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**FATALITIES:
TRUTH AND TRAGEDY IN TEXTS OF HEIDEGGER AND BENJAMIN**

by

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis explores the notion of truth as developed in the work of Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin. Contrary to the position adopted by many commentators, who seek to drive a wedge between Heidegger's unorthodox phenomenology and the resolutely non-phenomenological Benjamin, I shall want to show how both begin with a rigorously Husserlian conception of truth as an intuition of essence in order, finally, to deviate from it.

I argue that, for neither one, can truth be merely one problem or issue taken up by a thinking secure in itself. Rather, from its most classical determination in, for example, the *Metaphysics* as ἐπιστήμη τῆς ἀληθείας, the way in which truth has been determined has itself determined the very project of philosophy. Yet whilst the trajectory of both Heidegger and Benjamin's work can thus be determined in large measure by the question of truth, both are also concerned to re-orient that question in a direction that renders problematic Aristotle's implicit connection of truth to knowledge and knowledge to intuition and presence. I argue that their respective challenges to the location of truth in the act of knowing – a challenge made each time by way of an analytical regression from a propositional understanding of truth (*Satzwahrheit*) to intuitive truth (*Anschauungs-wahrheit*) to, finally, its more original character as disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*) – remain thoroughly phenomenological before showing how it is in the work of art, and in tragedy in particular, that each one finds the resources for a still more radical understanding of truth. *Not* in the cognitivist sense that art makes truth claims about the world, but in the sense that it is with the work of art that the historical act of disclosure and world-constitution that Benjamin and Heidegger call truth is most emphatically made.

Only the person who understands the art of existing, only the person who, in the course of action, can treat what is in each case seized upon as wholly singular, who at the same time nonetheless realises the finitude of this activity, only such a one understands finite existence and can hope to accomplish something by it.

Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*

Socrates looks death in the face as mortal. Not so the tragic hero who recoils from death as from a power that is familiar, proper, and inherent to him. Indeed, his life unfolds from death, which is not its end but its form.

Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*

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REFERENCES

The following abbreviations have been used throughout the notes. Reference is by volume number (where appropriate) and page number (unless otherwise indicated). Translations are most usually my own, although I have consulted the English editions listed here, and provided reference to these in those cases where they do not incorporate the German pagination in the margins.

References to Heidegger's Texts:

BW *Basic Writings*. London: Routledge, 1993.

EM *Einführung in die Metaphysik*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1966.

Ding *Die Frage nach dem Ding*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1987.

G *Gelassenheit*. Pfullingen: Gunter Neske, 1992.

GA *Gesamtausgabe*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975–.

KPM *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991. Translated by Richard Taft as *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Niet. *Nietzsche*. Pfullingen: Gunter Neske, 1961. 2 volumes.

OA *De l'origine de l'oeuvre d'art (1935)*. Paris: Authentica, 1987.

Sch. *Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit (1809)*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1971. Translated by Joan Stambaugh as *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom (1809)*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994.

SD *Zur Sache des Denkens*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1969.

- SvG *Der Satz vom Grund*. Pfullingen: Gunter Neske, 1957.
- SZ *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993. Translated by John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson as *Being and Time*. New York: Harper Collins, 1962.
- TK *Die Technik und die Kehre*. Pfullingen: Gunter Neske, 1985.
- U 'Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerkes. Erste Ausarbeitung.' *Heidegger Studies* 5 (1989), 5–22.
- VA *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Pfullingen: Gunter Neske, 1954.
- VS *Vier Seminare*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1954.
- WhD *Was heisst Denken?* Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1954. Translated by J. Glenn Gray as *What is Called Thinking?* New York: Harper and Row, 1968.
- Z *Der Begriff der Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1989.

References to Benjamin's Texts

- B *Briefe*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978.
- Briefe Gesammelte Briefe*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996–.
- GS *Gesammelte Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997.
- Or *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. London: Verso, 1977.
- SW *Selected Writings*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996–.

INTRODUCTION

The following thesis is an attempt to understand the place accorded to the notion of art in Heidegger and Benjamin's thinking, and in particular its relation to the notion of truth that constitutes the matter that is at issue for that thinking (*die Sache des Denkens*). I shall want to argue that for neither Heidegger nor Benjamin is art, any more than truth, to be understood as an *object* for thinking, that is, as something toward which a thinking already established in itself would be directed in order then to register or to further its own concerns; instead, thinking needs to be understood as thematising its *own* relation to art, as also to truth, in such a way as to constitute the very project of philosophy as such.

Such a claim clearly lends itself to a number of misinterpretations. The most evident of these – the cognitivist thesis – is that art, turned thus in the direction of truth, would be such to make truth statements of a sort, cognitive claims regarding the world. One can, it is true, find evidence in support of this thesis throughout Heidegger and Benjamin's work. Yet what disqualifies any such claim in advance, rendering it unworkable, is that for neither Heidegger nor Benjamin is truth to be understood in terms of the provision of cognitive understanding. Thus, to Heidegger's celebrated suggestion that the 'captious' formulation 'the essence of truth is untruth [*das Wesen der Wahrheit ist die Un-Wahrheit*]' is 'to indicate the strangeness of the new project of essence,'¹ one could just as much counterpose Benjamin's own statement of affairs in the essay 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy': 'Error

can no longer be explained in terms of erring, any more than truth can be in terms of correct understanding [*rechten Verstand*].²

Such, then, is the concern of this thesis: not, in fact, art as such, but *truth*: specifically, the way in which truth comes to be deployed and redeployed in certain texts by Heidegger and Benjamin on the basis of an initial engagement with art.

Necessarily, therefore, both Heidegger and Benjamin's principle meditations on the notion of art – respectively, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,'³ and what Claude Imbert calls 'les essais critique du cycle germanique'⁴ – will be shown to announce an orientation to the work of art that points beyond the rights and duties of reproduction and edification with which art has invariably been saddled by traditional philosophical aesthetics.

Having dealt in broad strokes with these sorts of questions in such a way as to lead the concern away from art per se to the determination of truth, I shall turn to a privileged instance in which Heidegger and Benjamin do in fact treat of *an* art, namely tragedy. Again, however, the concerns registered above need to be kept in mind. And it ought to come as no surprise, therefore, that Heidegger, as Françoise Proust rightly points out, left no *Abhandlung über das Wesen der Tragödie*.⁵ Neither, in point of fact, did Benjamin. For both, the treatment of tragedy does not, as I shall undertake to show, amount to an interpretation; rather would it be, to borrow terms from Heidegger's own remarks on freedom, remarks that we shall have cause to consider later on, that tragedy affords both a certain *possibility* of philosophy, its *Stätte und Gelegenheit*, its site and occasion.⁶

*

Dealing respectively with Heidegger and Benjamin, chapters one and two are structured around largely identical concerns. I shall want to argue that three notions in particular are central to both Heidegger and Benjamin's case with respect to the properly *fragwürdig* dimension of art: truth, origin, and history.

Chapter one treats of Heidegger and of 'The Origin of the Work of Art.' The concern here is to explore the issue and orientation announced by the title of Heidegger's essay. The treatment falls into three parts. The guiding thread for the first of these are two remarks which, to a large extent, frame the essay as a whole. The first is its opening line: 'Origin here means that from which and by which a matter is what it is and as it is.'⁷ The second, which comes from the concluding paragraphs of the essay, takes the form of a question as to whether, 'in our existence,' we are 'historically at the origin.'⁸ My concern here will be to appropriate for these remarks some of the resources that are released by the examination of origin undertaken in *Being and Time*, principally those released by the account given there of the essential duplicity of truth, understood in its more original sense as disclosedness. Turning, second, to 'The Work and Truth,' the central section of the essay itself, I take as the guiding thread for this part of my treatment two equally perimetic remarks: the first is a statement from the draft version of the essay, Heidegger there declaring art to be *necessary (notwendig)* for the happening of truth;⁹ the second comes from the Afterword to the essay: 'from the change in the essence of truth,' we are told, 'arises the history of the essence of art.'¹⁰ If, as I shall want to show, the overriding concern of Heidegger's essay is to ponder the essence of art in a manner ill-afforded by such a history, then this will entail another and concomitant change in the determination of

the essence of truth. Having explored the way in which such a determination is indeed broached in Heidegger's text, I turn, finally, to the historical dimension of art – what, as a counterpoint to the properly transcendental aspect of *Being and Time*, Heidegger calls *world* – in order to offer one possible account of how art 'is historical in the sense that it grounds history.'¹¹

Chapter two begins with style. More accurately, it begins with two brief allusions made by Benjamin to the 'concept' of philosophical style. Although self-evidently *not* a concept in the critical sense of the term – and, as I shall want to show, Benjamin's reference in both instances is to Kant – I examine how Benjamin employs it as such in order to argue the case for philosophy's filial relation to art. Taking his distance from the hoped for 'sisterly union' of mathematics and philosophy expressed by Kant in the Transcendental Doctrine of Method (a union clearly not intended to be consummated, however),¹² Benjamin stresses instead that it is in the manner in which it comes continually 'to stand anew before the question of presentation [*vor der Frage der Darstellung zu stehen*]' that the mark of philosophy's dealings with truth is to be found.¹³ It is here, I argue, that Benjamin finds the resources by which philosophy *can* and *must* thematise its own relation to art, a thematisation nowhere more clearly expressed than in his traducing of Kant's expression of family resemblances: 'Every great work,' he writes in a fragment of 1921, 'has its sibling ... in a philosophical sphere.'¹⁴ Following an exploration of the philosophical consequences that flow from these claims of method, I examine in more detail the 'deformations' in the essence of truth broached by Benjamin in the Epistemo-Critical Foreword to the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*.¹⁵ In the final section of the chapter, I turn to the concept of

origin, 'a thoroughly historical category,' Benjamin says. Through a careful reading of the paragraph of the Foreword in which Benjamin treats of origin. I undertake to show how and why he moves, finally, to reintroduce such a category back into art.

The previous chapters having shown *how* and *why* Heidegger and Benjamin address their analyses to the issue of art, chapters three and four turn to a particularly privileged instance of this: tragedy.

Central to the treatment of Heidegger in chapter three is a remark, scarcely noted in the literature, from the 'Letter on "Humanism"' of 1946: 'The tragedies of Sophocles, providing such a comparison is in any way allowable, shelter the ἦθος in their sayings more incipently than do Aristotle's lectures on "ethics".'¹⁶ I begin with a sustained account of the context of this remark and of its implications for the determination of man made by Heidegger in that text. I turn, next, to the suggestive analyses of Françoise Dastur and, having explored her suggestion that it is in tragedy that 'one finds an inaugural representation of the fundamentally mortal condition of man,'¹⁷ as well as her ensuing claim that it is tragedy that paves the way for philosophy (*qui prépare l'avenement de la philosophie*),¹⁸ I turn to the issue of death and its relation to tragedy in Heidegger's work. Finally, I address Heidegger's celebrated commentaries on the choral ode from Sophocles' *Antigone* in order to reexamine, in light of the foregoing analyses, his claims regarding the inceptive sense of ἦθος that resonates in Sophocles' tragedies. I shall want to show how these tragedies are seen by Heidegger to be '*decisive*' in opening up a 'concealed directive' for the way in which he undertakes to broach the question concerning man.¹⁹

The concerns of chapter four are rather more straightforward. I begins with a lengthy discussion of a remark from Benjamin's long essay of 1920 on Goethe's *Elective Affinities* regarding the resolute *Indifferenz* of myth with respect to truth: 'authentic art, authentic philosophy – as distinct from their inauthentic stage, the theurgic – begin in Greece with the departure of myth [*Ausgang der Mythos*], since neither one is any more nor any less based upon truth than the other.'²⁰ On the basis of this remark, I undertake to further the arguments of chapter two regarding the specific character that is to be accorded to truth, before turning to the principle concern of the chapter, Benjamin's account of tragedy. So far as Benjamin is concerned, tragedy needs to be understood as the inauguration and enactment of what, following Reiner Schürmann, I term an 'epochal principle.' I argue that, in the 'decisive, Greek confrontation' with myth that he sees enacted and accomplished by Attic tragedy, a new epoch (*Epoche*) is posited (*gesetzt*).²¹ This epoch, I suggest, is precisely that named in the remarks cited above as the *Ausgangspunkt* of myth. Yet if such *does* prove to be the case, then does it not follow that tragedy constitutes also the originary inscription of truth? Its precondition? Through a careful account of the notions of freedom and language in Benjamin's text, I pursue the implications of this claim in the direction of man.

Notes

1 GA 65: 351.

2 GS II 1: 167; SW I: 107.

3 If the most sustained and celebrated version of this text to have come from Heidegger's pen is the lectures presented in 1935 in Frankfurt under the title 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,' this version is itself worked up from origins that lie squarely in previous years. The earliest of these is a short, schematic draft of 1934, an authorised transcript of which appeared only recently, along with Heidegger's own marginal comments, as 'Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerkes' in *Heidegger Studies* 5 (1989), 5–22. More important, however, is a lecture, also entitled 'Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,' delivered in Freiburg on 13 November of the same year to the Kunstwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft as the key-note lecture to a colloquium entitled 'Die Überwindung der Ästhetik in der Frage nach dem Kunst.' Sharing the same divisions as the Frankfurt lectures and covering much of the same ground in often largely identical terms, this text is the 'first version' of the later lectures referred to by Heidegger in his supplementary remarks to *Holzwege* (GA 5: 344). This lecture, which was delivered unchanged in January of the following year at the University of Zurich, was then revised for the series of lectures given in Frankfurt in November and December of 1936 under the title 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes.' With the addition of an Afterword, written 'in large part later' (GA 5: 375), these lectures form the basis of the text published in 1950 in *Holzwege* as 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes.' With the further addition of an appendix written in 1956, they were reprinted a decade later as *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1960), and

then, along with Heidegger's marginal notes to the Reclam edition, in the revised *Gesamtausgabe* edition of *Holzwege* (GA 5: 1–74).

4 To wit, the Berne dissertation, 'The Concept of the Critique of Art in German Romanticism,' the 1921 essay 'Goethe's *Elective Affinities*,' and the failed Habilitationsschrift, the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*. See Claude Imbert, 'Le Présent et l'histoire' in *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, ed. Heinz Wismann (Paris: cerf, 1986), 743–92 (747).

5 See Françoise Proust, 'Drame et tragédie' in *Points de passage* (Paris: Kimé, 1994), 85–106 (92).

6 GA 31: 135.

7 GA 5: 7; BW 143.

8 GA 5: 65; BW 203.

9 U 21.

10 GA 5: 66; BW 207.

11 GA 5: 65; BW 202.

12 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. Jens Timmermann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1998) A 735; B 763. Henceforth cited as *KrV* with standard A and B numbers. All other references to Kant are to the *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1902–), cited as Ak volume and page number. As I shall want to argue, the reading of Kant that predominates in the literature on Benjamin is sadly misdirected and fails to provide a sufficiently nuanced account of this relation.

13 GS I 1: 207; *Or*: 27.

- 14 GS I 3: 835.
- 15 The reference here is to John Sallis' account of Heidegger's 1930 essay 'On the Essence of Truth,' 'Deformatives: Essentially Other than Truth' in *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, ed. John Sallis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 29–46.
- 16 GA 9: 353–4; BE 255–6.
- 17 Françoise Dastur, *La mort: Essai sur le finitude* (Paris: Hatier, 1994), 15.
- 18 Ibid., 17.
- 19 EM 133, 156. Heidegger's emphasis.
- 20 GS I 1: 162; SW I: 326. The point here recalls the one made by Heidegger in the Frankfurt lectures on art (GA 5: 64–5; BW 201) and cited at the end of chapter one.
- 21 GS I 1: 314; *Or* 135.

I. TRUTH

Der Wahrheit ist der Tod der Intention.

Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Kunstwerkes*

CHAPTER ONE

The Leap into the World: Heidegger and the Origin of Truth

The riddling character of ἀλήθεια comes closer to us, yet at the same time so does the danger than we might hypostasise it into a fantastical world essence¹

Heidegger closes 'The Origin of the Work of Art' of 1936 not with a summary statement of results or with an indication in the direction of further research, but with a question. 'In our existence,' he asks, 'are we historically at the origin [*sind wir in unserem Dasein geschichtlich am Ursprung*]?'²

Neither the formulation of the question nor its context leave any room for doubt that the decision being called for is, like all historical decisions, an 'essential' one.³ As such, it refers less to the voluntary selection of one set of distinct possibilities over another, what Heidegger sometimes likes to call choice (*Wahl*), than to what *Being and Time* will have already identified by the term resoluteness or resolute openness (*Entschlossenheit*), namely 'the disclosive projection and determination of what is factually possible at the time.'⁴ Indeed, Heidegger himself hints at just such a referral a few pages before this, describing the mode of knowing the work that he calls preservation (*Bewahrung*) as a being-resolved (*Entschiedensein*).⁵ And although the connection is not made explicit here by Heidegger, one could pursue this referral still further, in the other direction, as it were, and point to the way in which it was in the notion of resoluteness that *Being and Time* was to 'have arrived at that truth of

Dasein that is most originary,'⁶ that is, to the way in which the phenomenon of resoluteness was to have 'brought us before the originary *truth* of existence.'⁷

Such is, to my mind, the connection in which the concluding remarks of 'The Origin of the Work of Art' need to be read, a connection in which the decision as to whether we are, *in unserem Dasein*, historically at the origin takes on the character of possibilisation, of what releases possibilities for existence. Seen in such a connection, moreover, what is at issue in the decision being called for by Heidegger is Dasein's ownmost potentiality-for-being, which, as something thrown, can project itself *only* upon the definite factual possibilities released *by* that decision. It is in the decision alone, therefore, that Dasein can be made 'open for the monumental possibilities of human existence [*Existenz*]' by 'coming back resolutely to itself,' a movement back that Heidegger does not hesitate to refer to '*the historicity of Dasein*.'⁸ Important to dispel, however, is any suggestion that, drawn back to itself, Dasein is thus severed from any relation to a world. Quoting again from *Being and Time*:

Resoluteness, as *authentic being-a-self*, does not detach Dasein from its world, nor does it isolate it as a free floating I. How could it – when resolve, as authentic disclosedness, is nothing other than *authentically being-in-the-world*?⁹

One could say, then, that with the decision it is a matter of deciding upon a world, of disclosing it and making it possible. And if it is in the decision that the 'there' of Dasein is made transparent to it then it also follows that, referring this time to the draft of

the essay on art, the decision as to 'our historical Dasein [*geschichtlichen Dasein*]' is itself 'already the decisive leap [*der entscheidende Sprung*] into the nearness of the origin.'¹⁰

In 'The Origin of the Work of Art' itself, however, Heidegger refuses to make these sorts of connections explicit. Situating his remarks instead on the level of a 'precursory and so indispensable preparation' for any such response, he follows the question with an attempt to clarify it within the context of the concerns of the essay as a whole. This clarification takes the form of two further questions, in which the 'either-or' and its 'decision' are made strikingly clear:

Do we know, that is, do we give heed to, the essence of the origin [*das Wesen des Ursprunges*]? Or do we, in our relation to art, still only make appeal to an educated acquaintance with the past?¹¹

With such questions what comes to be decided upon (*entscheidet sich*) is the very status of art, its position as 'an origin in our historical existence,' as something 'historical in the essential sense that it grounds history,' or as a mere 'appendix,' a bland and routine 'semblance of culture.'¹² But just how is this to be decided on? By what right? By what authority?¹³

In order to make sense of this either-or and so give, at the very least, *some* indication as to its decision, Heidegger has need, therefore, of a point of reference or 'a sign,' something upon which the decision can be based. And he finds one, wholly unmistakable and infallible (*untrügliches*), he says, named in two lines from Hölderlin:

Hard it is

For that which dwells near the origin to abandon its place.¹⁴

Whilst it is not difficult to detect echoes of this sign in the various questions being raised here by Heidegger ('Do we know ... the essence of the origin?' 'Are we historically at the origin?' etc.), it is nonetheless at this point that one of the very real difficulties of his text emerges.

Consider for a moment this reference to the notion of the sign. 'A sign [*ein Zeichen*],' as Heidegger suggests elsewhere, 'can point to [*zeigen*] many and varied things.'¹⁵ So much so, in fact, that it will always be vulnerable to aberration and may even 'become inaccessible [*unzugänglich*].'¹⁶ Might not such be the case here? For no matter how 'infallible' Heidegger adjudges this sign to be, quite how it is to be deciphered remains entirely open to question.¹⁷ Just what does it signal as regards the either-or and its decision? A resounding *yes* to our dwelling historically at the origin? A resolute *no*? Or, perhaps more likely given the remarks of the draft, no decision either way, merely a hint in the direction of 'giving heed to the essence of the origin'? The text itself affords few real clues in this regard. What it does afford, however, is at least one indication that the difficulty here has less to do with some failure of reading that might one day be remedied than with the very ground of the decision as such. 'Every decision,' Heidegger declares in the central section of the lectures, 'is based on something unmastered [*ein Nichbewältigtes*], something concealed [*Verborgenes*], something confusing, otherwise it would not be a decision.'¹⁸ He calls this unmasterable, concealed ground *earth* (*die Erde*) and, in so doing, refers

the decision to that governing expanse he calls *world (die Welt)*. Quoting again from the central section of the lectures: 'Wherever those utterly essential decisions of our history are made ... there world worlds [*da weltet die Welt*].'¹⁹

I will come back to these locutions and their significance in due course. For the moment, let us merely draw attention to the way in which this referral of the decision to the notion of world is, before any reading of 'The Origin of the Work of Art' itself, already implied in Heidegger's insistence that the lines from Hölderlin be read as a 'sign.'²⁰

In the examination of the phenomenon of reference and the *facultas signatrix* provided in *Being and Time*, Heidegger had looked back to Husserl's analysis of indication (*Anzeichen*) in the first of the *Logical Investigations* in order to excavate the original meaning of the sign as a phenomenon of uncovering (*entdecken*).²¹ What does the sign uncover? It uncovers, Heidegger says, that into which one is thrown, that in which one's concern abides (*wobei ... sich aufhält*), the sort of involvement one has with something, allowing thus 'what is ready-to-hand to be encountered,' allowing thus 'its context to become accessible in such a way that our concerned dealings take on and secure an orientation.'²² The sign is described accordingly as 'an explicit and easily manipulable way' in which Dasein 'uncovers' in circumspective concern the world into which it is thrown. It is a way of constituting a context, a system of involvements or references, in short, a *world*, against which things can show themselves. Through the sign, Heidegger concludes, the 'uncovered region [*entdeckte Gegend*]' of a world is 'held explicitly open [*hält ... ausdrücklich offen*].'²³

Yet if, as seems entirely legitimate to assume, therefore, the sign being evoked at the close of 'The Origin of the Work of Art' is, much like the pathmarks, storm

warnings, signs of mourning 'and the like' instanced in *Being and Time*, one in which the referential totality of a world might come to be disclosed, then no less legitimate is the assumption that this sign, like another of Heidegger's examples, a work of art this time, the boundary stone (*Grenzstein*) gazed upon by the goddess in the votive motif known as 'The Mourning Athena,' is one by which something is 'gathered into its propriety [*in sein Eigenes versammelt*]' in order from there 'to emerge into presence.'²⁴

Whatever Heidegger *actually* intends with the 'unmistakable' sign named in these lines from Hölderlin, therefore, the implication seems to be that with them, a world might come to be disclosed and held together. The claim seems to be that with this sign, a world might come to be decided upon. In the essay on art no less than in *Being and Time*, it would seem to be a matter of what Jean-Luc Nancy has termed 'la mondanéité de la décision,' a decision through which nothing other than 'le monde même de l'existence' would come to be disclosed.²⁵

These are the sorts of claims that I shall want to explore in this chapter. Before moving on to do so, it is important to note that however urgent the question of this 'either-or' and its 'decision' might appear *now* to Heidegger, however urgent the need *now* to decipher the historical sign 'named' in Hölderlin's lines, the contemporary follower of his path of thinking might well have been forgiven for making the assumption that art was indeed no more than an 'appendix' to the rather more pressing concerns of fundamental ontology. In *Being and Time*, for instance, there would seem to be precious little scope for making such decisions, Heidegger focussing his phenomenological energies on *Dasein* as the site of the decision over 'le monde

même de l'existence,' and it has not passed unnoticed in the literature that 'art ... was virtually excluded' from that work.²⁶

Of course, we do not want for entirely coherent reasons as to why this might be the case. Consider just two such reasons. Concerned, *zunächst und zumeist*, with the everyday comportments and dealings of Dasein, *Being and Time* can have no place for art since art, presumably by definition, belongs to the order of the extraordinary. Or, in a somewhat more considered version of the same point: art remains truant from *Being and Time* because it is 'unthinkable on the basis of the categories of that work.'²⁷ As something encountered within the world, the work of art would be unthinkable as an available piece of equipment or a handy tool, as a being objectively present to Dasein, as the brute matter of a purely subsisting thing; and unthinkable, too, as Dasein, possessed neither of care, nor resoluteness, nor being-toward-death.

These look like persuasive arguments. But what, then, are we to conclude from Heidegger's rather curmudgeonly insistence that just as 'we [*wir*] enjoy ourselves and have fun the way *one* [*man*] enjoys oneself,' so too 'we read, see, and judge literature and art the way *one* sees and judges'?²⁸ It is important to note that the context of this remark situates art on the side of Dasein's existentiell fallenness and *not* on the side of its being alongside other beings. In other words, art is being evoked as an instance of *inauthenticity* and *not* one of everydayness. In this description, which betokens thus nothing so much as the eclipse of Dasein in its distraction and its falling away from an authentic concern with the world, has not the historical decision urged upon us at the close of 'The Origin of the Work of Art' already been taken? Instanced as a mere curio, has not art been situated firmly

alongside other inauthentic distractions? Does not the status of Dasein's 'relation to art' as a 'routine appearance of culture' seem already to be assured? Indeed. And what, also, are we to conclude from Heidegger's fear, confessed at the very outset of Division Two, that the attempt to provide an existential projection of Dasein's authentic being-toward-death might well turn out to be no more than *ein phantastisches Unterfangen* at best and, at worst, *eine nur dichtende, willkürliche Konstruktion*?²⁹ Indeed, it might appear that he had himself only aggravated the situation just a few pages before this by drawing an unequivocal distinction between conviction about something (about a particular being) and 'arbitrary fictions or mere "views" about it.'³⁰ As a mode of what he calls certainty (*Gewißheit*), which, as the explicit appropriation of what has already been disclosed or uncovered (*Erchlossenen b.z.w. Entdeckten*), has itself already been brought into line with the redetermination of truth undertaken just a few sections earlier,³¹ conviction, we are told, is 'grounded in truth or belongs to it equiprimordially' and refers accordingly to a certain mode of disclosedness in which 'Dasein allows the testimony of the uncovered (true) thing itself alone to determine its being toward it understandingly,' to a certain way in which Dasein is truthful (*in der Wahrheit ist*).³² Is it not, Heidegger suggests with an opprobrium that readily explains the worries of a few pages later, precisely such a determination with respect to truth that is lacking in all arbitrary fiction (*willkürliche Erdichtung*)?

A broadly similar picture emerges on consideration of the lecture courses which immediately follow the publication of *Being and Time*. Certainly, we do now find Heidegger making rather more allusions to art and to particular works of art: to the redoubtable wall of Rilke's *Malta Laudrids Brigge* in the last of the Marburg

courses;³³ to Novalis' reflections on 'homesickness' and to the dubious 'privilege of the poets' in the 1929–30 lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*;³⁴ to Rilke again, this time to a remark on the tribulations of 'fame,' at the end of the following year's lectures devoted to Hegel's *Phenomenology*.³⁵ What is more, Heidegger now appears to hint at resources and depths in art for which the official line followed in *Being and Time* did not seem to allow. In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, for example, Rilke's description of the scarred and shattered walls of a long-abandoned house is adduced as a disclosure of the fact that Dasein, as that being which always understands itself in terms of its existence, 'is its world,' a world that first makes it possible 'to uncover [*entdecken*] an equipmental contexture as intraworldly and to dwell in it [*sich bei ihm aufzuhalten*].'³⁶ The being-in-the-world which 'leaps toward us' in Rilke's description is *not*, Heidegger declares, something 'imagined [*hineingedichtet*] but, on the contrary ..., is possible only as an interpretation and elucidation of what actually is [*was ... "wirklich" ist*].'³⁷ And he will go even so far as to draw general conclusions from this, extending to poetry the status of the 'first' disclosure of a world, evoking it as 'the elemental articulation [*Zum-Wort-kommen*], that is, the becoming-uncovered [*Entdecktwerden*], of existence as being-in-the-world.'³⁸ Indeed, it might in retrospect be said that these sorts of conclusions are in fact presaged in *Being and Time* where, in an extremely reserved passage geared toward expanding the ongoing discussion of language, Heidegger had raised the possibility that 'the communication of the existential possibilities of attunement, that is, the disclosing of existence [*das Erschließen von Existenz*], might well become the proper aim of "poetic" discourse [*"dichtenden" Rede*].'³⁹

Clearly suggestive of subsequent developments, and in particular of that development that I shall want to consider here, remarks such as these are nonetheless decidedly reserved,⁴⁰ however, and remain, without exception, altogether marginal and illustrative to Heidegger's more immediate concerns.

Yet from the moment that Heidegger *does* undertake to treat of art as a concern in its own right, he affords it a strangely decisive status in his work, doing so, moreover, with respect to the way in which he formulates the topological or historical unfoldings of the truth of being. Quoting again from the concluding remarks of 'The Origin of the Work of Art': 'in its essence art is an origin, an outstanding way in which truth comes to be [*Wahrheit seiend*], i.e. becomes historical [*geschichtlich wird*].'⁴¹ Indeed, one might go so far as to wonder whether this 'decision' concerning art is not, at times, strained to the point where we are forced to reckon with the possibility that art has become for Heidegger the sole preserve for the truthful disclosure of beings. Whether it might not be possible to read the following remark from the draft of 1935, 'On the Origin of the Work of Art,' as actually being much closer to the underlying intention of Heidegger's discourse than the subsequent program of revisions to which these words submit: 'the work, i.e. art, is necessary [*notwendig ist*] for the happening of truth.'⁴² Thus, in a marginal note keyed to this line of the draft: 'Art, *one* origin of truth. The basic manner of its becoming.'⁴³ Then in the Freiburg lecture: 'art is, as the setting-into-work of truth, only *one way* in which truth happens.'⁴⁴ And, finally, in the celebrated assessment of the Frankfurt lectures themselves: 'How does truth happen? We answer: it happens in a few essential ways *One essential way*, in which truth

establishes itself in the beings it has opened up, is truth setting itself (in) to (the) work.'⁴⁵

If, on the evidence of such revisions, the absolute privilege which had initially accrued to art is never entirely erased, neither here nor anywhere else in Heidegger's thinking,⁴⁶ then it might appear that it is, at the very least, tempered somewhat. Heidegger moving from a position in which art is said to be the a priori condition for the happening of truth, to its being 'one origin,' 'one way' in which truth happens, albeit a *grundsätzlich* one, to, finally, the presentation of the work of art as merely one of the 'few essential ways' in which truth happens.

Yet might not the suspicion remain as to whether art is, in point of fact, ever presented as merely one essential way in which truth happens, one essential way in which beings are disclosed? Might one not suspect, in other words, that art is actually presented as *the* way in which truth happens? But if such *did* prove to be the case, then would it not be entirely likely that what Heidegger calls art would, under such a burden, be twisted out of all recognition? If art is indeed *the* way, and not simply *one* way, in which truth happens, would this not mean that the issue of Heidegger's discourse is not really art but something else entirely? Perhaps we can get closer to the question by asking: Of what does the essay claim to speak? Certainly not of art. Nor, even, of the work of art. It claims to speak, rather, of the *origin* of the work of art.

In this chapter I shall want to concentrate on a close reading of the themes surrounding Heidegger's reflection on the origin of the work of art, focussing principally on the draft and the Freiburg lecture of 1935 and the Frankfurt lectures of the following year, in order to see how the reflection as a whole unfolds and to

explore in some detail the apparently unsanctioned thesis that it is in art that truth happens. To the extent that these three texts cover largely the same ground and do so, moreover, in largely the same terms, I shall not undertake to examine each in turn. Nor, except in one or two exceptional instances, will I be drawn on the specific – often decisive – differences between them.⁴⁷ Rather will my concern be to focus on certain moments when Heidegger undertakes most emphatically to twist art in another direction; that is to say, in a direction other than art. I shall want to deal with three such moments. The first and most expansive of these refers to the notion of origin, most extensively as it is employed in *Being and Time*, and only then as it comes to govern the later essays. The second moment refers to the way in which Heidegger undertakes to reorient the notion of art in the direction of truth, specifically, in the direction of that deformation in the concept of truth already underway in the lecture ‘On the Essence of Truth.’⁴⁸ The third moment, and the one with which virtually all the claims advanced by Heidegger with respect to art come to be gathered together, refers to what we might properly call the *historical* moment of Heidegger’s text, and which he himself calls *world*.⁴⁹

I

Over and above the matter of art, ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ treats also – indeed, quite possibly more so – of origin. Yet whereas the former, as I have suggested, denotes a set of concerns that is almost entirely new for Heidegger, the latter had long named *die Sache des Denkens*.

Instructive in this regard is a letter of May 1919. Reflecting there on the ‘concentrated, fundamental, and concrete’ character of his work in terms of certain ‘basic problems of phenomenological methodology,’ Heidegger writes accordingly of its ‘disengagement from the residue of acquired standpoints’ and of its ‘ever new forays into true origins.’⁵⁰ The remark points clearly enough to the the themes and positions that had first been broached in *The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview*, Heidegger’s lecture course of the previous semester, and that will be developed at greater length in the upcoming winter semester course *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. What is equally clear, however, is that there is little to choose on this point between the work of the young Privatdozent and that of his more illustrious tutor, on whose *Logos* article of 1911 the remarks of this letter unmistakably draw.

‘Philosophy,’ Husserl had written toward the end of that work, at a point where the guiding determination of rigour had already been established, ‘is in its essence a science of true beginnings [*wahren Anfängen*], of origins,’ before adding: ‘the science concerning what is radical must be radical in procedure and from every point of view.’⁵¹ Not only are phenomenology’s ‘critical reflections’ and ‘profound considerations of method’ to constitute philosophy as *rigorous* science,⁵² therefore; they are also to constitute it as *radical* science, as science that is directed toward the root or origin of things. Further, Husserl is quick to draw the connection between this radical concern with origins and the watchword of phenomenology as a whole, the demand that ‘*the impulse of research ... proceed not from philosophies but from things [von den Sachen]*,’ re-emphasising the point with the following counsel: ‘Yet one must never abandon the radical lack of prejudice [*radikale Vorurteilslosigkeit*] and identify such things with empirical facts [*empirischen Tatsachen*], so remaining

blind to ideas which are to such a great extent given in immediate intuition.’⁵³ The radicality of phenomenology is such as to require that one avoid identifying the things themselves with things of fact, to avoid the impasse of empiricism that continually threatens to derail its transcendental step back to the level of constitution as such. The demand that the impulse of research proceed *von den Sachen* is clearly very different, therefore, from a call to the passivity or indolence of a thinking that would purport to be merely descriptive.⁵⁴ The phenomenological attitude requires not only an attention to the character of *reticence* by which thinking would seek to allow such things to present themselves, but also the laborious process of an *engagement*, what Heidegger calls a supervisory demonstration (*kontrollierende Aussweisung*),⁵⁵ that would undertake to invoke or to draw out the things themselves. From which it follows that there is need not only for a *reflection* on method, but also for there to be a *problem* of method: the methodological reflection is charged with bringing into the practice of phenomenology the reflexive determination that asks what would be required of a thinking that would attend genuinely to the things themselves. Above all (*vor allem*), Husserl concludes, such reflection ‘ought not to rest until it has secured its own absolutely clear beginnings.’⁵⁶

One could say, then, that for Husserl, therefore, as for Heidegger, it is only in the interrogation of such beginnings – *its own* – that the status of phenomenology as rigorous science comes to be secured. For Heidegger, as for Husserl, the most basic problem of phenomenology is phenomenology itself (*sie selbst für sich selbst*):

the kernel of philosophy’s problem lies in itself – it is itself the problem. The cardinal question concerns the essence, the concept of philosophy. Its theme is

formulated thus: The *Idea* of philosophy ..., and more accurately: The Idea of philosophy as original science.⁵⁷

Now if this interrogation of phenomenological origins marks the point of closest proximity between Heidegger and Husserl, it will nonetheless come also to mark a point of fundamental difference. This is not to say that the self-description given in Heidegger's letter is not entirely borne out by the analyses of the contemporaneous lecture courses. It is. And, just as in certain celebrated notes to *Being and Time*, Heidegger is scrupulous in placing such analyses under the aegis of his tutor, readily acknowledging the degree to which he is 'constantly learning in company with Husserl.'⁵⁸ Equally, Heidegger follows Husserl in his outspoken opposition to the notion of worldview, identifying the claim that '*worldview is the task of philosophy*' as the very *catastrophe* of philosophy itself.⁵⁹ And it is in Husserl's work, moreover, that Heidegger finds the possibility of a point of departure for his own inquiries that allows him to sidestep the prevailing neo-Kantian attempt to route philosophy through the *Faktum* of the existing sciences, whose sense it would thereby elucidate. This point of departure, what Heidegger variously terms the primary leap (*Ursprung*) or originating domain (*Ursprungsgebiet*) of thinking, is the concrete immediacy of lived experience brought into play by Husserl as the 'principle of all principles,' the principle from which all others are to draw their legitimacy:

the principle ... that every originally given intuition [*jeder originär gebende Anschauung*] is an authoritative source of [*Rechtsquelle*] of knowledge, that everything originally offered to us (in the flesh, as it were) in "intuition" is to

be accepted simply as what is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it there presents itself.⁶⁰

Now whilst he will dispute Husserl's insistence upon the principle qua *Prinzip*, Heidegger nonetheless sees in the non-theoretical character of intuition a genuine advance into the *Urhabitus* of rigorous phenomenology. So far as Heidegger is concerned, then, intuition names 'the primary intention of true living [*die Urintention des wahrhaften Lebens überhaupt*],' that is, 'the primary attitude of lived experience and of life as such [*die Urhaltung des Erlebens und Leben als solchen*].'⁶¹ And it is in this intention or attitude alone, therefore, that phenomenology is to find its concrete or factual point of departure. Not, to be sure, in its theoretical construction, but as the phenomenological disclosure of the sphere of immediate experience (*phänomenologische Erschließung der Erlebenissphäre*), the experienceable as such (*Erlebbares überhaupt*).⁶² The origin or originating domain for Heidegger's phenomenology is the problem of life, therefore.⁶³

Now it is at precisely this point, in the course of clarifying the focus and more *concrete* problem of his own investigations – not simply factual life, he says, but on a more basic level, life in its original leap (*Ur-sprung*) into the factic – that Heidegger takes his definitive leave from Husserl. Absolved of all relations to the theoretical sciences, the issue of philosophy is the disclosure of the original sphere (*Ursphäre*) of lived experience prior to its deformation and concealment by the theoretical attitude. Hence, if philosophy has not yet become rigorous or originary science (*strenge Wissenschaft, Urwissenschaft*), if it is not yet a science at all, as Husserl had declared in 1911, if it has not yet found its way into the *Ursprungsgebiet* of life but remains

bedevilled by the competing claims of objectification and abstraction, then the fault lies *not*, as Husserl had surmised, with the dictates of naturalism alone, but with what Heidegger terms more expansively ‘the general rule [*Generalherrschaft*] of the theoretical ..., the primacy of the theoretical as such.’⁶⁴ The question remains entirely open, furthermore, as to whether Husserl himself is not merely complicit in such rule but is, in point of fact, its prime mover. It is in precisely this connection that Heidegger’s most emphatic declaration of independence needs to be read:

Phenomenology defines its ownmost thematic matter *contrary to* [*gegen*] its ownmost principle, not from out of the things themselves but out of a traditional preview of it ..., one whose sense [*Sinn*] serves to deny the originary leap [*ursprünglichen Sprung*] into the beings that are thematically intended. As regards the basic task of determining its ownmost field, phenomenology is thus *unphenomenological*.⁶⁵

From as early as 1919, therefore, Heidegger was to have found himself addressing thus what a much later self-interpretation (1964) will identify as the problem of ‘what remains unthought in the appeal “to the things themselves”,’⁶⁶ doing so by way of an ever more radical appeal to the notion of origin. In the words of Reiner Schürmann: ‘The whole of Heidegger’s work can be read as an inquiry into origin [*une recherche d’origine*],’ therefore, the word ‘recurring at each stage of his itinerary.’⁶⁷ And it is around this word alone, moreover, that, quoting this time from Theodore Kisiel, ‘the various problems of his phenomenology proliferate.’⁶⁸

Being and Time, for instance, is unequivocal in this regard. There Heidegger makes a substantial *recherche d'origine*, and does so moreover in several distinct senses of the term.⁶⁹ The most straightforward of these, and the one with which the book begins, is the sense in which it finds its issue and point of departure in an anticipatory retrieval of what Heidegger takes to be the basic or inceptive (*anfänglicher*) issue for thinking: the question about being. Such is not, he declares, just *any* question but 'the question of all questions' and the one which impelled the earliest philosophical researches in the work of Plato and Aristotle. He opens the book accordingly, not only directing attention toward the question about being as the matter that will be at issue for it, but also referring back to those inaugural researches by way of a citation from Plato's *Sophist*:

For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression being. We, however, who once thought we understood it have now become perplexed.⁷⁰

The emphasis that Heidegger will want to place on the interrogative character of these remarks ('... the *question* of what we really mean by the word "being" ...,' 'the meaning of this *question* ...,' etc.) is enough to indicate that the concern here is going to be less blandly pedagogic than the declamatory tone of the opening remarks might otherwise suggest. Indeed, it amounts to something of a declaration of intent, one engaged in seeing off any suggestion that the aim of the treatise might be to provide a definitive *answer* to this question. This is, moreover, one of the principle reasons why Heidegger goes out of his way to caution against the application to fundamental

ontology of any principle of method drawn from the positive sciences. For whilst such sciences always *can* legitimately direct themselves toward the collation of results and the establishment of secure standpoints,⁷¹ fundamental ontology enjoys no such luxury. To the extent that it has always to 'face up to the possibility of the disclosure of a more originary universal horizon from which to draw an answer to the question,' it ought rather to 'guard against any overestimation of its results.'⁷² In marked contrast to the positive scientist, therefore, whose principle of method will always encourage the analogical determination and establishments of *a priori* rules, the fundamental ontologist does not find; he *seeks*. Hence: the goal of the treatise is less to provide appropriate answers, than to work out the *question* about being itself and to do so concretely.

