean Tragedy', in *Heidegger toward the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s*, edited by James Risser, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999, pp.163-186.
- Foti, Veronique M. *Epochal Discordance: Hölderlin's Philosophy of Tragedy*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2006.
- Frank, Manfred. *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, translated by Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2004.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Pelican Freud Library Volume 14 Art and Literature*, translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey, the present volume edited by Albert Dickson, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1985.
- Fried, Gregory. *Heidegger's Polemos*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2000.
- Friedländer, Paul. *Plato: I. An Introduction*, translated by Hans Meyerhoff, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958.
- Friedländer, Paul. *Plato: I. An Introduction*, translated by Hans Meyerhoff, Second Edition, Princeton, Bollingen Series LIX Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Froment-Meurice, Marc. *That Is to Say: Heidegger's Poetics*, translated by Jan Plug, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Fynsk, Christopher. *Heidegger Thought and Historicity*, Expanded Edition, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Gall, Robert S. 'Interrupting speculation: The thinking of Heidegger and Greek tragedy', *Continental Philosophy Review*, Volume 36, pp.177-194, 2003.

- Gallop, David. *Parmenides of Elea: Fragments*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- Gasché, Rodolphe. *Of Minimal Things: Studies on the Notion of Relation*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Gasché, Rodolphe. *Europe, or the Infinite Task: A Study of a Philosophical Concept*, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Geiman, Clare Pearson. 'Heidegger's *Antigones*', in *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, edited by Richard Polt and Gregory Fried, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2001, pp.161-182.
- Haar, Michel. *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, translated by William McNeill, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Hammermeister, Kai. *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Hammond, Paul. *The Strangeness of Tragedy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Hegel, G.W.F. *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I Werke 13*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970.
- Hegel, G.W.F. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, translated by TM Knox, Volume I, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1944.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Holzwege*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1950.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1954.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Was Heisst Denken?*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1954.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1959.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche Band 1*, Pfullingen, Verlag Günther Neske, 1961.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, Oxford UK & Cambridge USA, Blackwell, 1962.
- Heidegger, Martin. *What is Called Thinking*, translated by J. Glenn Grey and Fred Wieck, New York, Harper and Row, 1968.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Zur Sache Des Denkens*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969.

Heidegger, Martin. *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter D. Hertz, New York, Harper and Row, 1971.

Heidegger, Martin. *On Time and Being*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Heidegger, Martin. *Early Greek Thinking*, translated by David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi, San Francisco, Harper & Row Publishers, 1975.

Heidegger, Martin. *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1976.

Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt, New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1977.

Heidegger, Martin. *Vier Seminare*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1977.

Heidegger, Martin. *Gesamtausgabe II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1923-1944, Band 54, Parmenides*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1982.

Heidegger, Martin. *Gesamtausgabe II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1923-1944, Band 53, Hölderlins Hymn "Der Ister"*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1984.

Heidegger, Martin. *Gesamtausgabe III. Abteilung: Unveröffentlichte Abhandlungen, Band 65, Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1989.

Heidegger, Martin. 'Colloquium Über Dialektik, Anhang: Letzte, Nicht Vorgetragene Vorlesung Aus Dem Sommersemester 1952', *Hegelen Studien, Band 25*, 1990, pp.9-40.

Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche Volumes One and Two*, translated by David Farrell Krell, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1991 (1984).

Heidegger, Martin. *Parmenides*, translated by Andre Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1992.

Heidegger, Martin. *Sein und Zeit*, Siebzehnte Auflage, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993.

Heidegger, Martin. *Gesamtausgabe III. Abteilung: Unveröffentlichte Abhandlungen, Band 77, Feldweg-Gespräche*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1995.

Heidegger, Martin. *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, translated by William McNeill and Julia Davis, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1996.

Heidegger, Martin. *Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

- Heidegger, Martin. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Heidegger, Martin. 'The Last, Undelivered Lecture (XII) from Summer Semester 1952', translated by Will McNeill, in *The Presocratics after Heidegger*, edited by David Jacobs, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999, pp.171-184.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, translated by Keith Hoeller, New York, Humanity Books, 2000.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2000.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Identity and Difference*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2002 [1969].
- Heidegger, Martin. *Off the Beaten Track*, translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Four Seminars*, translated by Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2003.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Country Path Conversations*, translated by Bret W Davis, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Henrich, Dieter. *The Course of Remembrance and Other Essays on Hölderlin*, edited by Eckhart Förster, translated by Taylor Carman, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Werke und Briefe Band I Gedichte Hyperion*, herausgegeben von Friedrich Beißner und Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main, Insel Verlag, 1969.
- Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Werke und Briefe Band II Der Tod des Empedokles, Aufsätze, Übersetzungen, Briefe*, herausgegeben von Friedrich Beißner und Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main, Insel Verlag, 1969.
- Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Werke und Briefe Band III Erläuterungen*, herausgegeben von Friedrich Beißner und Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main, Insel Verlag, 1969.
- Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Poems and Fragments*, translated by Michael Hamburger, Third Edition, London, Anvil Press Poetry, 1994.
- Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Essays and Letters*, edited and translated by Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth, London, Penguin Books 2009.
- Inwood, Michael. *A Heidegger Dictionary*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