As he had done more expansively in the 1924 lecture course devoted to the *Sophist* and again in the course of the following semester *History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger credits Plato with having given the clearest indication yet of the 'inceptive vitality' of this 'expressly interrogative experience.'⁷³ Now, however, the point is more emphatically made: Perplexity about the meaning of being is regarded now as the very move *to* metaphysics. It is the point at which one ceases to 'tell stories about beings,' that is, the point at which one no longer 'determines beings as beings by tracing them back in their provenance to some other beings, as if being had the character of a possible being,' and begins to pose the question about being.⁷⁴ It is this movement, this originary mood of perplexity and wonderment, that *Being and Time* sets out to recapture (*wider-holen*). The 1935 lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics* is most explicit in this regard:

To ask: how does it stand with being? means nothing less than to *recapture* the inception [*Anfang*] of our historical-spiritual Dasein, in order to change it into another inception. This is possible [*Solches ist möglich*].⁷⁵

No less than its possibility, however, does Heidegger want to stress the *necessity* of this sort of repetition (*Widerholung*). Raising anew the question about being is not merely a *desiderata* for thinking, something that one might or might not choose to do, but a *demand*, one rendered entirely fitting by the fact that the question has ‘today fallen into forgottenness.’ With the result, so Heidegger charges, that ‘what was once wrested from the phenomena with the utmost effort of thinking’ and which, ‘as something concealed [*als Verborgenes*], first unsettled and continued to unsettle ancient philosophers, has become now self-evident.’⁷⁶ So much so, indeed, that any attempt even to raise the question about being will raise also the almost inevitable charge of a fundamental error of method (*methodischen Werfhlung*). Once measured against the utterances of the Eleatic Stranger, therefore, it is clear that the question of being does not only lack an *answer*; the self-evidence which is now taken to characterise this question attests, rather, to the fact that the question is itself obscure (*dunkel*) and without direction (*richtungslos*). It is not because the question lacks an answer but because the question is *itself lacking* that it is necessary to return to its first stirrings. And yet, it is not as if the concealment of the question can be dissociated from that beginning. On the contrary, the very presuppositions that precipitate the “fall” of the question into forgottenness and concealment are themselves rooted in its first articulations ‘in ancient ontology itself.’” From the very beginning, the question has been raised in such a way as to plant within it the seeds

of its concealment. Mere repetition is out of the question, therefore. For merely to repeat the beginning in unquestioning fashion would be also to repeat and thus extend the history of its concealment. What is required is a repetition which, by attending to and exposing the roots of concealment embedded within the very soil of metaphysics, would broach another, more originary beginning. It is for this reason alone, moreover, that this it is *not* this first beginning (*der griechischen Ansätze*) that is described by Heidegger in terms of origin. The issue here is *not*, as Paola Marrati-Guénoun suggests, 'the repetition ... of the origin,' a repetition which would require accordingly a 'return to the originary sources [*aux sources originaires*] of metaphysics.'⁷⁸ Rather, origin in this sense refers to the historical 'today' in its tension between the possibilities and necessities released by the question. Quoting again the passage from *Introduction to Metaphysics*:

An inception is not re-captured ... if one reduces it to something prior and now known and simply to be imitated, but only if the inception is incepted again *more originally* [*ursprünglicher widerangefangen*], with all the strangeness, obscurity, insecurity, which carry a true inception.⁷⁹

Over and above this, however, there is another, more fundamental sense in which *Being and Time* treats of origin. This second sense refers in large part to a problem concerning the structure of questioning established by the first. The problem is this: Just how is the question about being to be raised? If being is what is to be asked about, *das Gefragte*, what is it that is to be questioned, *das Befragte*? Where is the analysis to find its means of access (*Zugang*) to being as something worthy of

questioning? Heidegger answers: 'Insofar as being constitutes what is asked about, and being means [*besagt*] the being of beings, then beings turn out to be what is to be questioned.'⁸⁰ In what appears to be an entirely retrograde step, working out the question of the meaning of being is to take the form of a questioning of beings. But which beings? From which beings ought the disclosure of being to take its point of departure (*Ausgang*)? From which beings should it be possible to read off (*ablesen*) the meaning of being? Will any being suffice? Or should some particular being be privileged? Heidegger's initial response to these sorts of questions is famously oblique and takes the form *not* of an answer, but of a further exploration of the formal structure of the question about being itself. Glossing his earlier assertion that every inquiry is a *seeking* (*ein Suchen*), something guided in advance by what is being sought (*das Gesuchte*), he turns to the way in which the explicit question about being can then be said to arise *as a question*. It does so, he suggests, from a certain preunderstanding of being, from an understanding that is described variously as indeterminate (*unbestimmt*) and unoriented,⁸¹ vague and ordinary,⁸² familiar (*bekannt*) and therefore somehow pre-given (*und sonach irgendwie vorgegeben*).⁸³ Heidegger calls this understanding a *fact* (*ein Faktum*), observing:

out of it grows the explicit question concerning the meaning of being and the tendency toward its concept. We do not *know* what being means. But when we ask "What is 'being'?" we already hold ourselves within an understanding of the "is," without being able to fix conceptually what the "is" signifies.⁸⁴

The question about being arises as an explicit question or issue for thinking only to the extent that it is somehow given in advance of its being posed as such; that is, only to the extent that its possibility is preunderstood, albeit in an indeterminate manner. It is in this connection, then, that the question about being can be said to be ‘nothing other than the radicalisation of an essential tendency of being [*wesenhaften Seinstendenz*] that belongs to Dasein itself, the preontological understanding of being.’⁸⁵

It should be noted, however, that this need *not* mean, as Derrida’s influential account has it, that ‘the point of departure in the existential analytic is legitimated proximally and only [*d’abord et seulement*]’ from an ‘apparently absolute and long unquestioned privilege of *Fragen*.’⁸⁶ The case being made here by Derrida is a relatively straightforward one. The methodological strategy that secures Dasein as the exemplary being for raising the question about being is based, he alleges, on ‘*the experience of the question, the possibility of Fragen alone*.’⁸⁷ From which it follows that the whole of fundamental ontology is placed thus under the aegis of what Heidegger calls the questioning comportment of Dasein to itself. And since one cannot, therefore, ‘*question* this inscription in the structure of the *Fragen* from which Dasein will have received, along with its privilege, its first, minimal, and most secure determination’ without also confirming it ‘a priori and in a circular manner,’ that is, without giving up on its determination ‘as a question or a problem,’ one might, so Derrida suspects, ‘turn it against what Heidegger himself says.’⁸⁸ Specifically, it seems, against the following counsel from §9 of *Being and Time*: ‘No matter how provisional the analysis may be, it always requires the securing of the correct point of departure [*des rechten Ansatzes*].’⁸⁹

Now on Derrida's *own* terms the point is well taken and is certainly enough to justify his suspicions of an illegitimacy as regards *le point de départ* for the question about being. Equally, however, might one not wonder whether the careful attention paid by Derrida to the *spirit* of Heidegger's text does not lead him to neglect its *letter*? Might one not wonder whether matters are not in fact so straightforward as he suggests? Heidegger certainly holds that the analysis is to find its point of departure, its *Ausgang*, as well as its appropriate means of access to being, its *Zugang*, in Dasein's questioning comportment toward its own being. What he does *not* hold is that this comportment is to be placed accordingly at the outset, the *Ansatz*, of that analysis.⁹⁰ Point of departure and outset are *not*, the best efforts of Derrida's commentary and translation notwithstanding, identical. Whilst the former refers to the manner in which the question about being is given in advance of its being thematically posed, that is, to Dasein's *Seinsverhältnis* toward its own *Seinsverfassung*, the latter is rather different and refers instead to what the lecture course of the following year will call Dasein's 'extreme existentiell commitment [*Einsatz*].'⁹¹ As is said in the closing remarks of the initial Exposition of the Question of the Meaning of Being:

The existential analytic ... is ultimately *existentially, that is, ontically* rooted. Only if the questioning of philosophical research is itself seized upon in an existentiell manner as a possibility of the being of each existing Dasein does it become at all possible to disclose the existentiality of existence and so to gain a sufficiently grounded ontological problematic as such.⁹²

Hence, in addition to the existential sense, there is another, even more fundamental sense in which *Being and Time* treats of and thematises the notion of origin. Here, too, moreover, it is Dasein that occupies the place of that origin. Not, however, in the sense of its privileged position as regards the formal determination of the structure of questioning, but in the sense of its movement or leap into that structure as such.

Consider the remarks with which Heidegger concludes the statement of method to *Being and Time*:

However easy the formal delimitation of the ontological problematic from ontic researches may be, the development and above all the *outset* [*Ansatz*] of an existential analytic of Dasein is not without difficulties. In this task there lies a settled desideratum, one that has long disturbed philosophy which has, in turn, continually failed to meet it: *the working out of the idea of a "natural concept of the world."*⁹³

Clearly Heidegger intends to throw considerable weight behind the charge being levelled here. Indeed, a decade earlier and the same opprobrium had lead him to declare 'the leap into *another world*, or more accurately, for the first time into the world as such,' to be 'the methodological crossroads' on which 'the very life or death of philosophy will be decided.'⁹⁴ Yet however rar-reaching the effects of philosophy's failure to measure up to the world may thus be, the concern here is *not*, as the expository first part of §43 will demonstrate, to redress what Kant famously took to be 'a scandal of philosophy and human reason in general,' to wit, the fact that 'the existence of things outside us ... should have to be taken merely *on faith*.'⁹⁵ In the

sections of *Being and Time* given over to working out the concept of the world. Heidegger pays close attention to the remarks of the Refutation of Idealism appended to the second edition of the *Critique*. Not, however, in order to correct the basic inadequacy of the ontological proof furnished by Kant for the existence of the external world.⁹⁶ The worry here is less that Kant's thesis fails to resolve the problem to which it is addressed, than that it introduces a further 'perversion' of the problem itself. For so far as there *is* license to talk here of scandal, it is granted less by the fact that sufficient proof for the existence of the world has not yet been given, than by the fact that such proofs '*are expected and repeatedly attempted.*'⁹⁷ Heidegger elaborates: the demand for a proof of the existence of things outside of me (*außer mir*) rests on a 'factually accurate' but 'ontologically inadequate' connection with what is in me (*in mir*), on

a positing of something independently and "outside" *of which* a "world" is to be proven as present-to-hand. It is not that the *proofs* are inadequate, but that the kind of being of the being which asks for and provides proofs is underdetermined ... Correctly understood, Dasein defies [*widersetzt sich*] such proofs because in its being it *is* in each case already [*je schon ist*] what subsequent proofs deem necessary first to demonstrate for it.⁹⁸

Although the most immediate point of reference for these remarks is the analysis of the connection of world to Dasein (§18) established on the basis of the claim that Dasein's way of being is such as always to comport itself toward those beings that it is itself not – to Dasein, recall, 'being in a world belongs essentially [*das dem Dasein*

zugehört ... wesentlich: Sein in einer Welt]⁹⁹ – the point here reaches back equally to Heidegger’s earliest investigations into the origins of factual life. In the closing remarks of *The Idea of Philosophy*, for instance, he had insisted upon the worldliness of the experienced experience (*Welthaftigkeit des erlebten Erlebens*) that was to have provided that course with its central focus.¹⁰⁰ Equally in the course of the following semester, where the various tendencies of factual life are shown to ‘crystallise’ around me in the form of the world(s) in which I exist. World, in other words, is not something added to life; rather, factual life and life in a world presuppose one another:

factual life lives in a world of its own [*seiner eigenen Welt lebt*]; tendencies emerge from out of a factual lifeworld and disclose themselves *in* and *for* such a world. This is for factual life itself “a *Faktum* that is always again encounterable [*ein ‘immer wieder antreffbares Faktum’*].”¹⁰¹

In *Being and Time*, however, the mode of expression is rather different. It is the fact that Dasein *is in each case already a world*, the fact that Dasein *is*, the fact that Dasein exists, that is deemed sufficient proof of the nullity of all attempts to prove the existence of the world as such. Once this is granted, then it will be clear why ‘the question of whether there is a world as such and whether its being can be proven, is a meaningless one [*ist als Frage ... ohne Sinn*] if it is posed by *Dasein*,’ as Heidegger puts it, before removing the caveat: ‘and who else would do so?’¹⁰² Reiner Schürmann:

The originary origin ... in *Being and Time* ... is the opening, projected by us, in which things *are* insofar as they appear to the being that we are The originary as project is finite in the sense that it manifests beings against a horizon of beings that are not manifest This has some consequences for the understanding of truth.¹⁰³

Heidegger's analysis of such consequences comes in the section (§44) of the work entitled 'Dasein, Disclosedness, and Truth.' The title itself already broaches a decisive indication in respect of the analysis, naming as it does less a *sequence* than a certain *spread* or a *unity of possibilities*. What is required of the analysis, in other words, is to show that Dasein *means* disclosedness; disclosedness *means* truth, etc..

From the outset, a particular orientation to truth is very much in evidence. Heidegger begins by identifying the three theses that are constitutive of the traditional concept of truth (*der traditionelle Wahrheitsbegriff*):

1. The place [*Ort*] of truth is assertion (judgement).
2. The essence of truth lies in the correspondence [*Übereinstimmung*] of the judgement with its object.
3. Aristotle, the father of logic, assigned truth to the judgement as its originary place [*ursprünglichen Ort*] and also set in motion the definition of truth as correspondence.¹⁰⁴

The analysis is thus to orient itself to the *tradition* and so to the way in which the concept of truth has been handed down (*über-liefern*) by that tradition; it is to investigate the provenance (*Herkunft*) of the traditional concept of truth in order to

set out the positive possibilities secured by it. The analysis, in other words, is a *de(con)structive* one.

Equally, however, the analysis is to be *phenomenological* in the sense, first of all, determined in the §7 of the Introduction. That determination prescribes that the analysis proceed with reference to the way things (*Sachen*) show themselves as themselves; that is, it must be an analysis that attends to the way in which such things show themselves as phenomena, that lets 'that which shows itself be seen from itself as it shows itself from itself.'¹⁰⁵ Here, therefore, the analysis must be one that attends to the way in which truth comes to show itself *as truth* and that undertakes to describe what, which such a self-showing, truth shows itself to be.

As in the 1925–6 lecture course *Logic: the Question Concerning Truth*, the central question that will have to be addressed by the analysis is the one with which Kant had sought to expose the vanity of the logicians' art, driving them thus into a corner: What is truth?¹⁰⁶ In the earlier analyses, the centrality of this question was itself assured by the need to respond to another question, the question of 'whether the very idea of truth is not itself a phantom [*ein Phantom*].'¹⁰⁷ In *Being and Time*, however, this other question is left wholly out of account. The concern now is less to exorcise the spectre of scepticism than to clarify both the ontological meaning (*Sinn*) of saying *there is truth* (*es Wahrheit gibt*) and so the *necessity* with which truth finds itself presupposed (*voraussetzen*). Such is, Heidegger adds in a marginal note, 'the real place to begin the leap into Dasein.'¹⁰⁸

§44 begins by resuming the most classical expression of truth. The formulation Heidegger employs is that of Kant: 'The nominal explanation of truth, namely that it is the agreement of knowledge with its object, is here granted and presupposed.'¹⁰⁹ In

order to broach the properly phenomenological analysis of the phenomenon of truth, Heidegger responds to Kant's understanding of appearance as the locus of truth by clarifying the mode of being that belongs to knowing as such. He asks: 'When does truth become phenomenally explicit in knowing itself?' He answers: 'It does so when knowing demonstrates itself *as true*.'¹¹⁰ Truth shows itself as truth by way of demonstration. What is required, then, is an analysis of demonstration, since it is precisely in the phenomenal context of demonstration that truth shows itself as truth.

The analysis begins with the situation in which a person, his back to the wall, makes the assertion: 'The picture on the wall is hanging askew.' The demonstration occurs, that is to say, the truth of the assertion becomes manifest *as true*, when the person turns around and perceives the picture hanging askew on the wall. The analysis is phenomenological in the strictest sense, in the sense prescribed by the considerations of intentional fulfillment explored in the *Logical Investigations*. In the intentional fulfillment in which the intuited ('the picture on the wall is hanging askew') comes to coincide with what is meant or intended (that the picture *is* hanging askew on the wall), what comes to be demonstrated is the *truth* of what was meant. This intentional fulfillment is, for Husserl, truth in its most basic sense: 'the complete agreement of the intended and the given as such.'¹¹¹ The question now must be: how does truth show itself in such a demonstration? How is truth manifest? What is the most originary sense in which the assertion can be said to be true? Heidegger answers:

To say that an assertion is true signifies that it uncovers the being in itself. It asserts, it points out, it lets the being be seen ... in its uncoveredness. The

being-true (truth) of the asseertion must be understood as being-uncovered [*entdeckend-sein*].¹¹²

The truth of the assertion consists in saying the being itself as the being comes to show itself, in its uncovering of that being.

Now, however, Heidegger asks: what is it that secures the possibility for the being to be uncovered thus? What conditions must be met in order that the being can be uncovered? Answering these questions requires Heidegger to take a step back, as it were. It requires a move from the phenomenon of truth as agreement or as being-uncovered, to another phenomenon that can also be called truth, although in a more originary sense. What is this more originary sense? Heidegger answers, drawing together all of the analyses advanced thus far in the book:

Being-true as being-uncovered is in turn ontologically possible only on the basis of being-in-the-world. This latter phenomenon, which we know as a fundamental constitution of Dasein, is the *ground* for the originary phenomenon of truth ... Only with Dasein's *disclosedness* is the most originary phenomenon of truth attained ... Insofar as Dasein *is* essentially its disclosedness, and, as disclosed, discloses and discovers, it is essentially "true." *Dasein is "in truth."*¹¹³

The indication broached by the title of this section is clear, therefore: the *unity of possibilities* named by the terms Dasein, disclosedness, and truth now situated

explicitly as an *existentiale*, can thus be said to hold. It is Dasein that is the site of the most originary phenomenon of truth.

And yet, according to Heidegger's own summary expression of the full existential meaning of the principle that Dasein is 'in' truth: 'To the constitution of Dasein's being belongs *falling*.'¹⁴ In the way that it is proximally and for the most part, Dasein is dispersed. Ensnared by the anonymity of the they (*das Man*), Dasein is lost in its world (*an seine Welt verloren*). As such, falling is nothing other than a counter-movement to disclosedness. It is a tendency toward covering up and toward concealment. And it is because Dasein is essentially falling that Heidegger can now say that *the constitution of its being is such that it is in "untruth."*

The disclosedness of Dasein is thus not the straightforward opening of a region in which beings can show themselves. To it belongs an essential opposition, what Heidegger will later call a strife or conflict. Beings as a whole do not, in Heidegger's significant locution, show themselves from themselves (*sich von ihm selbst zeigt*); rather, they look like ... (*sieht so aus wie ...*). Disclosedness takes on thus the form of a struggle as beings fall away from Dasein's disclosedness into disguise and concealment; truth, uncoveredness, is something that must *first be wrested (erst abgerungen)* from beings; beings are to be *ripped (entrissen)* into concealment. Dasein's disclosedness becomes, variously, *a robbery (ein Raub)* or *a defence* against illusion and distortion. Truth, described in terms of the compass of Dasein's disclosedness, is thus marked by the conflict between opening and closing, between disclosure and concealment.

Yet what of this compass? Is it assured? For it is perhaps here that the first indications of a difficulty, precisely that difficulty whose radicalisation and extension

will constitute the basic development or dislocation in Heidegger's thinking after *Being and Time*, can be seen to emerge.

At the very end of the analysis of truth, and so at the very end of the preparatory analysis of Dasein, Heidegger undertakes again to clarify the necessity with which we must presuppose that there is truth. This time, however, the accent is significantly different. Recall: We presuppose that there is truth because, as Dasein, as the being whose existence is constituted by its disclosedness, we are in each case already *in* truth. Recall further, however: It is not *we* as Dasein who presuppose truth but *truth* that 'makes it ontologically possible that we can be in such a way as to presuppose something.' If, following the positive part of *Being and Time* gathered around §44, the site (*Ort*) upon which truth comes to show itself as truth is no longer to be thought as the demonstration of an assertion, then the problem arises of precisely *where* truth can be said to take place. Whilst truth is still connected to the understanding, still not essentially removed from Dasein, this presents no real difficulty. So long as truth is essentially appropriate to Dasein (*wesenhaften dasensmäßigen*), so long as world is essentially Dasein related (*wesenhaft daseinsbezogen*), the site of disclosedness is relatively assured.

As the remark cited above perhaps suggests, however – the remark according to which it is *truth* that generates the ontological possibility of Dasein's preunderstanding of being – there are signs that in *Being and Time* Heidegger has begun already to loosen the bonds that tie truth to understanding. If *Being and Time* does undertake to sustain the connection of truth to Dasein, there are signs that it has begun also the development that will mean that truth can no longer be regarded as correlative to anything like a faculty or ability (*Vermögen*) of man. Yet *were* truth

not to be found within such a connection, then where would it be found? If truth *were* no longer to be anything that might legitimately be ascribed to man, either in terms of a particular faculty (the understanding) or as an act of projective disclosure, then where would it happen? Where, indeed, *could* it happen? What could be the *site* of truth? The difficulty here is such that one would be forgiven for addressing to truth a question more explicitly begged by Heidegger's rather less celebrated account of the concept of freedom: What is freedom if it can no longer be thought as a property or attribute of man but as something more originary than man? What does it mean to say that man is *not* in fact *free* but himself merely a *possibility* of freedom, its *Stätte und Gelegenheit*, its site and occasion?¹¹⁵ (It is hardly by chance that I am raising the question by way of this analogy. From the attempt of *Being and Time* to root the will phenomenologically in Dasein's existential openness, to the letting-be that allows 'what is present its presence' scrutinised in the lecture 'On the Essence of Truth,' Heidegger will have insisted repeatedly on the intimate connection of truth to freedom, the opening in which man ek-sists.)

Such difficulties are familiar enough by now, and I do not mean to suggest that Heidegger is unaware of the problems. On the contrary, this is precisely what interests him in the lecture courses and essays immediately following the publication of *Being and Time*. Indeed, if certain retrospective comments are to be believed, these are even the problems which provide the 'wider context' for his work as a whole, a context that he identifies as 'the attempt, undertaken repeatedly since 1930, to shape

the questioning of *Being and Time* in more inceptive fashion [*die Fragstellung von Sein und Zeit anfänglicher zu gestalten*]. This means to subject the *Ansatz* of the question in *Being and Time* to immanent critique.¹¹⁶ If it is the notion of world (and its synonyms: the there of Dasein, disclosedness, truth, etc.) that constitutes the *Ansatz* of the questioning undertaken in *Being and Time*, then it is little wonder that it is precisely this that constitutes *die Sache des Denkens* for the reflections on the notion of origin undertaken by the meditation on the work of art.

II

From its opening words, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' is situated unequivocally by Heidegger as a reflection on the notion of origin:

Origin signifies here that from which and by which a matter is what it is and as it is. What something is, as it is, we call its essence. The origin of something is the provenance of its essence. The question concerning the origin of the work of art will question its essential provenance.¹¹⁷

The rhetorical character of these opening lines is quite marked, the four statements showing an intensification and a progression. Heidegger notes, first of all, that origin means *not* a simple starting point or point of departure, but that from which (*von woher*) and by way of which (*wodurch*) a matter is what it is and in the way that it is. *Die Sache* here is the work of art. The principle concern of Heidegger's text, therefore, will be to address that from which and under the sway of which the work

of art is what it is and as it is. No less, however, do these opening lines situate 'The Origin of the Work of Art' as a reflection on essence: what something is in the way that it is (*was etwas ist, wie es ist*) is its essence (*Wesen*). There is, to be sure, no hint as yet of the marked displacement in the concept of essence that will come into play later on in the text, no suggestion of that movement through which Heidegger will want to put into question the very truth of essence, turning from its 'inessential' sense to its more 'essential' one.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, far from being situated as an ancillary concern, the reflection on essence is shown from the outset to be entirely of a piece with the reflection on origin. Origin means that from which and by way of which a matter is in its essence. With the third line, Heidegger clarifies further still this relation of origin to essence. The origin of something is described now as the provenance of its essence. 'The Origin of the Work of Art' will ponder *not* the work of art itself, therefore, but *die Herkunft seines Wesens*, the provenance of its essence. The question of the origin of the work of art, Heidegger concludes, concerns the essential provenance (*Wesensherkunft*) of the work, that from which and by way of which it is in the way that it is.

'Misleading' though Heidegger may have come to adjudge these lines to be¹¹⁹ – a judgement which presumably bears on the undeveloped sense of essence noted above, and on the lack of any sustained exploration of the relation of origin to essence – they can nonetheless be read as a progressive clarification of the concerns of the essay as a whole, shifting attention away from the work of art per se to something else entirely, to what Heidegger calls its 'essential provenance.' As the opening theses of the Frankfurt lectures have it: clarifying 'the *path* which leads *from* the artwork *to* the origin [*vom Kunstwerk zum Ursprung*].'¹²⁰

In what amounts presumably to an admission of failure as regards the exposition carried out by the lectures themselves, Heidegger comes back to these points in the Afterword in order to clarify further still the relation of origin to essence. 'What the word origin means here,' he notes, 'is thought from out of [*aus*] the essence of truth.'¹²¹ The connection with the positive part of *Being and Time* gathered around §44 is clear. Yet however tempting it may be, it is important that we not try to gain a head start here and leap over the entire development carried out by the lectures – leaping over that development in order to secure *das Wesen der Wahrheit* as the *Wesensherkunft* of the work of art, to identify from the outset that 'from out of which' origin has been thought with that 'from which' and 'by way of which' the work of art emerges – and consider, instead, the remarks which immediately follow this clarification. Heidegger says now that 'the truth of which we have been speaking does not fall into line with what one normally connects with this name.'¹²² The reference to the developments of the earlier work is once again evident. Yet to the extent that the notion of origin articulated in the lectures will, by Heidegger's own lights, have been thought 'from out of the essence of truth,' it seems entirely likely also that the origin of which the lectures will have been speaking will not fall into line with what one normally connects with this name. It seems entirely likely, in other words, that the lectures will have put into question not only the essence of truth but also the very meaning of origin. Indeed, once origin means, as was stated in the opening lines, that from which and by way of which something is in its essence, it could hardly be otherwise, granted the proposition with which Heidegger will find the most secure expression of his attempt to put the essence of truth into question in such a way that

it no longer falls into line with what one normally connects with this name: the essence of truth is the truth of essence.¹²³

Following his initial remarks on the notion of origin, Heidegger reopens the proceedings with one or two formal considerations. Taking a stance as regards the habitual picture (*gewöhnlichen Vorstellung*) of the work of art, he turns to the most usual expression of its origin. Where, he asks, does the work originate, if not with the artist?¹²⁴ As one whose activities presumably give rise to works of art, the artist would be the origin of the work. Yet to the extent that the artist is what he is only by virtue of the work, there would seem to be just cause to afford the work an analogous position with respect to the artist. Hence: 'The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other.'¹²⁵ Yet however balanced this circle of artist and artwork might seem to be, it is in fact, so Heidegger interjects, disturbed by a certain eccentricity. Neither the artist nor the work can be the sole support of the other; neither one can completely circumscribe the other. Rather, 'in themselves and in their interchange, artist and work *are* by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both ..., namely art.'¹²⁶ As such, the issue that needs to be broached as regards the origin of the work of art turns out, Heidegger concludes, to be that of 'the essence of art.'¹²⁷ But can the essence of art be an origin? Can art, 'a word which no longer bespeaks anything actual,'¹²⁸ provide us with a ground from which to determine the essential provenance of the work of art? Can art also be called an origin?¹²⁹ This, as Heidegger observes, seems unlikely; and all the more so when one ponders just where it is that art 'prevails in an actual way,' namely in the work of art. Art, he declares, 'is present in the art-work [*west im Kunst-Werk*].'¹³⁰ Another circle

opens up thereby, one that circles within the first: 'Not only is the main step from work to art, as the step from art to work, a circle, but every particular step that we attempt circles within this circle.'¹³¹

Even in what remains a decidedly preliminary stage of the analysis, the question concerning the origin of the work of art proves thus to be a distinctly unsettling one. One, Heidegger confesses, which appears to entail nothing so much as *ein Verstoß gegen die Logik*,¹³² of what *Being and Time* will, in a context almost identical, have laconically entitled its 'most elementary rules.'¹³³ Needless to say, the analogy with the position set out in the earlier work is far-reaching. In each case the circle is taken to be what affords the possibility of beginning, whether that beginning be that of a full-fledged philosophical seeking that takes its guiding thread from what is sought, or the factual existence of Dasein guided in advance by its understanding. In neither case, moreover, does the circle disqualify the analysis '*a priori* from the realm of rigorous knowledge.'¹³⁴ In neither case is the circle one 'in which a random kind of knowledge moves.'¹³⁵ Rather is it, Heidegger avers, one in which is 'hidden a positive possibility of the most originary kind of knowing,'¹³⁶ broaching thus once again the possibility that the question of knowing might itself be raised *à nouveaux frais*, as it were.

No less than is the case with the hermeneutic circles of *Being and Time* – the need for the matter that is at issue for thinking to already have come into view for that thinking, the coincidence of the questioner and with what is to be questioned, etc.¹³⁷ – is the circle that circumscribes art one which we *have* to follow. Indeed, to the extent that thinking itself is no less crafty (*ein Handwerk ist*) than art, entering into

the path of this circle is even the strength or celebration of thinking (*das Fest des Denkens*).

In the Afterword to the lectures on art Heidegger will be more forthcoming with respect to the violation of logic fostered by attention to such origins. Once again, moreover, he is so in a way which suggests yet further analogy with the position set out in *Being and Time*. 'The preceding remarks,' he writes now, 'are concerned with the riddle of art, the riddle that art itself is [*das Rätsel, das die Kunst selbst ist*]. There is no pretension to solve the riddle. The task is to see it.'¹³⁸

III

Each version of Heidegger's text – the draft, the Freiburg lecture, and the Frankfurt lectures – falls into three distinct phrases. The first phase comprises in each case the attempt to highlight the work-being of the work of art and so, in view of the referential horizon within which the work of art is always located and relocated, the phenomenological difficulty of bringing this to light. Each of the three texts begins accordingly, thematising the attempt to gain access to the particular work character of the work of art (*Werksein des Werkes*). The draft is most emphatic in this regard: 'So long as we do not take hold of the work in its work being, the question of the origin of the work of art remains devoid of any adequately secure foundation.'¹³⁹ The initial move of each text is to orient itself thus toward the work of art.

The second phase of the investigation is addressed to the matter of origin. Moving beyond the provisional sense of origin that will have been employed in the first phase – art as the ground which renders the work of art both possible and necessary – the second phase asks: Might not the work itself be thought as an origin? Might not the work of art, as something that has been brought forth, be thought as

bringing something forth? Heidegger suggests as much: the work of art is what lets truth be brought forth into manifestness. Art, he declares, is a *becoming and a happening of truth* (*ein Werden und Geschehen der Wahrheit*).¹⁴⁰

In the third and most expansive phase of the analyses, Heidegger pursues his suspicions as to the work of art as a becoming and happening of truth. The concern of this phase is to justify the claims of the previous one. Its task is to restore to the work of art what Heidegger terms its authentic connections (*Bezüge*) by offering a response to the following question: ‘What is truth such that it can happen or even must happen as art? How is it that *there is art*?’¹⁴¹

Let me leave to one side the initial phase of the analysis, in which Heidegger considers the work being of the work by way, first of all, of its character as a thing, its *Dinghafte*, and, secondly, in its relation to equipment, *das Zeug*, and turn directly to the question posed by the second phase, that of art as a happening of truth. In the analyses of 1936 Heidegger draws the first phase of the analysis to a close by turning, for the first time in those analyses, to an actual work of art: van Gogh’s painting of a pair of shoes.¹⁴² He does so, he says, merely in order to illustrate a point concerning the equipmental substratum which underpins the traditional concepts of a thing, merely in order to see what is at stake with respect to a particular piece of equipment. Yet in turning to this ‘example,’ in having brought ourselves before the painting, in describing the equipment as it is presented there, something else also happens. We discover, Heidegger declares, the equipmental quality of the work. The artwork allows us to know what the shoes, as equipment, are in truth. Yet in this way it is not only the equipmental being of the shoes that is discovered. In bringing ourselves

before the painting, says Heidegger, we learn, 'unwittingly, in passing so to speak [*unversehens, gleichsam beiher*],' something about the artwork:

In the nearness of the work we were suddenly somewhere other than where we normally tend to be The artwork gives us to know what the shoes are in truth Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure [*die Eröffnung*] of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, *is* in truth. This being emerges into the unconcealment of its being [*dieses Seiende tritt in die Unverborgenheit seines Seins heraus*] If a disclosure of being happens in the work, disclosing what and how that being is, there is a happening of truth at work [*ein Geschehen der Wahrheit am Werk*]. In the work of art, the truth of beings has set itself (in) to (the) work [*hat sich ... in Werk gesetzt*].¹⁴³

As Heidegger acknowledges a little further on, these lines contain what is, at this point, a purely provisional assertion, one that he is not yet in a position to argue for. Nevertheless, he follows the claim that in the work of art truth has set itself (in) to (the) work *not* with any attempt to justify it, but by clarifying it in relation to the particular concerns of the investigation as a whole. In what do these concerns consist? What is to be *die Sache des Denkens*? Heidegger outlines it in the form of two questions:

What truth is happening in the work [*welche Wahrheit geschieht im Werk*]?
Can truth as such happen and so be historical [*kann Wahrheit überhaupt geschehen und so geschichtlich sein*]?¹⁴⁴

It is important to note that however contrived the path followed by the Frankfurt lectures up to this point, a path along which the relation of art to truth was brought to light in a preliminary way ('unwittingly, in passing so to speak'), *these questions* are not posed out of nowhere. Indeed, in a gesture that will have far-reaching consequences, Heidegger is at pains to draw out the initially rather unlikely connection between his own referral of the work of art to the concept of truth and the duties of reproduction and imitation with which it has invariably been saddled by traditional philosophical aesthetics. Initially, he does so ironically. Is it possible, he asks, that the claim that in the work of art truth has set itself (in) to (the) work is no more than a restatement of the view that art is an imitation or depiction of something actual? Of the view, 'happily now overcome,' that art has 'more to do with the beautiful ... than with truth?'¹⁴⁵ Heidegger, needless to say, demurs, although perhaps not for the reasons one might think. Content for the moment to stay with this line of inquiry, he pursues the claim for art as a reproduction of some object or other. Such a claim, he points out, is only fostered on there being some sort of correspondence or accord (*Übereinstimmung*) between the work and what is reproduced in it. The shoes in van Gogh's painting, for instance will need to have at least *some* accord with or correspondence to a pair of shoes. Yet, had not such accordance been already identified as what is most ordinarily taken to determine truth? Is it not precisely such correspondence which underlies the determination of truth as *ὁμοίωσις* and later as *adequatio*? Although the remarks here remain decidedly preparatory to the discussion of truth which will orchestrate the third part of the text, the implication already seems to be that Heidegger will want to read à

rebours, so that it is the specific character that is to be granted to truth that effectively governs the determination of art. However provisional the formulation may be, Heidegger's remarks seem already to anticipate what will not be stated outright until the Afterword to the text: 'from the change in the essence of truth arises the history of the essence of Western art.'¹⁴⁶ If the ostensible concern of Heidegger's essay is to ponder the essential character of art in a fashion ill-afforded by such a history, this will entail *per definitio* another and concomitant change in the determination of the essence of truth.

In order to clarify the point somewhat, one ought to recall precisely what is at stake in this appeal to the essence of truth. According to the argument advanced in the interpretation of 1936, in which the point is explored most extensively,

truth means the essence of the true. We think this essence by recalling the word of the Greeks. The word ἀλήθεια means unconcealment of beings. But is this really a determination of the essence of truth?¹⁴⁷

As was the case in the opening remarks of the text, the immediate concern of these lines is shown to enjoy a relation to what appears initially to be an ancillary issue. Truth means the 'essence' of the true.

Heidegger understands 'essence' in this context in two ways. First, in what he terms an 'inessential' way (*das unwesentliche Wesen*) where essence is taken to describe the generic and universal concept that holds indifferently for a number of different things. Other analyses, principally those of *The Basic Problems of Metaphysics*, leave no doubt that the reference here is to the primitive elements or

essentialia of the old ontology. To the extent that such general ontology treats by rights only of 'things unecstatically to hand [*vorhanden*],'¹⁴⁸ of *founded* presence, the point of Heidegger's nomination is well-taken. Equally, however, essence is taken in a more essential sense (*das wesentliche Wesen*). Essence in *this* sense, *Wesen* in its verbal sense as the essential unfolding and coming to presence (*wesen*) of something, describes accordingly the manner in which something unfolds and comes to presence as what it is in the way that it is. As Heidegger points out, however, it would be a gross error to see this second sense of essence as somehow indifferent to the first. Quite the contrary, in fact. Essence in its more essential sense *underlies* essence in the first sense. Only if this is the case can it describe 'the true essence of a thing ..., the truth of the given being,'¹⁴⁹ the happening by which alone the *ens* can attain its *essentia*.

As the silent shift in emphasis readily suggests – the shift from the question concerning the essence of truth to that concerning the truth of essence – the ensuing pages of 'The Origin of the Work of Art' will afford something of a restatement of the position argued for in the lecture 'On the Essence of Truth.' Reading with the earlier lecture:

The question of the essence of truth finds its answer in the proposition: *the essence of truth is the truth of essence* [*das Wesen der Wahrheit ist der Wahrheit des Wesens*]¹⁵⁰

As in §44 of *Being and Time*, the inquiries of 'On the Essence of Truth' and 'The Origin of the Work of Art' begin with reference to the traditional concept of truth.

Heidegger marking again its employment as propositional correctness, as the accordance or correspondence (*Übereinstimmung*) of a statement with the actual state of affairs. Once again, moreover, Heidegger does not proceed then to air a “new” concept of truth with which to replace the traditional one, but to treat the latter as genuinely worthy of questioning (*fragwürdig*). What, he asks, is meant by accordance? How can one thing, a statement or proposition, say, correspond or accord with another, such as the actual state of affairs?

Whereas the response of ‘On the Essence of Truth’ was to reach back to the sixth of Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* in order to show how the possibility of accordance has to be thought in terms of what Husserl had termed a directive comportment (*Verhalten*) of one thing to another, the possibility of accordance is now described more explicitly in terms of the general problem of unconcealment:

With all our correct representations we would get nowhere, we could not even presuppose that something to which we can correctly comport ourselves [*uns richten*] is already manifest [*offenbar*] unless the unconcealment of beings had already placed us in that illuminated realm [*Gelichtete*] in which all beings stand for us and from which all beings withdraw.¹⁵¹

Whereas, in the analyses of *Being and Time*, it was Aristotle and Kant who bore the brunt of Heidegger’s attempt to broach this more ordinary phenomenon of truth, this time it is Descartes who is scorned for thinking that an open commitment to ‘les règles certaines et faciles’ of a *mathesis universalis* could lead him to have done with ‘la ruse funeste’ of a Diophantus.¹⁵² For however much the application of such rules

might allow one to attain the level of 'la connaissance vraie,' this, so Heidegger observes, affords merely 'another variation of the determination of truth as correctness.'¹⁵³ In a manner that bears analogy with the analyses of *Being and Time*, then, it is a matter of seeing unconcealment as what more essentially *underlies* and not what *replaces* the habitual concept of truth. It is in this notion of unconcealment, 'clarified,' the lecture says, by 'recollection' of the Greek ἀλήθεια, that Heidegger most readily discerns the possibility of interrogating the more originary essence of truth which sustains the scholastic apparatus of *essentia* and *veritas*. For sure, if such a retrospective analysis is to stand, it will have to show willing and attend to an essential ambiguity in the concept of truth, recovering, on the one hand, the originary phenomenon of truth, whilst demonstrating, on the other, the manner in which the habitual concept of truth originates. In a way that also serves to rebut certain stock criticisms of the aletheic turn of transcendental phenomenology as no more than a product of an instinctive taste for the Hellenic,¹⁵⁴ Heidegger gives immediate notice that such a 'recollection' or 'reminder' can in no way signal a 'revival' or 'renewal' of Greek thinking.

The shift in the determination of the essence of truth is in no way extrinsic to that thinking. In a way that anticipates obliquely the remaining part of the discussion this shift is implied even to be a necessary one:

the hidden history of Greek philosophy lies from its beginning in the fact that ... it must shift its knowledge [*ihr Wissen ... verlegen muß*] and its saying more and more into discussion of a derivative essence of truth ... Unconcealment is, for thinking, the most concealed thing in Greek Dasein.¹⁵⁵

The aim of the interpretation, therefore, is to arrive at a position from which the unconcealment of beings expressed by the word ἀλήθεια can be seen less as a 'flight' into 'literal translation' than as a reminder of what, 'unexperienced and unthought,' underlies the familiar and so worn out' determination of truth as correctness. The decidedly 'unfamiliar' task of the inquiry is to afford the more authentic understanding of the essence of truth that will be required in order to answer the question 'What truth is happening in the work?'¹⁵⁶

It may well follow from this that truth happens as unconcealment although not, Heidegger cautions, in any straightforwardly unopposed sense. 'The Origin of the Work of Art' now gathers together all the requirements that must be met in order for beings to stand in unconcealment. It is noted: beyond (*über ... hinaus*) beings, before (*vor*) them, something happens (*geschieht*). 'In the midst of beings as a whole an open place comes to presence. There is a clearing.'¹⁵⁷ It is this clearing alone that grants open access (*Durchgang*) to things. In this clearing alone are things unconcealed in varying degrees. And yet, Heidegger cautions, within this clearing, indeed *only (nur)* within it, a being can also be *concealed*. Noting this 'curious opposition of presencing,' he infers: 'each being, encountered and encountering ..., at the same time always withholds itself in a concealment.'¹⁵⁸ Unconcealment is no mere *unopposed* happening but one that is continually traversed by a more *potent* force of concealment. Why more potent? Heidegger does not say here, as he will in the essay 'On the Essence of Truth,' that this potency is one that accrues to age: 'the concealment of beings,' he writes there, 'is older [*älter*] than every openness of this or that being.'¹⁵⁹ In the essay on art this potency stems from the fact that the

concealment that is at issue here is twofold, from the fact that the concealment that belongs to being is for the most part itself concealed:

We believe ourselves to be at home in the immediate sphere of beings. Beings are familiar, reliable, ordinary [*geheuer*]. And yet the clearing is pervaded by a constant concealing in the double form of refusal and dissembling. At bottom, the ordinary is not ordinary; it is extra-ordinary [*un-geheuer*].¹⁶⁰

All of which has, needless to say, some far-reaching consequences for the determination of truth:

the open realm in the midst of beings ... is never a rigid stage [] with a permanently raised curtain on which the play of beings is played out ... The unconcealment of beings is never an existent state [*ein vorhandener Zustand*] but a happening [*Geschehnis*].¹⁶¹

IV

Having secured the grounds at least for answering the first of his guiding questions ('can truth as such happen and so be historical?'), Heidegger has now to provide a response to the second: 'what truth is happening in the work?' The strategy he employs in order to do so is identical in each version of the text. Glossing his earlier assertion that art is a happening of truth, he turns to an altogether different sort of work of art, one chosen, he says, quite deliberately (*mit Absicht*). Casting another sort of look toward art, Heidegger takes this time as his leading example a work of art entirely removed from the order of representation (*darstellenden Kunst*). The example is that of a Greek temple.¹⁶²

What kind of truth is it that can happen in a temple? Presumably no kind of truth which could be thought in terms of correspondence or accord. For with what could the temple accord? To what could it correspond? The reasons behind Heidegger's deliberation in choosing such an example are immediately apparent, therefore. To the extent that it depicts or portrays (*bildet ...ab*) precisely nothing, no already existing form or meaning, but merely stands there (*steht da*) on the rocky ground, enclosing (*unschliesst*) or holding back (*einbehält*) the figure of the god,¹⁶³ the temple disqualifies in advance any instinctive appeal to the 'habitual' concept of art governed by the equally 'habitual' concept of truth. If truth does indeed happen in a work of art this sort, it will have to be of a different order altogether. Presumably of the order of unconcealment and disclosure. Yet how does truth as the unconcealment of beings happen in a work of this sort? What does the temple disclose? Answering these questions requires that Heidegger introduce the two terms that will quickly become central to his case: *world* and *earth*.¹⁶⁴

To begin with Heidegger names world. It is the temple, he says, that

for the first time fits together [*fügt*] and at the same time gathers [*sammelt*] around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and defeat, endurance and decline, acquire the shape of destiny for the essence of man. The prevailing expanse of these open relations is the world of this historical people.¹⁶⁵

What is immediately striking about Heidegger's remarks up to and including this point is the extent to which they begin to draw the temple – and so, by extension, the work of art – away from its specifically sensible character, its character as an object or as a thing. Such was presumably implicit in the discussion of equipment that had motivated the first of the Frankfurt lectures, and that had been introduced briefly in the opening minutes of the Freiburg text in order to distinguish the notion of origin from that of cause (*Ursache*), and in the closing pages of the same text in order to distinguish the considerations voiced there from the curious undoing (*merkwürdigen Verhängnis*) that dictates the referral of the work of art to the fabricated thing or piece of equipment (*eines angefertigen Dinges d.h. eines Zeugwerkes*).¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, these remarks make do make explicit what goes largely assumed in the later text: to the extent that equipment is, in the first place, assimilated ontologically to a world in the sense that world is established as the focus for the determination of its being, the work of art is not equipmental, it is not *das Zeug*. So what is the work of art? What sort of being is it? *Vorhanden? Zuhanden? Daseinsmässig?* None of these? The world is characterised here as 'holding [*hält*] open the open region of a world.'¹⁶⁷

To this extent, one term under which it might legitimately be addressed is that of the *sign* in the sense, first of all, determined for it in the analyses of *Being and Time* where, it will be recalled, the sign was said to 'hold explicitly open [*hält ... ausdrücklich offen*]' the 'discovered region' of a world.¹⁶⁸ Equally, however, in the sense determined for the sign in the lectures of 1951, later published as *What is Called Thinking?* in which the sign will be identified as a site of gathering, *Versammlung*. Quoting from yet another lecture text, this time the course of 1942, which treats of Hölderlin:

what historical man holds [*hält*] concerning art is governed by the manner in which historical man is himself held [*gehalten*] and sustained by the essence of art. Yet the way in which art spans the being-in-the-world of historical man, the way in which it lights up the world for him and lights up man himself ..., all this receives its law and structural articulation from the way in which the world as a whole is opened up to man.¹⁶⁹

The description of the temple continues, Heidegger remarking further the manner in which the work of art opens up the manifestness of beings as a whole in the world:

The temple in its standing there gives to things for the first time their look [*Gesicht*] and to man his outlook [*Aussicht*] upon himself. This view [*Sicht*] remains open as long as the work is a work, as long as the god has not fled from it. The same holds for the linguistic work [*Sprachwerk*]. In tragedy

nothing is staged or displayed theatrically, but the battle of the new gods against the old is fought.¹⁷⁰

What is immediately striking about *these* remarks is their introduction of *time* into the consideration of the work of art. The work of art has a time. One, indeed, that would appear to enjoy at least a passing analogy with the movement of Dasein's own originary temporalisation. It is as though in the movement *from* Dasein as the site of disclosedness and worldly ecstasis *to* the work of art, what has also been transformed is the ecstatic character of time that was to have made possible the disclosedness by which Dasein was to have been its "there," by which it was to have been there in the world from out of which things could then have shown themselves to it. For Heidegger names here something like the death of the work of art. *Not*, to be sure, in the sense determined in the Afterword to the lectures, that sense according to which *art dies (Kunst stirbt)* in its exposure to the element of experience, but in the sense that the world of a work of art is held open *for a time*, 'as long as the god has not fled from it.' The work of art belongs to a particular time and place, namely the specific world that it first clears and holds open. Heidegger binds the work of art (its opening up of a world, its granting the world a sway) *to* its world (its worlding and the manifestness of beings as a whole). The time that constitutes the work of art *as* a work of art is thus the time of the world that it opens up. One presupposes the other. Hence, in a manner that reminds us of Benjamin's exactly contemporaneous reflections,¹⁷¹ it cannot be a manner of visiting the work of art on its original site, nor of visiting it in a gallery, as if it were a thing that could come to be viewed. In Heidegger's condensed formulation: *die Welt der vorhandenen Werke ist zerfallen.*¹⁷²

The work of art, then, is the site or the place – one would even be tempted to say the *there* – that *first* opens up or *inaugurates* a world by gathering the different paths and relations that first let things be, let things come to presence. It spans or cuts through (*durchspannt*) the world in which man exists. ‘With the opening up of a world all things come into their tarrying and hurrying, their remoteness and nearness, their broadness and confines.’¹⁷³ No more than in *Being and Time*, then, can world in this sense refer, as it did for Kant, to the totality of beings that are experienced (a transcendental concept of the sum of things as appearances) or to a framework that would be imposed upon them (a pure synthetic concept of reason), any more than it could refer to a “physical” place that could come to be located by way of a map or a globe. World, Heidegger insists, is in no sense an object, nothing that could be made present and available to intuition. The opening up of a world, that is, the manifestness of beings as a whole, requires a own mode of expression that would hold it apart from that which it would determine. Indeed, world so exceeds any determination as a being that Heidegger will not say that it *is*, but that it *worlds*: *Welt weltet*.¹⁷⁴

Suffice it to say, the terminology being exploited here by Heidegger would have come as no great surprise to those members of the audience who had thought to follow the trajectory of his work from its more orthodox phenomenological beginnings. The lecture courses of 1919 provide case and point. There Heidegger had prevailed upon the language (if in no way the substantive intent) of Marburg neo-Kantianism in order to give full expression to the concrete immediacy of what he terms *das Umwelterlebnis*, the context of meaningful orientation into which factual life makes its leap. Taking the phenomenological demand for immediacy one step

further, Heidegger had raised the question of what could be said to provide the focus of experience within such a context. He asks: What is it that I see? Objects? Books and desks, for example? 'No, I see something else ... I see the desk in an orientation or illumination, against a background ..., the object [*Gegenstand*] as encumbered with a meaning.'¹⁷⁵ It is not objects that are experienced in order then to be interpreted as meaning one thing or another. What is experienced, rather, is the background of meaning (*das Bedeutsame*) itself, the experienceable as such (*Erlebbares überhaupt*). For this background against which things give themselves directly to be experienced, Heidegger proposes the name *world*. Here, he concludes,

it is the background of meaning that is primary, for it gives itself immediately, without any ponderous detour through an apprehension of things. For one living in a surrounding world [*Umwelt*] ... it is wholly worldlike, *it worlds* [*es weltet*].¹⁷⁶

Reading just a little further on, moreover, and the ensuing section (§15) of the same lecture text broaches an indication equally decisive in the present context. Undertaking now to clarify the living-through (*Er-leben*) of such experience in terms of its character as an *event* (*Ereignis*) in contrast with any sense of psychic or physical *process* (*Vorgang*), Heidegger offers a single illustration of the point. To the phenomenon of a rising sun reduced to a mere natural process (*bloßen Vorgang in der Natur*) by the theoretical understanding of the astronomer, he counterposes the event of the chorus of Theban Elders in Sophocles' *Antigone*, in which 'the joyful morning flashes for the first time into view,' citing, in Hölderlin's translation:

O flash of sun, o the most beautiful, that

On seven doored Thebes

Has long shone¹⁷⁷

Further, the the notion of world being developed by ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ clearly owes much also to the properly transcendental part of *Being and Time* addressed in some detail above. Now, however, Heidegger extends its scope, disregarding the specifically existential character that had been ascribed to it in the earlier work, its status as a moment within the whole that Heidegger designates as being-in-the-world, itself identified as a designation for the *Grundverfassung oder Seinsverfassung des Daseins*, as the fundamental constitution of Dasein, the constitution of its being. Still retained as the *a priori* fabric for the appearance of beings as a whole, world is now relieved of its thoroughgoing association with Dasein’s projections and careful dealings. Still retained as a network of relational possibilities, as a horizon, world designates now the horizon and possibilities afforded a particular *historical* epoch. ‘Only where a world prevails,’ Heidegger had insisted a few months before this, ‘is there history.’¹⁷⁸ In the lectures of 1935, world is *die weltende Einheit dieser Bezüge*; in those of the following year, *die waltende Weite der offenen Bezüge*: the worlding unity of relational complexes, the prevailing expanse of the open relational complex, the horizontal network of relations – of laws, customs, beliefs, cultures, decisions, etc. – that holds sway for an historical people.

The description of the temple continues, this time Heidegger naming earth:

Standing there, the temple work opens up a world and at the same time sets this world back again on the earth which itself only thus comes forth as home ground [*als der heimatliche Grund*] ... *The work lets the earth be an earth.*¹⁷⁹

What is the earth? To begin with, the earth appears to denote little more than what would be called the materiality (*Werkstoff*) of the work of art, that from which the work of art is fashioned or made. Heidegger contrasts such making with that involved in the construction of equipment. When stone or metal is used for making an ax (to use the example of 'The Origin of the Work of Art') or a hammer (to use that of *Being and Time*), it is used up. Its materiality disappears, as it were, assimilated beyond all recognition into the servicability of the ax or the hammer. By contrast, the materiality of the earth does not disappear into the work of art. Rather, in the work of art, the earth is set forth 'into the openness of the world of that work.' In the setting forth of the work of art from earth, the materiality of the earth

comes forth as the work sets itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of the stone, into the firmness and flexibility of wood, into the hardness and lustre of metal, into the light and darkness of colour, into the timbre of sound and into the naming power of the word.¹⁸⁰

The work of art allows the materiality of the earth to appear, to appear as what it is. Equally, then, earth denotes what we know as nature: the storm, the lustre and gleam of stone, colours, tones, the invisible space of air, all fall under its compass. It is through the work that such things 'enter into their given shape and come thus to

shine forth [*kommen so als das zum Vorschein*] as what they are.’¹⁸¹ Now, however, Heidegger broaches yet another, more decisive connection, pointing the analysis away from *what* it is that that comes thus to shine forth and toward that emergence and coming forth (*dieses Herauskommen und Aufgehen*) itself. He writes: ‘This emerging ... the Greeks early on called φύσις. It lightens that upon which and in which man grounds his dwelling. This we call the earth.’¹⁸² Note, however, the curious conjunctions here: ‘the Greeks called this ...’ and then ‘we call this ...’ Whatever historical strategy is intended by these locutions – and the point here is presumably analogous to the structure of repetition established in *Being and Time* – the more important point here concerns the way in which the earth does not straightforwardly refer to the Greek φύσις, but to its fundamental trait, namely, its self-concealment. It is as if the earth denotes, in Michel Haar’s insightful phrase, ‘the *non-metaphysical* equivalent of φύσις,’ that is, φύσις ‘at the other extreme of history, echoing the beginning.’¹⁸³ No more than was the case with world, then, can the earth in any of these senses or in this spread of possible senses refer to the astronomical notion of a planet, to some “physical” place that might come to be fixed and measured. Indeed, the earth is precisely what most *resists* all geometrical identification.

Heidegger takes the example of a stone. What is most evident in a stone is its weight, its hardness. Yet what is weight? What is hardness? One tries to take the measure of this, to analyse and resolve its elemental materiality in scientific fashion. One places the stone on scales, breaks it into fragments and shards in order to peer into its inner structure. One reduces it to its component elements in order to calculate and express its valencies and formulae. And yet, none of these analytic measures is able to penetrate and explore the weight or the hardness of the stone. Manifesting

itself, the earth holds itself thus *also* in reserve, turning back in upon itself. It is, Heidegger says, *das Hervorkommend-Bergende*, that which shelters in coming forth:

Earth only shows itself when it remains undisclosed and unexplained. Earth brakes every attempt at penetrating it ... only appearing illuminated as itself when it is noted and preserved as the essentially undisclosed [*die wesenhaft Unerschließbare*], that which withdraws from every disclosure, that is, constantly holds itself closed.¹⁸⁴

Following the exposition of world and earth, Heidegger has now to clarify his claim regarding their relation to the work of art and to one another, the claim according to which it is the work of art that brings beings as a whole into unconcealment, that 'brings forth world and earth in their counterplay' in such a way that truth happens.¹⁸⁵

As before, Heidegger first distinguishes this relation in respect of world. The work of art belongs to a world, it is set within it. It is only from within the world in which it is set that the work of art is granted its time and place – in Benjamin's terms, its *Aura*. Yet world is not then to be understood as an already existing openness within which the work of art would then come to be disclosed. World is, rather, an event that happens – that *worlds* – *in* the work of art. It is the work of art that first opens a world, that first lets it prevail as the open relational complex within which alone it can itself come to stand. Heidegger expresses this reciprocity with the term *Aufstellen*, setting up. The work of art is set up within a world; not, to be sure, in the sense of its having been installed (*aufgestellt*) or placed within a world, notions that Heidegger rather equates with the irretrievable and inevitable decline of a world. Set up not in

this sense, then, but in the literal sense of what is also called e-recting (*er-richten*), namely in the sense of 'opening up what is right in the sense of a guiding and directive measure, as a way in which what is essential gives directives.'¹⁸⁶ The difference here is marked: set up within a world, the work of art itself sets up that world, opens it and sustains it. The work of art does not simply belong to a world but, set up within it, sets up that world. Writes Heidegger, therefore: *werksein heißt: ein Welt aufstellen*, to be a work means to set up a world.¹⁸⁷

A structurally synonymous relation obtains between earth and the work of art, a relation that is this time expressed with the term *Herstellen*, production or setting forth. The work of art, Heidegger says, is brought forth (*hervorgebracht*) from the earth, that is, from some earthy material like stone, wood, or language, but presumably also from those other senses of earth operative in the analysis. The work of art is *set forth* from out of the earth. Yet in being set forth from the earth, the work of art is also set back into the earth in such a way as to set forth earth. Set back into stone, wood, language, the work of art sets forth the earth in such a way as to bring it into the open, allowing it to show itself as stone, wood, language. In the work the earth shows itself, comes to appear, precisely as that which conceals itself. Writes Heidegger, therefore: *die Erde her-stellen heißt: sie ins Offene bringen als das Sichverschließende*, to set for the earth means: to bring it into the open as that which closes itself off.¹⁸⁸

The work of art, then, is to be described in terms of these two essential connections (*Wesenbezüge*): the setting up of a world and the setting forth of the earth. How? How do these traits belong together in the work of art? How, as the Frankfurt lectures have it, are these traits to belong together in such a way as to

constitute the *Insichstehen* of the work? Although circumspect, the remarks of Freiburg lecture are instructive on this point. World and earth, Heidegger says there, are 'related to one another and both are rooted in a third thing.'¹⁸⁹ What thing? What is the connection in which world and earth are related to one another in such a way that the setting up of a world and the setting forth of the earth are brought together in the unity of the work of art? Heidegger's answer is emphatic. Most of all in the draft:

World is against earth and earth against world. They are in strife [*Sie sind im Streit*]. Such strife consists in the intimacy of their counterturning belonging together [*widerwendigen Sichzugehörens*] ... The essence of the work lies in the contestation of the strife [*Bestreitung des Streits*] of setting up and setting forth, in which contestation the open intimacy of earth and world struggle [*erstreitet*].¹⁹⁰

But also in a marginal note appended to these lines:

There has to be strife – i.e. there has to be a work ... when world and earth are.¹⁹¹

And equally in the Freiburg lecture:

World is against earth and earth against world. They are in strife, and are so because they belong together.¹⁹²

So, too, in the Frankfurt lectures:

The world grounds itself on the earth, the earth thrusts up through the world. Yet the relation of world and earth in no way wastes away into the empty unity of opposed terms unconcerned with one another. The world, in resting upon the earth, strives [*trachtet*] to surmount it. It cannot, as self-opening, tolerate anything closed. As sheltering, however, the earth always inclines toward drawing the world into itself and keeping it there. The opposition of world and earth is a strife.¹⁹³

World, as the open relational complex, and earth, as that which emerges as self-closing, belong together in strife. The question that needs now to be asked is: how is this strife, this *Streit*, to be understood? *Not*, Heidegger cautions, as a mere discordance or dispute between two things present-to-hand (*vorhanden*), but as *essential strife* (*wesenhaften Streit*) in which each side brings the other into the accomplishment of its essence. Both world and earth require the other; each sustains and reinforces the other. Earth cannot do away with or 'renounce' the open region of a world if it is to appear as such any more than the world worlds only to the extent that it is grounded upon 'something decisive.' There is strife because there is a reciprocal danger of absorption; not simply because world and earth seek to encroach upon one another (world striving to 'surmount' the earth, the earth striving to 'draw the world into itself and keep it there,' etc.), but, more fundamentally, because each is dependent upon the other. Quoting this time from the Freiburg lecture:

In strife, world and earth move apart *from* one another [*rücken ... auseinander*], but do so only by drawing back properly to one another [*aufeinander zurücken*]. The open world seeks to transport earth into a worldly structure [*ein Weltgefüge*]; earth draws the world back into itself and lead it toward its obscure ground. In this conjunctive disjunction of strife [*zueinanderstehenden Auseinandertreten des Streits*] an open region opens itself. We call this the *there*. It is the illuminated space where, for the first time, a being is engaged and appears as such and as evident. This openness of the there is the essence of *truth*.¹⁹⁴

In the strife of world and earth, an open region is opened. The openness of this open region, in which beings can struggle out of concealment into unconcealment, is what Heidegger identifies now as the essence of truth. Ought this to be taken as implying, however, that the strife of world and earth, as the strife of an open region with one that is essentially closed off, describes the opposition that is held within the essence of truth? That the *wesenhaften Streit* of world and earth is itself the *Urstreit* of clearing and concealing that obtains in the happening of truth? Not at all. 'Earth thrusts through the world, world grounds itself on the earth, *only to the extent that* truth happens as the originary strife of clearing and concealment.'¹⁹⁵ The conflict of world and earth rests on the more originary conflict of clearing and concealing:

This openness of the open region, that is, truth, can be what it is, namely this openness, only if and so long as it establishes itself in its openness. Hence.

there must always be in this openness a being in which the openness takes its stand and attains its constancy. In occupying the open, openness holds the open open and sustains it.¹⁹⁶

Or, reading again with the Freiburg lecture:

While the work sustains the strife between the earthy open world and the worldly earth closed upon itself, nothing else is at work within it than the happening of an opening of the there – i.e. truth. In the work, a happening of truth is set to work. And this *putting (in) to (the) work of truth is the essence of art*. Art, therefore, is a way in which truth happens, the opening of the there in the work.¹⁹⁷

The work of art, then, is the being or the site of presencing in which truth, understood in its more originary sense as the tension of clearing and concealing, is composed and thus gathered into view; truth is gathered or happens in the work of art as the strife of world and earth. It should be noted, however, that Heidegger denies that either of these conflictual relations is – or *can be* – an existent state (*vorhandene Zustand*) that would come then to be disclosed in the work of art. Rather, he wants to insist that it is in the work that such conflict comes first to be opened.

truth is not in itself present beforehand, somewhere among the stars, only later to descend elsewhere among beings ... Clearing of openness and

establishment in the open belong together. They are one and the same happening of truth.¹⁹⁸

The work of art stands as an instigation (*Anstiftung*) of this strife, naming it in its essence. What the work of art contains within itself, its *Insichstehen*, and so may also disclose is not so much the “essence” of this strife in the sense of that which already is in being (the τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι of what Heidegger calls Greek ontology),¹⁹⁹ therefore, but the counter-turning belonging-together of world and earth in its prevailing and happening as truth. In the terms introduced earlier in Heidegger’s text, the work discloses the essence of this strife *not* in its inessential sense, but in its more essential sense as the happening or self-showing and self-concealing of something. Yet this strife is disclosed, if it comes at all to be disclosed, *not* as an already existent state of affairs, as something *vorhanden*, but in an *historical* or, as Heidegger will also say, *destinal* or *epochal* manner. And such disclosure happens, if and when it happens, not by way of an apprehension and confirmation of that strife,²⁰⁰ that is, not by way of a calculative intrusiveness,²⁰¹ but poetically, in a manner that not merely discloses but also instigates and enacts that strife. To say that it instigates the strife of world and earth means that the work of art is itself a happening of truth. Remarks Heidegger:

Art as poetry is founding [*Stiftung*] in the sense of the instigation [*Anstiftung*] of the strife of truth. Whenever beings as a whole, as beings themselves, demand their grounding in openness, art comes into its historical essence as founding. This happened for the first time in the West in Greece.²⁰²

Notes

¹ 'Hegel and the Greeks' (GA 9: 442).

² GA 5: 66; BW 203. Strikingly, although both the earliest and the final versions of Heidegger's text, the draft and the Frankfurt lectures cited here, conclude on what is essentially the same question, the intervening Freiburg lecture ends with the discussion of Hegel that Heidegger subsequently relegates to the Afterword to the version published in *Holzwege*. In the draft, the question reads as follows: 'Are we or are we not near to the essence of art as an origin [*das Wesen der Kunst als Ursprung*]? And if we are not near the origin are we or are we not going to become so ...?' (U 22). On the possible differences between these questions, see Robert Bernasconi, 'The Greatness of the Work of Art' in *Heidegger in Question: the Art of Existing* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993), 99–116 (110–13). For Bernasconi, the difference here is openly political: 'The earlier stridency with which Heidegger had challenged the theory that art is an "expression" of the people has now been replaced by a certain *Schwermut*, or melancholy, which matches the isolation that the thinker now experiences in his meditation on art. Is it a mistake,' Bernasconi concludes, 'to hear in this change of mood Heidegger's growing awareness of his political isolation?' (*ibid.*, 113). To my way of thinking: yes. If there *is* a real difference between the two ways of posing the question, and I remain largely unconvinced on this point, might it not more accurately be thought in terms of the impoverishment of man on-going in Heidegger's work? On this, see chap. 3, below.

³ GA 5: 35; BW 174. Heidegger's emphasis in these final lines on the decision concerning art presumably opens the door to the charge of "decisionism," a charge often levelled at *Being and Time*. See, for example, the reading of Karl Löwith, in which this 'philosophy

of resolute existence' is declared to have satisfied all criteria of 'decisionism' in its 'exhalation of the pathos of decision in the name of pure resolution': *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* (Stuttgart, 1960), 93–4. For a more expansive treatment, dealing this time with Heidegger's early readings of Aristotle, see Beat Sitter, 'Zur Möglichkeit Dexisionistischer Auslegung von Heideggers Ersten Schriften,' *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 24 (1970), 516–35. For two useful correctives to this view, see Henri Birault, *Heidegger et l'expérience de la pensée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 519–20, and Jean-Luc Nancy, 'La Décision d'existence' in *Une Pensée finie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), 107–45, esp. 109 note 1.

⁴ SZ 298. The relation of decision or *Entscheidung* to resolute openness or *Entschlossenheit* has been drawn out at length by Reiner Schürmann in *Le Principe d'anarchie: Heidegger et la question de l'agir* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), 291–5, and by Jean-Luc Nancy in 'La Décision d'existence,' op. cit., esp. 107–10, 116. Nancy's argument is the more sustained. Citing Heidegger's claim here that 'die Entschlossenheit ist ihrem ontologischen Wesen nach je die eines jeweiligen faktischen Daseins,' rendered by Macquarrie and Robinson as 'resoluteness, by its ontological essence, is always the resoluteness of some factual Dasein at a particular time,' he translates: 'l'ouverture décidante / décidée, selon son essence ontologique, est à chaque fois celle d'une Dasein factuel'; 'La Décision d'existence,' op. cit., 138.

⁵ Cf. GA 5: 56; BW 193.

⁶ SZ 297.

⁷ SZ 307.

⁸ SZ 396. Heidegger's emphasis.

⁹ SZ 298. Heidegger's emphasis. Cf. GA 24: 408.

- 10 U 22.
- 11 GA 5: 66; BW 203.
- 12 GA 5: 66; BW 203. Cf. OA 54.
- 13 The questions, in fact, are Heidegger's own, posed some years later with respect to Marx and the decision, 'made in advance, that man and only man (and nothing else besides) is the issue' (VS 132).
- 14 'Schwer verläßt / Was nahe dem Ursprung wohnet, den Ort'; Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Die Wanderung' in *Gesammelte Briefe*, eds. Robert Honsell and Hans Jürgen Meinerts (Bielefeld: Sigbert Mohn, 1961), 246.
- 15 SZ 81.
- 16 SZ 81.
- 17 As Robert Bernasconi has noted; 'The Greatness of the Work of Art,' op. cit., 110. Although Bernasconi is to be applauded for drawing attention to the significance of this citation, his willingness to draw a distinction, presumably "political," between its use in the draft and its use in the Frankfurt text is questionable. See the remarks of note 2, above.
- 18 GA 5: 42; BW 180.
- 19 GA 5: 31; BW 170.
- 20 Although truant from the Freiburg text, which omits all reference to the 'sign,' this referral is already operative in the draft version of the essay where this same sign closes the considerations. *Not*, however, as 'a test still to be stood' (GA 5: 66; BW 203), but as what Heidegger calls the 'untrodden middle of world and earth' in which 'great decisions [*große Entscheidungen*]' are held in reserve (U 15). A similar point is made in the 1937–8

winter semester lecture course *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, where Heidegger's exhortation is for us to allow Hölderlin 'to be the decision that he is [*ist*]' (GA 45: 127). Here too, moreover, it is a matter of a decision which itself 'includes a pre-decision as to our readiness or unreadiness with regard to such decisions' (ibid.).

²¹ Cf. SZ 77 note 1 and SZ 76–82. Compare also the remarks of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* where, in addition to a restatement of Husserl's analyses, Heidegger retrospectively interprets the remarks cited here in terms of 'their orientation toward basic principles' (GA 24: 263).

²² SZ 79.

²³ SZ 108. It is in this sense that Heidegger describes Dasein's supply of signs as pregiven or *vorgegeben* in concern (ibid.).

²⁴ 'Die Herkunft der Kunst und die Bestimmung des Denkens' in *Distanz und Nähe: Reflexionen und Analysen zur Kunst der Gegenwart*, eds. Petra Jaeger and Rudolph Lütke (Würzburg: Köhler-Verlag, 1983), 11–22 (13). Compare, also, the *πέρας* of the Addendum to 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (GA 5: 71–2; BW 208). As Walter Biemel notes in his commentary on Heidegger's late essay, 'this definition of the limit – which was by no means thought up by Heidegger and attributed to Athena – is a decisive concept in Greek thought'; 'Elucidations on Heidegger's Lecture "The Origin of Art and the Destination of Thinking"' in Sallis (ed.), *Reading Heidegger*, op. cit., 370–82 (372). On the sign as the site of gathering or *Versammlung*, see also the opening remarks of the 1951 lecture course *What is Thinking?* (*WhD* 5–7; 9–11) where, once again on the basis of a line from Hölderlin, it is *man* who is identified as *ein Zeichen*, one which is 'without interpretation [*ohne Deutung*]' (*WhD* 6; 10). 'We are,' concludes Heidegger citing Hölderlin's 'Mnemosyne' in a way which looks back to the remarks of

the 'Letter on "Humanism",' 'a sign that is not read' (*WhD* 14; 18). On the connection of limit (*Grenze*) and πέρας to gathering, see also 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (VA 149: BW 356).

²⁵ Nancy, 'La Décision d'existence,' op. cit., 108.

²⁶ Michel Haar, *Le Chant de la terre: Heidegger et les assises de l'Historie de l'Être* (Paris: Éditions de l'Herne, 1987), 204. More or less the same point is made by Miguel de Beistegui, *Heidegger and the Political: Distopias* (London: Routledge, 1998), 86.

²⁷ Haar, *Le Chant de la terre*, op. cit., 204.

²⁸ SZ 126–7. Emphasis mine. The references in *Being and Time* to art and its cognates can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The most expansive of these is the recourse to the 'alten Fabel' of Cura (SZ 198–9 and 197 note 1) as a 'preontological testimony' of Dasein, in the course of which Heidegger wittingly elides the matter of its mythological or poetic status. What has gone unnoticed, however, is the small but significant softening of position with respect to the presentation of this fable: if one compares the penultimate draft of *Being and Time*, the Marburg lectures of two years earlier, this same fable is described as entirely 'naïve,' and the fact of its ability to tell us *anything* regarding Dasein's being-in-the-world regarded as 'quite astonishing' (GA 20: 419). Rather more puzzling, however, is Heidegger's evocation of this fable in order to 'make plain that our interpretation is no fabrication [*keine Erfindung ist*] but, as an ontological construction, it has a secure basis and has been sketched out beforehand in an elemental way' (SZ 197): in other words, his recourse to a fable in order to secure the interpretation against the charge of fabrication. In the light of what I shall argue in chapter 3, moreover, it is not insignificant that already in *Being and Time* Heidegger turns to a work of art in order to illustrate that 'the *perfectio* of man, his becoming what one can be in being-free for his

ownmost possibilities (projection), is one of the “accomplishments” [*eine “Leistung”*] of “care” (SZ 199). On the term “accomplishments” as opposed to “accomplishment [*Vollendung*],’ see chap. 3, below. On the only sustained reference in *Being and Time* to a particular work of art, see Robert Bernasconi, ‘Literary Attestation in Philosophy: Heidegger’s Footnote on Tolstoy’s “The Death of Ivan Ilyich”,’ *Heidegger in Question*, op. cit., 76–98.

29 SZ 260. At the very end of this section, Heidegger is forced to admit that however clear the ontological *possibility* of authentic being-toward-death may be, it remains, ‘after all, existentially a fantastical demand [*ein phantastische Zumutung*]’ (SZ 266).

30 SZ 256.

31 ‘To be certain of a being means: to hold it as something true [*es als wahres für wahr halten*]. But truth means the uncoveredness of beings. And all uncoveredness is grounded ontologically in ordinary truth, the disclosedness of Dasein’ (SZ 256). I will come back to this in due course.

32 SZ 256. Heidegger’s emphasis.

33 Cf. GA 24: 244–7.

34 Cf. GA 29/30: 7, 393.

35 Cf. GA 32: 212.

36 GA 24: 244. The status of art as a sign seem also to be assured, therefore.

37 GA 24: 246.

38 GA 24: 244. Strikingly, Heidegger comes back to Rilke rather later on in the lecture course, citing this same description now as an example of Dasein’s *inauthentic* self-understanding (cf. GA 24: 410). Michel Haar reads the lines from *The Basic Problems of*

Phenomenology as a 'discrète entrée en scène de la poésie'; *Le Chant de la terre*, op. cit., 204–6. As he notes there: 'the poet makes things be seen in the same way as the phenomenologist!' (ibid., 205). For Haar, however, the critical word in this discussion is *obzwar, although*. Thus regarding Heidegger's claim that 'the poet is able to see this original, *although* unreflected and not theoretically discovered world' (GA 24: 246–7. Emphasis mine), he comments that, immediately following the 'affirmation of the *non-fictive* character of art, the commentary hesitates and is cut short' (*Le Chant de la terre*, 206). As far as Haar is concerned, therefore, for the Heidegger of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* art is no more than 'une intuition aveugle' (ibid.). Whatever the considerable merits of Haar's fine book, I remain unconvinced on this point and it would, I think, suffice to read the following remarks from *Being and Time* to confute Haar's ensuing remarks: 'By looking at the world theoretically, we have already dimmed it down to the uniformity of what is purely present-to-hand' (SZ 138). If the 'world' which Rilke allows us to see is indeed 'nicht theoretisch erfundene,' as Heidegger insists, surely this renders the description all the more compelling as a document of being-in-the-world? One ought also to note Heidegger's use here of the word 'elementar' – 'a rare word in Heidegger,' as Haar rightly points out (*Le Chant de la terre*, 205). In the reference to Hyginus' fable in *Being and Time*, this word had been used in order to characterise the existential interpretation of Dasein as care, Heidegger noting there that the interpretation, far from being a mere fabrication (*Erfindung*), is one that has in fact been sketched out beforehand 'in an elemental [*elementaren*] way' (SZ 197). Rather more problematic is Ian Lyne's suggestion that the remarks of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* are intended as 'a phenomenological interpretation of poetry': *The Temporality of Language*, op. cit., 97. Although Lyne is right to emphasise the

importance of these lines, he altogether fails to appreciate that the concern here is *less* with an interpretation of poetry than with poetry as interpretation.

39 SZ 162.

40 If not, as Michel Haar suggests, ultimately disavowed; cf. *Le Chant de la terre*, op. cit., 206.

41 GA 5: 66; BW 202.

42 U 21.

43 U 22. Heidegger's emphasis.

44 OA 44. Heidegger's emphasis.

45 '... eine wesentliche Weise ... ist das Sich-ins-Werk-setzen der Wahrheit' (GA 5: 42, 50; BW 180, 186. Emphasis mine).

46 And, as we saw above, it should be recalled that as late as 1967 one finds Heidegger speaking of 'Die Herkunft der Kunst und die Bestimmung des Denkens.'

47 For some largely inconclusive considerations of these differences, see Robert Bernasconi, 'The Greatness of the Work of Art,' op. cit.; Emmanuel Martineau, 'Avant-propos de l'éditeur' (OA 1–8); Jacques Taminaux, 'The Origin of "The Origin of the Work of Art",' in Sallis (ed.), *Reading Heidegger*, op. cit., 392–404.

48 The reference here is to John Sallis' account of this lecture, 'Deformatives: Essentially Other than Truth' in Sallis (ed.), *Reading Heidegger*, op. cit., 29–46. As I shall want to show, it is in the lectures on art that Sallis' central thesis, that there is, 'within the very essence of truth, something essentially other than truth, a divergence from nature within nature, true monstrosity' (ibid., 29), finds its most concrete affirmation.

- 49 Following Klaus Held's formidable thesis that 'the world is the actual subject matter of phenomenology,' a thesis Heidegger would in no way dispute, this moment might equally be termed the *properly phenomenological* moment of Heidegger's text; 'The Finitude of the World: Phenomenology in Transition from Husserl to Heidegger' in *Ethics and Danger: Essays on Heidegger and Continental Philosophy*, eds. Arleen B. Dallery and Charles Scott (Albany: SUNY, 1992), 187–98 (187). In the following chapter, I am indebted both to this essay and to the same author's 'Heidegger und das Prinzip der Phänomenologie' in *Heidegger und die praktische Philosophie*, eds. Anne-Marie Gethmann-Siefert and Otto Pöggeler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988).
- 50 Letter to Elisabeth Blochmann of 1 May 1919 in *Martin Heidegger – Elisabeth Blochmann. Briefwechsel 1918–1969*, ed. Joachim W. Storck (Marbach am Neckar: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1989), 16.
- 51 Edmund Husserl, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* in *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1911–1921)*, *Husserliana XXV* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 61. This essay is, of course, one of the few of Husserl's works to which Heidegger's published work devotes any real expository space; see, in particular, the remarks of the Marburg lecture course of 1925 (GA 20 §13c).
- 52 Husserl, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, op. cit., 3.
- 53 Ibid., 61. Husserl's emphasis.
- 54 The following sentences gloss the meditation on phenomenological midwifery provided by the opening paragraphs of John Sallis' 'Image and Phenomenon' in *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995; second edition), 63–75.
- 55 GA 20: 32.

56 ‘... ihre absolut klaren Anfänge’; Husserl, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, op. cit., 61.

57 GA 56/57: 12. The ellipses are Heidegger’s own. Cf. GA 58: 1.

58 *Heidegger – Blochmann Briefwechsel*, op. cit., 16. Cf. SZ 38 note 1, 47 note 1, 50 note 1, etc..

59 GA 56/57: 7–8. For Heidegger, therefore, the relation of philosophy to worldview is one of fundamental incompatibility (*Unvereinbarkeit*) and radical separation (*radikale Trennung*). The reference point for such remarks is, once again, Husserl’s *Logos* article of 1911.

60 Husserl, *Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950) I §24; translated by W. R. Boyce Gibson as *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (New York: Collier Books-MacMillan, 1962), 83, translation modified (cited GA 56/57: 109).

61 GA 56/57: 109–10.

62 Cf. GA 56/57 §12 and 115. Significantly, this experienceable something (*Etwas*) is said by Heidegger to have ‘a genuine world-character’ (GA 56/57: 109).

63 Thus the first division of the lecture text, *Das Leben als Ursprungsgebiet der Phänomenologie*.

64 GA 56/57: 87. Hence Heidegger’s call for the philosophers to ‘throw themselves ... into robust reality’ (GA 57/58: 135).

65 GA 20: 178. Heidegger’s emphasis.

66 SD 71; BW 441.

67 Schürmann, *Le Principe d’anarchie*, op. cit., 144.

68 Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time*, op. cit., 117.

- 69 In the remarks on *Being and Time* that follow, I am indebted to three exemplary studies: John Sallis, 'Where Does *Being and Time* Begin?' in *Delimitations*, op. cit., 98–118; Reiner Schürmann, *Le Principe d'anarchie*, op. cit., 144–184; and Marlène Zarader, *Heidegger et les paroles de l'origine* (Paris: Vrin, 1986).
- 70 *Sophist* 244a. The citation is given here in Heidegger's translation (SZ 1).
- 71 Even if no 'genuine advance' is made by their doing so (SZ 9). The argument against fundamental ontology as offering anything in the way of 'proof' or 'results' is reopened later on in the book (SZ 315). By the time of the 'Letter on "Humanism",' of course, Heidegger's principle difficulty with the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time* is its still too 'inappropriate orientation toward "science" and "research"' (GA 9: 357; BW 258–9).
- 72 SZ 26. See, too, the opening remarks of the 1937–8 lecture course *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, where philosophy, 'in its incessant questioning,' is said never 'to yield results' and to remain 'always and necessary strange to a thinking preoccupied with calculation, use and learning' (GA 45: 4), precisely the same strangeness which will be reiterated several years later at the outset of the 'Letter on "Humanism"' (GA 9: 314–15, 317; BW 218–19, 221). Herman Philipse makes a similar point in order to justify his thesis of a *Heidegger absconditus*. For Philipse, reading Heidegger involves inevitably a certain 'disappointment,' one engendered by the fact that, so he claims, 'we cannot provide an answer to the question of being at all'; *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 7. Philipse justifies his claims with references to remarks from the dialogue with which Heidegger concludes *Gelassenheit* of 1959: 'We ought to do nothing but wait [*Wir sollen nichts tun sondern warten*]' (G 35), and to the following caution from *Introduction to Metaphysics*: 'To know how to question means: to

know how to wait, even a whole lifetime' (EM 157). It hardly needs to be pointed out that to wait (*warten*) can also mean to await, to attend upon a projected future, and quite apart from an absence of any critical generosity whatsoever, an absence characterised by the loaded nomination of *Gelassenheit* (usually translated as releasement, but more properly as composure, calmness, etc.) as *resignation*, the principle difficulty with Philipse's remarks is that they altogether fails to grasp what Heidegger understands by the notion of questioning, which, as a rather more careful account of Heidegger points out, 'means something quite different from interrogation or raising questions with a view to answering them'; de Beistegui, *Heidegger and the Political: Distopias*, op. cit., 172 note 21. That such a structure is operative in Heidegger's work from the start is borne out by the following remark from Theodore Kisiel: 'Phenomenology ... seek[s] to determine origins and ultimates, the first and last things, the underived from which all else is derived, which can only be "shown" or "pointed out" but not "proved" ...'; *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, op. cit., 39.

⁷³ GA 20: 179. In which, moreover, moreover, the Stranger's response to his interlocutors is regarded explicitly 'as a question' (ibid.). The treatment meted out in the previous semester's lecture course on Plato's *Sophist* (GA 19: 446–9) is the more sustained. Of the Stranger's response, translated now as follows: 'Because we find ourselves at an impasse as regards what you are saying, you will have to explain to us what you mean when you use the word "being",' Heidegger comments: '*This is the genuinely central concern of this passage and of the whole dialogue*' (GA 19: 446. Heidegger's emphasis). It is in the course of this commentary, moreover, that the formal structure of questioning which guides *Being and Time* is first set in place. As Theodore Kisiel rightly remarks: 'a student who had skipped the semester on the *Sophist* would have had trouble following

- all these tersely made connections'; *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, op. cit., 364.
- 74 SZ 6. Compare the remarks of Held, 'The Finitude of the World,' op. cit., 195.
- 75 EM 29. Important to note in this context, however, is the fact that Heidegger speaks here of *Anfang* and *not* of *Ursprung*. Although the connection between the respective positions of *Being and Time* and *Introduction to Metaphysics* is clear, it is also more complicated than I am allowing, therefore. On the particular sense of *Anfang* as opposed to *Ursprung* and to *Begin*, see Schürmann, *Le Principe d'anarchie*, op. cit., 145–52, and chap. 3, note 28, below. See also the informative note of Werner Marx, *Heidegger and the Tradition* (Evanston: North-western University Press, 1971), 116.
- 76 SZ 2. For Heidegger's more considered account of the necessity underlying his own 'discovery of tradition' (SZ 20), see the remarks of the penultimate draft, *History of the Concept of Time*, which culminate in the following declaration of intent: 'Radicalised in its ownmost possibility, phenomenology is nothing other than the questioning of Plato and Aristotle brought back to life: *the repetition, the retaking of the beginning of our scientific philosophy*' (GA 20: 184–5). On the function and implications of the word 'today' in these remarks, see Andrew Benjamin, 'Time and Task: Benjamin and Heidegger Showing the Present' in Benjamin and Osbourne (eds.), *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, op. cit., 216–50.
- 77 SZ 2–3.
- 78 Paola Marrati-Guenoun, *La Genèse et la trace: Derrida lecteur de Husserl et Heidegger* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 126.
- 79 EM 29–30. Strangely enough, Heidegger uses here the word *Dunkel*, obscurity, precisely the term which *Being and Time* had used in order to characterise our orientation today

to the question about being (SZ 4, cited above). It should be noted, moreover, that although I am here following the lead of *Introduction to Metaphysics* in order to formulate matters in terms of the possibility of questioning (what is allowed for by the tradition) and its necessity (what is dictated by the present situation), the point could equally well be made in terms either of retrospection and prospection, or of *Andenken* and *Vordenken*. For an instance of the former, see Schürmann, *Le Principe d'anarchie*, op. cit., 159; for the latter, see Zarader, *Heidegger et les paroles de l'origine*, op. cit., 27–35, and Marrati-Guénoun, *La genèse et la trace*, op. cit., 126.

⁸⁰ SZ 6. Heidegger's emphasis. The demonstration of and justification for this move, made in the 1925 lecture course *History of the Concept of Time* (GA 20: 199–200), is absent from the analyses of *Being and Time*.

⁸¹ GA 20: 193, 194.

⁸² SZ 5.

⁸³ GA 24: 457.

⁸⁴ SZ 5. Heidegger's emphasis. Compare the reading of Derrida, 'Les Fins de l'homme' in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Seuil, 1967).

⁸⁵ SZ 15.

⁸⁶ Jacques Derrida, *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), 36, 26. Compare 'Les fins de l'homme,' op. cit., esp. 148–53, Derrida's earliest attempt to expose the presuppositions that constrain the point of departure of *Being and Time*.

⁸⁷ 'Il n'est choisi comme étant exemplaire pour la question de l'être que depuis l'expérience de la question, la possibilité du *Fragen*, telle qu'elle s'inscrit dans le réseau du *Gefragte*, l'être, de l'*Erfragte*, le sens de l'être, du *Befragte der Seinsfrage*, à savoir de l'étant que nous sommes' (ibid., 36. Derrida's emphasis).

88 *De l'esprit*, 37.

89 SZ 43. Cited here in Derrida's translation: '... elle exige l'assurance d'une point de départ juste'; *De l'esprit*, 37.

90 The distinction I am drawing here is also argued for by William McNeill, 'The First Principle of Hermeneutics' in *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in his Earliest Thought*, eds. Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (Albany: SUNY, 1994), 393–408, esp. 404–6, and by John Sallis in the context of a discussion of Heidegger's late essay 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking': 'The structure of the question as the comportment of Dasein toward itself is no longer ... to serve as the point of departure. The *Ansatz* is earlier The question would be deployed only starting from what would call it forth, not with an absolute privilege'; 'Flights of Spirit' in *Double Truth* (Albany: SUNY, 1995), 19–35 (32). See, too, the distinction drawn by Reiner Schürmann between 'le concept de commencement' and 'l'origine originaire,' the former denoting a 'familiarity with what we nevertheless do not know,' the latter 'the temporal condition of what is to be thought and done ..., the horizon opened by our project of being' (*Le principe d'anarchie*, op. cit., 160–1, 172). Such is not, of course, the only point at which Derrida's reading begins to break down. Exemplary in this regard is the famous intervention of Françoise Dastur who, at the Essex colloquium 'Reading Heidegger' at which Derrida first presented the arguments of *De l'esprit*, drew attention to a passage from the essay of 1957–8 'The Essence of Language' in which, having suggested that 'every onset of every questioning [*jeder Ansatz jeder Frage*] holds itself within the promise of what is put into question,' Heidegger remarks that 'the proper bearing of thinking [*die eigentliche Gebärde des Denkens*] is *not* questioning but listening to the promise of that which is to

- come into question' (GA 12: 164. Emphasis mine). For Derrida's somewhat haphazard response to this intervention, see *De l'esprit*, 147–54 note.
- 91 GA 26: 176. Heidegger's emphasis.
- 92 SZ 13.
- 93 SZ 52. Heidegger's emphasis. A marginal note written by Heidegger in his own copy of the text and keyed to the word *disturbed* (*beunruhigt*) is rather less charitable as regards the effects of philosophy's discomfort: 'Hardly! The concept of world is not grasped at all' (SZ 441 note 52). It is Klaus Held who has argued most persuasively in favour of locating the outset of the analytic in a phenomenology of world openness; see 'Heidegger und das Prinzip der Phänomenologie,' op. cit..
- 94 GA 56/57: 63.
- 95 Kant, *KrV* B xli note. Somewhat needlessly in my view, given the care with which his argument is constructed, Heidegger will in §43 make much of the fact that Kant writes here of 'das Dasein der Dinge außer uns' (B xli), rather than, as presumably he ought, of *das Vorhandenheit der Dinge außer uns*, remarking that, for Kant, 'the term "Dasein" means the being-present-to-hand of consciousness as much as the being -present-to-hand of things' (SZ 203).
- 96 Something, I think, Kant himself would not deny. The modifications to the argument introduced by lengthy footnote to the second edition Preface, from which the foregoing quotations are taken, indicates a certain dissatisfaction on his part as to the 'Refutation of Idealism' itself. The note is, moreover, only the first of numerous attempts on the part of Kant to resolve the difficulty. For other such attempts, see R 5653–4 (Ak XVIII: 305–13) and R 6312–17 (Ak XVIII: 613–29). Suffice it to say, the evident hostility of *Being and Time* to the Refutation of Idealism does not allow for the elision of Heidegger's

position and that of, say, logical positivism, for which the spurious character of the epistemological problem of the world derives from its resistance to all empirical or scientific proofs, itself clearly a variant on the problematic idealism refuted by Kant. For such a position, see the researches, contemporaneous with the redaction of *Being and Time*, of Rudolph Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World: Pseudoproblems in Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

97 SZ 205. Heidegger's emphasis.

98 SZ 205. Heidegger's emphasis.

99 SZ 13.

100 Cf. GA 56/57: 117.

101 GA 58: 62–3.

102 SZ 202. Heidegger's emphasis.

103 Schürmann, *Le Principe d'anarchie*, op. cit., 172–3. The final sentence, not present in Schürmann's original essay, comes from Christine-Marie Gros' authorised English translation of these remarks, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 143.