- Janicaud, Dominique and Mattéi, Jean-François. *Heidegger: From Metaphysics to Thought*, translated by Michael Gendre, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Jones, John. *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1962.
- Josipovici, Gabriel. *In the Fertile Land*, Manchester, Carcanet, 1987.
- Kafka, Franz. *Gesammelte Werke: Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande und andere Prosa aus dem Nachlass*, herausgegeben von Max Brod, Frankfurt am Main, S Fischer Verlag, Lizenzausgabe von Schocken Books, New York, 1953.
- Kafka, Franz. *The Great Wall of China and Other Short Works*, translated by Malcolm Pasley, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1973.
- Kahn, Charles H. *Essays on Being*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Kirk, G.S., Raven, J.E., and Schofield, M. *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, Second Edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Kleinberg-Levin, David Michael. *Gestures of Ethical Life: Reading Hölderlin's Question of Measure After Heidegger*, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Lacan, Jacques. *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960 The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Dennis Porter, London, Routledge, 1992.
- Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. *Typography: Mimesis Philosophy Politics*, edited by Christopher Fynsk, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. *Poetry as Experience*, translated by Andrea Tarnowski, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. *Heidegger and the Politics of Poetry*, translated by Jeff Fort, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2007.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *De L'Existence à L'Existant*, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1963.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1974.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Existence and Existents*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Duquesne University Press, 1978.

- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, The Hague/Boston/London, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. 'The Trace of the Other', translated by Alphonso Lingis, in *Deconstruction in Context*, edited by Mark C. Taylor, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1985, pp.345-359.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *Collected Philosophical Papers*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2006.
- Lewis, Michael. *Heidegger and the Place of Ethics*, London New York, Continuum, 2005.
- McNeill, William. *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999.
- McNeill, William. *The Time of Life: Heidegger and Ethos*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2006.
- McNeill, William. [www.desphilosophy.com/dpp/dpp\\_journal/paper2a/body.html](http://www.desphilosophy.com/dpp/dpp_journal/paper2a/body.html). Accessed 2007.
- Marion, Jean-Luc. *Étant donné: Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, Paris, Quadrige\PUF, 1997.
- Marion, Jean-Luc. *Being Given: Towards a Phenomenology of Givenness*, translated by Jeffrey L Kosky, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 2002.
- Menke, Christoph. *The Sovereignty of Art: Aesthetic Negativity in Adorno and Derrida*, translated by Neil Solomon, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, The MIT Press, 1998.
- Menke, Christoph. *Tragic Play: Irony and Theater from Sophocles to Beckett*, translated by James Phillips, New York, Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Signs*, translated by Richard C. McCleary, Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1964.
- Mugerauer, Robert. *Heidegger and Homecoming: The Leitmotif in the Later Writings*, Toronto Buffalo London, University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- Naas, Michael. 'Keeping Homer's Word: Heidegger and the Epic of Truth', *The Presocratics after Heidegger*, edited by David C. Jacobs, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999, pp.73-99.

- Nabokov, Vladimir. *The Annotated Lolita*, edited by Alfred Appel Jr, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1993.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Muses*, translated by Peggy Kamuf, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Nicholsen, Shierry Weber. *Exact Imagination, Late Work: On Adorno's Aesthetics*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, The MIT Press, 1997.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1961.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Werke VII, Also Sprach Zarathustra*, herausgegeben von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1968.
- Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, translated by David W Wood, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Palmer, John. *Parmenides & Presocratic Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Pattison, George. *The Late Heidegger*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000.
- Phillips, Adam. *The Beast in the Nursery*, London, Faber and Faber, 1998.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. *Poetry and Tales*, edited by Patrick F. Quinn, New York, The Library of America, 1984.
- Reed, Valerie. 'Bringing Antigone Home?', in *Comparative Literature Studies*, Volume 45, No.3, 2008, pp.316-339.
- Robbins, Jill. *Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Sallis, John. *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics*, Second, Expanded Edition, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1995
- Sallis, John. *On Translation*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2002.
- Sallis, John. *Transfigurements: On the True Sense of Art*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Sallis, John. *The Verge of Philosophy*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Schmidt, Dennis J. *On Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987.

- Sophocles. *I Ajax, Electra, Oedipus Tyrannus*, edited and translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, Harvard University Press, 1994
- Sophocles. *II Antigone, The Women of Trachis, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus*, Loeb Classical Library, edited and translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, Harvard University Press, 1994, reprinted with corrections 1998.
- Staehler, Tanja. 'Antigone and the Nature of Law', in *Law and Philosophy, Current Legal Issues 2007, Volume 10*, edited by Michael Freeman and Ross Harrison, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp.137-155.
- Steiner, George. *Antigones*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Taylor, Mark C. *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*, Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press, 1984
- Warminski, Andrzej. *Readings in Interpretation: Hölderlin, Hegel, Heidegger*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Warminski, Andrzej. 'Monstrous History', in *The Solid Letter: Readings of Friedrich Hölderlin*, edited by Aris Fioretos, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1999, pp.201-214.
- Wigley, Mark. *The Architecture of Deconstruction Derrida's Haunt*, Cambridge Massachusetts, London England, The MIT Press, 1993.
- Wilkinson, Lisa Atwood. *Parmenides and To Eon: Reconsidering Muthos and Logos*, London, Continuum, 2009.
- Young, Julian. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Ziarek, Krzysztof. *Inflected Language: Toward a Hermeneutics of Nearness*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994.