104 SZ 214.

105 SZ 34.

106 *KrV* A 58; B 82. Cf. GA 21: 19 and SZ 215.

107 GA 21: 19.

108 'Hier der eigentliche Ort des einsetzenden Einsprungs in das Dasein' (SZ 444 note).

109 Kant, *KrV* A 58; B 82 (cited SZ 215).

110 SZ 217. Heidegger's emphasis.

- 111 Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1968) II 1: 122. Compare the definition of Emmanuel Levinas: ‘Truth is an adequation of thought, as a purely signifying intention, to an object given in intuition, an intuition that grasps an object that is present in all its concrete reality, “in the flesh”’; *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, translated by André Orianne (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 134–5.
- 112 SZ 218.
- 113 SZ 220–1.
- 114 SZ 221.
- 115 GA 31: 135.
- 116 SD 61; BW 431. One ought to note, moreover, Jacques Taminiaux’s recollection of Heidegger’s Zähringen suggestion that ‘the meditation on the origin of the work of art had played a decisive role in the *Kehre*, the turn that occurred in his thought in the thirties’; ‘The Origin of “The Origin of the Work of Art”’ in Sallis (ed.), *Reading Heidegger*, op. cit., 392–404 (392).
- 117 GA 5: 1; BW 143.
- 118 GA 5: ; BW 175–6.
- 119 Thus in a marginal note to Heidegger’s own copy of the Reclam edition of the essay, keyed to the opening words of the text: ‘Mißverständlich die Rede vom “Ursprung”’ (GA 5: 1 note b). Reiner Schürmann draws similar conclusions, arguing that these opening lines characterise the notion of *Ursprung* by what he deems the ‘same duplicity’ as the Aristotelian notion of ἀρχή, namely ‘commencement and commandment,’ so ‘integrating the Aristotelian schema into a regional phenomenology’; *Le principe d’anarchie*, op. cit., 180 note 3. According to Schürmann’s self-avowed valorisation of Heidegger’s later work.

‘this regional conception of the origin is entirely abandoned by the time of *Zur Sache des Denkens*’ (ibid.). For Aristotle’s account of the various λέγεται of the notion of ἀρχή, see *Metaphysics* V 1: 1012b 34–1013a 17.

120 OA 20. Heidegger’s emphasis.

121 GA 5: 69; BW 205.

122 GA 5: 69; BW 205.

123 The reference here is, of course, to the lecture of 1930, ‘On the Essence of Truth’ (GA 9: 201; BW 137). I will come back to this proposition in the following section.

124 In the Freiburg lectures, the question was posed in the following way: ‘where can a work of art have its origin if not in its production by the *artist* [*in der Hervorbringung durch den Künstler*]?’ (OA 20). By the following year this has become the sardonic suggestion that ‘the work of art arises [*entspringt*] ... from out of and through the activity of the artist [*die Tätigkeit des Künstlers*]’ (GA 5: 1; BW 143), Heidegger now holding the notion of producing or bringing-forth (*hervorbringen*) in reserve.

125 GA 5: 1; BW 143.

126 GA 5: 1; BW 143. Heidegger’s emphasis. Cf. U 7; OA 22.

127 GA 5: 2; BW 144.

128 GA 5: 2; BW 143. The reference here is presumably to Hegel’s declaration that art, ‘considered in its highest determination,’ is ‘a thing of the past [*ein Vergangenes*]’; *Ästhetik in Werke in zwanzig Bände*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971) XIII: 25. Heidegger cites this remark in the Afterword to the Frankfurt text (GA 5: 68; BW 205), as well as in the main body of the Freiburg lectures of the previous year (OA 54).

- 129 This proposition, surprisingly not cited by Heidegger, comes from Aristotle's enumeration of the various senses of the word ἀρχή. See *Metaphysics* V 1: 1013a 13–14: ἀρξαι δὲ λέγονται καὶ αἱ τέχναι
- 130 GA 5: 2; BW 144.
- 131 GA 5: 2, 3; BW 144.
- 132 GA 5: 2; BW 144. As Denis Schmidt observes: 'This remark must not be taken as an excuse for an awkward or misfired beginning to the text but as a comment on the character of the beginning as such'; *The Ubiquity of the Finite: Hegel, Heidegger, and the Entitlements of Philosophy* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1988), 102. See Schmidt's ensuing consideration of the 'prominent, almost archetypal, role' played by 'the image of the circle in antiquity' (ibid., 102–3).
- 133 SZ 152. The context is a discussion of hermeneutic circularity, i.e. of the second sense of origin discussed above. The *Verstoß gegen die Logik* is announced as early as the 1924/25 winter semester lecture course *Plato's Sophist*, where one finds the following declaration: 'the "logic" of the determination of beings may not be invoked as the criterion for the explication of being' (GA 19: 447). See also the remarks of §1 of *Being and Time*: 'the mode of determination of beings which has its justification within limits – the "definition" of traditional logic which is itself rooted in ancient ontology – cannot be applied to being,' an assertion reinforced by the claim that 'a riddle lies *a priori* in every relation and being toward beings as beings' (SZ 4). Broadly the same point is made in the 1929 lecture 'What is Metaphysics?' where a further declaration concerning origin leads Heidegger to the conclusion here 'the idea of "logic" itself dissolves in the whirlpool of a more original questioning' (GA 9: 117; BW 105). On the extent of such circularity, see

- again the analyses of Lyne, *The Temporality of Language*, op. cit., 61–71, and Schmidt, *The Ubiquity of the Finite*, op. cit., 100–1.
- 134 SZ 152. Whilst nonetheless disqualifying it *a priori* from ‘the sphere of scientific knowing’ (ibid.).
- 135 SZ 153.
- 136 SZ 153.
- 137 The analogy would also hold for the circle, significantly restated at the outset of the lectures on fine art, of Hegel’s speculative methodology; cf. *Ästhetik, Werke XIII*: 11.
- 138 GA 5: 67; BW 204. One ought to note, however, that the German verb ‘sehen’ has much the same figurative extension as the English ‘to see’ (*Wie siehst du das?*, *Das darf man nicht so sehen*, etc.). Coming back to these ‘propositions’ some years later, Heidegger reiterates nonetheless this absence of pretension; the essay, we are told in the Addendum, gives ‘no answers.’ Quite the opposite, in fact. What ‘gives the illusion’ that such answers are forthcoming are, Heidegger says, ‘directives for questioning (see the opening propositions of the Afterword)’ (GA 5: 73; BW 211). The analogy with the position set out in *Being and Time* is again clear. For Heidegger’s more sustained considerations of the notion of riddle, again in the context of a meditation on origin, see GA 39:239–44 and GA 53: 22–3 and 40–1.
- 139 U 7. Compare OA 24.
- 140 GA 5: 59; BW 196.
- 141 GA 5: 44; BW 182.
- 142 These same shoes, although absent from both the draft and the Freiburg lecture, also crop up, once again as a ‘helpful example,’ in the intervening lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics* (EM 27).

143 GA 5: 21; BW 161–2. Robert Bernasconi has drawn attention to what he deems an ‘insufficiently appreciated’ distinction between this example and the one that follows, that of a temple. Bernasconi remarks: ‘Whereas the temple opens up a world’ in historical fashion, ‘the painting of the peasant woman’s shoes tells us *no more* than what the peasant woman knows without noticing or reflecting’; *The Question of Language in Heidegger’s History of Being*, op. cit., 36. To my mind, Bernasconi is too intent on reading Heidegger’s description here in terms of the pre-phenomenological encounter with equipment which had sustained the considerations of worldhood in *Being and Time*. ‘The Origin of the Work of Art,’ however, displays a considerably different emphasis and is concerned less with the concerned dealings of Dasein in which the equipmental world as a whole is sighted in circumspection (*Umsicht*), than with the historical happening of truth. What the painting accordingly discloses is not so much what the pair of shoes ‘is in truth,’ as is often said, than their character as equipment, ‘what the equipment ... is in truth.’ No less than the temple, moreover, do the shoes open up a world. ‘World and earth,’ Heidegger says, ‘exist [*sind ... da*] for the peasant woman, and for those who are with her in this way, only thus: in equipment. We say “only” and thereby err; for the reliability of the equipment first gives the simple world its security and safeguards for the earth the freedom of its continual onrush’ (GA 5: 20; BW 160). And in a marginal note keyed to the remark that ‘world and earth exist,’ Heidegger adds: “‘exist” = are present [*anwesend*]’ (GA 5: 20 note a). Here, no less than with the temple, it is a matter of a world and of the earth first becoming present, and so a matter also of the historical manner in which art discloses truth, precisely what Bernasconi finds to be lacking in the discussion of van Gogh’s painting.

144 GA 5: 23; BW 163.

- 145 GA 5: 21; BW 162.
- 146 GA 5: 69–70; BW 206.
- 147 GA 5: 37; BW 176. It should be noted that the extensive questioning of truth is notably lacking from both the draft and the Freiburg lecture.
- 148 GA 26: 268.
- 149 GA 5: 37; BW 176.
- 150 GA 9: 201; BW 137.
- 151 GS 5: 39; BW 177.
- 152 René Descartes, *Regulae, Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Vrin, 1997) X: 371–2.
- 153 GA 5: 38; BW 177.
- 154 That Heidegger recognises something of himself in this is attested by the series of letters written during the 1950s and 60s to Erhart Kästner, in which the philosopher confesses his worries about the impending trip to Greece: ‘Greece is still always the dream and every new advance of thinking lives in it,’ he writes in 1957; *Martin Heidegger – Erhard Kästner Briefwechsel*, ed. Heinrich Petzt (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1986), 34. In the notebook kept whilst in Greece, Heidegger notes that such worries stemmed from a fear that the reality of modern Greece might not live up to the dream. ‘The Greece of today could deny [*verwehren*] the old one, prevent what is proper to it coming to light.’ The fear is that Heidegger’s own thought of Greece might turn out to be ‘a mere invention,’ his *Denkweg an Irrweg; Aufenthalte* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), 3.
- 155 GA 5: 37–8; BW 176. Compare the essay of 1940, ‘Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,’ where this thesis is most fully argued: ‘Plato’s thinking follows the change in the essence of truth’

(GA 9: 237). As Heidegger notes in his concluding remarks to *Wegmarken*, the ‘train of thought in this essay’ goes back to the 1931/32 lecture course *On the Essence of Truth* (GA 9: 483). See also the exemplary reading of the aletheic turn in Jean-François Courtine’s ‘Le Platonisme de Heidegger’ in *Heidegger et la phénoménologie* (Paris: Vrin, 1990), 150–8.

156 GA 5: 23; BW 163.

157 GA 5: 39–40; BW 178.

158 GA 5: 40; BW 178.

159 GA 9: 193–4; BW 130.

160 GA 5: 40; BW 178.

161 GA 5: 41; BW 179.

162 On the particular importance of this example, see Bernasconi, *The Question of Language in Heidegger’s History of Being*, op. cit., 35–6. In the corresponding lines of both the draft and the Freiburg lecture, Heidegger writes of ‘der Zeustempel,’ so giving the impression that he has a particular temple in mind (U 8; OA 24). Which one? A clue appears to be afforded by the fact that Heidegger invites us in each version of the text ‘to call on the temple at Paestum at its own site’ (U 7; OA 22; GA 5: 26; BW 166), issuing the invitation immediately before he turns to the temple as a specific example. It is generally agreed, however, that none of the temples in Paestum was in fact dedicated to Zeus. Emmanuel Martineau, having compared the description of the temple afforded by Heidegger in the Freiburg and Frankfurt lectures with those extant temples which *are* so dedicated, concludes that this temple is ‘incontestablement idéal’ (OA 56 note 3). For a further exploration of Heidegger’s temple, see John Sallis, ‘Temples of Earth’ in *Stone*, op. cit., 82–115.

- 163 Cf. U 22; OA 24; GA 5: 27; BW 167. It is presumably Hegel's account of the entrance of the God into the temple as 'a lightning flash of individuality that smites its way into the inert mass, permeating it with its presence' that is the point of reference here; *Ästhetik, Werke* XIII: 117–18.
- 164 According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, it was in the introduction of these two terms that the full force of the lectures' sensational impact was felt most acutely; 'Zur Einführung' in Martin Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1960), 107–9. If the mere introduction of earth as a category of presencing seems to run counter to Heidegger's project thus far – particularly if read in terms of the categorical refusal in *Being and Time* to countenance anything like an original insertion of Dasein into nature – the concept of world developed here marks an equally significant shift. Thus, in addition to the Dasein-analytic of *Being and Time*, 'The Essence of Grounds' of 1929 had afforded a sustained examination of world in respect of the transcendence of Dasein (GA 9: 123–75, esp. 137–62), as had the second part of the winter semester lecture course of the same year, *The Basic Concepts of Metaphysics*, in respect of Dasein's world-constitution (GA 29/30: 261–415, esp. 410–15). For a detailed examination of this shift in emphasis, see Werner Marx, *Heidegger and the Tradition* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 183–91.
- 165 GA 5: 27–8; BW 167. In the Freiburg lecture, these sentences are almost identical, the phrase 'die Menschenwesen die Gestalt seines Geschickes gewinnen' having replaced the words 'eine Volkes engefügt sind' (OA 26).
- 166 Cf. OA 22, 52.
- 167 GA 5: 31; BW 170.
- 168 SZ 108.

- 169 GA 53: 26–7.
- 170 GA 5: 29; BW 169.
- 171 The reference here is, of course, to the reflections of the essay ‘The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility’ in which Benjamin speaks of ‘the present decline of aura [*des gegenwärtigen Verfalls der Aura*]’ (GS I 2: 440, 479) before remarking: ‘even the most complete reproduction lacks one thing: the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence [*einmaliges Dasein*] in the place [*Ort*] where it is to be found’ (GS I 2: 437, 475).
- 172 GA 5: 26; BW 166.
- 173 GA 5: 31; BW 170.
- 174 GA 5: 30; BW 170. The phrase does not appear in the Freiburg lectures, where Heidegger writes instead that ‘die Welt waltet,’ the world *reigns* (OA 28, 30). In an editorial note to this remark, Emmanuel Martineau states that the formula is unequivocal in Heidegger’s typescript, adding further that the phrase ‘die Welt weltet’ is used for the first time in the version of 1936 (OA 57 note 9). Not so. In the corresponding lines of the draft, written some months before the Freiburg text, Heidegger had written: ‘World worlds – it guides [*umleitet*] our Dasein like an escort [*ein Geleit*], in which the lingering and hastening, remoteness and nearness, extent and limits of all beings remain open to us [*uns ... offenbleibt*]’ (U 9). Quite why the phrase does not appear in the Freiburg lecture text is a matter for speculation, however.
- 175 GA 56/57: 71.
- 176 GA 56/57: 73. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Kisiel, having dealt at length with the relation of Heidegger’s *es* of prepredicative immediacy to the validating *es gilt* of neo-Kantian theoretical judgement, describes the employment of this ‘felicitous expression’

drawn from the 'linguistic treasure trove' of the German language (GA 1: 211) as the 'central insight' of Heidegger's thinking; *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, op. cit., 25.

177 'O Blik der Sonne, du schönster, der / Dem siebenthorigen Thebe / Seit langem scheint ...' (GA 56/57: 74).

178 'Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry' (GA 4: 38).

179 GA 5: 28, 32; BW 168, 172. Heidegger's emphasis.

180 OA: 30; GA 5: 32; BW 171. What Heidegger is calling here 'die Nennkraft des Wortes,' a power or force brought forth into manifestness by the work of art, has striking resonances with Benjamin's identification of the essence of language as a 'Namenssprach' (GS II 1: 143–7; SW I: 64–7).

181 GA 5: 28; BW 168.

182 GA 5: 28; BW 168. Compare U 9; OA 26. The first and final clauses are identical in each case.

183 Haar, *Le Chant de la terre*, op. cit., 108.

184 GA 5: 33; BW 172.

185 GA 5: 43; BW 181. Compare OA 26.

186 GA 5: 30; BW 169.

187 GA 5: 30; BW 169–70.

188 GA 5: 33; BW 173.

189 OA 28.

190 U 12.

191 U 22.

- 192 OA 32.
- 193 GA 5: 35; BW 174.
- 194 OA 34. Heidegger's emphasis.
- 195 GA 5: 42; BW 180. Emphasis mine.
- 196 GA 5: 42; BW 180.
- 197 OA 34.
- 198 GA 5: 49; BW 190.
- 199 Cf., for example, GA 24: 150.
- 200 GS 5: 50; BW 187.
- 201 GA 5: 35; BW 172.
- 202 GS 5: 64–5; BW 201.

CHAPTER TWO

Affiliations: Benjamin's Concept of Philosophy

Every great work has its sibling (brother or sister?) in a philosophical sphere.¹

Writing in 1929 for *Die literarische Welt*, Benjamin concludes his review of a lecture given by one Edgar Dacqué with a passing reference to what he describes as the 'fundamental breakthrough' of phenomenology.² The breakthrough, as Benjamin understands it, turns on the 'strict opposition' of phenomenological thinking to anything like a notion of system. 'In place of the idealistic system,' he writes, 'Husserl sets the notion of discontinuous phenomenology [*die diskontinuierliche Phänomenologie*].'³

Reference to Husserl are rare in Benjamin's work. The claim itself, however, is perhaps enough to indicate that his attitude toward phenomenological research is rather less blandly antipathetic than is often assumed.⁴ Fleshed out somewhat, it would presumably run like this: phenomenological thinking is directed toward self-effacement in the face of the things themselves. It is thinking that places itself under the demand that '*the impulse of research ... proceed not from philosophies but from things and from problems [von den Sachen und Problemen]*,'⁵ from 'a free dedication to the problems themselves and to the demands stemming from them.'⁶ Circling within the discreet 'spheres of direct intuition' (presumably what Benjamin intends here by 'discontinuity,' *Diskontinuität*), it could not but stand opposed to the epistemic

unity projected by the traditional notion of system⁷ To quote from one of the younger and more precocious adherents to Husserl's methodological demands: the concrete immediacy of experience that provides phenomenology with its principle focus 'cannot be attained by any conceptual system thus far constructed, but only by phenomenological life in its ever increasing intensification of itself.'⁸ So far as Benjamin's review is concerned, however, the underlying issue here appears rather different. The opposition of phenomenology to the traditional notion of system is *not* said to stem from the 'attitude' of phenomenological life as such, what the same exponent of Husserl will describe as its essential moment (*Wesensmoment des Lebens*) or the experienceable as such (*Erlebbares überhaupt*), and that Benjamin will himself explore in notes of the following year in terms of the disposition (*Habitus*) of a lived life.⁹ The issue, rather, concerns the 'opposition' of 'the unity and continuity of intuition' to 'the traditional form of such unity, the system.'¹⁰ One assumes although it is not made explicit by Benjamin, that the reference here is to the analyses of the *Logical Investigations* and, more specifically, to the way in which Husserl undertakes there to broach the question of truth. It will be recalled that the determination of truth advanced there by Husserl turns on its relation to knowledge. *Not*, however, to the knowing that attends a proposition concerning an object, but to the specifically *intentional* structure of knowing, its character as a fulfilled intention or as intuition (*Anschauung*). It will be recalled further that knowing is not an empty intuition but an act of identification (presumably what Benjamin intends here by 'continuity,' *Kontinuität*) in which what is intuited (what is present in the flesh, *leibhaftig anwesend*, to use Husserl's locution) is the same as what was intended or aimed at. This identity (presumably what Benjamin intends here by 'unity,' *Einheit*) is, for

Husserl, truth in its most basic sense, ‘the complete agreement of the intended and the given as such.’¹¹ Quoting again from the young phenomenologist cited a moment ago, this time from a celebrated defence of Husserl orchestrated almost a decade after the earlier remarks:

Phenomenology ... calls for a step by step, expressly *intuitive* envisaging and supervisory demonstration of the issue. Accordingly one cannot – without diverting the entire direction [*Sinn*] of the investigations – simply pull out results and build them into a system ... It lies in the essence of phenomenological investigations that they ... must in each case be *repeated* and rehearsed anew.¹²

Now the notion of discontinuity that Benjamin takes to be exemplary of phenomenological thinking makes a rather more celebrated appearance shortly before the remarks of this review, in the Epistemo-critical Foreword to the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, where the ‘breakthrough’ with respect to ‘the logic of the system’ is, of course, his own.¹³ Once again, moreover, the breakthrough turns on the character that is determined for truth. On what Benjamin will call *das Sein der Wahrheit* and so, by implication, on *ihr gemäße Verhalten*, the stance or comportment that truth entails.¹⁴ On the separation, constructed and developed in the ensuing pages of the Foreword, ‘of truth from the contexture of knowing [*Zusammenhänge des Erkennens*].’¹⁵ On the claim, whose far-reaching implications those pages will

begin to explore, that 'the object of knowledge ... is *not* truth [*der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis ... ist nicht die Wahrheit*].'¹⁶

The claim here is clearly the same, then, as the one considered in the previous chapter with respect to Heidegger. In contrast to Heidegger's challenge to the location of the phenomenon of truth in the act of knowing, however, which rests, as we have seen, on an analytical regression from propositional truth (*Satzwahrheit*) to intuitive truth (*Anschauungs-wahrheit*) to, finally, its more original character as disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*), Benjamin's argument is largely assertoric and low key, and develops rather by way of an attention to what he terms the *form* or *method* of philosophical projects.¹⁷ These are not, he suspects, incidental to such projects. Nor are they simply part of their didactic furnishings. Method, in other words, is not *mathesis*. Rather, it is something *eigen*, something proper or specific to philosophy as such. It is, in Benjamin's terms, an esoterism (*eine Esoterik eignet*) that philosophy 'is powerless to discard ..., that it has rightly to acknowledge.'¹⁸ Clearly, therefore, method cannot be thought in terms of a simple preference or choice but only, adopting once more the closing formulations of Husserl's *Logos* article, in terms of something *preindicated* (*vorgezeichneten*) by the problems or issues themselves.

What, then, is the basic problem or issue of philosophy? That is, in what problem or issue does Benjamin find philosophy to be preindicated? In the Foreword to the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, the basic issue for philosophy is the question of truth. *Not*, therefore, in the sense that philosophy would have been already determined or established and only then brought to bear on the question of truth; rather, the way in which that question is itself determined would determine the

nature – the form or method – of the project of philosophy as such. It is in this connection that the rather puzzling references made throughout the Foreword to ‘the method of truth’ or to ‘the method of knowledge’ – rather than to, say, the method of Plato or Leibniz, or to the method of phenomenology or mathematics, etc. – need to be understood. ‘If philosophy is to hold true to the law of its form,’ Benjamin declares accordingly, ‘not as the mediated guide to knowing [*vermittelnde Anleitung zum Erkennen*] but as the presentation of truth [*Darstellung der Wahrheit*], then the exercise of this form, and not its anticipation in the system, will have to be accorded its due importance.’¹⁹

The principle point that needs to be retained here, therefore, is that Benjamin’s ostensibly methodological reflections will have largely *philosophical* significance with regard to the determination of truth.

What, then, is the method of truth? What is *ihr gemäße Verhalten*? What is the stance or comportment appropriate to truth? Before undertaking to address this question, it is important to note that the reference here to the notion of comportment with respect to truth is fundamentally different to that with which Husserl had undertaken to demonstrate the possibility of the accordance of a true statement with the thing about which the statement is made. It will be recalled from the previous chapter that it is only because the statement is also a comporting (*Verhalten*) toward the thing that it can first accord with it. It will be recalled, further, that it is only in the referral of such comportment to its ground, what he calls the openness of comportment (*Offenständigkeit des Verhaltens*) by which things are *such-as* (*so-wie*) they are, that Heidegger comes, in the lecture ‘On the Essence of Truth,’ to identify the essence of truth as the freedom of disclosive letting beings be (*entbergende*

Seinlassen des Seinden).²⁰ With regard to the remarks of the Foreword, however, the point rather concerns the manner in which the question of truth is itself to be addressed; that is, it is *not* a matter of the conditions of possibility of truth, what Heidegger's marginal note terms the 'ground of the making-possible' of truth,²¹ but of what is would be required of the analysis in order that truth show itself *as truth*.

What, then, is the method of truth? Benjamin begins with an opposition. To the syncretism of the systematic web, which undertakes 'to ensnare truth ... *as though* [als] it were something which flew in from outside,' he counterposes the 'alternative philosophical form' of the scholastic *tractatus*, a form whose principle characteristic he declares to be 'the renunciation of the uninterrupted course of intent [Intention].'²² In Françoise Proust's elegant expression, the *tractatus* is *le traite éclaté*.²³ Needless to say, the character of the opposition is significant, and amounts to something like a change of register. Counterposing the determination of truth proper to the system to that proper to the *tractatus*, Benjamin moves from a position in which truth is, to use the formulation of his earlier Kant notes, an *activity* (*Tätigkeit*) done to something, to one in which truth is seen as *ein tranzendentes Intransitivum*.²⁴ Leaving this significance momentarily to one side, let us merely note that in the Foreword, just as in the review of Dacqué's lecture, discontinuity is mobilised as a mark of method:

Presentation is the embodiment of its method. Method is digression.
Presentation as digression [*Darstellung als Umweg*] – such is, then, the

methodological character of the treatise ... Thinking starts tirelessly anew, returning in roundabout fashion to the thing itself [*die Sache selbst*].²⁵

It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that when Benjamin returns in the Foreword to the notion of discontinuity he does so under the aegis of a remark taken from an essay by one Jean Hering, a student of Husserl, published in the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* of the previous year. Turning once again to the determination of truth as the relation of essences, a relation now described by the term *resonant (tönende)*,²⁶ Benjamin declares the multiplicity (*Vielheit*) of these relations such as to admit of enumeration (*es ist zählbar*). Such essence, Hering suggests in the passage cited by Benjamin,

lead a life distinct *toto coelo* from that of objects and their conditions; the existence of such essences does not allow of being forced dialectically by the selection and addition of some random ... complex which we may encounter in an object; rather is their number enumerable [*gezählt*] and each of these must be sought on the site of its worldly connections [*ihr zukommenden Orte ihrer Welt*] until one finds it, like a *rocher de bronze*, or until the hope of its existence has been shown to be illusory.²⁷

To which Benjamin adds:

Ignorance of this discontinuous finitude of truth [*ihrer diskontinuierlichen Endlichkeit*] has often frustrated energetic attempts at a renewal of the

doctrine of Ideas, most recently those of the later Romantics. In their speculations, the linguistic character of truth is replaced by that of a reflexive consciousness.²⁸

If the affirmative treatment of intentionality made in Herring's essay – which, as the citation suggests, comprises an effective rebuke to the attempt to hitch the constituting consciousness of phenomenology, the intentional givenness of an object to consciousness, to the ethos of an objective construction – runs almost exactly counter to the claims of the Foreword, Benjamin chooses to elide this fact, focussing instead on the notion of 'discontinuous finitude' in order to give expression to what he is calling truth.

It is in precisely this connection, then, that I shall want to focus on Benjamin's exploration of the filial relation of philosophy to art announced in the epigraph to this chapter. As the foregoing remarks suggest, the concern here will be less with the manner in which Benjamin undertakes to treat art as a particular object of philosophical scrutiny, than on the manner in which philosophy itself comes to be constituted and thematised through that relation.

In doing so I shall want to deal, first of all, with the issue of style: with what a fragment of the late 1920s refers to as the 'rope' over which thinking must leap if it is 'to advance into the realm of writing.'²⁹ Indeed, to the extent that the opening words of the Foreword announce the concern there as being what is proper, *eigen*, to philosophical writing, the notion of style is almost unavoidable. To begin with, however, I shall want to focus *not* Benjamin, but on Kant. Following a brief discussion of the central points of Benjamin's early *Kantdeutung*, the 1917 essay 'On the

Program for the Coming Philosophy,' I will come back to the Foreword and to the notion of style in order to explore further Benjamin's account there of the method of truth.

I

Writing in 1917 of the need 'to preserve what is essential' in Kant's work, of the need to 'ground' the system of Critical philosophy 'anew,' Benjamin declares his conviction that 'Kant's prose itself exhibits [*darstellt*] a *limes* of high artistic prose.'³⁰ Although a more considered statement of this limit goes unarticulated by Benjamin, the importance he accords to it does not. In a move that is presumably intended to shore up this conviction concerning the artistic limits established by the Critical text, he makes appeal to its letter: 'Whoever does not feel in Kant the striving after *the thought of doctrine [Lehre] itself*, and whoever does not grasp his work with the utmost reverence for its letter as a *tradendum*, as something to be handed on,' this person, Benjamin insists, 'knows nothing of philosophy.'³¹ For this reason alone, he concludes,

all faulting of Kant's philosophical style is pure philistinism and profane chatter [*profanes Geschwätz*]. It is quite true that in great scientific systems art must also be included (and vice versa), and thus it is also my conviction that Kant's prose itself exhibits a *limes* of high artistic prose.³²

Suffice it to say, it would be hard to agree unqualified with the sort of assessment being made here by Benjamin. Indeed, one of the first to challenge any such claim,

and by implication to stand trial on the charge of 'chatter' that Benjamin reserves for the wretched class of reader who would draw attention to deficiencies in the Critical style, was Kant himself.³³

Habitually regarded as exemplary in this respect are the closing remarks of the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Having taken the opportunity to retrace his steps along the 'thorny paths' of his work, Kant declares himself entirely satisfied as to 'the propositions themselves and their grounds of proofs ..., the *system*.'³⁴ Indeed, once Kant's own characterisation of the *Critique* is granted, it could hardly be otherwise. The inventory of all that is possessed through pure reason, the system is in fact reason *itself*. Hence it is on the basis of the unity of reason – 'so perfect a unity,' Kant remarks, 'that if its principle were insufficient for even a single one of the questions that are set for it by its own nature, then this might as well be discarded since it would also then not be able to answer any other questions with complete reliability'³⁵ – that the security of the system can be assured. As one might expect, however, things are far from perfect, and Kant is candid in allowing that 'as to the manner of its *presentation* [*Darstellung*], much remains to be done.'³⁶ Still, the fact that misunderstandings and obscurities are 'hardly to be avoided' in an undertaking of this sort means that this is a relatively minor point of contention, one whose resolution can be left with impunity in the hands of those with the requisite 'talent' for such matters, and Kant rejects accordingly any suggestion that this lapse in presentation might in any way compromise the systematic integrity of his labours. However much it may lack the necessary elegance (*die erforderliche Eleganz*), the construction of the system, once grasped as a unity (*als Einheit*), is assured.³⁷

Now it is to precisely this notion of system that Benjamin turns in the remarks cited above in order to justify his claims for Kant's philosophical style. It is the systematic form of Kant's *Wissenschaft* that generates and sustains the conviction that 'Kant's prose itself exhibits a *limes* of high artistic prose.' Yet to the extent that the claim here turns on an appeal to the *letter* of the Critical text, on its *style* as it were, it is such as to begin to collapse the otherwise strict distinction being established by Kant: the distinction more formally described in the first edition Preface as that between *discursive* or *logical clarity* and *intuitive* or *aesthetic clarity*; that is, between the view of things and the procedure by which that view would be presented, between the *Sache* of philosophy and the manner of its *Darstellung*.

And yet, it is not as if this distinction could ever be sustained, even by the Critical text itself. Indeed, the distinction can be seen already to be thoroughly in question in the remarks concerning the presentation of the system itself. The various rough patches (*Unebenheiten*) in the system to which Kant freely admits are themselves significantly brought forward as explanations of the various obscurities (*Dunkelheit*) and misunderstandings (*Widersprüche*) to which the *Critique* has given rise. Significant because it is precisely such obscurities and misunderstandings that alone were to have established the need for a tribunal of pure reason. The broad strokes that open the Critical *roman de la guerre* are too well known to need much reiteration here.³⁸ What should be recalled, however, is the 'peculiar fate' through which reason is lead not only to 'fall into obscurity and contradiction [*Dunkelheit und Widersprüche*],'³⁹ but also to a 'misunderstanding of itself [*Missverstand ... mit ihr selbst*].'⁴⁰ It is almost as though the tribunal of reason has failed in fact to rule.

I shall come back to the question of the limit apparently presented by Kant's prose in due course. To begin with, however, let us briefly recall just what is at issue in Benjamin's implicit appeal to the distinction between spirit and letter (*Geist und Buchstab*) in philosophy. Fichte, in the various introductions to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, and Schelling, in his treatise *On the I*, have stated this distinction with particular cogency.⁴¹ Both do so, moreover, in order to meet precisely that challenge laid down by Kant when he invites those with a talent for lucid (*lichtvollen*) presentation to complete (*vollenden*) and secure the necessary elegance for the system of transcendental philosophy.

Fichte's argument in the *Wissenschaftslehre* is by far the more sustained. There, and in the face of all evidence, not least of which is Kant's own testimony on the case, Fichte declares his own system to be none other than the Critical one.⁴² Whatever thoroughgoing independence of procedure (*Darstellung*) it may have as regards that of Kant, it is to comprise the same view of things (*dieselbe Ansicht der Sache*).⁴³ The claim made on behalf of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is a modest one, therefore. It is to have at last presented 'in systematic form' the system which 'although not actually established by Kant ..., had certainly been envisaged by him.' Fichte stresses his own 'certainty' on this point: 'everything Kant says actually consists of fragments and consequences of this system.' Indeed, it is only because of Kant's having *presupposed* such a system that 'his assertions have sense and coherence.'⁴⁴ It is this system, then, this *Ansicht der Sache*, already present in Kant's text without ever presented there as such, that the *Wissenschaftslehre* undertakes to construct. In the words of one of Fichte's most incisive readers, therefore: that work was to have at last provided the 'systematic accomplishment and perfection of pure

theoretical reason as such,' not simply by 'completing the deficiencies of the *Critique*' but by articulating 'the new intelligibility of the transcendental as such.'⁴⁵

More or less the same argument can be made in respect of Schelling. Having briefly assessed in a note to the *Form-Schrift* of 1794 Fichte's 'precise characterisation' of the 'admirable spirit' of Critical philosophy,⁴⁶ he offers his own expression of the distinction in the Foreword to his treatise of the following year, *On the I*. The aim of the treatise, he tells us, is 'to present [*darzustellen*] the results of Critical philosophy as they lead back to the highest principles of all knowledge.'⁴⁷ And Schelling deduces the legitimacy of his enterprise by observing that only those who 'know the letter but not the spirit' of Critical philosophy could possibly hold to the view that 'the entire course of the *Critique of Pure Reason* could constitute in any instance the course of philosophy as science.'⁴⁸ An almost identical situation emerges in his own *Wissenschaftslehre*, therefore, where despite a declaration that he 'in no way intends to rewrite what Kant has already written,' Schelling nonetheless takes it upon himself 'to grasp what ... is needed if his philosophy is to hang together in itself [*in sich selbst zusammenhängen*].'⁴⁹ For Schelling as for Fichte, therefore, the appeal to the 'spirit' of Critical philosophy over the letter of its text involves no real criticism of Kant but affords instead the opportunity to rebuild the system of his work on ever more secure foundations.

Now the position being argued for by Fichte and by Schelling is broadly similar to that of Benjamin's own *Kantdeutung*, the essay 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy' of 1917, which employs an identical metaphoric of rebuilding or recasting with respect to Kant. 'It is of the utmost importance,' Benjamin writes, 'for the coming philosophy to recognise and separate those elements of Kant's system which have to

be taken over and tended, those which have to be rebuilt, and those which have to be discarded.’⁵⁰ Equally, in a way that enjoys yet further analogy with the Fichtean characteristic, there is no question of this rebuilding being regarded as a break with Kant. Quite the contrary, in fact, Benjamin insisting that ‘there will never be a shattering, a collapse of the Kantian system ..., only its concrete establishment and universal development [*Ausbildung*].’⁵¹

In as much as the remarks of the essay on Kant and of the letter to Scholem are designed to situate Benjamin’s own program of research clearly within the compass of transcendental philosophy, certain questions ought now to be addressed. The question, for instance, of what it is that Benjamin proposes to ‘take over’ from Kant. Equally, the question of what it is that he proposes to rebuild. Also the question of what is to be discarded. What, therefore, does Benjamin understand by transcendental philosophy?

Transcendental philosophy, as *Kant* understands it, begins when the notion of ‘object’ can no longer be taken for granted. Indeed, when the fact that there *are* objects at all, that they can be *given*, becomes thoroughly questionable, *fragwürdig* in the positive sense of the term. In his celebrated letter of 1772 to Marcus Herz, Kant inquires: ‘What is the ground of the relation of that in us which we call representation to the object?’⁵² The question, as Alexis Philonenko remarks,⁵³ constitutes *la crise fondamentale* in the proto-critical project carefully nurtured since the inaugural *Dissertation* of 1770. With it, Kant takes his ‘Copernican’ turn. In its solution, he suspects, will lie ‘the key to the whole secret of hitherto obscure metaphysics’ and, therefore, to what he calls ‘transcendental philosophy.’⁵⁴

Such is the extent of metaphysical obscurity, however, that to this question Kant dismisses all available responses. He rejects both the empiricist version of an essentially *causal* relation between representations and the objects that affect us, as well as the 'wholly absurd recourse' to the mystical archetypes of the *deus ex machina*.⁵⁵ The effect of this, however, is to leave philosophy in a decidedly 'precarious position,' what Philonenko calls an 'almost paroxysmal state,'⁵⁶ with neither an earthly nor a heavenly peg on which to hang its pronouncements.⁵⁷

By addressing the central problem raised by the question posed in the letter to Herz, the positive part of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is intended to provide a definitive way out of this predicament. The problem is this: how is it that pure concepts agree with objects that the understanding does not bring forth out of itself and of which it is not the effect? In other words, what needs to be explained is how 'the understanding may formulate real principles ... with which ... experience must be in exact agreement and that nevertheless are independent of experience'?⁵⁸ It is precisely in respect of these difficulties, however, that the *Streit der Auslegungen* breaks out.⁵⁹

On one account, the difficulty here is resolved by threading philosophy through the *Faktum* of existing sciences, specifically Euclidean geometry and Newton's *Principia*.⁶⁰ The very 'fact' that the mathematical and general sciences exist is deemed enough to demonstrate the vacuity of all attempts at the 'empirical derivation' of *a priori* concepts from experience in the manner of Locke or Hume.⁶¹ So when Kant declares that 'I name *transcendental* all knowledge that is occupied not so much with objects but with *our a priori concepts* of objects as such,'⁶² the

Transcendental Analytic is read as little more than a subordinate expression of the more concrete researches of the secure sciences. Such is, of course, the account of Marburg neo-Kantianism. Hermann Cohen, for example, is said by Cassirer to have grasped what is 'essential in the transcendental method,' namely that it begins by presupposing the *Faktum* of experience 'in order then to ask as to the possibility of this *Faktum*.'⁶³ The portion of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that leads up to the Transcendental Deduction is therefore interpreted as a theory of experience. So in Cassirer's *own* response to the question more famously asked at Davos the previous year ('What does Heidegger understand by Neo-Kantianism?'):⁶⁴

All prominent representatives of neo-Kantianism are of the same mind on at least one point: that the central focus of Kant's system lies in epistemology [*Erkenntnislehre*], that the 'fact' and 'possibility' of science constitutes the beginning and goal of Kant's problem. In the question of this problem and in it alone were the scientific character and primacy of Kant's doctrine to be grounded.⁶⁵

It is this identification of the *Faktum* of experience with the *Faktum* of natural science that is held, rightly, to be a source of fundamental disagreement between Benjamin and the Marburg School. A withering aside in a letter of February 1918, in which Benjamin confesses that 'I do not know Rickert's big book, but I know all about his *method* ..., modern in the worst sense of the word,'⁶⁶ would begin thus to bear out the observations of Françoise Prost:

the *Streit* between the theory of knowledge and the existential analytic would ... presuppose an excluded third: a true knowledge 'of higher experience.' The Cohen-Cassirer / Heidegger duo would have excluded Benjamin⁶⁷

It is the remarks of the Addendum to the 'Program' essay that provide Benjamin's most emphatic statement of intent in this regard:

The source of existence [*die Quelle des Daseins*] lies in the totality of experience [*der Totalität der Erfahrung*], and only in doctrine does philosophy run up against an absolute, as existence, and in doing so run up against that continuity in the essence of experience [*Kontinuität im Wesen der Erfahrung*], in neglect of which the failings of neo-Kantianism are to be suspected.⁶⁸

It is precisely this notion of the 'totality of experience' on which much of Benjamin's early work will turn. As far as that work is concerned, moreover, experience cannot be an experience of sense data and equated with the knowledge of an empirical object:

It is the task of the coming philosophy to find for knowledge the sphere of total neutrality as regards the concepts of object and subject; in other words, it is to conceive the autonomous, originally proper sphere of knowledge in which these concepts in no way signal the relation between two metaphysical entities.

What Benjamin wants to put into question, in other words, is precisely the rigidifying language of consciousness over against object used to characterise the realm of experience. According to his most emphatic statement of affairs:

The more vastly and boldly the unfolding of the coming philosophy announces itself, the more deeply it must struggle for certainty [*Gewißheit*], the criterion of which is systematic unity or truth [*die systematische Einheit oder die Wahrheit*].⁶⁹

Now the term 'systematic unity' emphasised here by Benjamin also appears in the Transcendental Doctrine of Method, where it underwrites the procedure by which 'ordinary knowledge' is raised to 'the rank of a science,' the procedure Kant calls architectonic or the art of systems (*die Kunst der Systeme*).⁷⁰ As Kant is careful to point out, this 'art' ought not to be confused with a mere aggregate or accumulation of knowledge; rather, it should be seen as an organised unity (*articulatio*) that grows *per intus susceptionem*. Generative of systems, architectonic is in fact *reason* itself.⁷¹

II

"The concept of philosophical style is free from paradox."⁷² This remark, written almost a decade after the letter to Scholem, is, so far as I am aware, Benjamin's only other direct reference to the notion of philosophical style. It comes from the short section of the Foreword to the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* entitled 'Philosophical Beauty.' Both the title and the few pages which it entails appear, then, to point in the

direction of yet another, rather less laborious consideration of the shared concerns of art and the presentation of philosophy.

This time, however, all the work is done for us. Assigning the philosopher the position of an elevated middle (*erhobene Mitte*) between the scientist and the artist, between the conceptual ordering of the world and its metaphoric construction, Benjamin raises the issue of philosophical style, remarking that, 'as a concept,' it remains free from paradox *only* to the extent that the philosopher shares with the artist the task of presentation (*Aufgabe der Darstellung*). The concept of style, in other words, is now all but synonymous with that of presentation:

The scientist ... shares the philosopher's interest in closing off what is merely empirical, the artist shares the task of presentation. Popular opinion has placed the philosopher all too close to the scientist, and often to the inferior kind at that. Nowhere in the task of the philosopher does there appear to be a place for consideration of presentation. The concept of philosophical style is free from paradox.⁷³

With respect to this double misplacement – that of the philosopher as regards his rightful position as an *erhobene Mitte*, that of presentation as regards its role in the *Aufgabe* of the philosopher – the draft version of these lines is still more emphatic:

Popular opinion has placed the philosopher all too close to the scientist and to the inferior kind at that. His estrangement from the figure of the artist finally reaches a point where there no longer seems to be a place for the beauty of

presentation in the determination of the task of the philosopher [*die Schönheit der Darstellung in der Bestimmung der Aufgabe des Philosophischen*]. The point of the previous discussion was to free the concept of philosophical style from paradox⁷⁴

Thus, philosophy is essentially to involve presentation; more specifically, to the extent that philosophy is to constitute 'the method of truth' in contrast to 'the method of knowledge,' its task lies in 'the presentation of truth.' This involvement is violated, however, and the ensuing claims of philosophy to the 'postulates' of style definitively supplanted once the scientific arrangement (*Disposition*) and division (*Aufteilung*) of the world is taken to be the model of philosophical practice. Benjamin elaborates: with the division of the world into various regions, each one to be investigated by a particular science or discipline, the phenomenon of world *as such* – what we have seen Benjamin to describe variously as 'the *Habitus* of a lived life,'⁷⁵ 'the totality of experience,' the 'continuity in the essence of experience,'⁷⁶ 'the concrete totality of experience ... , that is, existence,'⁷⁷ etc. – becomes increasingly formalised. The systematic unity that was to have constituted the very *sense* of truth is epistemologically dissected into its component parts. Yet the solution is not, as the next section ('Division and Dispersal in the Concept') makes clear, the syncretic gathering of these disciplines: 'Such syncretic completeness has no more in common with truth than any other form of presentation that attempts to ascertain truth in mere cognitions and cognitive patterns.'⁷⁸

By contrast, the artist undertakes no such retrospective (re)construction of an epistemically decimated world, but offers an image (*Bild*) that, by virtue of its

metaphoric character, is always definitive. This image, nevertheless, is always a *restricted* one: 'ein kleines Bild' in the draft,⁷⁹ 'ein Bildchen' in the Foreword itself.⁸⁰

The sole aim of Benjamin's text, therefore, its *Sache*, is to uncover and thereby to resolve the 'methodological incoherence' wrought by the philosopher's estrangement from the artist and by the severance of presentation from its rightful place in the task of the philosopher.

The Foreword begins accordingly:

It is proper to philosophical writing [*dem philosophischen Schriftum eigen*] that, with every turn, it stands anew before the question of presentation [*vor der Frage der Darstellung zu stehen*].⁸¹

The rhetorical character of this initiatory statement is famously marked. It begins with philosophy, with what marks out philosophical writing as being such, namely its standpoint with respect to the question of presentation. This standpoint is what is *proper* or *peculiar* (*eigen*) to such writing. It is what gives such writing its distinctly philosophical character. By beginning with the issue of presentation and with the standpoint of the philosophical text with respect to such presentation, the Foreword begins with what is most properly its own. It begins, in other words, *with itself*. Next comes another self-indication: this standpoint with respect to the question of presentation is described as one proper to philosophical *writing*, rather than to what that writing is about. The issue here, then, is not *die Sache des Denkens*, that toward which thinking or writing (the former, remember, leaps over the 'rope' of style in order 'to advance into the realm of writing') would be directed.⁸² It is a matter of that

before which thinking or writing 'stands anew' and *not* of thinking or writing *on* the question of presentation, as one thinks or writes *on* phenomenology, for example. And yet, the line does precisely that. It directs itself toward the question of presentation as the matter that will be at issue for it. The question, then, is doubled, the line thematising explicitly that before which it will already have taken a stance. This starkly reflexive movement is finally turned back upon itself, redoubling the line's concern with the question of presentation. It is a matter of a writing that, 'with every turn,' stands anew before the question of presentation. Benjamin uses the word *Wendung*: "turn," "change," but also "expression," "turn of phrase," thus reinscribing within this opening line yet another turn toward presentation.⁸³ With every turn (of phrase) philosophy must stand before the matter of its own turn toward the question of presentation.

No less marked, however, is the draft version of this same line:

It is proper to philosophical *knowledge* [*der philosophischen Erkenntnis*] that, with every turn, it stands anew before the question of presentation.⁸⁴

The difference here could hardly be more sharply focussed. What this earlier version makes clear by the alteration of a single word is that the standpoint of philosophy as regards the question of presentation is not to be confined to the written character of philosophical texts alone. Standing before the question of presentation is proper not merely to philosophical *writing* but also to philosophical *knowledge*. Moving from the final version to the draft has the effect of leaping over the entire development of the former, over that development that is required in order to translate the discourse on

knowledge into one on writing and on language. Situating itself on one register rather than the other, the draft carries out that translation instantaneously, drastically foreshortening the movement carried out by the final version of the Foreword, a movement whose terms are evoked explicitly by a remark from the essay 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy':

The consciousness that philosophical knowledge was absolutely certain and *a priori*, the consciousness of that aspect of philosophy which matches mathematics, made Kant turn fully away from the fact that all philosophical knowledge has its proper expression [*einzigem Ausdruck*] in language [*Sprache*] and not in formulae or number.⁸⁵

Most marked of all in the opening lines of the Foreword, therefore, is the contrast immediately drawn between the concept of philosophical method being advanced here and the mathematical pretension according to which it could be evoked *more geometrico*, a pretension which, Benjamin suggests, signals nothing so much as the 'total elimination of the problem of presentation.'⁸⁶ He distinguishes accordingly between the digressive method of the philosophical *tractatus* and 'the coercive proof of mathematics,'⁸⁷ a distinction all the more forcefully argued for in the draft as Benjamin states outright his rejection of any determination of philosophy as being legitimised through 'imitation of mathematical procedures [*der Nachahmung des mathematischen Verfahrens*].'⁸⁸

Now in light of the remarks of the 'Program' essay cited above, it would not be altogether surprising were Benjamin's remarks here to be seen as having at least

some reference to the confession with which Kant opens the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* of 1786: 'I have in this treatise followed the mathematical method, if not with all rigour [*alles Strenge*] ..., then at least imitatively [*den noch nachgeahmt*].'⁸⁹ As indeed they do. Now on one account, these remarks are read as the defining statement of Benjamin's gradual disaffection with the climate of Critical philosophy. The Foreword, therefore, in Claude Imbert's elegant expression of the point, would treat accordingly of that over which Kant had *passé sous silence*, namely 'the permanent condition of actuality [*d'effectivité*] that writing ... imposes upon thought.'⁹⁰ The insistence upon the standpoint of philosophy with respect to the question of presentation would thereby draw to a close the long journey that leads Benjamin away from Königsberg through Jena to Weimar: from having divined in Kant the very *possibility* of philosophy ('his system ... must last forever,' etc.),⁹¹ through disappointment at the inaccessible (*unzugänglich*) character of the proto-historical writings,⁹² through frustration at the impossibility of finding in Kant's work an appropriate point of access (*Zugang*) to a genuinely historically conscious philosophy,⁹³ to, finally, the nomination of Kant – 'this *despot*' of rigourism – as 'the greatest opponent' of his own thinking.⁹⁴

This has proved to be a highly influential picture, both of Benjamin's reading of Kant and of the methodological consequences that follow from it.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, it is deeply misleading on several accounts: not only does it distort Kant's understanding of the character of philosophy, principally by obscuring the distinction made in the *Transcendental Doctrine of Method* between philosophical and mathematical

knowledge; it also fails to do justice to the far-reaching implications of Benjamin's subsequent concerns with regard to the 'method of truth.'

What needs first of all to be said, then, is that Kant is *not*, of course, entirely sympathetic to the mathematical pretensions of philosophy and prefigures in more than one place the suspicions aired by Hegel in the *Science of Logic* concerning the use of mathematical terms for expressing philosophical notions.⁹⁶ Indeed, he derides the attempts to use certain terms 'against the direction of mathematics' as the 'delusion' of philosophers who expect immediate and absolute certainty from their concepts without ever getting involved in the bothersome labours of a transcendental deduction.⁹⁷ Contrary to the claims of the celebrated Wolff, for example, for whom 'the rules of mathematical method are the same as those of philosophical method,'⁹⁸ Kant maintains that the method of metaphysics is not synthetic, like that of mathematics and geometry, but *analytic* or strictly *conceptual*. Celebrated pedagogical consequences follow from this, not least of which is that one cannot hope to *learn* philosophy as one might learn any one of Euclid's apodeictically certain propositions:

Among all rational sciences (*a priori*) ... only mathematics can be learned, never philosophy (except historically); rather, as far as reason is concerned, we can at best only learn to *philosophise*.⁹⁹

Philosophy, unlike mathematics, is not susceptible to being learnt by rote; the best that one can hope, indeed, is to learn to exercise the talent of reason (*Talent der Vernunft*). The break is not absolute, however, and Kant freely grants that

philosophers can legitimately maintain an interest in kinds of quantity (infinity or totality, for example), and mathematicians are entitled to treat of spatial qualities like line and surface. To this extent, these two employments of reason have 'a common object.'¹⁰⁰ The point of difference, therefore, lies in the way in which that object is handled. So whilst both the geometer *and* the transcendental philosopher can both indeed lay claim to the title of artist of reason (*Vernunftkünstler*) – artists whose canvas would accordingly be that of real grounds rather than purely logical ones – it is a matter of recognising that these grounds are formal in the one case, since they concern entirely pure and *a priori* determinations of space and time, and material or transcendental in the other, since they concern the existence of appearances that does not allow of construction. Rather *more* damaging to Benjamin's case, however, or to the case most often assigned to him, is the evocation of mathematics in the Transcendental Doctrine of Method: '*philosophical* knowledge is *rational knowledge from concepts*, mathematical knowledge that from the *construction* of concepts.'¹⁰¹

On this level, at least, therefore, the claims most often attributed to the Foreword are thus refuted. Indeed, the suggestion of the 'Program' essay that Kant turns away from the fact that all philosophical knowledge has 'its proper expression [*einzigsten Ausdruck*] in language [*Sprache*] and not in formulae or number,'¹⁰² turns out to be a futile exercise in lax reading. And yet, it is entirely likely that matters are not as straightforward as this might suggest. For if Benjamin *is* somewhat remiss in his characterisation of the mathematical predilections of the critical philosophy, then this is not to say that his remarks do not have some validity. Granted, Kant insists upon the fact that the proofs of philosophy are in fact *acromatic* or *discursive explanations* 'conducted by the agency of words alone.' Equally, however, he allows

that there are certain circumstances in which mathematics and philosophy may 'offer each other their hand.'¹⁰³ This relation is not to be consummated, however, and Kant stresses the decidedly *filial* character of the coupling involved: philosophy, he suggests, has every reason to hope for a 'sisterly union' with mathematics. And Benjamin's grasp of this is no where more securely expressed than in his traducing of this expression of philosophy's filial relations: 'every great work,' reads a remark from the early 1920, 'has its sibling (brother or sister?) in a philosophical sphere.'¹⁰⁴

III

Benjamin begins the fragment with the observation that the unity (*die Einheit*) of philosophy, its system (*ihr System*), exceeds *necessarily* the reach of all philosophical questioning. The unity of philosophy is always in excess of the infinite number of finite questions that can be asked of it. As such, Benjamin suggests, 'the system of philosophy is in no sense open to question [*ist in keinem Sinne erfragbar*]' since to any such question 'there is obviously only one answer: the system of philosophy itself.'¹⁰⁵

The remarks of these opening lines occupy a decidedly medial position, therefore: between the equation drawn in the 'Program' essay between systematic unity and truth, and the argument of the Foreword according to which while *knowledge* is 'open to question [*erfragbar*], truth is not.'¹⁰⁶

Now leaving wholly out of account any consideration of whether this Idea is to be understood in the manner of Kant as a regulative one or in the manner of Schelling as a constitutive principle,¹⁰⁷ Benjamin calls this 'virtual question' by which

philosophy might be said to seek its own unity, *the Ideal (das Ideal)* of the philosophical problem.

Nevertheless, he insists, if the *conceptus cosmicus* of philosophy does indeed remain virtual and so beyond the reach of philosophical questioning, there are certain *actual constructs (wirkliche ... Gebilde)* which, whilst belonging neither to the realm of questions nor to that of philosophy, have the deepest affinity (*die tiefste Affinität*) to this ideal. These are works of art. It is in works of art that philosophy is able to discover the appearance of the ideal of its problem. Philosophy – what Benjamin terms Critique – becomes, therefore, a matter of allowing this ideal to appear. And since it is a matter, then, of inquiring after its own ideal as it appears in works of art, this becomes, moreover, ‘the highest philosophical problem.’¹⁰⁸

Suffice it to say that ‘art’ has in this connection precisely that sense determined for it in the final sections of Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism*. It will be recalled that, with respect to the infinite and opposed aspects of philosophy, Schelling declares art to be the thing that ‘achieves the impossible’ by resolving (*aufzuheben*) this infinite opposition in a finite product. It is, in Gunter Figal’s felicitous expression, ‘the happy medium of oppositionality.’¹⁰⁹ Further, this resolution is even constitutive of art itself, Schelling insisting that ‘there is no work of art which does not present, either immediately or through reflection, an infinite.’ It is, he continues, in art alone that the productive power of such resolution can be unveiled (*enthüllen*). Art, as the medium of this unveiling, becomes thus ‘the only true and external organ and document of philosophy, which always and continuously documents what philosophy cannot present externally [*äußerlich nicht darstellen kann*].’ In a formulation more

familiarly Schellingian: 'aesthetic intuition' is thus 'merely intellectual intuition become objective.'

Now depending rather heavily on Schelling's presentation of the 'wonder' and the 'riddle' of art, Benjamin goes on to describe the reciprocal relation of art to philosophy by way of the following scenario, one which, he candidly acknowledges, relies much on its self-evident 'sentimentality':

Suppose one meets a young man who is handsome and attractive, but who appears to be hiding a secret [*ein Geheimnis ... zu bergen scheint*] within him. It would be ungentle and reprehensible to press him on it, to snatch it from him. Yet it is perhaps allowable to inquire whether he has any siblings in order to see whether their behaviour might not in some way explain the secretive character [*geheimnisvolle Wesen*] of the stranger. In the same way does the true critic inquire after the siblings of the work of art. And every true work has its sibling (brother or sister?) in a philosophical sphere.¹¹⁰

The revised version of these lines, from the essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, is nearly identical. What is added brings Benjamin's position even closer to that of Schelling:

Suppose one meets a young man who is handsome and attractive but closed off, because he carries a secret within him. It would be reprehensible to want to press him on it. Yet it is perhaps allowable to inquire whether he has any siblings and so to see whether their nature might in some way explain the

puzzling nature [*Rätselfhafte*] of the stranger. In the same way does the Critic inquire after the siblings of the work of art. And every true work has its sibling in the realm of philosophy. After all, it is in precisely these figures that the ideal of its problem appears [*erscheint*].¹¹¹

The point that needs to be retained from these lines is this: philosophy is the sibling of art. The riddle (*Rätself*) or the secret (*Geheimnis*) carried by the work of art is that of philosophy, of the ideal of its problem, itself. The excavation of this secret is the work of Critique. As such, Critique is not merely a matter of engagement with the work of art, it is also and more fundamentally one of philosophy's engagement with its own ideal.

What, then, of the secret? What does it mean for Benjamin to say that the secret of art is the Ideal of philosophy? Why is it the secret alone that opens onto the essence of art (*dem Wesen der Kunst*)?¹¹² Why is it only in presenting itself as a secret (*als Geheimnis sich darstellte*) that the work of art gives itself to be understood as such?¹¹³

Secrecy always implies a certain injunction on communication. The secret says: You shall not communicate ...; it says: You shall not disclose the secret Is such an injunction operative here? Benjamin himself appears to concede as much since, a few sentences later, he notes that Critique must stop short of revealing the secret, 'as if in awe of the work.'¹¹⁴ And what stops Critique short is, of course, the secret itself.

Inasmuch as Benjamin describes this secret as the truth content of the work of art, one can note, then, that the secret marks the truth of the work itself. This is its secret. And yet, although it is with the secret of the work alone that the truth of the

work appears, it cannot, Benjamin insists, be a matter of turning this appearance, this *Erscheinung*, into a *Bestand*, a subsistent reality:

the truth in a work does not make itself known as something open to question [*als erfragt*], but as something required [*als erfordert*]. If, therefore, it can be said that all beauty refers [*beziehe sich*] in some way to the true and that its virtual place in philosophy can be determined, then in every true work of art an appearance of the Ideal of the problem can be found.¹¹⁵

Critique does not disclose the secret as such; rather, it discloses the fact that there *can* – and, for the work, that there *must* – be a secret.

The secret of the work, then, is its truth. So literally does Benjamin hold to this that the remainder of his remarks serve to do no more than draw out the latent tautology of this expression. For it is not a matter of trying to secure the secret in order then to grasp the truth of the work. The point is not to disclose or to show the secret, but to grasp the secret *as* truth. In the work, truth appears as the secret. In Benjamin's more precise formulation: *es scheint*. It shines.

This determination of the work of art in terms of the relation of truth to *Schein* prompts Benjamin to ask about the relation of beauty to *Schein*. If he draws here on the language through which aesthetics has traditionally spoken, namely the language of beauty, he does so primarily in order to displace it. For it is not a matter of a disclosure of the truth behind such appearance. Rather, for Benjamin beauty marks the inseparability of truth from its *Schein*. Shining forth in the work of art, truth appears as beautiful: 'the ground of the being of the beautiful [*Seinsgrund der*

Schönheit] lies in the secret.’¹¹⁶ And this secrecy, this veiling, is also the place of the *Schein* of truth – that is, of the beautiful. ‘The beautiful is neither the appearance nor the veil [*Nicht Schein, nicht Hülle ... ist die Schönheit*] for something else. It is not appearance [*Erscheinung*] but essence [*Wesen*] throughout, one that remains essential only when being a veiling.’¹¹⁷

If the Critique of a work of art is thus the excavation of the beautiful secret of the work, then it is not a matter of unveiling that secret as such. Unveiled, truth would not shine. It would be *unscheinbar*. It is a matter instead of allowing Critique to raise itself to a true intuition of the beautiful (*wahren Anschauung des Schönes*), that is, to ‘the intuition of the beautiful as secret.’¹¹⁸ Critique cannot, therefore, be a matter of raising the veil; rather, it is a matter of recognising that in the veiled *Schein* of the beautiful, truth stands forth. ‘Thus, with respect to all beauty, the idea of unveiling [*der Idee der Enthüllung*] becomes that of non-unveilability [*der Unenthüllbarkeit.*]¹¹⁹ This is the idea of art Critique.

Notes

- ¹ 'Jeder große Werk hat sein Geschwister (Bruder oder Schwester?) in einer philosophischen Sphäre' (GS I 3: 835).
- ² GS IV 1: 536. *Die Literarische Welt* was one of Berlin's numerous weekly periodicals and, in the eight years following his failure to habilitate, provided Benjamin with a much needed source of income and an outlet for his work. The review of Dacqué's Lessing Lecture, 'A Crisis in Darwinism?' was published in the issue dated 12 April 1929. On Benjamin's involvement with the journal, see Momme Brodersen, *Walter Benjamin: A Biography* (London: Verso, 1996), 158–62.
- ³ GS IV 1: 536.
- ⁴ Such antipathy is presumably aduced on the basis of the well-documented and rather ill-informed hostility to Heidegger. Although Benjamin offers nothing in the way of a systematic reading of Husserl's work, it does appear that he had at least a degree of familiarity with it. And although Adorno's edition of the *Briefe* endeavours to removes all but one of Benjamin's references to the father of phenomenology, a rather less bowdlerising approach does indeed begin to bear out a remark from a *c.v.* of 1928, in which Benjamin stresses the importance of 'the philosophy of Husserl and the Marburg school' to his own intellectual itinerary (GS IV 1: 218). So, in addition to early readings of the *Logos* article of 1911 and the first volume of the *Ideas* attested in letters of 1913, 1915 and 1915 (*Briefe* I: 144, 302, 410), Benjamin also shows familiarity with the principle organ of Husserl's work, the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, the Foreword to the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* citing at length an essay published in the issue of 1921 (cf. GS I 1: 218; *Or* 37–8). And although Benjamin nowhere aligns his own researches with those of phenomenology, the 1918 essay 'On the

Program of the Coming Philosophy' does suggest that it is only on the basis of 'the many problems raised by phenomenology' that one might begin to elucidate the 'pure transcendental consciousness' (GS II 2: 163; SW I: 104) which constitutes the overriding concern of that essay. So, too, in the Habilitationsschrift, where the discussion of moods which brings the central section of that work to a close will be cast explicitly by Benjamin in the guise of a 'phenomenology' (GS I 1: 318; *Or* 139). See, finally, the numerous references to Husserl in the indexes provided by the editors of the *Gesammelte Briefe*. For considerations of the various philosophical influences on Benjamin, see Françoise Proust, *L'histoire à contretemps: Le temps historique chez Walter Benjamin* (Paris: cerf, 1994), 10–14, 15–19 and, more briefly, Claude Imbert, 'Le présent et l'histoire' in Wismann (ed.), *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, 743–92 (748–51 and 749 note 13). To Proust's careful exploration of Benjamin's medial position viz.-à-viz. the *Kantstreit* between neo-Kantianism and phenomenology, one might contrast Peter Fenves' unfounded assertion that Benjamin's work as a whole affords a thoroughgoing and sustained engagement with phenomenology; 'The Genesis of Judgement' in David Ferris (ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 75–92. When Fenves writes that 'the often cited remark "truth is the death of intention" does no differ so radically from Husserl's conception of truth as the fulfillment of intention' (ibid., 223 note 3), he conflates what is, by Benjamin's own lights, the purely methodological concept of *Intention* which has the sense of systematic mediation or possession, with Husserl's analytic concept of *die Intentionalität* as the structure of lived experience. The overstatement of his subsequent claim that the Foreword to the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* constitutes Benjamin's attempt 'to displace and reinscribe the methodological implications of discrete phenomenological research into "ideas" or essences"' (ibid. 223 note 3) pales into insignificance, however, when

compared with his attempt to rewrite the juvenile essay of 1914 on Hölderlin as a “translation” of the phenomenological concept of noema ... into the poetological concept of *das Gedichtete*’ (ibid.). ‘Benjamin’s reading of Hölderlin proceeds,’ so Fenves claims, ‘to demonstrate the thoroughgoing permeation of the Kantian forms of intuition (space-time) with one another, and, once bound together, with *das Geistige*, the end result of which is an intuitional-intellectual network so tightly bound up with itself that, as a unity, it realises *das Gedichtete* Hölderlin’s poetic process thus arrives at a *Gedicht* (‘Blödigkeit’) that fulfills *das Gedichtete*. The poem is, to use the language of Husserlian phenomenology, the fulfillment of its noema; it is, in other words, true’ (ibid., 227–8 note 13). That the essay demonstrates nothing of the sort goes, I think, without saying. At the other extreme, see Rolf Tiedemann’s attempt, carried out under the supervision of Adorno, to draw an thoroughgoing distinction between Benjamin and ‘the intentions of Husserlian phenomenology and its pure and simple description of an “ontological realm of absolute origins”’; *Studien zur Philosophie Walter Benjamins* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1973), 16. Compare, moreover, Adorno’s strange assertion that the Epistemo-Critical Foreword to the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* constitutes a realisation of the ‘unfulfilled promise’ of phenomenology; *Über Walter Benjamin: Aufsätze, Artikel, Briefe* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 35ff..

⁵ Husserl, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, op. cit., 61. Husserl’s emphasis.

⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁷ Ibid., 61.

⁸ The young phenomenologist is, of course, Heidegger, the remark coming from the discussion of rigour undertaken in the 1919 lecture course *The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldviews* (GA 56/7: 110). Heidegger’s apparent opposition to the conceptual

system is sustained well beyond this and other early Freiburg courses (see, for example, GA 58 §2). In *Being and Time*, for instance, he aduces the system as one instance of ‘the various ways in which phenomena can be covered up [*möglichen Verdecktheit*]’ (SZ 36). Compare Husserl’s remarks on ‘the “system”’ of phenomenology; *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, op. cit., 5–6.

9 GS V 2: 1038. The notes in question are the first of those written for projected *Arcades Work*. For Heidegger’s remarks, see GA 56/57: 116.

10 GS IV 1: 536.

11 Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1968) II 1: 122. Compare the definition of Emmanuel Levinas: ‘Truth is an adequation of thought, as a purely signifying intention, to an object given in intuition, an intuition that grasps an object that is present in all its concrete reality, “in the flesh”’; *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, translated by André Orianne (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 134–5.

12 GA 20: 32–3. Emphasis mine.

13 GS I 1: 213; *Or* 33.

14 GS I 1: 216; *Or* 36.

15 GS I 1: 210; *Or* 30.

16 GS I 1: 216; *Or* 36. Emphasis mine.

17 With regard to this assertoric character, there is some truth in Andrew Bowie’s suggestion that ‘when [Benjamin] revised the original version [he] excluded some of the explanatory material’; *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997), 218. Even the draft, however, the argument proceeds largely by way of assertion, Benjamin not actually carrying out the analyses

but only, identifying their central terms, referring to their results. It is presumably in this regard that one needs to read Benjamin's confession in a letter to Scholem of 19 February 1925 that 'the Foreword is unmitigated chutzpah' (*Briefe* II: 422), as well as the now famous responses that it solicited from its examiners: 'the author's incomprehensible means of expression ... must be seen as betokening a lack of objective clarity' (Hans Cornelius), and from its reviewers: the approach to the work is barred by the 'seven seals of the Epistemo-critical Foreword' (J. M. Lange); the citations are taken from Broderson, *Walter Benjamin*, op. cit., 149, 150.

18 GS I 1: 207; *Or* 27–8.

19 GS I 1: 208; *Or* 28. The draft of this line reads: 'not as the mediated guide to the knowing of truth [*vermittelnde Anleitung zum Erkennen der Wahrheit*] ...' (GS I 3: 925).

20 See chapter 1, 63–5, above.

21 GA 9: 177 note a. The remark is appended to the word *Wesen* in the first line of the essay (BW 115).

22 GS I 1: 208; *Or* 28. Cf. GS I 3: 925, for the draft version of these remarks. For a suggestive meditation on the underlying consequences of Benjamin's turn to the notion of treatise, see Proust, *L'Histoire à contretemps*, op. cit., 163–72.

23 Proust, *L'Histoire à contretemps*, op. cit., 166.

24 GS IV 1: 43.

25 GS I 1: 208; *Or* 28. It is the contrast of the *Umweg* of Benjamin's text to the *Weg* of Heidegger that provides the impetus for the account of Ian Lyne's *The Temporality of Language*, op. cit..

26 Although the connection is not made by Benjamin, the context of the 'linguistic character [*sprachlichen Charakters*]' of truth (GS I 1: 218; *Or* 38) means that it is worth recalling

here the definition of ‘tone’ given by Kant in §53 of the *Critique of Judgement* as an affective capacity belonging to ‘every expression of *language* [jeder Ausdruck der Sprache]’ (Ak V: 328. Emphasis mine).

27 Jean Hering, ‘Bemerkungen über das Wesen, der Wesenheit, und die Idee,’ *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 4 (1921), 495–543 (522); cited GS I 1: 218; Or 37–8.

28 GS I 1: 218; Or 38.

29 GS IV 1: 203.

30 Letter to Gerhard Scholem of 22 October 1917 (*Briefe* I: 390).

31 *Briefe* I: 389. Benjamin’s emphasis. It is presumably remarks such as this which lead Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe to the following conclusion: ‘For Benjamin ..., Kant is the name for the project of philosophy as such,’ a conclusion which Lacoue-Labarthe extends in the suggestive direction of ‘a sort of repetition (before the Heideggerian letter) of Kant ... in which the whole of Benjamin’s work is situated’; ‘Avant-propos’ to Walter Benjamin, *Le Concept de critique esthétique dans le romantisme allemand*, translated by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Anne-Marie Lang (Paris: Flammarion, 1986), 7–24 (17, 16). Compare the astonishing claim of Beatrice Hanssen, however, made on the basis of the remarks of *this* letter, that ‘Benjamin’s position is best characterised *in his own words*, as an attempt to disregard the letter or minutiae of Kant’s writings’; *Walter Benjamin’s Other History*, op. cit., 27. Emphasis mine.

32 *Briefe* I: 389–90. It is important to bear in mind the considerable importance that the word “chatter” will assume in Benjamin’s work. See, for example, the remarks of the contemporaneous fragment ‘On Language as Such and on Human Language,’ an early draft of the concluding pages of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*. Benjamin

writes in the draft of 'the profound sense in which Kierkegaard grasps the word "chatter"' (GS II 1: 152; SW I: 71), in the Habilitationsschrift of "'chatter"' in the profound sense in which Kierkegaard grasps the word' (GS I 1: 407; *Or* 233). As the editors of the *Gesammelte Schriften* point out (GS II 3: 939), Benjamin probably drew the term from Theodor Haecker's partial translation of *Two Ages* as *Kritik der Gegenwart* (Basel: Hess, 1914), where Kierkegaard's word *snak* (chatter or bavardage) is indeed translated as *Geschwätz*. For an excellent discussion of the far reaching influence of Haecker's translation on the German thought of the Twentieth century, see Allan Janik, 'Haecker, Kierkegaard, and the Early *Brenner*' in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Two Ages*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon: Alabama University Press, 1984), 189–222. With respect to Benjamin's concern here with the 'letter' of Kant's text, the following remarks, in which Kierkegaard chastises the move by one Thomasine Gyllembourg to preface her novel *A Story of Everyday Life* with her own 'review,' present themselves as exemplary: 'I wish the author had not done it In my opinion the book has been harmed by this preface precisely because it can prompt rash and impulsive people and loose tongues to say: "Is that it?" "The whole thing can be said in one page." It is certainly true that what is said by a chatty person [*snaksomt Meneske*] or a sassy, degenerate child makes no difference whatsoever, but when it concerns a book by a reputable, distinguished, and established figure in literature, something else is manifestly more desirable ...': Søren Kierkegaard, *Two Ages*, translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna V. Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 60. The point here is that the addition of its own 'review' renders the book redundant and, rather than promoting reading, fosters 'chatter.' On the extent of Kierkegaard's use of the term "chatter," see Peter Fenves, *"Chatter": Language and History in Kierkegaard* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), and, in particular, the final chapter, 'Notifying the Authorities,' which treats of

Two Ages. It is worth noting, however, that Benjamin nowhere mentions a reading of *Two Ages* and, given the context of his remarks in both the draft fragment and the Habilitationsschrift – the Fall as the move from ‘immediacy [*Unmittelbarkeit*] in communication [*der Mitteilung*]’ into ‘the abyss of the mediacy of all communication [*der Mittelbarkeit aller Mitteilung*] ... , into the abyss of chatter’ (GS II 1: 154; SW I: 72) – it is more compelling to read them as a supplement to *The Concept of Anxiety*, a work to which Benjamin *does* refer (*Briefe* I: 148), and to Kierkegaard’s account there of the Fall as the ‘annulment of immediacy’ (the logical analogue, he says, of innocence in the ethical sphere) and the emergence of ‘the enigmatic word [*gaadefuldt Ord*]’ in ‘the ambiguity [*Tvetydighed*] of anxiety’; *The Concept of Anxiety*, translated by Reidar Thomte (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 37, 44, 45. That Benjamin probably *does* have in mind “chatter” in the profound sense in which Kierkegaard grasps the word’ whilst writing of Kant in the letter to Scholem is suggested by the fact that, from 1913, he was to have set the Danish philosopher alongside the Critical one, noting in a letter to Carla Seligson that ‘whenever a few pages of Kant had tired me out, I fled to Kierkegaard,’ moving ‘as no normal man can,’ between the *Groundlaying for the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Either/Or* over the course of a few weeks (*Briefe* I: 92). One final point of reference in the context of an inquiry into the affiliation of philosophy and art expressed by the epigraph to this chapter, comes in ‘Kierkegaard: the End of Philosophical Idealism,’ Benjamin’s review of Adorno’s Habilitationsschrift (GS III 1: 380–3). Although Benjamin does not say as much, it is hard not to read this review as a commentary on and re-statement of the Benjaminian formulation of the opening line of Adorno’s essay: ‘If one attempts to understand the writings of philosophers as literature then one has missed their truth content [*Wahrheitsgehalt*]’; Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Konstruktion des Ästhetischen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 9. In

his review, Benjamin remarks Kierkegaard's 'revelation' of the 'mythical elements' of German Idealism, a revelation he locates *not* in the philosopher's overt theses but in 'the hermaphrodite character of his literary appearance, which seems so often to turn his works into bastards of poetry and knowledge' (GS III 1: 381). On this review and on the dependency on Benjamin's work of Adorno's book, see Peter Fenves, 'Image and Chatter: Adorno's Construction of Kierkegaard,' *Diacritics* 22:1 (1992), 100–14 (110), and Reiner Rochlitz, 'Le meilleur disciple de Walter Benjamin,' *Critique* 582 (1995), 819–35 (820–2).

³³ See the remarks of the second edition Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*: 'a talent for pelucid presentation' is 'something I am conscious of not having myself' (*KrV* B xliii). Compare also the remarks of Lewis White Beck: 'Kant's style is not to everyone's liking, not even to his own. But few men have had juster estimates of their own style than Kant had of his ...'; *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), 3. For a more considered account of the vexed issue of "Kant's style," see Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le discours de la syncope: I. Logodaedalus* (Paris: Flammarion, 1976). Nancy's concern in this work is less with the style of a philosophical writing per se, than with the rupture (*la syncope*) which the issue of style – and so of *Darstellung* (Nancy's own equation) – introduces into philosophy once philosophy itself comes to be seen as 'a certain *how* [*comment*] of presentation': 'There thus comes about a moment when philosophical orthography can no longer certify, authorise, or authenticate itself in any way – but when philosophy designates, implicates, and disavows *itself* through what will very quickly become the modern notion – and so one *exterior* to philosophy – of "literature." This is the moment of Kant.' It is on the basis of Kant alone, Nancy concludes, therefore, 'that the express distinction ... between philosophy and literature becomes possible and necessary' (*ibid.*... 26). Geoffrey

Bennington's formidable essay 'De la fictions transcendental' in Michel Lisse (ed.), *Passions de la littérature: Avec Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 141–160, extends and complements Nancy's analyses in order to show how it is precisely when Kant opens 'the celebrated and obscure ... distinction between limit and border, between *Grenze* and *Schranke*' (ibid., 141), that the frontier between literature and philosophy breaks down: 'wherever there is a frontier ..., or perhaps wherever there is a thought of the frontier, there is something like literature' (ibid., 142). In similar vein, although less convincingly, Peter Fenves metaphoric account, *A Peculiar Fate: Metaphysics and World History in Kant* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), reads the Critical text in terms not of a 'securing of fundamental positions' but of 'their illustrative presentation' (ibid., 2), a presentation which, he suggests, always exceeds the positions it is intended to secure. Equally important for what I shall want to argue viz.-à-viz. Benjamin and Kant is Michel Foucault's suggestion that 'la critique kantienne marque ... le retrait du savoir et de la pensée hors de l'espace de la représentation'; *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 255. As both context and Foucault's own contemporaneous translations – of, most importantly, Kant's *Anthropology* – attest, *la représentation* is here to be read as *Darstellung*. See, finally, the remarks of Paul de Man's 'Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant' in *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1996), 70–90, where attention is drawn to 'how decisively determining the play of the letter and of the syllable, the way of saying (*Art des Sagens*) as opposed to what is being said (*das Gesagte*) – to quote Walter Benjamin – is in this most unobtrusive of stylists' (ibid., 89). As I hope to show, it is precisely this opposition, one which comes into play only at the very close of de Man's otherwise extraordinarily insightful essay, that becomes properly *fragwürdig* in Benjamin's text.

- 34 *KrV B xxxvii.*
- 35 *KrV A xiii.*
- 36 *KrV B xxxviii.* Kant's emphasis.
- 37 *KrV B xliv.*
- 38 The characterisation is that of Jean-François Lyotard, 'Judicieux dans le différend,' *La Faculté de juger* (Paris: Minuit, 1985), 195–236 (200).
- 39 *KrV A viii.*
- 40 *KrV A xii.* John Sallis offers a useful dual reading of this line (as misunderstanding of itself and misunderstanding *with* itself) in *Spacings*, op. cit., 9.
- 41 The distinction, properly introduced into philosophy by Karl Reinhold in 1790, enjoyed far-reaching currency in the *après-Kant* of German Idealism as what Rolf-Peter Horstmann describes as a 'relatively elegant' solution to the problem of adopting a stance with respect to that of Kant; *Die Grenzen der Vernunft – Eine Untersuchung zu Zielen und Motiven des deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Anton Hain, 1991), 60. The opening chapter of Horstmann's book provides a good overview of such stances.
- 42 For Kant's contestation of this identity, apparently made without having ever read the relevant works by Fichte, see the celebrated open letter of August 1799 where Fichte's work is denounced as containing 'a totally indefensible system,' a 'fact' which leads Kant to declare it 'sufficient that I renounce any connection with that philosophy' (Ak XII: 370). John Sallis' *Spacings – of Reason and Imagination in Texts of Kant, Fichte, Hegel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), 25–35, offers a good account of Fichte's attempt to re-present the Critical spirit.

- 43 J. G. Fichte, 'First Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*' in *Fichtes Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975) I: 420. Cited in Sallis, *Spacings*, op. cit., 25 and in Horstmann, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft*, op. cit., 61.
- 44 'Second Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*,' *ibid.*, 478. Cited in Sallis, *Spacings*, op. cit., 34 and in Horstmann, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft*, op. cit., 62.
- 45 Miklos Vetö, *De Schelling à Kant: Les Deux voies de l'Idéalisme allemand* (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1998), 320.
- 46 F. W. J. Schelling, *Über die Möglichkeit der Philosophie* in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta'scher, 1860) I 1: 105 note.
- 47 Schelling, *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte in menschlichen Wissen* in *Sämtliche Werke* I 1: 152.
- 48 *Ibid.*, *Sämtliche Werke* I 1: 153.
- 49 Schelling, *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre* in *Sämtliche Werke* I 1: 375.
- 50 GS II 1: 159; SW I: 101–2.
- 51 Letter to Scholem of 22 October 1917 (*Briefe* I: 390).
- 52 Letter to Marcus Herz 21 February 1772. Ak X: 130.
- 53 Alexis Philonenko, *L'Oeuvre de Kant* (Paris: Vrin, 1969) I: 98. See also Ernst Cassirer's commentary on the letter in the opening paragraphs of his review of Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *Kantstudien* XXXVI (1931), 1–26 (1–3), and that provided by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood in their recent edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 47–9. Kant's letter makes reference to the *Dissertation* which

fails, he suggests, to do justice to ‘the obscurity of our faculty of understanding’ in respect of experience (Ak X: 131).

54 Ak X: 130.

55 Ak X: 130.

56 Philonenko, *L'Oeuvre de Kant*, op. cit., 98.

57 *Groundlaying for the Metaphysics of Morals* Ak IV: 425. The remark on the *mißlichen Standpunkt* of philosophy is, of course, central to Heidegger’s own engagement with Kant and is cited at crucial points throughout his work. See, for example, the concluding remarks of the 1930 essay ‘On the Essence of Truth’ (GA 9: 199; BW 136) and of the lecture course of the same year *On the Essence of Human Freedom* (GA 31: 303), as well as the Davos *Disputation* with Cassirer (KPM 279; 175).

58 Ak X: 131.

59 The term is Cassirer’s; see ‘Bemerkungen zu Martin Heideggers Kant-Interpretation,’ op. cit., 1.

60 Ian Lyne argues persuasively for reading the systematic *Umweg* of the whole of Benjamin’s work in terms of a critique of the understanding of time which follows from this recourse to Newtonian physics; *The Temporality of Language*, op. cit., chap. 3. Strangely enough, although this may well be an heuristic device on Lyne’s part, the opening chapter of that work appears to endorse precisely the reading of Kant against which Benjamin (and, as Lyne points out, Heidegger) were reacting. What is of concern, in other words, is *not*, as Lyne holds, ‘the way in which Kant’s investigation of the “concept of the existence of a thing as such” took Newtonian science as its starting point’ (ibid., 131, citing GS V: 34), but the way in which *neo-Kantianism* takes Kant’s starting point to be that of Newtonian science. For the remarks on neo-Kantianism that follow, I

am indebted both to discussions with Ian Lyne, as well as to Alexis Philonenko's *L'École de Marbourg: Cohen, Natorp, Cassirer* (Paris: Vrin, 1989), as well as the polemical remarks of Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Lapsus iudicii' in *L'Impératif catégorique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), 35–60 (49–52).

61 Kant, *KrV* B 128.

62 Kant, *KrV* A 11–12; B 25.

63 'Davoser Disputation zwischen Ernst Cassirer und Martin Heidegger' (KPM 294; 184–5).

64 KPM 274; 171.

65 Cassirer, 'Bemerkungen zu Martin Heideggers Kant-Interpretation,' op. cit., 2.

66 Letter to Gershom Scholem of 1 February 1918 (*Briefe* I: 426. Emphasis mine). Heinrich Rickert's 'big book' is *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* of 1913.

67 Françoise Proust, *L'Histoire à contretemps*, op. cit., 12.

68 GS II 1: 170; SW I: 109.

69 GS II 1: 158; SW I: 100.

70 *KrV* A 832; B 860.

71 Compare Jacques Derrida, 'Chaire vacante: Censure, maîtrise, magisralité' in *Du Droit à la philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), 343–70 (362).

72 GS I 1: 212; *Or* 32.

73 GS I 1: 212; *Or* 32. To the best of my knowledge, the only commentator to devoted any consideration to this remark is Françoise Proust; see *L'Histoire à contretemps*, op. cit., 166–7. With respect to the philosopher's position as an *erhobene Mitte* between the artist and the scientist, it is worth recalling Benjamin's description of *translation* as

- 'midway between poetry and doctrine [*mitten zwischen Dichtung und Lehre*]' in the Introduction to his translations of Baudelaire (GS IV 1: 17; SW I: 259).
- 74 GS I 3: 931.
- 75 GS V 2: 1038.
- 76 GS II 1: 170; SW I: 109.
- 77 GS II 1: 171; SW I: 110.
- 78 GS I 1: 213; *Or* 33.
- 79 GS I 3: 931.
- 80 GS I 1: 212; *Or* 32.
- 81 GS I 1: 207; *Or* 27. Osbourne's translation reads: '... a restricted image.'
- 82 GS VI 1: 203.
- 83 The point is made by Rainer Nägele, *Theatre, Theory, Speculation: Walter Benjamin and the Scenes of Modernity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1991), xvi–xvii.
- 84 GS I 3: 925. Emphasis mine. Here, as elsewhere, the principle difference between the draft and the final version of the Foreword is most accurately expressed as that between what Benjamin calls philosophical *knowledge* and philosophy as given through *presentation*. Compare, for example: 'Die Darstellung, wenn sie als die eigentliche Methode philosophischer Erkenntnis sich behaupten will ...' (GS I 3: 928) with 'Wenn Darstellung als eigentliche Methode des philosophischen Traktates sich behaupten will ...' (GS I 1: 209; *Or* 29), and: 'Gegenstand der Philosophie sind die Idee' (GS I 3: 928) with: 'Gegenstand dieser Forschung sind die Ideen' (GS I 1: 209; *Or* 29).
- 85 GS II 1: 168; SW I: 108. Compare the remarks of Alexis Philonenko: 'It is genuinely essential to recognise that Kant always refused to offer a *Critique of Langauge* and his

practice consists merely in trying sometimes to explain the meaning of one term, sometimes in choosing another and in clarifying the meaning of a metaphor, without ever pretending to be a linguist. What characterises Kant in his century is that he is almost the only philosopher to make no reference to the *Cratylus*'; *La Théorie kantienne de l'histoire* (Paris: Vrin, 1998), 149.

86 GS I 1: 207; *Or* 27.

87 GS I 1: 208; *Or* 28.

88 GS I 3: 925.

89 Ak IV: 478. Compare, however, the remarks of the 'Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality' of 1764 where Kant declares 'with Bishop Warburton that nothing has been more damaging to philosophy than mathematics, and in particular the *imitation* of its method in contexts where it cannot possibly be employed' (Ak II: 283); translated in *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, eds. and trs. David Walford and Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 256. Presumably this is not one of those contexts.

90 Claude Imbert, 'Le Présent et l'histoire,' op. cit., 768. Compared to the readings cited in note 96, below, Imbert's position is a nuanced one, concerned as it is with Kant's apparent *silence* and not with his position per se, and follows from her careful account of the extent of Kant's involvement in the Foreword. On *le silence de Kant*, compare the remarks of Philonenko, *La Théorie kantienne de l'histoire*, op. cit., 149. cited in note 85. above.

91 Letter to Scholem of 22 October 1917 (*Briefe* I: 389).

92 Letter to Scholem of 23 December 1917 (*Briefe* I: 408).

- 93 Letter to Scholem of 1 February 1918 (*Briefe* I: 426).
- 94 Letter to Ernst Schoen of May 1918 (*Briefe* I: 455). The briefest glance at the indexes to the *Gesammelte Briefe* suffices to show the extraordinary extent to which Kant drops out of Benjamin's philosophical vocabulary from this point onwards. For a careful and exacting account of this gradual shift, see Timothy Bahti, 'Theories of Knowledge: Fate and Forgetting in the Early Work of Walter Benjamin' in Nägele, *Benjamin's Ground*, op. cit., 61–82 (62–6), where the shift is characterised as one 'from knowing to reading, all the while along an axis of immediate intuition turning into some other kind of insight or observation' (ibid., 64–5).
- 95 Exemplary in this respect is Beatrice Hanssen's claim that the Foreword 'resumed the critique of Kant's predilection for mathematical formalisation ... already taken up ... toward the end of the "Program of the Coming Philosophy"'; *Walter Benjamin's Other History*, op. cit., 39. See also the remarks of Martha B. Helfer, *The Retreat of Presentation: the Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse* (Albany: SUNY, 1996), 178: 'Benjamin ... chastises Kant for trying to eliminate the *Darstellung* problematic from philosophy by modeling his *Critiques* on a mathematical paradigm.' A broadly similar claim is made in the expository account of Reiner Rochlitz who, despite insisting upon the resolutely Kantian foundations of Benjamin's thinking, implies a thoroughgoing opposition of Benjamin to Kant on this point; *Le désenchantement de l'art: La Philosophie de Walter Benjamin* (Paris: Gallimard nrf, 1992), 30–1, 48–9. Compare, however, the altogether more suggestive comments of Rainer Nägele. 'Benjamin's Ground' in Nägele (ed.), *Benjamin's Ground*, op. cit., 19–37 (24–5), of Imbert, 'Le Présent et l'histoire,' op. cit., 768–9, and Bhati, 'Theories of Knowledge,' op. cit., 63.

- 96 See Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Remarque spéculative* (Paris: Galilée, 1973), 141–2.
- 97 Kant, *KrV* A 233; B 285–6.
- 98 Christian Wolff, *Preliminary Discourse on Philosophy in General*, cited in Lewis White Beck, ‘From Leibniz to Kant’ in *The Age of German Idealisms*, eds. Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins (London: Routledge, 1993), 5–39 (9).
- 99 On this celebrated phrase, ‘familiar in the lycées,’ see Jacques Derrida, ‘Chaire vacante,’ *op. cit.*, 360–70. The analogy with Benjamin’s own rejection of the mathematical character of philosophical method is clear.
- 100 *KrV* A 715; B 743.
- 101 *KrV* A 713; B 741. Kant’s emphasis.
- 102 GS II 1: 168; SW I 108.
- 103 *KrV* A 726; B 754.
- 104 GS I 3: 834.
- 105 GS I 3: 833.
- 106 GS I 1: 209; *Or* 30.
- 107 Rolf Tiedemann makes more or less the same point with respect to status of the Idea in the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, coming down firmly on the side of the Idea as constitutive principle; cf. *Studien zur Philosophie Walter Benjamins*, *op. cit.*, 34–5.
- 108 GS I 3: 833.
- 109 Gunter Figal, ‘Aesthetically Limited Reason: On Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*’ in *Philosophy and Tragedy*, eds. Miguel de Beistegui and Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 1999), 141.
- 110 GS I 3: 835.

111 GS I 1: 195; SW I: 146.

112 GS I 3: 172.

113 Cf. GS I 1: 195.

114 GS I 1: 173.

115 GS I 1: 173.

116 GS I 1: 195.

117 Ibid..

118 Ibid..

119 Ibid..

II. TRAGEDY

Qu'il n'y ait pas de remède à la mort, que le mortalité soit le
Partage de l'homme ... c'est ce qui, dans la tragédie sophocléenne,
Prépare l'avènement de la philosophie.

Françoise Dastur, *La mort*

CHAPTER THREE

'A Good Death': Heidegger and the Essence of Tragedy

We presumably arrive at a trace of the essence of tragedy not when we illuminate it psychologically or aesthetically, but only when we think its essential form, the being of beings, by thinking *διδόναι δίκην ...της ἀδικίας*.¹

In the Introduction to *Being and Time* Heidegger draws a seemingly unequivocal distinction between the ensuing analytic of Dasein and the plethora of interpretations available for Dasein's particular ways of being.² He readily accepts that the existentiell accounts afforded by poetry, politics, anthropology, ethics, etc., do not preclude and may even require or call for (*fordern*) existential analysis. What he disputes is any possibility of their attaining the level of originality claimed for the 'productive logic' of his own investigations.³ This is not to say that such interpretations are no longer entirely valid as ways in which Dasein can be interpreted. They are. Rather is it to say that whatever *factual (sachlich)* merits they may possess as regards the particular realms that provide the impetus for their respective methods, a persistent failure to ask as to the being of Dasein means that they have altogether missed the real *philosophical* problem.⁴ 'Only once the basic structures of Dasein are adequately worked out with explicit orientation toward the problem of being itself,' Heidegger declares, 'will the results of the previous interpretations of Dasein gain their existential justification.'⁵

At least as important as this distinction, however, is the *pudeur* that Heidegger is always quick to respect as regards the more concrete function of his own researches. For whilst it may fall to fundamental ontology to leap ahead and play the role of groundlaying to those sciences whose pedagogic fixation with results renders them incapable of awaiting the completion of its tiresome labours, it in no way follows from this that it ought to be seen as affecting an *advance* (*Fortschritt*) over them.⁶ Confining himself accordingly to the altogether more 'modest' task of a preliminary repetition and desedimentation of what has already been uncovered ontically (*des ontisch Entdecken*) so as to render it 'ontologically more transparent,'⁷ Heidegger concludes his lengthy introductory statement of intent with some candour: not only will the analytic prove to be 'necessarily inadequate' when seen from the standpoint of the theoretical sciences but, rather more significantly, its contribution to these will only ever be an indirect one (*nur indirekt*).⁸

Both points are made rather more graphically in a lecture presented some years earlier to the Marburger Theologenschaft. Even in this early distillation of the essence of his approach,⁹ Heidegger's overriding concern is to distinguish his own considerations from those of the various sciences, from theology to relativity physics, from history to philosophy itself. Rather than being joined to this seemingly endless 'parade,' therefore, the considerations voiced in the lecture are situated by Heidegger on the level of a propaedeutic or pre-science (*Vorwissenschaft*), one whose task it is to subject this parade to 'police scrutiny' so as to determine whether a particular field of research is legitimately 'in touch with its issue [*bei ihrer Sache ist*]' or merely 'fed by some traditional and worn-out verbiage.'¹⁰ In the case of philosophy, for example,

these policing duties are famously said to take the form of the occasional 'house search of the ancients, in order to see what they were up to.'¹¹ Very much like the notion of a productive logic, therefore, first introduced in the lecture course of the following year in order to clarify the way in which fundamental ontology is to leap over the sciences in order to secure their basic concepts,¹² the 'pressing but decidedly *subordinate*' concern of such pre-science is to 'conduct inquiries into what could ultimately be meant by what ... science and philosophy have to say about existence and about the world.'¹³

So rather than wanting simply to rectify the shortcomings of the various positive sciences and their corresponding regional ontologies, therefore, *fundamental ontology* is asking another sort of question altogether, one that does not belong to existentiell inquiry but lends itself to a thoroughgoing attempt to ask how such inquiry might be possible in the first place. As the Exposition of the Task of a Preparatory Analytic of Dasein has it: of showing how 'the question of being is the spur [*die Stachel*] for all scientific thinking.'¹⁴

The development in *Being and Time* of the notion of conscience (*das Gewissen*) as the call of care (*der Ruf der Sorge*) affords a good instance of this sort of distinction. In what amounts to an effective clarification and concretion of his earlier remarks, Heidegger now declares the demand (*Forderung*) for an ethics rebuffed by the 'phenomenal findings' of an analysis that is concerned less with meeting expectations and issuing practical directives for action – by modelling ethical deliberation along the lines of demonstrative and calculative formulae, for example – than with setting out an attestation of Dasein's ownmost potentiality-for-being:

*the expectation of an actually usable purpose from assured possibilities of “action” that are available and calculable ... is founded upon the interpretative horizon of common-sense concerns, which forces the existence of Dasein under the idea of a regulable business practice*¹⁵

All the same, it would appear from the various admonitory remarks made in the lecture courses and publications immediately following the appearance of *Being and Time* that such expectations were sufficiently exaggerated for Heidegger to find himself having to answer critics who doubted the claims of fundamental ontology to have adopted a standpoint wholly antecedent to such concerns. So in an aside to his lectures on Leibniz and in a withering note to *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* of the following year, he seizes the opportunity to accuse such critics of a fundamental misunderstanding of his entire enterprise and of raising ‘cheap accusations,’¹⁶ principally that of an ‘ethical egoism’ apparently inscribed within the project of fundamental ontology, which are, on the terms established by the project, clearly inadmissible.¹⁷ Quoting again from the development carried out in *Being and Time*:

The call of conscience gives no such “practical” directives *for the sole reason* that it calls Dasein to its ownmost potentiality-for-being ... The call discloses nothing that could be positive or negative as *something to care for*, because it refers to an ontologically completely different mode of being, namely *existence [die Existenz]*.¹⁸

Now this argument against ‘the interpretative horizon of common-sense concerns’ with respect to the notion of ethics is most famously reprised, of course, in the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’ of 1946. There, Heidegger recalls the anxieties voiced by a ‘young friend’ shortly after the publication of *Being and Time* at his insistence that the paths of ethics and ontology be distinguished in this way. When, the young friend had asked of the philosopher, are you going to write an ethics? Of course, Heidegger already *had* as his young friend would have realised if only he or she had read *Being and Time* with a little more care. Retrospectively situating that work as an attempt ‘to advance thought in a preliminary way toward the truth of being ... by reaching back into the essential ground from out of which thinking concerning the truth of being emerges,’¹⁹ Heidegger shows his hand, declaring: ‘the thinking that thinks the truth of being as the inceptive [*anfängliche*] element of man as one who ek-sists is *in itself* originary ethics.’²⁰

The apparent evidence of such assurances notwithstanding, several readers of Heidegger presumably a good deal more illustrious than his unfortunate young friend have been moved to ask a similar question: Ought not ontology, in particular the fundamental ontology of Dasein presented in *Being and Time*, to foster an ethics? Among the first to pose the problem in this way was Jean Beaufret who, in a letter of 1945, confessed to a protracted struggle to ‘*préciser le rapport de l’ontologie avec une éthique possible.*’²¹ Setting the tone of his response with a decidedly uncharitable assimilation of Beaufret’s cautiously worded statement of research to the reckless attempt to provide an ethical supplement to ontology – a strategy clearly designed to allow for an implicit restatement of the position set out almost twenty years earlier:

the 'Letter on "Humanism"' feigning to ask whether ontology ought not to be *supplemented (ergänzt)* by an ethics,²² *Being and Time* having declared any clarification of the hermeneutic situation immediately to be forgone if one begins with an initially theoretical subject so as then to *supplement* it (*zu ergänzen*) with an ethics²³ - Heidegger nonetheless considers the point at length. He readily accepts, for instance, that were it to be 'thought more originally,' Beaufret's line of inquiry would have a 'meaning and essential importance.'²⁴ What he disputes is whether it can have any real basis in the sphere of legitimate ontological questions. In contrast to the anxieties of the young friend, however, Beaufret's own difficulties appear *not* to stem from his having paid insufficient attention to *Being and Time*. If there *is* error on Beaufret's part, Heidegger implies, it lies in his failure to have read Sophocles:

Before attempting to determine more precisely the relationship between "ontology" and "ethics," we must ask what "ontology" and "ethics" themselves are. It becomes necessary to ponder whether what can be designated by both terms still remains appropriate [*gemäß*] and proper [*nahe*] to what is assigned to thinking, which, as thinking, has above all to think the truth of being ... The tragedies of Sophocles, provided such a comparison is in any way allowable, shelter [*bergen*] the ἠθος in their sayings more incipiently [*anfänglicher*] than do Aristotle's lectures on "ethics."²⁵

Hunting down the etymology of the word ἠθος, Heidegger finds that it's more original meaning, more original than either "ethics" or the "ethical," is "abode" or "place of

dwelling” (*Aufenthalt, Ort des Wohnens*). Eschewing the most immediate justification for his findings – the one afforded in fact by Aristotle himself in those same lectures on “ethics”²⁶ – Heidegger finds an altogether more apt illustration of the point in a fragment handed down by Plutarch and ascribed to Heraclitus. The fragment, in whose ‘simplicity’ the essential meaning of the word ἦθος comes ‘immediately to light,’ reads: ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων. Diels translates: ‘Dem Menschen ist seine Eigenart sein Dämon.’²⁷ Kirk renders the saying in English: ‘man’s character is his daimon.’²⁸ Burnet, whom Heidegger often consulted in German translation, eliminates the residual Hellenism: man’s character is his fate.²⁹ Kahn, in whose taxonomy the fragment is placed amongst the thinker’s ‘ethical and political advice,’ follows suit: ‘man’s character is his fate (his *daimon* or his divinity).’³⁰ And Heidegger himself, observing the way in which the fragment is ‘commonly translated,’ tenders only a slight grammatical variant on the rendering of Diels: ‘seine Eigenart ist dem Menschen sein Dämon.’³¹

Clearly there can be no question of reconciling Heidegger’s findings with such translations, which are scorned accordingly for their failure to think in a suitably ‘Greek’ manner – that is, in a manner ‘appropriate to the *Sache* that is to be thought.’³² The more important point here, however, surely concerns the way in which each of the translations enumerated above can be said to work *à contresens*, foreclosing immediately on that line of inquiry that the reference to Heraclitus was intended to prise open: the inquiry into what ontology and ethics themselves are. When Heidegger does come properly to translate the fragment, therefore, the basis for his doing so is no longer a purely philological one, but one appropriate to *die Sache*

selbst. Hence: 'the (ordinary) abode is for man the open site for the presencing of the gods (the extra-ordinary).'³³ No less problematic here, however, no less inappropriate to the *Sache* that is to be thought, is the sense in which the terms "abode" or "dwelling" are habitually taken. And justifying his translation by reference to another remark by Heraclitus, Heidegger goes even so far as to cast real doubt on whether we are today at all able to think what is 'actually' named by them. Still, an important hint in the direction of such thinking is given a few lines further on, when it is pointed out that dwelling had already been identified in *Being and Time* as the very 'essence' of Dasein's fundamental constitution, namely being-in-the-world:³⁴

Being-in does not designate a spatial "inside one another" of things present-to-hand, any more than the word "in" originally means a spatial relationship of this kind; "in" stems from *innan-*, to dwell [*wohnen*], *habitare*, to abide [*sich aufhalten*]; "an" means: I am in the habit of [*ich bin gewohnt*], familiar with, I tend to something; it has the meaning of *colo* in the sense of *habito* and *diligo*. This being to whom this sense of being-in belongs we characterise as the being that I myself in each case am [*bin*]. This word *bin* is connected with by [*bei*]; "I am" [*Ich bin*] means in turn: I dwell in, I abide in the presence of [*bei*] ... the world as something familiar in such and such a way. To be, as the infinitive of "I am," i.e. understood as an existential, means to dwell in the presence of ..., to be familiar with *Being-in is thus the formal existential expression of the being of Dasein, which has the essential constitution [wesenhafte Verfassung] of being-in-the-world.*³⁵

Here, dwelling does not refer to some particular place or address at which one resides. any more than world was seen in chapter one to refer to a cosmological *mundus* that could come to be portrayed by way of a map or globe. Dwelling in the sense of being-in-the-world means being alongside (*bei*) other beings and so being situated there (*da*) in the matrices of particular contexts. It means, still according to the analyses of *Being and Time* discussed in chapter one, to take up a direction toward what is present-to-hand, to exist as that open space for the disclosure of beings as a whole, to be that disclosive site on the basis of which beings can arise as phenomena and come to presence. Hence, dwelling in the sense of being-in-the-world *also* means to be situated *aletheologically*, to be lodged in what, following the displacements broached by 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' might be called a particular *historical* constellation of truth.

So when, in order to justify the translation of fragment 118 proposed just a few moments before, the 'Letter on "Humanism"' turns back to Heraclitus and to a story famously preserved by Aristotle,³⁶ the failure of the visiting strangers to recognise themselves as in the presence of something 'exceptional' and 'counter to the usual course of life' is only to be expected.³⁷ Commenting on the story, Heidegger repeatedly describes the strangers in terms of their 'curiosity,' that is, in terms of that decidedly fallen mode of being-in-the-world whose essential characteristic *Being and Time* had already presented as an *Aufenthaltlosigkeit*. 'The two constitutive factors of curiosity, that of *not-tarrying* in the surrounding world with which one is concerned, and that of *distraction* by new possibilities, found the third of the essential characteristics of this phenomena, that which we call *never-abiding-anywhere*,' Heidegger had remarked.

before declaring: 'Curiosity is everywhere and nowhere. This mode of being-in-the-world unveils a kind of being of everyday Dasein in which Dasein continually uproots itself.'³⁸ The difference between *these* strangers and the one from Elea could not be more marked, therefore. For whilst the philosophical attitude may well begin in the originary pathos of wonderment, curiosity begins in what Heidegger is here calling 'distraction' and its effects are felt somewhat closer to home. In contrast to the thaumatic contemplation of beings, to that apprehending of what is present-to-hand that *Being and Time* calls dwelling, curiosity has no interest in wonderment to the point of incomprehension. Certainly, it fosters a desire to see, 'but *only* [*nur*] so as to have seen.'³⁹ Certainly, it fosters a desire to know, 'but *simply* [*lediglich*] so as to have seen.'⁴⁰ And it comes as no surprise, therefore, that when Heidegger offers his own account of the motives underlying the strangers' visit, he does so in the following terms: 'The visitors want this "experience" not so as to be overwhelmed by thinking but *simply* [*lediglich*] so that they can say that they saw and heard someone who everyone [*man*] says is a thinker.' Hoping to catch Heraclitus when, 'sunk in profound meditation, he is thinking,' 'the curious ones instead find him by [*bei*] a stove.' Their 'curious importunity toward the thinker,' suggests Heidegger, renders them 'at a loss' to draw any meaningful inference from this view of his impoverished 'abode.' In the face of such a 'disappointing sight' 'even the curious' lose any desire to 'draw near' and are only prevented from leaving when the thinker, reading the 'frustrated curiosity in their faces,' calls them in with the words εἶναι γὰρ καὶ ἐταῦθα θεοῦς, here too the gods are present.⁴¹

Now, with respect to the thoroughgoing identity of existence and dwelling established in *Being and Time*, it is only to be expected that more or less the same point be made by the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’:

The word ἦθος names the open region in which man dwells. The open site of his abode allows what pertains to the essence of man to appear [*läßt das erscheinen was auf das Wesen des Menschen zukommt*] and which in doing so abides in nearness to him. The abode of man contains and preserves the advent of what belongs to him in his essence [*der Aufenthalt des Menschen enthält und bewahrt die Ankunft dessen, dem der Menschen in seinem Wesen gehört*].⁴²

When set alongside the passage from *Being and Time* cited a moment ago, these lines will have some far reaching consequences for Heidegger’s remark concerning Attic drama. For if the tragedies of Sophocles do indeed shelter in their sayings an inceptive sense of ἦθος (‘the open region in which man dwells,’ ‘the open site of his abode’), might this not also mean that they contain and preserve in equally inceptive fashion what it is that ‘belongs’ to man in his essence? Might it not mean that these tragedies shelter something of the very being of man?

My concern in this chapter, then, is to build on the broader analyses of chapter one in order to ask as to Heidegger’s recourse to tragedy in order to re-secure the issue which, since *Being and Time* at least, will have formed the centrepiece of his entire enterprise, to wit, that of ‘laying bare [*die Freilegung*] the *a priori* that must be made visible if the question “what is man?” is to be discussed philosophically.⁴³

What *a priori*? In the analyses of *Being and Time* Heidegger had proposed the name Dasein or Dasein in its disclosedness.⁴⁴ More precisely, he had proposed this name as a way of generating the circular foresight that first enabled those analyses and that was, in turn, confirmed and extended by them. For in that comportment toward being that provides the first formal indication of Dasein's existence, Dasein is shown itself *to be* the question of being: 'the question of being,' Heidegger had written, 'is nothing other than the radicalisation of an essential tendency of being that belongs to Dasein itself, the pre-ontological understanding of being.'⁴⁵ From which it follows, as again we saw in chapter one, that working out the question of the meaning of being has to take the form of a working out of Dasein's already operative understanding of being, of letting Dasein, interpret itself (*sich auslegen*), so to speak.

In the 'Letter on "Humanism",' however, Heidegger proposes a rather different name for this *a priori*. Now he calls it abode or place of dwelling. No longer a case of listening in on (*abzuhören*) the phenomenal content of Dasein's self-disclosure, the concern now is to bring 'the relation of being to the essence of man' to language.⁴⁶ And whereas the project of fundamental ontology was geared in its entirety toward the problematic of gaining an appropriate means of access (*Zugang*) to the phenomenon of being-in-the-world as the fundamental constitution of Dasein, it is now a matter of asking what it is that belongs (*gehört*) to man in his essence, understood in terms of his dwelling, his being there (*da*) and alongside (*bei*) that dimension that Heidegger *had* called world and that is *now* called 'the clearing of being into which man stands out on the basis of [*aus*] his thrown essence.'⁴⁷

I

Let me turn first of all to the particular context in which Sophocles' tragedies are said by Heidegger to shelter the open site of the abode of man, the site which, containing and preserving 'the advent of what belongs to him in his essence,' allows this essence 'to appear.'

Note the curious conjunctions here: the abode preserves the *advent (Ankunft)* of essence, *allows this essence to appear (läßt ... erscheinen)*. Presumably these locutions are intended to give notice that the notion of essence (*wesen*) is here being understood *not* in its nominal sense, but in what was seen in chapter one to be its more essential sense, that is, in its verbal sense as the essential unfolding and coming to presence (*wesen*) of something.⁴⁸ In the context of the 'Letter on "Humanism"' such an orientation would not be entirely surprising. For the whole point of the analysis thus far will have been to contest the 'dangerous' and 'uncontrollable' set of presuppositions which, underscoring every humanism, purport to have determined the essence of man by way of what Heidegger identifies as 'an already established interpretation of nature, of history, of world, of the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole [*ein schon feststehende Auslegung der Natur, der Geschichte, der Welt, des Weltgrundes, das heißt des Seinden im Ganzen*].'⁴⁹

Made right at the beginning of the analysis, the identification serves to establish at least three significant points.

There is, first of all, a point concerning the way in which man is to be located: that is, concerning his place with respect to beings as a whole. The point here is that

the interpretation established by the humanist tradition stands or falls on the location of man as one particular being *within* beings (*innerhalb des Seienden*) or as one being *amongst* others (*unter anderen*). I will return to the significance of these locutions in due course. For the moment, let us simply note the evident reserve on this point registered by Heidegger in a sardonic aside: 'One can proceed in this way ... and thereby always be able to say something right [*Richtiges*] about man.'⁵⁰

From which follows, second, a point concerning the way in which man as a specific object of inquiry is to be delimited, set off as one particular being over against others. The point this time turns on the attribution to man of a specific difference. What difference? A difference, Heidegger suggests, of *ratio*, reason. Man is set off from other beings, from those beings *within which* or *amongst which* he has already been located, by his determination as rational animal, as a living being endowed with reason. Now whilst Heidegger in no way wants to contest the factual veracity of this claim – which, very like the location of man *within* or *amongst* beings as a whole, is judged 'not false' and so not to be 'dismissed out of hand'⁵¹ – what he *does* dispute is the capacity of any such determination to shrug off its defining 'principle.' Does the essence of man lie 'inceptively and most decisively' in the dimension of *homo animalitas*? Heidegger says not and charges humanism accordingly with having failed altogether to take the measure of this essence by having defined man by way of something that he quite clearly is not. The locution on this point is emphatic:

one *must* be clear on this, that by proceeding in this way one abandons man to the essential realm of *animalitas*, even if one does not equate him with

animals, but attributes a specific difference to him. In principle [*Prinzip*], one is still thinking of *homo animalitas* even when *anima* is posited as *anima sive mens* and this in turn posited as subject, person, or spirit. Such a positing is the manner of metaphysics.⁵²

Metaphysics thinks man on the basis of (*von*) animality, and *not* in the direction of (*zu ... hin*) his *humanitas*.

At least as damaging to the humanist case, however, is its appeal to the defining character of reason. For however else it may be determined, the essence of reason is, so Heidegger writes, 'always and in each case grounded in the fact that for every apprehension of beings in their being, being is in each case already illuminated, appropriated in its truth.'⁵³ The implicit reference on this point is to Kant, Heidegger invoking here both the Transcendental Dialectic (reason determined as 'faculty of principles') *and* the Analytic (reason as 'faculty of categories'). One can presume, however, that the more important allusion in these lines is to the principle of reason itself ('or some other way') which, as an assertion regarding the ground of beings, had already provided the point of departure for a much earlier treatise, 'On the Essence of Ground.'⁵⁴ Narrating the act of peculiarly Socratic midwifery by which Leibniz undertakes to draw the axiomatic form of reason from out of a determination of truth as a propositional *a priori*, Heidegger transcribes the habitual expression of the principle (*nohil est sine ratione*) into its positive form (*omne ens habet rationem*). He remarks: 'The principle speaks *about beings* and does so from the perspective of something like ground.'⁵⁵ For Leibniz, the principle of inclusion, *praedicatum inest*

subjecto, holds that all complex propositions can be reduced, by means of analysis, to primitive statements or axioms, what Heidegger terms *first truths (ersten Wahrheiten)*. A relation thus obtains between such truths and the principle of reason since it is the principle alone that is able to provide a ground – a *reason* – for beings. Without it there would be truths that could not be resolved into such axiomatic form, thereby contravening the character of truth as such. ‘Since this is impossible, however, and truth persists, the *principium rationis*, since it springs from the essence of truth, also persists.’⁵⁶

Need it be said that Heidegger’s reservations here with regard to the notion of rational animal are not entirely without precedent, enjoying at least a passing resemblance to Descartes’ response to the question which, following the discovery of the *cogito*, was to have provided the point of departure for the second of the *Meditations*: What is man (*quid est homo*)? It will be recalled that the question is raised by Descartes in order to guard against error; more specifically, to guard against error ‘in the very thing that I maintain to be the most certain of all,’⁵⁷ to wit, the *cogito* or the *ego sum as res cogitans*. As such, the question forms a necessary part of the ongoing subjection of the philosopher’s ‘former opinions’ to the rigorous scrutiny of hyperbolic doubt that was to have secured the discovery of ‘one certain and immutable thing’ upon which to construct a metaphysics.⁵⁸ What, therefore, did Descartes think formerly that he was? ‘A man. But,’ he asks, extending the range of questioning still further, ‘what is a man? Shall I say a rational animal? Certainly not.’⁵⁹ It is the scope and radicality of the sort of questioning at work here that dictates the emphatic rejection on this point. For were the nomination *animal rationale* to stand

unchallenged it would involve appeal to certain 'obscure' notions which themselves stand in need of further clarification: 'it would be necessary then to ask what animal and rational mean [*quidnam animal sit et quid rationale*] and in this way from a single question would we fall into other, more difficult ones.'⁶⁰ The point, then, is that the determination of man as rational animal is inadequate to the mathematical paradigm of certainty and evidence on which Cartesian metaphysics is to be constructed, the 'obscurity' of reason and animality rendering them concepts inadequate to the exposition of the being of the *sum*.

Of course, the analogy between the positions is apparent at best. For whilst Heidegger sees in Descartes' iteration of the *problem* of the subject an 'authentic impulse toward philosophical questioning,'⁶¹ He disputes nonetheless the adequacy of the ontological clarification given for the being of the *sum*. To the extent that the mode of being of the *cogitationes* is not itself questioned but understood merely as substance, it remains the case that Descartes falls prey to the error of 'ontological indifference' with respect to the being of the *sum*, which is merely asserted and presented accordingly as the presence-to-hand of a thinking thing.⁶²

Hence, third and most decisively, there is also a point concerning the way in which 'the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole,' is to be thought. The locution is once again emphatic:

Metaphysics does indeed represent [*stellt ...vor*] beings in their being and so also thinks the being of beings. But it does not think *being as such*, does not think the *difference* between them. Metaphysics does not ask about the truth of

being itself. This is why it never asks in what way the essence of man belongs to [*zur ...gehört*] the truth of being.⁶³

Inasmuch as these lines develop and extend the identity of metaphysics and humanism that had been stated – but not argued for – toward the end of ‘Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,’⁶⁴ the point here concerns the failure of humanism to think the difference between being and beings, that is, to think the very difference within which it operates. Metaphysics – and so, by extension, the humanism that it founds – fails to think being as such; it thinks only beings as such. Failing to think this difference it cannot, so Heidegger argues, but turn being into a being, into God or a cosmic ground, for instance. For metaphysics – as for the humanism that it founds – the question about being effectively remains a question about beings, a question that fails accordingly to think *in the direction of* (*zu ... hin*) being. And yet, it is not simply being that goes unquestioned, but the *truth* of being, the openness within which alone beings can show themselves in their being. ‘As the clearing itself, the truth of being remains concealed for metaphysics.’⁶⁵

Now whilst such a determination may well be adequate to the *metaphysical* concept of man, it says precisely nothing about his *phenomenal* basis, on which, according to Heidegger, the tradition is as good as silent. The formal structure of the argument being developed here is clearly the same as that of *Being and Time*, therefore, where, as we have already seen, the distinction between fundamental ontology and the positive sciences was made in such a way as to secure the former as the sole means of access to the *a priori* phenomenal ground upon which alone the

question about man can be raised in an appropriate manner. Identical too, moreover, is the principle charge being levelled here by Heidegger:

The origins that are relevant for traditional anthropology, the Greek definition and the theological guideline, indicate that, over and above an attempt to determine the essence of the being called “man” [*einer Wesensbestimmung des Seienden “Mensch”*], the question of his being has remained forgotten, conceived as something “self-evident” in the sense of the *being present-to-hand* [*Vorhandenseins*] of other created things.⁶⁶

Referred back to its roots in traditional ontology, humanism is seen to be no more than an extension of a general zoological principle that serves, in turn, as the *organon* of a formal ontology of the abstract *entitas* or thing as such.⁶⁷ Heidegger, by contrast, refuses to accept that a general ontology, which treats by rights only of things present-to-hand, of founded presence, should be given *droit de cité* in the field of existential properties. In the ontologies afforded by traditional metaphysics, for example, in which ‘the *res cogitans*, consciousness, and the interconnectedness of experience, serve as the methodological point of departure,’ the relations between things hold *eo ipso* for *all* ontological relations. With the result, so Heidegger charges, that the phenomenal content (*phenomenalen Bestand*) of Dasein is altogether missed. Among the most emphatic remarks in this respect are those of the 1925 lecture course *History of the Concept of Time* directed against Husserl’s exposition of the natural attitude. Confessing his unease as regards the manner in which Husserl’s account of the unity

of lived experience can be shown ultimately to adhere (*halten*) to the notion of rational animal, Heidegger raises the following questions with regard to 'the *being of the fully concrete man*':

Does its being allow itself to be *assembled*, as it were, from out of the being of its material substratum, the body, of the soul and the spirit? Is the being of the person the *product* of the modes of being of these strata of being? Or is it here that it becomes evident that this sort of prior division and subsequent assemblage is not directed toward phenomena, that whatever approach is taken to the personal, the person is taken here as a *multilayered thing of the world* [*ein mehrschichtiges Weltding*], the being of which will never be reached no matter how doggedly we pursue the reality toward which we are directed?> What is retained, then, is always the mere being of an already given object, a real object; this means that it is always a matter of being as objectivity, in the sense of being an object for reflection.⁶⁸

Humanism, relieved of any specific orientation in the direction of man, can thus operate only according to what, in an exacting commentary on Heidegger's text, Françoise Dastur terms a logic of *Ergänzung*, addition: 'it is because man has been reduced to mere animal organism,' she writes, to what Heidegger terms *ein zoologisches Objekt*, 'that it seems necessary to attribute to him an immortal soul, personality, and rationality.'⁶⁹ As such, humanism has too little respected (*geachtet*) the essence of man, with the result, so Heidegger charges, that his essential

provenance (*Wesensherkunft*) goes unrecognised. It follows from this that the discourses that Heidegger identifies as humanist not only fail to yield even a confused presentiment of this essential provenance and so to entertain at least some token of respect for the essence of man but, in a way that only aggravates the situation, have actually *impeded* or *closed off* (*verhindert*) the possibility of these ever being raised as legitimate areas of inquiry, so rendering them altogether inaccessible (*unzugänglich*) to questioning. Humanism's defence of *humanitas* is said thus to rest upon an inability to realise the proper dignity (*eigentliche Würde*) of man and upon a concealment of the question of his essence.

This, then, is the connection in which to read the proposal now advanced by Heidegger: 'ought not thinking, by means of open resistance to "humanism," to risk an impulse that could for the first time cause us to be suspicious of the *humanitas* of *homo humanus* and its basis?'⁷⁰

To the question of 'whence and how the essence of man is to be determined,' Heidegger dismisses all available responses, therefore. He rejects both a zoological account of an essentially privative ontology of life – 'Dasein ... as life ... and then something else on top'⁷¹ – and the theological account according to which man, the *ens finitum*, is determined in his opposition to God, the *ens realissimum*.⁷² The consequence of this, however, is to leave man in a decidedly *impoverished* position, with nothing, as it were, to call his own.⁷³

It is in order to find a way out of this predicament that Heidegger broaches the following indication which, in addition to allowing the 'way into which the essence of

man belong to being' to become open to question, *fragwürdig* in the positive sense, *also* sets such an opening at the very heart of that relation:

Metaphysics closes itself to the simple essential fact that man unfolds in his essence [*in seinem Wesen west*] only where he is claimed by being. Only in this claim "has" he found that wherein his essence dwells ... Such standing in the clearing of being I call the ek-sistence of man.⁷⁴

This, then, is the context in which Sophocles' tragedies are said by Heidegger to shelter the abode of man, the open site that contains and preserves his essential unfolding, determined now on the basis of the ek-static character of his existence. The context is, as Heidegger readily admits, one of a surprisingly 'odd' and 'extreme' humanism,⁷⁵ one in which it is not man per se that is at stake, but his historical essence (*das geschichtliche Wesen des Menschens*) in its provenance from the truth of being, his essential unfolding from the history of being.

When set back in this context, Heidegger's remarks concerning tragedy take on a quite different light. For what the tragedies of Sophocles can *now* be said to shelter in their sayings (*in ihrem Sagen*) is less the essence of man already determined in accordance with a fixed interpretation of his position within beings as one being amongst others, than the *site* of the essential unfolding and coming to presence of man as the being who dwells ek-statically within the world. As such, and developing further the analyses of chapter one, this site ought not to be seen as a depiction or portrayal of such dwelling, nor as having brought it to light as an already existent

state. Rather, it ought to be seen as a happening that, in the words of one commentator, 'enacts and accomplishes' the dwelling of man within the world.⁷⁶

The reference here is, of course, to the invitation, issued with the very first words of the 'Letter on "Humanism"' to rethink the essence of action: 'We are still far from pondering the essence of action decisively enough.'⁷⁷ Action, Heidegger maintains, has been regarded only as the bringing about of an effect (*als das Bewirken einer Wirkung*), not in its more essential determination as accomplishment (*Vollbringen*) in the sense of unfolding something into the fullness of its essence, to bring it to full unfolding.⁷⁸ Yet if this is indeed the case, only that which already "is" can be accomplished in this way. Heidegger remarks in the same context: 'To the *Sache* of thinking there belongs historically in each case only one saying [*eine ... Sage*], the one that is appropriate to its *Sachheit*.'⁷⁹ Only that which some particular epoch or world renders historically possible or discloses as being possible within its own context, can be brought to full unfolding.⁸⁰ But what "is" above all is being. Hence:

Thinking accomplishes [*vollbringt*] the relation of being to the essence of man. It does not make or cause this relation. Thinking brings it into being solely as something handed over to thought from being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking being comes to language. Language is the house of being. In its home man dwells [*wohnt*]. The thinkers and the poets are the guardians of this home.⁸¹

The sayings of Sophocles' tragedies can thus be said to accomplish or carry out the being of man as dwelling by bringing 'what belongs to him in his essence' to full disclosure. It is in tragedy, Heidegger seems to be saying, therefore, that man first becomes manifest in his relation to being; that is, that man first comes to dwell in the midst of beings as a whole.

II

Although I have not yet begun to consider the specific character of the recourse to tragedy, the question already needs to be addressed as to the extent of Heidegger's claims for it. Are they not problematic in their scope? In light of the remarks of chapter one concerning the project of world disclosure toward which the work of art is directed, I would want to suggest not. And certainly not if – borrowing a phrase from John Sallis – it is *mortality* that furnishes Heidegger with the 'proper name; of man, 'displacing, if not entirely replacing, Dasein.'⁸² For how else is tragedy to be understood if not – this time in the words of Françoise Dastur – that 'ephemeral form of art' in which one finds 'an inaugural representation of the fundamentally mortal condition of man'?⁸³

With regard to the position that I am developing here, Dastur's remarks warrant careful consideration. Not least of all because the position that she is concerned to ascribe to tragedy enjoys a status analogous to that argued for by the 'Letter on "Humanism".' Although not immediately apparent, the extent of this analogy is readily discerned in Dastur's repeated insistence that the tragedian's

depiction of a world of funerary rites and cenotaphs, of blood and ashes, a world peopled by both the living and the dead, be cast in the formidable role of antechamber to the philosopher's own reflections on death.⁸⁴ Tragedy, she holds in a striking phrase, paves the way for philosophy (*prépare l'avènement de la philosophie*).⁸⁵

To begin with, Dastur makes the point by way of the following historical construction. Death, she contends,

only becomes the object of philosophical discourse when it no longer appears as “death in general,” as an “accident” that befalls the living, nor even as their inescapable “fate,” but as “death proper,” as “my-death,” which entails that the one who thinks takes on board the possibility of his or her own disappearance. Philosophical discourse on death is thus properly speaking a discourse on mortality or on being-mortal as such.⁸⁶

It is important to note the almost imperceptible way in which Dastur passes from – or, more accurately, *binds together* – two things in these remarks: the ‘appearance’ through which death becomes a possible issue for philosophical reflection, and an equation of the very possibility of thinking (‘celui qui pense ...’) with a thought of mortality as such (‘prise en compte ... la possibilité de sa propre disparition’). That it is Heidegger’s text that provides the framework for her doing so is not in doubt. Not only because the phrase *la mort en général* recalls the declaration of the 1925 Marburg course *History of the Concept of Time*, in which Heidegger says that there is no such thing as *der Tod überhaupt*.⁸⁷ Rather more significant in the present context are the

ensuing analyses of the book, where it is through his *own* mortality (*à travers sa propre mortalité*) alone that man is said to enjoy a relation not only to ‘death “in general”,’ but also to ‘the very possibility of his existence as such.’⁸⁸ Another passage from the earlier analyses clarifies the matter further:

If death ... can only impose silence on conceptual discourse, and if, as that which never appears to me “in person,” it constitutes the non-phenomenon par excellence, it nonetheless remains the case that ... knowing and feeling oneself to be mortal constitutes the ground of the experience that man has of himself [*l’expérience que l’être humain a de lui-même*]. From which it follows that it is this strange knowledge of his own end ... that renders possible a discourse not on “death,” but on the relation that a thinking being entertains with his own mortality. And this discourse is properly phenomenological, therefore, since it is a discourse on the *appearance to oneself* of the finite character of one’s own existence [*l’apparaître à soi-même du caractère fini de sa propre existence*].⁸⁹

Evoking the ‘fine example’ of Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Dastur defends the thesis that it is in tragedy that this ‘appearance’ first takes place. What comes to be disclosed by tragedy, she argues, is existence *propre*; that is, existence not as ‘an absolutely lived life [*une vie absolument vivante*]’ but as one that ‘includes within it a relation to the world of the dead.’⁹⁰

I take it that Dastur’s intention here is to read tragedy in the manner of a principle of intelligibility, one that spells out the ‘appearance’ of the factually limited

character of existence so that it may be read as the ground of all possible 'experience.' This is, moreover, the connection in which to read the distinction that is carefully drawn in these passages between the *mort en général* that *survient* a living being, and the relation that man *entretient* (maintains, exercises, conducts, cultivates, etc.) with *sa propre mortalité*. Suffice it to say, the claim being made on behalf of this distinction is hardly an empirical one; rather is it, to use Dastur's own appellation, a *phenomenological* one, in the sense, first of all, determined in the Introduction to *Being and Time*. That determination prescribes that the analysis proceed with regard to the way in which *death shows itself*; that is, it must be an analysis that attends to the process in which death comes to show itself *as death* and that thematises what, within such a process of self-showing, death shows itself to be. This is why Dastur writes: 'it is a discourse on the *appearance to oneself* of the finite character of one's own existence ... of mortality.'

In a later essay on death, Dastur turns again to tragedy, extending her case for it in the direction of what is now described as an *image d'une assumption de la mortalité*.⁹¹ At least as important as that interpretation, however, is her response to the guiding question of that essay: How is one to live with death, all the while knowing that one has (*doit*) to die? Drawing a strategic distance between her own position and the premise that 'death is a malaise of which man can be cured,' a premise that underpins the veritable 'arsenal' of technological possibilities that harbour the goal of 'defeating death,' however momentarily, and 'setting ourselves up as masters of existence,' Dastur offers the following answer: 'it is now more urgent than ever for man to *become* the mortal that he is.'⁹² The position, as Dastur candidly admits, is far

from novel and enjoys broad analogy with the one set out in Heidegger's own statement of emergent mortality. 'Rational living beings,' reads a statement of 1955 duly cited by Dastur, 'must still *become* mortals.'⁹³ Briefly assessing this analogy in a note, she concludes her essay by raising the question of whether 'it might not be accurate to say that this injunction constitutes the entire ethics [*toute l'ethique*] of this thinker unjustly maligned for having subordinated ethics to ontology.'⁹⁴

Now if Dastur's hunch here is correct, as I think it is, then it ought to follow that it is tragedy's notional status as 'a first representation of the fundamentally mortal condition of man' that secures the basis for Heidegger's claims regarding the inceptive manner in which Sophocles' tragedies shelter the $\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$ of man. Indeed, commenting further on the *lucidité* of her own response to the question of how we are to live with death ('it is now more urgent than ever ...,' etc.), Dastur invites yet further analogy with precisely this aspect of Heidegger's text. '*To become mortal*,' she explains, 'is to come properly to dwell on the earth and to abide in it.'⁹⁵

And yet there is, of course, no such reference in the 'Letter on "Humanism",' no such turn back to death. On one level, this is not altogether surprising. The concern of the text is announced with its opening lines: to remedy the historically insufficient determination of the essence of action (*das Wesen des Handelns*), to ponder it more decisively. And what, as Heidegger himself had asked in *Being and Time*, just after having put out of play the ethical thread seemingly evoked by the notion of conscience with which we began, can death have in common with the concrete situation of action (*der konkreten Situation des Handelns*)?⁹⁶

Heidegger is more than a little circumspect on this point and, within the 'Letter on "Humanism",' there is only one indication: an indirect reference, appended to the beginning of the analysis in such a way as to register its concerns, back to *Being and Time*. The reference follows a more extended passage devoted to language (*Sprache*) in which Heidegger again alludes, directly this time, to *Being and Time* and to the 'essential dimension of language' touched upon there.⁹⁷ One assumes, although the connection isn't made explicit, that the allusion here is to §34 of that work and to the referral there of language to its ground in discourse (*Rede*), the articulation of the intelligibility of the there (*die Artikulation der Verständlichkeit des Da*) by which Heidegger had undertaken to clarify the Greek notion of λόγος; that is, to the referral that had, in turn, allowed him to show how the ontological locus of the phenomenon of language has to be located in Dasein's essential constitution. Projecting the issue of language onto the upcoming analyses of humanism, Heidegger writes:

The widely and rapidly spreading erosion of language ... comes from a threat to the essence of man. A merely cultivated use of language is still no proof that we have as yet escaped the danger to our essence ... Language still denies us *its* essence: that it is the house of the truth of being.⁹⁸

Although the connection is again not made explicit, the principle point that needs to be retained from this projection and from the allusion to 'the essential dimension' of language touched upon in *Being and Time* is that language is to be seen *not* as a property of man but, more significantly in the present context, as that through which

the claim (*Anspruch*) of being to the essence of man is carried out or accomplished (*vollbringt*). Indeed, it is only from out of this sort of claim, which will be explored further under the aegis of the notion of ek-sistence, that man 'finds that wherein his essence dwells [*das ... worin dein Wesen wohnt*].' Only because of such dwelling "has" he language as the home [*Behausung*] that preserves the ek-static for his essence.'⁹⁹

To this appropriation of the issue of language to that of dwelling is appended, then, the implicit reference back to *Being and Time*:

In this claim upon man, in the attempt to ready man for this claim, is there not implied an endeavour for man? Where else does "care" tend but in the direction of bringing man back to his essence? What else does this mean if not that man (*homo*) become human (*humanus*)?¹⁰⁰

A brief recollection of what is actually at issue in Heidegger's reference to care as tending in the direction of bringing man back (*zurückzubringen*) to his essence, and so of how this reference may also bring into play the issue of death, should help to clarify the point.

III

From the outset, the analysis of death in *Being and Time* is designed to defend an assertion made in an earlier section of the work when, following the hard-won clarification of the 'unified phenomenon' of being-in-the-world, Heidegger is concerned

to explicate care as the structural whole of Dasein. Registering the need for any interpretation laying claim to originality (*Ursprünglichkeit*) to delimit Dasein as a whole, he draws attention to the possibility that the notion of care might manifestly contradict (*widerspricht offenbar*) the possibility of any such delimitation. So when Heidegger uses care as a designation for the way in which Dasein is *always* beyond itself (*über sich hinaus*), we are effectively encouraged to draw the conclusion that the structural whole of Dasein is such as to *contradict* and so to *preclude* the possibility of Dasein ever being-a-whole.

As Heidegger is candid in acknowledging, the difficulty here seems to stem from the very first moves of *Being and Time*; specifically, it stems from the efforts there to secure the outset and point of departure for the inquiry in an analytic of Dasein. For what was required in order for the question about being to be posed in its full transparency was, as we saw in chapter one, a concomitant transparency of the questioner. The overriding concern of the initial moves, therefore, was to secure a preliminary understanding of the essence of Dasein by distinguishing it from that of *das Vorhandene*, identifying the former as what is in each case mine (*ist je meines*), as comportment toward possibility, as *existence*.¹⁰¹

Now in the section (§41) of *Being and Time* given over to the explication of care as the being of Dasein, Heidegger repeats these opening formal indications verbatim, before adding the rider:

Ontologically speaking, however, being toward one's ownmost potentiality-for-being means: Dasein, in its being, is in each case already *way ahead of itself* [*ist*

ihm selbst ... je schon vorweg]. Dasein is already beyond itself not as a way of behaving toward other beings that it is *not*, but as being toward the potentiality-for-being that it itself is.¹⁰²

Needless to say, the declaration that Dasein's being is in each case always way ahead of itself should *not* be taken as referring to its dealings with others is slightly misleading and, grasped too quickly, tends rather to distort the delicate bifurcation in the structures of Dasein's ecstatic existence within which the analysis is operating. Taken on face value, moreover, it clearly gives free rein to the sorts of errors against which we saw the remarks of the lectures on Leibniz and those of the *Kantbuch* to be directed. So in what is presumably an anticipation of the order of grounding that will retrospectively have structured the analyses of *Being and Time* as a whole, Heidegger focuses here on the worldly ecstatic structure by which Dasein stands out into the world, leaving for later the specifically temporal structure, namely Dasein's standing out toward the horizontal structure that delimits the ecstases of originary temporality. Further, to the extent that Heidegger is availing himself of the sorts of distinctions discussed at the outset of this chapter, one ought also to say that the declaration being made here is *not* a matter of existentiell assertion. As a being that is thrown into a world, Dasein always and already manifests care for that world in which it exist, where care does not refer to some practical activity or another, but is employed as an ontological term to designate Dasein's way of being-in-the-world. Adds Heidegger, therefore: 'Being-way-ahead-of-itself does not mean anything like an isolated tendency in a worldless subject, but characterises being-in-the-world.'

Two significant points follow from this. Heidegger is able, first, to confirm being-way-ahead-of-itself (*das Sich-vorweg-sein*) as a designation for the whole of the essential constitution of Dasein. Dasein's comportment toward possibility, the fact that it comports itself toward its own being as something that is at issue for it, means that Dasein is always already way-ahead-of-itself. The argument is seemingly straightforward: if existence is definitive for Dasein's mode of being, and if the essence of this existence lies in Dasein's comportment toward the possibilities that it is, then so long as Dasein *is* it must in each case be beyond itself. Equally, however, and this is the second point, to the extent that this *itself* has already been characterised ontologically as being-in-the-world then Dasein's being-way-ahead-of-itself is shown, 'more completely grasped ..., to mean: *being-way-ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-in-a-world*.'¹⁰³

Now according to the objection being feigned by Heidegger just a few pages further on, it is precisely this state of affairs that establishes the 'tribunal' ruling against the possibility of Dasein's ever being a whole. For if Dasein's existence *does* consist in its being in each case already way-ahead-of-itself, that is, in its projecting onto what still remains to be seen, there is 'strong evidence' indeed weighing against any such possibility. For so long as Dasein *is* there are possibilities still to be settled. So long as Dasein *exists* there is something still outstanding. Like a fruit that is not yet ripe, so long as Dasein *is* it is marked by a certain *Unganzheit*, by a certain lack of wholeness. Like the fruit, it has not yet 'run its course.'¹⁰⁴ The phenomenological requirement that Dasein be grasped as a whole founders, therefore, on the structure of care.

And yet:

To that which is thus outstanding, the “end” itself belongs. The “end” of being-in-the-world is death. This end, which belongs to potentiality-for-being, that is, to existence [*zum Seinkönnen, das heißt zur Existenz gehörig*], limits and determines each possible totality of Dasein [*begrenzt und bestimmt die je mögliche Ganzheit des Daseins*].¹⁰⁵

It is this limitation and delimitation that makes the analysis of death strictly necessary. For it is only in its no longer being there (*sein Da*) that Dasein comes finally to be a whole, that is, to settle the possibilities that it itself *is*. Nevertheless, in coming thus to be a whole Dasein also loses the being of its there (*des Seins des Da*), the place from which its own being is disclosed. In the Marburg lectures of 1925 Heidegger will say: Dasein’s being a whole makes it simply disappear (*macht es gerade verschwinden*).¹⁰⁶ It would seem that the only witness capable of swaying the tribunal and so of securing the originality demanded for the analysis is the only one that cannot be called: Dasein itself. Indeed, the imbroglio is such that one could well be forgiven for sharing Heidegger’s earlier feigned consternation on the point.

What follows these analyses, namely the account proper of death as a phenomenon of Dasein, serves only to provide a way out of this predicament by confirming and extending those analyses. So far as the existential analytic is concerned, therefore, the actual account of death remains rightly *subordinate to* the explication of care as the fundamental constitution of Dasein. It is because of this that

being-toward-death is now called the *most originary (ursprünglichste) concretion* of care, dying said to be *grounded (gründet)* in care, and the ensuing sections of the work said to give no more than a phenomenal conformation of the ontological status accorded to care as the essential structure of Dasein being-in-the-world.¹⁰⁷ Later Heidegger makes the same point: 'The care structure does not speak *against* the possibility of being-a-whole, but is the *condition of possibility* of such an existentiell potentiality-for-being.'¹⁰⁸

The question that needs now to be raised is this, therefore: How is the whole of Dasein's existence concretely unveiled (*sich ...enthüllen*) in the phenomenon of death? The following remarks, which come from the preliminary sketch of the existential-ontological structure of death, make the point succinctly:

Death is a possibility-of-being [*eine Seinsmöglichkeit*] that Dasein has always to take upon itself. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its *ownmost* potentiality-for-being [*steht sich ... selbst in seinem eigensten Seinkönnen bevor*]. In this possibility, what is at issue for Dasein is its being-in-the-world as such. Its death is the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there [*Nichtsmehr-dasein-könnens*]. If Dasein stands before itself as this possibility, it has been *fully* referred [*völlig ... verweisen*] to its ownmost potentiality-for-being. Standing thus before itself, all relations in it to other Dasein are undone. This ownmost, non-relational possibility is at the same time the extreme one.¹⁰⁹

From this passage, which concentrates virtually the whole of the analysis, three points need to be retained as being central to Heidegger's case.

To begin with, the passage identifies death as that with which Dasein comes to stand before its *ownmost* potentiality-for-being. Death is Dasein's *own* – that is, it is something proper, *eigen*, to Dasein, something toward which Dasein always relates as *its own*. This identification has the effect, first of all, of establishing a context in which death is removed from the structure of replacement ... in and by ... (*Vertretung in ... und ... bei*) that, proximally and for the most part, Dasein can and must (*kann und muß*) stand in for another Dasein.¹¹⁰ What establishes this context is the mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*) of death. It is the fact that death is essentially my own (*wesenmäßig jeder meine*) that precludes the possibility of any such structure of replacement. Repatriated into the very structure of Dasein's existence, itself situated firmly within the compass of *Jemeinigkeit*, death can be shown thus to be the '*ownmost, nonrelational, unsurpassable possibility*' of Dasein.¹¹¹

Hence the second point central to Heidegger's case: the determination of death as *possibility*.¹¹² Death is a possibility that Dasein has always to take over, a possibility toward which it has always to comport itself. Yet death is presumably not just one more of those possibilities that Dasein in each case *is*. Indeed, one could presumably say that it is *the* possibility, the possibility that is *most proper to Dasein*, the possibility toward which Dasein has no choice but to comport itself. And one could presumably say also that if Dasein is that being which, having its own being as something that is at issue for it, comports itself toward its being as its ownmost possibility – such is, it will be recalled, the second formal indication of Dasein deduced

at the outset of *Being and Time* – then death, as that singular possibility in which Dasein’s being is *most* at issue would be the possibility that first opens up the space in which Dasein can comport itself toward possibility as such. Might not death, in other words, be the possibility that opens up a space in which Dasein can first comport itself toward its being as its ownmost possibility? Death as sheer possibilisation?¹¹³ (Indeed, it will be necessary to come back to this point in order to show how it is death as Dasein’s ownmost possibility that dictates that death is for the most part irrelevant, *unbetreffend*). Comporting itself toward this possibility, Dasein is brought thus to stand before itself (*steht sich das Dasein selbst ... bevor*) in its ownmost potentiality-for-being, given back to or disclosed to itself *from* this possibility. By disclosing Dasein to itself, disclosing it in its ownmost possibility, death would serve thus to draw Dasein back before itself. Almost the same point is made in the lecture course of 1925, Heidegger this time remarking:

The certainty that I am myself in that I will die is the *basic certainty of Dasein itself*. It is an authentic statement of Dasein, while the *cogito sum* is only the appearance of such a statement ... Only in dying can I say with absolute certainty that “I am.”¹¹⁴

One can only be struck by these remarks. And first of all by their apparent contrast to the context established for death by the analyses of *Being and Time*. There, the context is clear: death is to be thought in terms of the categories of modality alone; it is to be thought as possibility, *Möglichkeit*. Here, meanwhile, the statement that “I am

myself in that I will die," what Heidegger terms *ein eche Daseinsaussage*, is seemingly expressed in precisely those terms disqualified by the later analyses: death is thought here in terms of the quality of judgements; it is thought as certainty, *Gewißheit*. Seemingly, however, because Heidegger immediately brings this certainty back within the compass of possibility, referring in a manner that is no less striking to death as *die äußerste Möglichkeit* of the "I am," its furthest, extreme, uttermost possibility.

One should note also, however, that the allusion here to Descartes is rather more significant than perhaps at first appears. Indeed, once aligned with the analyses of worldhood carried out in *Being and Time* and the brief consideration there of the Cartesian characteristic, all the signs are that Heidegger has a further connection in mind.

It will be recalled that to Descartes' claim to have solved once and for all the relation of the *res cogitans* to the *res extensa*, Heidegger retorts that he has in fact merely narrowed down the question of the world to that of natural things (*Naturdinglichkeit*); that is, Descartes has in fact done little more than enclose the being of the *sum*, attributed the ontological title of substance, definitively within an ontology of *Vorhandenheit*. If the *cogito sum* ever were to serve as the point of departure for an analytic of Dasein, Heidegger speculates, it would have need, therefore, of an inversion (*Umkehrung*), one in which the *sum* would be asserted primarily in the sense that 'I am in a world.'¹¹⁵ It is in precisely this connection, then, that the ensuing remarks of the lecture text need to be understood: if a statement along the lines of *cogito sum* is 'to mean anything at all,' it is only as *sum moribundus*, the *moribundus* alone giving meaning to the *sum*.¹¹⁶ For if it is in dying alone that I

can say that "I am," if it is death that is *die äußerste Möglichkeit* of the "I am" then, recalling once more the identity of existence and dwelling established in *Being and Time* ("I am" means ... I dwell in, I abide in the presence of ..., etc.) it follows that it is only in dying that I can say that I dwell alongside (*bei*) other beings; that is, it is only in dying that I can abide there (*da*) in a world.

Hence, third and final point, what is at issue for Dasein with regard to the possibility of death is its being-in-the-world as such. Death is the possibility of Dasein's no-longer-being-able-to-be-there, that is, the possibility of its no longer being Dasein, its no longer being the *there* that it most properly *is*. Now, however, the point is extended: this possibility is such as to *belong to* (*gehört*) being-in-the-world as the essential constitution of Dasein. In this connection one could say, then, that the nonrelational character of death is turned inward, as it were. In the manner in which Dasein stands before itself as this possibility, it is not only, as Heidegger states, its relations (*Bezüge*) to other beings that are dissolved (*gelöst*). It is, more emphatically, also a matter of a severance of Dasein *from itself*, from the *there* that it *is*. With death, it would seem, Dasein comes to be separated from itself.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Heidegger reintroduces at this point the notion of anxiety, already examined in the analytic of moods where, as anxiety about (*worum*) and for (*worvor*) being-in-the-world, it took the form of a privileged instance of Dasein's disclosure. The connection with the earlier analyses is noted: Anxiety is anxiety for being-in-the-world itself. In Heidegger's more precise formulation: *das Worvor dieser Angst ist das In-der-Welt-sein selbst*.¹¹⁷ Yet death is also referred to anxiety by way of another, more fundamental connection. Recall again: 'If Dasein

stands before itself as this possibility, it has been *fully* referred [*verweisen*] to its ownmost potentiality-for-being.' In being referred to the possibility that is most its own and in being thus disclosed to itself from this possibility, Dasein is severed from all relations to beings as a whole. Equally, however, to be referred (*verweisen*) is also, as John Sallis points out, to be exiled. The self-disclosure is one that effectively exiles Dasein, thrusts it out from what is comfortable and familiar, exiles it *fully*. Hence, in coming to stand before itself Dasein is exiled. Only in being exiled thus does Dasein come back to what is most properly its own. Recall, now, the analyses of the lecture 'What is Metaphysics?' Recall, specifically, that it is in anxiety that everything appears to shrink away from Dasein and that it is this disappearance of beings as a whole that renders Dasein anxious. Anxiety arises thus from nothingness. Or, more accurately, Dasein comes to grasp nothingness as a possibility by way of anxiety. Heidegger sums up the situation as *abweisend Verweisung*: referential exile.¹¹⁸

In the ensuing sections of *Being and Time* Heidegger narrates the passage from Dasein's flight in the face of ... (*Flucht vor ...*) which, thematised in terms of falling (*Verfallen*) and in terms of the replacement of Dasein's being-way-ahead-of-itself by the phenomenon of a not-yet (*Noch-nicht*), that is, in terms of a transition from the sphere of what is most properly Dasein's own to that of broad generality, characterises proximally and for the most part Dasein's relation to death, to the level of authenticity. Dasein may well be thrown toward the ownmost, nonrelational, unsurpassable possibility of death as the most originary concretion of existence. It may well be the case that 'if Dasein exists it has already been *thrown* into this possibility.'¹¹⁹ Death may well be the possibility that is most Dasein's own. Dasein's

ownmost possibility. Such does not, however, preclude the possibility that Dasein always *can* comport itself to this possibility in such a way that what is disclosed by it is evaded or covered up. Indeed, not only *can* Dasein cover up or fall away from such disclosure, but it *does* so: 'proximally and for the most part Dasein covers up its ownmost being-toward-death, fleeing *before* it.'¹²⁰

Authentic being-toward-death, meanwhile, is comportment toward death as possibility; that is, instead of a comportment toward death which would undertake to transform it into something actual (*Verwirklichung*), authentic being-toward-death is a comportment that grants death its status as possibility: 'If being-toward-death has to disclose understandingly the possibility that we have characterised, and if it is to disclose it *as a possibility*, then in such being-toward-death this possibility must not be weakened; it must be understood *as possibility*, it must be cultivated *as possibility*, and in comportment toward it *sustained as possibility*.'¹²¹

Clearly, therefore, authentic being-toward-death can be a matter neither of dwelling on (*sich autenthalten bei*) death, of expectation (*Erwarten*), nor of calculating how we are to bring it about, since each of these serves to promote its character as actuality, thereby *annihilating* (*vernichten*) its character as possibility. To the extent that death gives no support (*keinen Anhalt*),¹²² nothing to be actualised, and nothing that Dasein could itself *be* (*sein könnte*), the comportment involved in authentic being-toward-death means that death be granted its full character as *mere* possibility. Heidegger characterises this comportment as *Vorlaufen*, running ahead. *Vorlaufen*, however, is neither *Vorhaben* nor *Vorrücken* nor *Vorschreiben* nor *Vornehmen*, neither planning ahead nor moving ahead nor putting forward nor carrying out; rather, it is

the movement by which Dasein projects itself onto its death as sheer possibility. In running ahead it is a matter of projecting out toward this possibility, but in a way that would forego its transformation into something actual. In running ahead, what comes to be disclosed is nothing less than Dasein's inability to *be* what is most its own: 'being-toward-death as running ahead into possibility is what first makes this possibility possible and sets it free as possibility.'¹²³

Prior to running ahead, Heidegger seems to be implying, death would be something not entirely possible; it would be more akin to perishing (*Verenden*), to the way in which the fruit, having ripened, falls finally to the ground.¹²⁴

Equally, however, 'to project oneself onto one's ownmost potentiality-for-being means: to be able to understand oneself in the being thus unveiled: to *exist* [*existieren*].'¹²⁵ If Dasein did not run ahead, it would not exist. If Dasein were not dying, it would not exist. *Only in dying can Dasein be said to be.*

And yet, Heidegger does not only call this *Vorlaufen*. He proposes also another, more discreet name for this mode of being-toward-death, one that has passed almost unnoticed in the literature. In being authentically toward-death, in running ahead toward its own death by sustaining its character as sheer possibility, Dasein would also be *endlich*, finite.¹²⁶

In such a being toward its end Dasein exists in a way that is authentically whole as that being that it can be when 'thrown into death.' It does not have an end at which it simply stops, but *exists finitely* [*existiert endlich*].¹²⁷

I want to turn now, after this long journey through the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’ and through *Being and Time* to one of the two instances when Heidegger undertakes to treat directly of the poetic sayings of Sophocles’ tragedies. These treatments are made in the 1935 lecture course, later published as *Introduction to Metaphysics*, and the 1942 lecture course *Hölderlin’s Hymn ‘The Ister’*.¹²⁸ I shall want to focus here on the first of these treatments. In doing so, I shall not undertake to reconstitute the intricacies of Heidegger’s analysis – itself, he claims, ‘of necessity inadequate.’¹²⁹ Nor will I attempt to comment on its strategic implications for the context in which it appears (a discussion of the traditional opposition between being and thinking). Instead, I shall want to concentrate on those sections of the commentary which, in light of the analyses that I have just retraced, allow us to understand Heidegger’s claim regarding the inceptive sense of ἦθος that resonates in Sophocles’ tragedies. I shall want to show how, for Heidegger, these tragedies are seen as ‘*decisive*’ in opening up a ‘concealed directive’ for the way in which he undertakes to broach the question concerning man.¹³⁰

IV

In the 1935 lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger begins his treatment of the ‘poetic project’ in which the essence of man is ‘established’ with an extended consideration of the first line of the second chorus from Sophocles’ *Antigone*:

Πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδ’ ἀνθρώου δεινότερον πέλει.

Heidegger translates:

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing

More uncanny looms or stirs beyond man.¹³¹

In a way that anticipates in large part the standpoint that will be adopted in the 'Letter on "Humanism",' Heidegger makes this treatment so as to be able to take the measure of who man is (*zu ermessen wer ... der Mensch sei*). But why through a treatment of tragedy, precisely? Heidegger answers: Because it is in tragedy alone that one finds a properly poetic projection (*dichterischen Entwurf*) of the essence of man amongst (*bei*) the Greeks.¹³² It is in this sense, then, that the famous choral ode from Sophocles' *Antigone* is said to be

no mere description and exposition of the spheres and compartments of active man as one being amongst others, but the poetic projection [*den dichterischen Entwurf*] of his being from out of its extreme possibilities and limits.¹³³

One presumes, although the connection is not made explicit, that Heidegger's use of the word *Entwurf* is intended to give notice that tragedy is being seen less as a "sketch" or "outline" of the essence of man amongst the Greeks, and more as a process of disclosure and showing forth. In other words, even before undertaking to read the chorus, the *Introduction to Metaphysics* seems to be appropriating for that reading all the resources that are released in *Being and Time* by the connection drawn between projection and the full disclosedness of being-in-the-world. Indeed, it is only in

connection with this project of world-constitution to which the properly transcendental aspect of *Being and Time* always aspires, that one can begin to grasp the otherwise rather questionable claim that Heidegger offers up as justification for his tragic turn: it is in tragedy alone that 'the being and, belonging to it, the Dasein of the Greeks, is properly established [*sich eigentlich stiftete*].'¹³⁴

Heidegger begins the analysis by considering the first line of the chorus. Man, he says, is identified there 'in *one* word' as τὸ δεινότατον . Heidegger translates: *das Unheimlichste*, the most uncanny. This word, he states, encompasses man in 'the outermost limits' and 'sudden abysses' of his existence.¹³⁵

To the violence of Heidegger's translation of τὸ δεινόν and of τὸ δεινότατον in the ensuing commentaries there have been repeated references. First of all, by Heidegger himself in the lecture text of 1942, remarking that the translation is one that is *befremdlich*, foreign, *gewaltsam*, violence, philologically false.¹³⁶ Also by Michel Haar, who provides a careful account of the remarks of the *Introduction to Metaphysics* before concluding that 'the entire reading rests on the translation of δεινόν – habitually rendered by redoubtable – as *unheimlich*.'¹³⁷ Equally by Will McNeill, who raises the possibility that Heidegger's translation of the word δεινόν broaches 'the very problem of translation as such.'¹³⁸ And by Miguel de Beistegui, who declares that 'it matters little that τὸ δεινόν does not "mean" *das Unheimliche*, if this is the direction in which it points.'¹³⁹ Everything, it seems turns here around the singularly *deinotic* (violent, foreign, etc.) character of Heidegger's translation of τὸ δεινόν.

In the treatment of the chorus made in the lecture course of 1942, Heidegger cites as 'instructive' two other translations, both by Hölderlin, of the opening line of the chorus:

There is much that is extraordinary. Yet nothing

More extraordinary than man.¹⁴⁰

There is much that is forceful. Yet nothing

Is more forceful than man.¹⁴¹

Unlike Hölderlin's translations, which point in the direction of the inhabitual (*das Ungewöhnliche*) and the forceful (*das Gewaltige*) alone, Heidegger's own translation is intended to point in a more fundamental direction by stressing the specifically *uncanny* character of τὸ δεινόν, its character as that which is not at home in the homely (*nicht im Heimischen heimisch ist*). He writes:

the translation of δεινόν by *unheimlich* goes beyond what is expressed in the Greek word with regard to its explicitness. We may also say that the translation is incorrect [*unrichtig*]. Yet on that account it is perhaps more true [*wahrer*] than its translation by fearful, forceful, inhabitual [*furchtbar, gewaltig, ungewöhlich*].¹⁴²

Interestingly enough, both of Hölderlin's translations are also cited in an short essay by Paul Friedländer, 'Πολλὰ τὰ δεινά,' published the year before Heidegger delivered *Introduction to Metaphysics*.¹⁴³ It is unfortunate that Friedländer's essay has gone wholly unnoticed in the literature on Heidegger's commentary on the chorus. For although Heidegger would certainly object to many of the central claims of that text – most evidently Friedländer's closing arguments concerning the 'ethico-political implications' of the *tragische Weltsicht* – there are nonetheless striking parallels between what both philosophers have to say. Not only does Friedländer organise his account around and an interpretation of the ambiguities that bestride the word δεινόν,¹⁴⁴ albeit one that is rather more philologically and grammatically sound, but the central identification of the two counter-turning phrases (*Gegensätze*) around which Heidegger will structure his concerns is also made.¹⁴⁵ So, too, the issue toward which my own remarks will be directed, that of death as the uttermost limit (*die äußerste Grenze*).¹⁴⁶ I will come back to each of these points in due course. To begin with, however, let me make one point concerning Heidegger's *soi-disant* deinotic translation of τὸ δεινόν.

Following his citations from Hölderlin, Friedländer addresses himself to the objections of Wilamowitz, who chides Hölderlin for his 'idiotic translation' of δεινόν by the forceful, *das Gewaltige*, and by the extraordinary, *das Ungeheure*.¹⁴⁷ On this point Friedländer, needless to say, demurs, citing a remark from Grimm in which the 'original concept' of *das Ungeheure* is shown to lie not 'in that which is *not ordinary* [*nicht geheuer*] but essentially in what is *uncanny* [*unheimlich*].'¹⁴⁸ Such might be, Friedländer suspects, the basic direction in which Sophocles inflects the word. It

would seem, then, that what is rather more problematic than Heidegger's translation of the word δεινὸν is his insistence upon the singularly deinotic character of that translation.

Let me ignore, then, the various pretences that assist Heidegger's case here – the pretence, for example, that allows him to pass over the fact that neither of the terms around which his analysis turns is actually present in this line: Τὸ δεινὸν is not used, only the plural τὰ δεινὰ; the superlative δεινότατον is eschewed by Sophocles in favour of the comparative δεινότερον – and pass immediately to his initial clarification of τὸ δεινὸν:

The Greek word δεινὸν is ambiguous in that uncanny ambiguity with which the sayings of the Greeks bestride the counterturning confrontations of being [*die gegenwendigen Aus-ein-ander-setzung des Seins*].¹⁴⁹

The ambiguity that Heidegger here takes to characterise the word δεινὸν is far from straightforward. The word, he says, is ambiguous (*zweideutig*). It means (*bedeutet*) more than one thing. The bulk of the ensuing commentary will be devoted to exploring the implications of this statement. The ambiguity is then qualified. It is *uncanny* (*unheimlich*). The ambiguity that marks the word δεινὸν is uncanny. Δεινὸν, the word for the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*), is ambiguous in a way that is itself uncanny. In its ambiguity the uncanniness of δεινὸν is thus doubled. It is seized already by what it names. Δεινὸν is itself already deinotic.

Heidegger proceeds, next, to explore the various ambiguities that characterise the word δεινόν. Δεινόν, he tells us, means first of all the fearful (*das Furchtbare*). Not, however, in the habitual sense of the term, as the intimidating source of petty fears (*kleine Furchtsamkeiten*). Rather, δεινόν means the fearful

in the sense of the overwhelming prevailing [*des überwältigenden Waltens*] that in the same way compels the panic of terror, true anxiety [*die wahre Angst*], the gathered silent awe that resonates in itself.¹⁵⁰

Τὸ δεινόν in this first sense clearly refers the πολλύς of the opening line of the chorus, to what Heidegger's translation of that line calls the manifold or the many, *die Viele*. The point is then clarified: 'it is beings as a whole that is ... the overwhelming.'¹⁵¹ Δεινόν in this sense refers to beings as a whole. It is beings as a whole that is *unheimlich* in the sense of the fearful. It is beings as a whole, the sheer facticity of their being, that compels (*erzwingt*) the moods of terror and anxiety.

And yet, Heidegger tells us, δεινόν does not simply mean the fearful (*das Furchtbare*). It also means the forceful (*das Gewaltige*). More accurately, insofar as it means the fearful δεινόν also means the forceful. But how is this to be understood? It is to be understood, Heidegger says,

in the sense of one who uses force [*die Gewalt braucht*], not merely by having force at his beck and call [*über Gewalt verfügt*] but by being actively forceful

[*gewalt-tätig*] to the extent that the using of force [*das Gewaltbrauchen*] is the basic trait not only of his actions but of his Dasein.¹⁵²

Whereas the previous sense of the word δεινόν explored its implications with respect to beings as a whole with only implicit regard to its bearing on man, the sense this time refers explicitly to the deinotic character of man. It is man who, much like those beings in the midst of which he stands, is said now to be δεινόν in the sense of the forceful. Man is δεινόν because he is the one who uses force. *Not*, however, in the sense that force could be said to constitute a subsequent property or capacity, something upon which man could be said to draw in any given circumstance. Indeed, Heidegger goes out of his way to caution against any unauthorised application of force to a sense of volition. The terms forceful activity (*Gewalt-tätigkeit*) and using force (*Gewaltbrauchen*) are being used, he says, in ‘an essential sense.’ One assumes, although again the point is not actually made by Heidegger, that force in this sense refers neither to its habitual meaning as simple brutality nor to any notion of *Willkür*, the faculty of maxims or the executive function of the will. The decisive word in this context is *brauchen*: ‘to use’ or ‘to have use for’ (in the sense that one says of something that *es ist brauchbar*, it is workable or useful), but also ‘to need’ or ‘to require’ (as one says of a matter that *es ist braucht*, it is necessary). Man, one could say, is δεινόν in the sense that he *needs to use* force.

Yet, Heidegger continues, man is not δεινόν in this sense alone. He is indeed δεινόν in the sense of the one who is actively forceful (*der Gewalt-tätige*), but *also* in the sense of the one who is exposed to or set out into (*ausgesetzt*) the overwhelming, τό

δεινὸν in the first sense. As with the 'Letter on "Humanism",' therefore, the point here concerns the attribution to man of a 'singular determinacy,' of a determinacy that 'distinguishes man from himself.'¹⁵³ It has been insufficiently noted, however, that *this* characterisation of τὸ δεινὸν ought not to be thought as affording an additional sense of the word. Rather, it is intended to gather together the earlier senses of the word, marking thus the uncanny ambiguity of the notion of δεινὸν itself. Heidegger's use of the term *zweifach*, twice or double, marks the point emphatically:

Man is the actively forceful one not in addition to and aside from his being other things, but solely in the sense that, on the basis of his being actively forceful against the overwhelming, he uses force. It is because he is twice δεινὸν in an originally unitary sense that he is τὸ δεινοτάτον, the most forceful [*in einem ursprünglich einigen Sinne zweifach δεινὸν ist er τὸ δεινοτάτον, das Gewaltigste*]: actively forceful in the midst of the overwhelming.¹⁵⁴

The superlative character of man's δεινὸν, his character as τὸ δεινοτάτον, the most δεινὸν, is not, then, the effect of a quantitative or qualitative increase or excess of force; rather is it the consequence of that doubling of δεινὸν noted above. Its basic trait, Heidegger notes accordingly, 'lies in the interchange of the double sense of δεινὸν.'¹⁵⁵ The nomination of man as τὸ δεινοτάτον is such as to gather together the counter-turning ambiguities of τὸ δεινὸν marked at the outset, bringing to the fore the fundamental trait of the δεινὸν: as the most δεινὸν, the most forceful of beings, man is also the most uncanny, *das Unheimlichste*.

The question that needs now to be asked is this: What is to be understood by the uncanny, *das Unheimliche*? Heidegger defines it as that which throws us out of the homely, out of what is familiar and habitual (*aus dem Heimlichen, d.h. Heimischen*). As the overwhelming, $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\omicron\nu$ in the first sense, the uncanny names that which prevents us from being at home, *das Unheimische*, the unhomely. 'The unhomely does not let us be at home. Therein lies the overwhelming [*das Unheimische läßt uns nicht einheimisch sein. Darin liegt das Überwältigende*].'¹⁵⁶ As the most uncanny, *das Unheimlichste*, man does not only dwell in the midst of the prevailing of beings as a whole, but does so in a way that means that he cannot be at home. As the one who is actively forceful, man exceeds the limits of the homely (*die Grenze des Heimischen*), doing so in the direction of the unhomely in the sense of the overwhelming. Heidegger writes:

The knowing man [*der Wissende*] sets out into the midst of order, draws being into beings, yet is never able to prevail over the overwhelming [*das Überwältigende zu bewältigen*]. As such he is thrown back and forward between order and disorder, between the base and the noble. Every actively forceful harnessing of the forceful [*jeder gewalttätige Bändigung des Gewaltigen*] is either victory or defeat. Each in separate ways hurls him out of the homely and thus each in separate ways first unfolds the dangerousness of achieved or lost being.¹⁵⁷

Another passage clarifies the matter further:

It is in being thus set out from the homely that the homely is itself first disclosed as such. But at the same time and only thus is the strange, the overwhelming first disclosed as such. In the event of uncanniness beings as a whole are opened up as such. This opening up is the happening of unconcealment. This is nothing other than the event of uncanniness.¹⁵⁸

Most of the rest of the commentary of the lecture text is in fact devoted to a discussion of the manner in which man exists thus *inmitten* of beings as a whole. Heidegger focuses his remarks now around the two structurally synonymous phrases that give full voice to the counter-turning character of that existence: Παντοπόρος ἄπορος and ὑψίπολις ἄπολις, which he renders respectively: 'Everywhere venturing forth underway, inexperienced without escape,' and 'towering high above the site, forfeiting the site.'¹⁵⁹

To begin with, Heidegger focuses on the first strophe and antistrophe of the chorus. The concern there is with the overwhelming, that is, with beings as a whole. The overwhelming is the sea, the earth, living things, 'each one overwhelming (δεινόν) in its particular way.' In a manner that calls to mind the evocation in the 1919 lecture course *The Idea of Philosophy* of the earlier chorus as a lived event in which 'the first joyful morning flashes into view,'¹⁶⁰ beings as a whole are 'here said as if for the first time.'¹⁶¹ Treating of the overwhelming, however, the chorus treats also of man. Indeed, the 1942 commentary will be more direct still: 'although telling of the sea and the earth, of the animals and the wild and of storms ...,' this strophe and antistrophe

tell also 'exclusively of man.'¹⁶² It tells, in other words, of those beings alongside (*bei*) and in the midst of which (*inmitten*) man dwells in the world. Yet as the actively forceful one – the one who *needs to use force* in order to be the being that he is – this dwelling is far from passive. Man is τὸ δεινότετον, *das Unheimlichste*, the most uncanny of beings because, abiding in the midst of the many that are uncanny, he is not at home. Not at home, man unleashes the force that he needs to use against that which overwhelms him, prevailing over it:

This breaking out, breaking up, capturing and conquering is in itself the first opening up of beings *as sea, as earth, as animals ...* The forceful act of poetic saying, the project of thinking, of the construction of buildings, of the action that founds a state, is not some awakening of the capabilities that man has, but a harnessing and an ordering [*Fügen*] of those forces [*Gewalten*] through which beings disclose themselves as such in man's entering into their midst. This disclosedness of beings is that force over which man has to prevail in order first to be himself in forceful activity in the midst of beings, i.e. to be historical.¹⁶³

It should be noted, however, that this forceful activity, this breaking out and breaking up, capturing and conquering (*Ausbrechen und Umbrechen, Einfängen und Niederzwingen*) by which beings as a whole are mastered (*bewältigt*) in the sense of their being disclosed is *not* unlimited in all directions, as it were. It is, as Michel Haar suggests, without ever drawing out the consequences of this insight, a matter of prevailing over the overwhelming, *pour un temps*.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, it could hardly be

otherwise, granted the extent to which this disclosure is not, as we saw in chapter one, an *unopposed* happening, but one that is run through by concealment, granted the extent to which 'the clearing in which beings stand is in itself also concealment.'¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, and this brings us to the passage to which I want primarily to draw attention:

on *one* thing does all forceful activity founder *immediately* [*unmittelbar*]. This is death. It ends beyond all completion [*über-endet alle Vollendung*], it limits beyond all limits. Here there is no breaking out or breaking up, no capturing or conquering. Yet this uncanniness that sets us once and for all outside everything homely is not some special event that must come to be named amongst others because it, too, finally happens. Man has no escape [*ist ohne Ausweg*] with regard to death, not merely when he comes to die but constantly and essentially. Insofar as man *is* he stands in the inescapability of death. Dasein is thus the happening of this uncanniness itself [*ist das Da-sein die geschehende Unheimlichkeit selbst*].¹⁶⁶

Another remark concludes the discussion, clarifying the matter further:

With the naming of *this* forcefulness and *this* uncanniness, the poetic project of being and of the essence of man sets its limits upon itself.¹⁶⁷

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Notes

- ¹ The Saying of Anaximander' (GA 5: 357–8). On this remark, see the suggestive note of William J. Richardson in *Martin Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 519 note 11. Heidegger offers three different translations of Anaximander's phrase διδόναι δίκην ...της ἀδικίας. He cites first Nietzsche's suggestion in *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen* of 1873: 'they must pay penalty and be judged for their injustice [*sie müssen Buße zahlen und für ihre Ungerechtigkeiten gerichtet werden*]' (GA 5: 321). Next he cites Diels: 'they pay recompense and penalty to one another for their recklessness [*sie zahlen einander Strafe und Buße für ihre Ruchlosigkeit*]' (GA 5: 322), offering finally his own translation: 'they, these same ones, let belong (in the overcoming) the order of dis-order [*gehören lassen sie, die Selbigen, Fug (im Verwinden) des Un-Fugs*]' (GA 5: 357).
- ² The following methodological considerations, which resume the opening discussions of chapter 1, ought to be supplemented by the reading offered by Jean-François Courtine, 'La Cause de la phénoménologie' in *Heidegger et la phénoménologie*, op. cit., 161–85.
- ³ SZ 10.
- ⁴ Cf. SZ 45 and note a.
- ⁵ SZ 16.
- ⁶ Cf. SZ 51.
- ⁷ SZ 51.
- ⁸ SZ 45.
- ⁹ Thus Michel Haar in a note to his translation of this 'first sketch' of *Being and Time*; *Heidegger* (Paris: L'Herne, 1983), 36.

- 10 Z 7. As regards phenomenology as prescience, compare the remarks of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, in which this propaedeutic role is complicated somewhat: 'Hitherto phenomenology has been grasped ... as a philosophical prescience [*eine philosophische Vorwissenschaft*], preparing the ground for the properly philosophical disciplines of logic, ethics, aesthetics, and the philosophy of religion. But in this determination of phenomenology as prescience the traditional reserve of philosophical disciplines is taken over without asking whether that same reserve is not called into question and eliminated by phenomenology itself' (GA 24: 3).
- 11 Z 7. On the 'police' function of philosophy, see Kant, *KrV* B xxv.
- 12 The identification between the *Vorwissenschaft* of the lecture and the nomination of fundamental ontology as productive logic is made by Heidegger himself when, in the Marburg course of 1925, the latter is also termed 'pre-scientific ... disclosure' (GA 20: 3).
- 13 Z 7. Emphasis mine.
- 14 SZ 52.
- 15 SZ 294. Heidegger's emphasis. Compare again the remarks of the 1925 lecture course *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time* (GA 20: 175–7, 391). Taking his distance from both a material ethics and a 'merely' formal one, Heidegger's point of reference is, as the context makes clear, the respective 'demands' of Scheler (SZ 290–1 and note) and of Kant (SZ 293). See, too, the more expansive discussion of Scheler's material ethics in the lecture course of 1925 (GA 20: 175–7) and the emphasis placed on the way in which 'Kant determined the basic principle of his ethics in such a way that we call it formal' in the lecture of 1924 (Z 13). On the development of conscience, see the

analyses of Courtine, 'Voix de la conscience et vocation de l'être,' *Heidegger et la phénoménologie*, op. cit., 305–25.

16 GA 26: 177.

17 Thus: '... if the statement "It belongs to the essence of Dasein that, in its being, it is concerned with this being" is located at the point of departure of an ontological analysis of Dasein ..., then it is a simple imperative of even the most primitive methodology to at least inquire whether or not this ontological statement of essence does or could present an ontic claim from a world-view that preaches a so-called ... existentiell, ethical egoism' (GA 26: 240). Then: 'We abstain here from adopting a position with respect to the criticisms that have surfaced thus far. This is held back – insofar as the real melange of "objections" move in the dimension of the problems – for a special publication' (KPM 234 note 293; 160 note 293).

18 SZ 294. Heidegger's emphasis.

19 GA 9: 237; BW 258.

20 GA 9: 256; BW 258. Emphasis mine. For persuasive readings of Heidegger's work as having engaged with the issue of ethics from the start, see Jean Grodin, 'Das junghegelianische und ethische Motiv in Heideggers Hermeneutik der Faktizität' in *Wege und Irrwege des neueren Umgangs mit Heideggers Werk*, ed. István M. Feher (Berlin: Duncker and Humboldt, 1991), and John van Buren, 'The Young Heidegger, Aristotle, Ethics,' in Dallery and Scott, eds., *Ethics and Danger*, op. cit., 169–85.

21 Beaufret's letter remains sadly unpublished, although a French translation of the 'Brief über den "Humanismus"' does append the 'früherer Briefe' referred to by Heidegger at the end of the later text (GA 9: 363), his initial response to Beaufret's inquiries, dated 23

November 1945; see *Questions* (Paris: Gallimard *nrf*, 1976) III: 155–7. Around the same time as Beaufret, although eliciting rather less in the way of response, Emmanuel Levinas was addressing more challenging versions of this question to Heidegger. See ‘L’Ontologie est-elle fondamentale,’ *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 56 (1951), 88–98. Such questions had even been implicit in Levinas’ work from as early as an essay of 1932, ‘Martin Heidegger et ontologie’ in *En Découvrant l’existence avec Husserl et Heidegger* (Paris: Vrin, 1967; nouvelle édition), 53–76, which, although not framed in the expressly “ethical” terms that Levinas will adopt from 1947 onward, certainly points in that direction. See, too, Jacques Derrida’s rightly celebrated essay on Levinas, ‘Violence et la métaphysique,’ which draws heavily on the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’ in order to examine Levinas’ attempt to provide an ‘Ethics of Ethics’ that could ‘give rise neither to a determined ethics, nor to determined laws, without negating and forgetting itself’; *L’Écriture et la différance* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 164. An extended reading of the various threads uniting Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida’s understanding of “ethics” is provided by Robert Bernasconi, ‘Deconstruction and the Possibility of Ethics: Reiterating the “Letter on Humanism”,’ *Heidegger in Question*, *op. cit.*, 211–24. For a more recent attempt to orient the text of fundamental ontology toward *une éthique possible*, see Jacques Taminiaux, ‘La phénoménologie de l’action et de la pluralité,’ *Archivo di Filosofia* LIV (1986), 1–3.

²² GA 9: 353; BW 254.

²³ SZ 316. Significantly, the word *Ethik* appears each time in quotation marks.

²⁴ GA 9: 358; BW 259.

- 25 GA 9: 353–4; BW 255–6. In light of the thesis that I want to advance here, Heidegger's word *anfänglicher* ought to be taken in the root sense of *Anfang* as that which first seizes, grasps or takes hold (*fängt*). Its identification with the pre-Socratic *anfängliche Denker* means that, as we saw in chapter 1, it is carefully to be distinguished from 'the later beginning [*das Beginnen*] of metaphysics' (GA 55: 80). In this regard, I would note that I find problematic David Farrell Krell's translation of these lines in *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 1: 'the tragedies of Sophocles "in their sayings shelter the ἦθος in a more pristine form than do Aristotle's lectures on "ethics".' On incipency and the incipient beginning, see Dennis Schmidt, 'On the Obscurity of Origins: Hegel and Heidegger as Interpreters of Heraclitus' in *Philosophy Today* XXVI (Winter 1982), 322–31, and Schürmann, *Le principe d'anarchie*, op. cit., 122–5. See, too, §12, 'Das anfängliche Denken, das eine Bereitschaft ...' of Heidegger's own notes of 1938–9, recently collected under the title *Besinnung* (GA 66: 40–2).
- 26 ἠθικὴ results from ἔθους and indeed derives its name with a tiny variation in form, from this word'; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II I 1. See, however, the objections raised by Kahn, cited in note 30, below.
- 27 Diels and Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Wiedmannsche Buchhandlung, 1922) I: 100 (fragment 119 in the enumeration).
- 28 G.S.. Kirk and J.E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 211.
- 29 John Burnet, *Early Greek Thinking* (London: A. and C. Black, 1920), 124.

30 G. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 260. In a statement that runs exactly counter to the direction of Heidegger's ensuing claims, Kahn holds that 'the meaning of the sentence depends on the sense given to *daimon*,' stating further that '*ethos* "character," is closely related to *ethos* "custom, habit." In the plural, *ethos* can refer also to custom or customary haunts. But in this fragment ..., as in other poets and in Aristotle, *ethos* means very much what we understand by character: the customary patterns of choices and behaviour distinctive of an individual or a given type' (ibid., 335 note 376). On ἦθος as 'the hidden but characteristic part of a person – the place, as it were, to which one returned when one was really him- or herself,' and ἦθεα as 'places and regions,' see the perceptive comments of Charles Scott, *The Question of Ethics*, op. cit., 143–7 (144).

31 GA 9: 354; BW 256.

32 GA 9: 358; BW 259.

33 'Der (geheure) Aufenthalt ist dem Menschen das Offene für die Anwesenung des Gottes (des Un-geheuren)' (GA 9: 356; BW 258). The translation is, like so many of those advanced by Heidegger, unorthodox. As I shall want to demonstrate, in this context it is relatively unproblematic, however.

34 Heidegger will refer not just to the identification in *Being and Time* of dwelling as a 'formal existential expression of the being of Dasein,' but also to other analyses more contemporary with the 'Letter on "Humanism".' So: 'dwelling is the essence [*Wesen*] of being-in-the-world (cf. *Being and Time*). This reference to "being-in" as "dwelling" is not some etymological word play. The reference in the essay of 1936 on Hölderlin's phrase "Full of merit, yet poetically, man dwells on this earth" is no adornment of a thinking

that rescues itself from science by way of poetry' (GA 9: 358; BW 260). The latter reference is presumably to a remark from the lecture 'Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry' where Heidegger states that "to dwell poetically" means: to stand in the presence of the gods and to be struck by the essential nearness of things' (GA 4: 42), although one could point equally to a remark from the lecture of 1956, '... poetically man dwells ...,' in which dwelling is said to be 'the basic character of man's existence [*des menschlichen Daseins*]' (VA 23).

35 SZ 54. Heidegger's emphasis. The ellipses are Heidegger's own. On this paragraph, which draws its principle insights from Grimm's *Worterbuch*, see the helpful note provided by MacQuarrie and Robinson in their translation of *Sein und Zeit*.

36 Aristotle, *De partibus animalium* I 5: 645a 17–20. The story, Heidegger says, is in tune with (*mit ... stimmt*) the fragment (GA 9: 355; BW 256). Aristotle narrates the story principally in order to justify the ensuing sections of his own thesis concerning the study of animals. 'We must not,' he says, 'recoil with childish aversion from examination of the humbler animals ... for in everything that flourishes, marvels are present [*ἐν πᾶσι γὰρ τοῖς φυαικοῖς ἔνεστι τι θαυμαστόν*]. And, like Heraclitus, when some strangers came to visit him but found him warming himself at the stove and hesitated to go in, is reported to have bidden them not to be afraid to enter since even here divine things are present, so we should embark on the study of every living being without shame, for each will reveal to us something flourishing and beautiful.' Heidegger first narrates this story, not usually included in editions of Heraclitus (neither the Dielz-Kranz edition, nor those of Burnet or Kirk consider it worthy of note), at the beginning of the summer semester lecture courses he devotes to Heraclitus in 1943, where its position lends it a status

analogous to that of the citation from Plato's *Sophist* that establishes the exordial mood of *Being and Time*. He remarks there, in terms largely retained by the 'Letter on "Humanism",' that 'such "stories," even when these are inventions, or precisely because they are so, contain a more original truth than data that are established by historical research' (GA 55: 5).

37 '... gegen das übliche Dahinleben der Menschen ...' (GA 9: 355; BW 257).

38 SZ 172–3. Cf. GA 20: 382–3. The fact that Heidegger prefaces the remarks of *Being and Time* with a discussion of the 'tendency simply-to-perceive [*zum Nur-Vernehmen*]' that fosters curiosity, a tendency expounded in particular relation to Aristotle and Augustine's respective interpretations of 'the care for seeing' that is 'essential' for man (SZ 171), leads me to think that one could read much of the 'Letter on "Humanism",' principally the emphasis upon the deed (*Tun*) of thinking as what exceeds all viewing (*Betrachten*), as what exceeds the θεωρία of theoretical reason, in terms of this rarely discussed section of *Being and Time* (§36). It is interesting to note also that Heidegger follows the section on curiosity with one devoted to the equally fallen matter of 'Ambiguity' which, as we shall see, is itself a central notion to the discussion of tragedy in *Introduction to Metaphysics*. As with the analyses of 'fear,' discussed below, it would be instructive to trace the way in which many of the everyday comportments and modes of being-in-the-world uncovered in *Being and Time* find themselves recast in a more authentic guise in the various readings of Greek tragedy.

39 SZ 172. Heidegger's emphasis. The contrast of θαυμάζειν to curiosity is Heidegger's own (ibid.).

40 SZ 172. Emphasis added.

- 41 GA 9: 355–6; BW 257.
- 42 GA 9: 354; BW 256.
- 43 ‘... die Frage “was der Mensch sei” ...’ (SZ 45). On such *Apriorismus*, cf. SZ 50 note 1.
- 44 Jacques Derrida makes more or less the same point in ‘Les Fins de l’homme,’ op. cit., 157, and in *De l’esprit*, op. cit., 31.
- 45 SZ 15. This claim, according to which a ‘complete ontology of Dasein’ remains the prerequisite if ‘anything like a “philosophical” anthropology is to rest upon a philosophically sufficient basis,’ thereby linking the question about being to the question of what man is, is made in the 1925 lecture course *History of the Concept of Time* with respect to the manner in which the question about being has ‘today fallen into forgottenness.’ Having devoted several weeks to his preliminary reflections on the character of phenomenological research, Heidegger is addressing himself to the ‘*fundamental neglect*’ of the question of being as such (GA 20: 178). Such is, he says, ‘hardly a matter of mere negligence, merely overlooking a question that ought to have been raised, any more than the orientation to the traditional definition of man is a chance mistake’ (GA 20: 179). See, too, the remarks of the 1930 lecture course *On the Essence of Human Freedom* (GA 31: 126–7).
- 46 GA 9: 313; BW 217.
- 47 GA 9: 350; BW 252.
- 48 Worth remarking in this context is the observation made by Hermann Paul in his *Deutsches Wörterbuch* that the substantive form of the word *Wesen* derives from an Indogermanic root suggesting “to reside” or “to dwell,” senses that the verb *wesen* preserved until the time of Luther. See also Heidegger’s retrospective assessment earlier

on in the ‘Letter on “Humanism”’ where, recalling the expression in *Being and Time* according to which ‘the “essence” of Dasein lies in its existence’ (SZ 42; cited GA 9: 325; BW 229), he points out that ‘the word “essence” was carefully written in quotation marks. This indicates that “essence” is now being determined neither from *esse essentiae* nor from *esse existentiae*, but from the ek-static character of Dasein’ (GA 9: 327; BW 231). This retrospective remark, as well as the broadly similar one appended to the published version of the 1940 lecture course *European Nihilism* (cf. *Niet* II: 194–5), ignores, however, the largely underdeveloped sense of “essence” in the earlier work, where Heidegger appears to regard the notion of *Wesen* as virtually interchangeable with that of *Essenz*; see, for example, the following restatement of this formal indication of Dasein’s being: ‘the “essence” [*Essenz*] of Dasein is founded in its existence’ (SZ 117). John Sallis would disagree on this point and claims to find in *Being and Time* a ‘hardly surprising ... redetermination of essence,’ one announced ‘as a kind of reversal: the essence of Dasein is existence’; ‘Flights of Spirit,’ op. cit., 34. The point here, however, would be that this ‘redetermination’ of the essence of Dasein is *not* a redetermination of the notion of essence as such.

49 GA 9: 323; BW 227.

50 GA 9: 323; BW 227.

51 GA 9: 322, 330; BW 226, 233. An identical point is made in §34 of *Being and Time* (SZ 165).

52 GA 9: 323; BW 227. Heidegger’s emphasis. The point is addressed briefly but astutely by Françoise Dastur in ‘Three Questions to Jacques Derrida’ in Dallery and Scott (eds.),

Ethics and Danger, op. cit., 25–41 (30–2). See, too, the considerations of Derrida to which Dastur’s comments are directed, in *De l’esprit*, op. cit., 47–57.

53 GA 9: 322; BW 227. For a similar point, see SZ 48. For an insightful extension of Heidegger’s case “against” reason, see Heribert Boeder, ‘The Distinction of Reason’ in *Seditions*, op. cit., 101–9.

54 In fact, Heidegger makes explicit reference to this long essay of 1928, and to this discussion in particular, just a few lines before these remarks (cf. GA 9: 322; BW 226).

55 GA 9: 127. He adds in a marginal note: ‘Wherever and whenever there are beings there is also *ground*; thus there is *grounding* wherever there is being’ (GA 9: 127 note a).

56 GA 9: 129.

57 Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, op. cit. VII: 25.

58 *Oeuvres de Descartes* VII: 24.

59 *Oeuvres de Descartes* VII: 25. Cf. *ibid.*, 19 for an expression of this earlier belief.

60 *Oeuvres de Descartes* VII: 25. Compare, however, the remarks of the opening pages of the *Discours*, where Descartes makes appeal to ‘la raison ... qui nous rend hommes, et nous distingue des bêtes’ (*ibid.*, VI: 2).

61 GA 24: 220.

62 GA 20: 296.

63 GA 9: 322; BW 226. Emphasis mine.

64 ‘The beginning of metaphysics in the thought of Plato is at the same time the beginning of “humanism”’ (GA 9: 236).

65 GA 9: 331; BW 234.

66 SZ 49. Heidegger's emphasis.

67 See the remarks of *Introduction to Metaphysics*: 'this definition of man is at bottom a zoological one [*ist im Grund eine zoologische*],' and it is upon the ζῷον of this zoological definition that 'the Western doctrine of man ... has been constructed' (EM 150). *This*, then, is the connection in which to read Heidegger's remark in the 'Letter on "Humanism"' that 'the thinking that inquires into the truth of being and so defines man's essential abode from and toward being is neither ethics nor ontology' (GA 9: 357; BW 259). The reference here to 'ontology' is directed not, as Joanna Hodge concludes, toward *Being and Time*, but toward *formal* ontology – what Heidegger now calls 'the "ontology" of metaphysics': 'By way of its beginning [*Ansatz*] another questioning, this thinking [i.e. that of *Being and Time*] is already removed from the "ontology" of metaphysics (even that of Kant)' (GA 9: 357; BW 258), the ontology that had been described in *Being and Time* as both 'ontology taken in its broadest sense and without reference to particular ontological directions and tendencies' (SZ 11) and the 'traditional ontology' that accords a 'priority ... to the present to hand' (SZ 147). For Hodge's remarks, see *Heidegger and Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1997), 100. For a considered view of Heidegger's *Destruktion* of zoology, most succinctly expressed in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (cf. EM 108, 150) and in the remarks of the 1925 Marburg course (cf. GA 20: 155), see Françoise Dastur, 'Pour une zoologie "privative",' *Alter* 3 (1995), 281–317.

68 GA 20: 173. François Raffoul provides an exhaustive account of Heidegger's various remarks to this effect; cf. *Heidegger and the Subject* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1998), 22–39. See also David Farrell Krell's commentary on these lines in *Daimon Life*, *op. cit.*, 80–2.

- 69 Dastur, 'Three Questions to Jacques Derrida,' op. cit., 31.
- 70 GA 9: 246; BW 248. The Frank Capuzzi and J. Glenn Grey translation of the phrase 'stutzig zu werden' is 'to cause perplexity.' Although not strictly accurate, this translation has the undoubted merit of referring these remarks back to the exordial mood of *Being and Time* and its drafts (cf. SZ 1; GA 20: 179; Z 1, etc.). Insofar as humanism, on analogy with the ontic slumbers projected by 'ancient ontology' (SZ 3), sanctions the wholesale neglect of being as *die Sache des Denkens* and so precludes any interrogation of the very conditions under which it might itself become possible, such a referral is an entirely persuasive one, therefore.
- 71 SZ 50.
- 72 The studied caution of this second gesture is reminiscent of Kant's refusal in the first *Critique* to draw any specific ontological inference from the conceptual inadmissibility of the *ens realissimum* (*KrV* A 592–621; B 620–49). Kant concludes his demonstration of the impossibility of either an ontological, cosmological or physio-theoretical proof for the existence of God by remarking: 'the ideal of the supreme being is nothing but a regulative principle of reason' (*KrV* A 619; B 647), thus avoiding the snares of speculative theology whilst *also* leaving room for practical faith. So, too, Heidegger, who maintains that it is not only rash but a fundamental error of procedure if one assumes that his own demonstrations have decided on the existence or non-existence of God (cf. GA 9: 350; BW 261).
- 73 Compare Michel Haar's remarks on 'the poverty of *homo humanus* or man without faculties' in *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 122–32. See also Derrida's

insistence on the need to distinguish between the *Privation* of man and the *Entbehrung* of the animal; *De l'esprit*, op. cit., 85.

74 GA 9: 323–4; BW 227–8.

75 ‘Thus we are thinking a humanism of an odd sort [*seltsamer Art*]’ (GA 9: 345; BW 248); ‘Is this not “humanism” in an extreme sense [*in äußersten Sinn*]?’ (GA 9: 342; BW 245).

76 “A Scarcely Pondered Word.” The Place of Tragedy: Heidegger, Aristotle, Sophocles’ in *Philosophy and Tragedy*, eds. Miguel de Beistegui and Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 1999), 169–90 (170).

77 GA 9: 313; BW 217.

78 Charles Scott’s elegant translation of *Vollbringen* as *carrying out* seems to me astute in this instance; see *The Question of Ethics*, op. cit., 178–9.

79 GA 9: 358; BW 259.

80 Cf. Haar, *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 165.

81 GA 9: 313; BW 217.

82 Sallis, *Echoes*, op. cit., 121.

83 Françoise Dastur, *La mort: Essai sur le finitude* (Paris: Hatier, 1994), 15. Dastur’s emphasis. Compare the remarks of an earlier study, *Hölderlin: tragédie et modernité* (La Versanne: encre marine, 1992), in which Dastur makes an extensive treatment of Hölderlin’s various works dealing with tragedy. In the present context, her contention that ‘le sujet de tragédie est le temps’ (ibid., 38), ought to be noted. Argued for with respect to Hölderlin’s various attempts to rewrite *Empedocles* as a modern tragedy, Dastur makes the point as follows: ‘[Empedocles] suffering comes from the fact that, as a mortal, he is tied to the “law of succession,” to *time* ... For the tragic hero ... his tragic

sacrifice represents only a temporary solution to his epoch, to destiny. This is why, as Hölderlin makes clear in the “Remarks,” the theme of tragedy is nothing other than time itself’ (ibid., 37–8, 59). For further consideration of the merits of Dastur’s essays, see David Farrell Krell, *Lunar Voices: of Tragedy, Poetry, Fiction and Thought* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 8–9 note 9 and 21–2 note 21, and Jean-Claude Monod, ‘Phénoménologie et “chrono-logie”,’ *Esprit*, April 1996, 194–200.

84 Significantly, this role is one in which Sophocles in particular is credited with having grasped in its essentials. The position is extended slightly in *Dire le temps*, Dastur’s most important and analytic work to date. Preparatory to a consideration of the relation of phenomenology to philosophy, she makes the suggestion that ‘philosophy as a mode of autonomous thought is only born from the retreat of the divine – to which Sophocles’ tragedies are the witness ...; it is because the microcosm is no longer the image of the macrocosm the border between the divine and the human becomes problematic [*se fait énigme*] and that the meaning of “being” becomes aporetic.’ So far as Dastur is concerned, moreover, the position here is broadly analogous to that argued for at the outset of *Being and Time*; cf. *Dire le temps: Esquisse d’une chrono-logie phénoménologique* (La Versanne: encre marine, 1994), 50 and note. The historical reflections of Walter Kaufmann’s *Tragedy and Philosophy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), seems to me to argue implicitly for a similar thesis. See, for example, the opening claim that ‘philosophy is younger’ than tragedy. Indeed, remarks Kaufmann, ‘the two greatest Greek philosophers did not merely come *after* the greatest tragedians; their kind of philosophy was shaped in part by the development of tragedy’ (ibid., 1–2).

85 *La mort* 17.

- 86 Ibid., 18.
- 87 GA 20: 433. I will come back to this declaration in the following section.
- 88 Cf. *La mort* 46–51 and 61–9.
- 89 Ibid., 37. Dastur’s emphasis.
- 90 *La mort* 16. Earlier in the essay Dastur cites the fragment from Heraclitus which will be so central to Heidegger’s case, ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων in order to demonstrate that ‘la vie de l’homme soit vie “avec” les morts’ (9). In this regard, see also Dennis Schmidt’s observation à propos the fact that ‘in *Being and Time*, Heidegger takes the project of thinking the prospects of connectedness to the point of asking about our relation with the dead,’ a relation that is itself ‘the bond overriding every other bond for Antigone’; ‘Why I am so Happy,’ *Research in Phenomenology* XXV (1995), 3–14 (6). Looking ahead somewhat to chapter 4, attention should also be drawn to Ernst Cassirer’s examination of mythic existence in the second part of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, an essay to which both Heidegger and Benjamin respond at length. ‘A basic trait of the mythic consciousness of objects,’ notes Heidegger in his review of Cassirer’s book, ‘lies in the fact that a demarcated boundary [*eine abgesetzte Grenze*] is *lacking* ... between the living and the dead’ (KPM 2560. On Cassirer’s presentation of this trait, see Alexis Philonenko, *L’École de Marbourg: Cohen, Natorp, Cassirer* (Paris: Vrin, 1989), 167.
- 91 *Comment vivre avec la mort?* (Paris: Éditions pleins feux, 1998), 25. The phrase also appears in *La mort* 15.
- 92 *Comment vivre avec la mort?* 36. Dastur offers a far more direct expression of her position a few lines earlier: ‘I would like,’ she says, ‘to risk the following thought: being, existence, is perhaps nothing other than gift of death [*le don que nous fait la mort*]’ (ibid.,

35), and concludes her observations with the following strangely tragic call to 'laughter': 'In laughter we experience what Nietzsche so magnificently called "the innocence of the future." We experience the fact that we are innocent, that death is not the punishment for a crime that we commit simply by being born but, on the contrary, what allows us to exist [*d'être là*], and it is thus in laughter that, paradoxically, we enter into the most profound relation to our mortality' (ibid., 37–8). Here, at least, Dastur's point of reference is less Heidegger than Bataille. See, most evidently, the remarks of *Le Coupable*: 'Le fou rire ou l'extase nous placent au bord du même abîme, c'est la "mise en question" de tout le possible. C'est la point de rupture, de lâchez-tout, l'anticipation de la mort'; *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977) V: 355. See also *La mort*, op. cit., 76–9.

93 VA 171.

94 *Comment vivre avec la mort?* 36 note 17.

95 '... à habiter véritablement la terre et à séjourner dans son corps' (ibid., 36).

96 Cf. SZ 302.

97 GA 9: 318; BW 222. This dimension is admirably explored in Françoise Dastur's 'Language and Ereignis' in Sallis (ed.), *Commemorations*, op. cit., 355–69, esp. 357–9. See also the brief remarks of Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann in *Die Selbstinterpretation Martin Heideggers* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1964), 183–4, and the more critical remarks of Lyne, *The Temporality of Language*, op. cit., 84–9.

98 GA 9: 318; BW 222.

99 GA 9: 323; BW 227–8. As David Farrell Krell points out in an editorial note to the English translation of these remarks, the ensuing reference to care is here already inferred in the reference to the notion of 'the ecstatic' (BW 228).

100 GA 9: 319; BW 223–4. Heidegger refers on two other occasions in the ‘Letter on
“Humanism”’ to the notion of care, each time in order to make more or less the same
point (cf. GA 9: 331, 350; BW 231, 252).

101 SZ 42. See also SZ 42 note b. That this is, properly speaking, an *identification* of Dasein
as possibility is left in no doubt, Heidegger adding: ‘Dasein *is* [ist] in each case its
possibility’ (SZ 42. Heidegger’s emphasis). Such might, he suggests in a note, be taken as
a ‘definition’ (SZ 42 note d).

102 SZ 191–2. Heidegger’s emphasis.

103 ‘Das Sich-vorweg-sein besagt voller gefäßt: *Sich-vorweg-im-schon-sein-in-einer-Welt*’ (SZ
192. Heidegger’s emphasis). In the *Widerholung* of the second Division, Heidegger
restates this ‘existential formula’ as follows: ‘being-way-ahead-of-oneself-already-in (a
world) as being-alongside (innerworldly beings encountered)’ (SZ 317).

104 SZ 244.

105 SZ 234.

106 GA 20: 246.

107 Cf. SZ 247, 251, 252, respectively. Read this way, the functional structures that demand
that Heidegger treats of death are actually set in place several sections earlier in *Being
and Time* than those explicitly devoted to the matter itself. In this regard, I begin to
wonder whether it might not be instructive to return that analysis to the description
afforded in the lecture course of 1925 *History of the Concept of Time*, where Heidegger
states his preference for seeing the analysis of death as a purely ‘transitional
consideration’ (GA 20: 242). Indeed, as is said later on in *Being and Time*, such
considerations merely make ‘*the articulation of the totality of the structural whole even*

- more rich ...* (SZ 317. Heidegger's emphasis). On the difficulties that accrue from this program of analysis, namely that it 'leaves authentic being-toward-death without ontic attestation,' see Robert Bernasconi, 'Literary Attestation in Philosophy,' *Heidegger in Question*, op. cit., 76–98 (77).
- 108 SZ 317. Heidegger's emphasis.
- 109 SZ 250. Heidegger's emphasis. In the following analyses, I am indebted to the studies of Dastur, *La mort*, op. cit., 18, 40–6; Jacques Derrida, *Apories: Mourir – s'attendre aux "limites de la verité"* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 48ff.; Haar, *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 31; and Scott, *The Question of Ethics*, op. cit., 97–101.
- 110 Cf. SZ 239–40.
- 111 SZ 250. Heidegger's emphasis.
- 112 See Derrida, *Apories*, op. cit., 114: 'If being-possible is the being proper to Dasein, then the existential analytic of Dasein's death ought to make this possibility its theme. The analytic of death is submitted, as an example, this ontological law which regulates the being of Dasein, and which has the name possibility. On the other hand, however, death is itself uttermost possibility.' In the ensuing pages, Derrida deals at length with the notion of death as possibility (ibid., 113–16).
- 113 Compare Haar, *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 31.
- 114 GA 20: 437, 440. See also Haar, *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 31–2.
- 115 SZ 211. The 'phenomenological deconstruction of the *cogito sum*' (SZ 89) projected at this point in *Being and Time* was, of course, never published.
- 116 GA 20: 438. On this remark, see the commentaries of Dastur, *La mort*, op. cit., 46–7, and Haar, *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 30.

117 SZ 251.

118 GA 9: 120.

119 SZ 251.

120 SZ 251.

121 SZ 261. Heidegger's emphasis. The analogy with the position argued for by Dastur with respect to the relation that man *entretient* with *sa propre mortalité* is clear.

122 Compare Maurice Blanchot's assertion that one cannot 'compter sur la mort, la vôtre, la mort universelle, pour fonder quoi que ce soit, pas même la réalité de cette mort se incertaine et is irréelle qu'avec elle s'évanouit ce qui la prononce'; *L'Écriture du désastre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 143.

123 SZ 262.

124 Compare Henri Birault's detection in these lines of an 'invention' of 'another death or another certainty of death,' one through which 'what is involved in actual death' comes to be disclosed. Birault elaborates: 'To die means in fact to be able to die. But this inability, henceforth invested with an "ontological" or "transcendental" significance, now precedes the event or fact of death. Death is thus doubled. It alone affords the meaning or the truth, the comprehension or the capacity of death. Being-able-to-die does not prefigure the reality of death. It gives only the intelligence and the power of death. It bespeaks what is involved in actual death [*ce qui est en jeu dans la mort effective*]; *Heidegger et l'expérience de la pensée*, op. cit., 39. Adds Birault in a phrase that reminds us of the position argued for by Dastur: 'La fatalité est empirique, la possibilité qui en procède ne l'est pas moins ... La mort n'est pas un phénomène vital, la mort est un phénomène existencial' (ibid.).

125 SZ 262–3. Emphasis mine.

126 In order to see how *Endlichkeit* functions as just such a name, it would be necessary to show how, at least in terms of any explicit and thematic treatment, the term occupies a decidedly marginal position in the architectonic of *Being and Time* where, of all places, one would have expected Heidegger to have made an extensive treatment. It is the assumption that he *does* so that mars the otherwise excellent critique of Haar in *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 27–43. Indeed, not only does Haar assume 'finitude' to be a synonym for death – 'is not "my death",' he asks, 'merely another word to designate the temporality of my finitude whose future horizon is indeterminate?' (ibid., 27–8) – he also assumes its correlation with mortality (ibid., 31), an even more fugitive term so far as *Being and Time* is concerned, where it makes only one appearance, and there merely in order to characterise the 'ontic interpretation' of care afforded by Seneca's *Epistles* (SZ 199). As the Preface to Haar's book demonstrates, however, this distinction is one of which he is profoundly aware; cf. *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 20. The same cannot be said of Christopher Fynsk's feeble attempt to read 'Heidegger's course of thinking' as one entirely constructed around a notion of finitude. Fynsk's account of *Being and Time* is breathtakingly lax in its governing assumptions, particularly so given the manner in which Fynsk undertakes to situate the work as a reflection on 'the finitude of metaphysical questioning,' a term he misappropriates from the *Kantbuch* of 1929; cf. Fynsk, *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), esp. 16–17, 28–54 (16). For a more productive employment of the same erroneous distinction, see David Wood, *The Deconstruction of Time* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1989), 188–9. The only commentator to have explored the technical

sense given to the notion of finitude in *Being and Time* is Jean Grodin, *La Tournant dans la pensée de Martin Heidegger* (Paris: puf, 1987).

127 SZ 329. Heidegger's emphasis.

128 To the extent that Heidegger focuses much of his attention on the notion of πόλις, it is unsurprising that the majority of the literature devoted to his readings of the chorus have adopted a specifically political approach. In the following sections I am indebted to two excellent comparative studies. Jacques Taminiaux's *Le Théâtre des philosophes* (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1995), provides an excellent summary of both readings in the context of the author's ongoing genealogy of tragedy. Miguel de Beistegui's *Heidegger and the Political*, op. cit., 114–45, offers a sustained account of both readings, focussing on the shift from the lectures of 1935, 'which still suffered from onticity,' to the 'more "ontological"' interpretation of 1942. Formidable though his account may be, one ought to note nonetheless the infelicity of de Beistegui's assertion that 'the translation of the chorus from *Antigone*, which constitutes Heidegger's major source of interpretation, remains identical' (ibid., 141). Not so. The translation published in the 1953 edition of *Introduction to Metaphysics* is not the one used in 1935 but the one developed during the lectures of 1942. For Heidegger's original translation, see *Martin Heidegger – Karl Jaspers: Briefwechsel 1920–1963*, ed. Walter Biemel and Hans Saner (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1990), 158–60. In addition to the studies of Taminiaux and de Beistegui, I have consulted with profit Will McNeill's excellent 'Porosity: Violence and the Question of Politics in Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*' in *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 14:2–15:1 (1991), 183–212, as well as the brief but perceptive

- remarks of Haar in *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 208–12, and of Ward, *Heidegger's Political Thinking*, op. cit., 184–93.
- 129 EM 113. Cf. GA 53: 73.
- 130 EM 133, 156. Heidegger's emphasis.
- 131 'Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch / über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt' (EM 112).
- 132 EM 112.
- 133 EM 119. Compare, however, the entirely reasonable objection of Michel Haar that 'the manifest content of the text is a simple enumeration of the activities of man'; *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 212.
- 134 EM 110. The phrase 'das zugehörige' is a later addition.
- 135 EM 114. The formulation is repeated a few pages later (EM 119).
- 136 Cf. GA 53: 74.
- 137 Haar, *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 209.
- 138 Will McNeill, 'Porosity,' op. cit., 187.
- 139 de Beistegui, *Heidegger and the Political*, op. cit., 141.
- 140 'Ungeheuer ist viel. Doch nichts / Ungeheuerer, als der Mensch' (GA 53: 85).
- 141 'Vieles gewaltige giebt's. Doch nichts / Ist gewaltiger, als der Mensch' (ibid.).
- 142 GA 53: 78.
- 143 Paul Friedländer, 'Πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ,' *Hermes* 69 (1934), 56–63. Since its publication, Friedländer's essay has claimed a canonical place in the scholarly literature on the chorus. My thanks to James Gilbert-Walsh for having confirmed that a copy of this essay

was indeed available in the Universitätsbibliothek in Freiburg during the time Heidegger was composing *Introduction to Metaphysics*. One can only be surprised that this essay has received no attention in the literature on Heidegger, particularly so given the generous attention that has recently been paid to Friedländer's various responses to Heidegger's essay 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth.' On the complex history of these responses and their counter-responses, see Bernasconi, *The Question of Language*, op. cit., 17–23.

144 Friedländer, 'Πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ,' 59.

145 Ibid., 58.

146 Ibid., 59; EM 121. In the translation actually used in the lecture course of 1935 Heidegger follows Friedländer's translation of Sophocles' reference to Hades as 'the singular hurdle [*einziges Hindernis*],' before modifying in 1942 to 'the singular onslaught [*einzigem Andrang*].'

147 Friedländer, 'Πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ,' op. cit., 59.

148 Ibid..

149 EM 114.

150 Ibid..

151 'Das Seinde im Ganzen ist ... das Überwältigende' (EM 115).

152 EM 115. At the risk of the occasionally cumbersome phrase, I will translate *Gewalt*, *Gewaltige*, *gewalttätig*, etc. as *force*, *forceful*, *actively forceful*, etc.. Such is to be preferred to the usual translation of *power* or *violence*. Compelling in this regard are the observations of Haar: 'Rendering *Gewalt* by violence gives the impression that the relation of being to man and man's response would be marked not by necessity but by *coups de force*, by violent convulsions'; *Heidegger et l'essence de l'homme*, op. cit., 211. If I

do not follow Haar in his choice of *power* (*puissance*), it is because of the emphasis that Heidegger will place on the notion of *Macht* later on in his interpretation.

153 ‘... *kann* es seine überwältigende Macht an sich halten’ (EM 115. Heidegger’s emphasis).

154 EM 115.

155 The locutions are those of Boeder, ‘The Distinction of Reason,’ op. cit., 103.

156 EM 115.

157 EM 123.

158 EM 116.

159 EM 123.

160 EM 127.

161 Respectively, ‘Überall hinausfahrend unterwegs erfahrungslos ohne Ausweg’ and ‘Hochüberragend die Stätte, verlustig der Stätte’ (EM 113, 116–7). The 1935 translation on both ‘salient points’ is identical to the one worked out in 1942.

162 GA 56/57: 74.

163 EM 117.

164 GA 53: 123.

165 EM 120.

166 Haar, *Heidegger et l’essence de l’homme*, op. cit., 211.

167 GA 5: 40; BW 178.

CHAPTER FOUR

The dicta of Fate: Benjamin and the Signs of Tragedy

It is here that the attitude of the Greeks and the real tragideans [*der eigentlichen Tragiker*] toward the world and toward fate remains unbending.¹

In a letter written to Hugo von Hofmanstahl in December 1925, Benjamin recalls the 'great interest' with which he had 'some time ago' been reading Ernst Cassirer's investigations into 'conceptual forms in mythic thinking.'² This reading, however, appears not to have left the young Benjamin unsatisfied and he is quick to air his suspicions as to the overall feasibility of these investigations, chiding Cassirer accordingly for attempting 'not merely to present mythic thought in concepts, i.e. Critically, but also to illuminate it in contrast with [*durch den Kontrast gegens*] what is conceptual.'³

Although the focus of his dissatisfaction goes largely unexplored in this letter, the emphasis that Benjamin places on the notions of *concept* and *contrast* is perhaps enough to suggest that the principle difficulty here is less with the overall *content* of Cassirer's account, than with the manner in which this 'phenomenology of mythic consciousness' undertakes to orchestrate its concerns. Its *method*. So when Cassirer maintains, for instance, that mythic thinking crystallises around the concretion of 'pure intuition,' thereby allowing for the application of the categories of modality,⁴ Benjamin would presumably object that such categories can, in fact, have no purchase

in the realm of myth. Equally, given his long-standing hostility to the neo-Kantian project discussed in the opening chapters, one might well suspect that the reference here to the notion of *Kritik* is intended to draw attention to what Benjamin would doubtless see as an unauthorised extension of the relation that obtains between transcendental consciousness and the critique of pure reason to the real of a critique of culture.

Need it be said that the situation being invoked here by Benjamin is broadly similar to the one that will be surveyed by Heidegger in an ambiguous note to §11 of *Being and Time*? Although quick to congratulate Cassirer on having made significant advances not merely in the field of ethnological research but also in the philosophical investigation of *das mythische Dasein*, Heidegger raises there a question as to whether the foundations upon which these advances are made have in fact been rendered 'sufficiently transparent.'⁵ The lines to which this note is appended indicate the substance of Heidegger's reserve on this point. Marking clearly the distinction between the ontic proximity of everydayness and the factual state of primitive existence (*Alltätlichkeit deckt sich nicht mit Primitivität*), he allows nonetheless that the latter *can* have some positive significance, *some* factual merit: 'primitive phenomena,' he suggests, 'are often far less concealed and far less complicated,' concluding: 'Primitive Dasein often speaks out of a more originary absorption in phenomena.'⁶ The problem here, then, is not with the notion of the primitive per se (which has, as Heidegger remarks, 'its *own* specific everydayness'), but with the failure of ethnology – and Cassirer's ethnology in particular – to ask as to the mode of being to

which it is addressed. Ethnological science, he declares accordingly, 'already presupposes an adequate analytic of Dasein.'⁷ Whatever significance Cassirer's work may have as regards the future of ethnological research, therefore, its currency is devalued somewhat once it is seen from the perspective of properly 'philosophical problematics.'⁸ At least as damaging to Cassirer's case, however, is Heidegger's evident disquiet on the question of whether 'the architectonic and general systematic content' of the *Critique of Pure Reason* are at all capable of 'affording a possible design for such a task.' A review essay, written and published in the year following *Being and Time*, formulates the question and the doubt more pointedly still. Following a summary exposition of Cassirer's text and its achievements as 'a guide to the positive sciences,' Heidegger again registers his concerns as to its 'foundations and methodological principles,' its 'proper *philosophical* content.'⁹ Quickly divining the underlying justification for Cassirer's view of myth as 'a creative principle of world formation'¹⁰ – essentially, Heidegger notes, 'an *appeal* to Kant' – he raises the question of whether the *neukantisch* interpretation upon which this appeal is made does in fact 'get to the heart of the transcendental problematic as an ontological one in its essential possibilities.'¹¹ Heidegger, needless to say, demurs, seeing in Cassirer's analysis a failure to engage in a sufficiently primordial manner with the realm of being toward which it is directed. 'The interpretation of the essence of myth as a possibility of human existence [*menschlichen Daseins*] remains,' he concludes, 'random and directionless so long as it cannot be grounded in a radical ontology of Dasein in light of the problem of being in general.'¹²

For Heidegger as for Benjamin, therefore, it remains a moot point as to whether mythic thought does indeed lend itself to the sort of conceptual analysis being proposed by Cassirer. In each case, moreover, the difficulty is not with 'the rich ethnological and religious historical material that grounds Cassirer's interpretation of myth,'¹³ but with the underlying claim to have presented its object 'in concepts. i.e. Critically,' and so to have illuminated it 'in contrast with what is conceptual.'¹⁴

The remarks of the letter to von Hofmansthal are by no means Benjamin's first and last words regarding the examination of mythic consciousness undertaken by his illustrious tutor, who makes a rather more significant appearance, if not by name then certainly by inference, several years before this, in a series of remarks that punctuate the central section of the long Goethe essay of 1924.¹⁵ In a manner that enjoys close analogy with the contemporaneous reflections on the origins of knowledge made by Cassirer in the second part of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*,¹⁶ Benjamin declares 'the meaning of the relation of myth to truth' to be one 'fundamental to all knowledge [für alle Erkenntnis fundamentale].'¹⁷ In sharp contrast to the influential account of Cassirer, however, who identifies the *Bedeutung* of the *Verhältnis* as a process of substitution – for the category of truth, he says, myth substitutes that of indiscriminate presence¹⁸ – and of transition – all categories of knowledge, we are told, 'have to pass through a mythic stage before receiving the titles and insignia that give them their logical value'¹⁹ – Benjamin's own reflections lead him to identify this meaning as one of unequivocal *exclusion*.

‘There is,’ he declare, ‘no truth, for there is no unambiguity, and so not even error in myth [*Es gibt keine Wahrheit, denn es gibt keine Eindeutigkeit, und also nicht einmal Irrtum im Mythos*].’²⁰ Declaring the distinction to be absolute, Benjamin takes the hammer of critique to the ungainly pedestal of the literature, deriding as wholly jejune the groundless (*unergründlich*) identification of myth and truth made by the Goethe commentaries of one Friedrich Gundolf.²¹ The relation, he avers, rather ought to be thought as one of *indifference (Indifferenz)*. In the structure of this indifference, a notion that Benjamin is quick to divest of any lingering sense of insouciance or passivity, characterising it instead as *annihilating (vernichtenden)*, myth comes to be withdrawn from any claim to truth. So much so, in fact, that the structure annihilates altogether the possibility of there being anything like a truth of myth. Of myth, writes Benjamin, evoking a distinction already familiar from chapter two, there can only be *knowledge (eine Erkenntnis)*; a knowledge, he implies parenthetically, that would be nothing other than knowledge of myth’s essential indifference to truth. In this regard, he concludes,

authentic art, authentic philosophy – as distinct from their inauthentic stage, the theurgic – begin [*hebt ... an*] in Greece with the departure of myth [*Ausgang des Mythos*], since neither one is any more nor any less based on [*auf ... beruht*] truth than the other.²²

In Benjamin's own projection for the essay, these lines come from a series of remarks entitled 'Myth and Truth.'²³ The title and the remarks themselves suggest a very simple schema: myth comes to an end; then, after the end of myth and in opposition to it, something else begins, something called truth. One could presume Benjamin's text to fill in this schema by drawing out the particular nature of the opposition of authentic art and philosophy to their inauthentic counterparts, and by offering one or two considerations as to the character of the new beginning then to be made, of the art and philosophy that might shelter truth from the 'most disastrous mode of thinking ... which bewilderingly bends back into myth that which has itself begun to grow out of it.'²⁴

Yet it is important that one *not* detach such a schema from these remarks on 'myth and truth,' *not* employ it as a framework for reading Benjamin's text. But why not? Are not these lines unequivocal in their formulation of this schema? Such would, it seems, be the view that has governed the repeated references that have been made to these remarks. By Winfried Menninghaus, for instance, who proposes that one read 'the opposition of reason and truth to myth' being constructed here by Benjamin as 'dependent upon a vertical schema of evaluation, a schema, furthermore, that entails 'a clear hierarchy between the two.'²⁵ Also by Rolf Tiedemann, who makes the suggestion that 'however much certain very ancient works of art still retain links with myth, they become works of art only to the extent that they constitute an opposition to the spirit of myth.'²⁶ Also by Reiner Rochlitz, who observes that 'art and philosophy arise only in opposition to myth.'²⁷

Undeniably, Benjamin holds that in order for art and philosophy to be authentic, *eigentlich*, they have to be grounded on truth. And holds also that it is this ground alone that distinguishes the from the art and philosophy that, grounded upon myth, he calls inauthentic, *uneigentlich*. It would be difficult to imagine a more classical statement of metaphysical opposition, of the opposition constitutive of metaphysics itself. As such, one can hardly avoid the suspicion that Benjamin's remarks here afford little more than one further expression of philosophy's founding and well-documented denigration of myth, of that denigration through which myth comes to be located and defined by way of a λόγος – a λόγος that defines itself even by way of a twisting free from the hold of myth – and so by way of a truth that would remain by definition closed to myth. The ensuing paragraphs of the essay, in which Benjamin relaunches his offensive against the attempts of Herr Gundolph to keep his 'wriggling sophisms' suspended above 'the ground ... of λόγος,' certainly do little to dispel this impression, concluding, as they do, with the unequivocal declaration that 'the question of truth can come to nothing in the face of every mythic thinking.'²⁸ So far as this declaration is concerned, indeed, one would be hard pressed to find a position seemingly any more at odds with that of Heidegger who maintains, meanwhile, that it is in fact in *myth* that one finds a mode of ἀληθεύειν more appropriate than any apophantic λόγος to the conflict of clearing and concealing that he identifies as the happening of truth. The 1942 lecture course *Parmenides* makes the point succinctly:

Mûθος is the Greek word for the word in which is said that which is to be said before all else. The essence of μûθος is itself determined on the basis of ἀλήθεια. It is μûθος that reveals, discloses and allows to be seen, that is, reveals, discloses, and allows to be seen that which shows itself in advance of everything as the presencing in all “presence.” Only where the essence of the word is grounded in ἀλήθεια, hence amongst the Greeks, only where the word is grounded in this way as great legend that supports all poetry and all thinking, hence amongst the Greeks, only where poetry and thinking ground the originary relation to the concealed, hence amongst the Greeks, only there is there that which bears the Greek name μûθος, namely “myth.”²⁹

There would seem, then, to be little to choose between the schema under which the account of myth is advanced by Benjamin in his *Goethedeutung* and the ‘spirit of modern rationalism’ which Heidegger elsewhere takes to have infected the claims of ‘our modern historians of philosophy.’ With his failure to have grasped that ‘μûθος and λόγος are not ... placed in opposition by philosophy as such’ but ‘become separated and opposed only at the point where neither μûθος nor λόγος are able to hold to its original essence,’ Benjamin’s demotion to the ranks of modern historian would seem to be assured.³⁰

Yet what makes his grasp of matters rather more insightful than this sort of schema would suggest is a sense that the relation of myth to truth (one of ‘annihilating

indifference,' remember) is such as to render immediately problematic any straightforward comparison *of* or transition *from* one to the other.

Recall once again: 'There is no truth ... *and so not even error*, in myth.' That there is no place for truth with respect to myth does not, then, mean that myth would harbour the opposite of truth: *Irrtum*, error or untruth. As the Schellingian notion of indifference is presumably intended to suggest, the relation of myth to truth is such as to admit of no principle of unity or identity that would be able to effect an hierarchical ordering of the two, implying there by the continuity of an order of founding between them. The point is that the ostensibly historical reflections of Benjamin's essay on Goethe have *philosophical* significance. The assertion that authentic art and authentic philosophy begin with the departure or close of myth amounts *also* to the assertion that this departure marks the entrance or opening of that upon which the possibility of such authenticity rests. The *Ausgang* of myth presages the *Anhebung* of authentic art and authentic philosophy only to the extent that it presages *also* the *Anhebung* of truth itself. What comes thus to be placed in question is the assumption that the saying of myth, a saying 'prior' to and so also 'indifferent' to the saying of truth, could be set in opposition to the saying of truth as, for instance, the saying of untruth. The annihilating indifference of myth with respect to the determination of truth being advanced here by Benjamin means that there can be no basis upon which the two might come to be contrasted in this way. Any such basis or principle would be precluded, so the analysis implies, not simply by myth's indifference to truth, but also by the peculiar and correlative character of truth itself. In the passage from myth to

truth a decisive transformation – one coincident with what Benjamin names here a ‘departure’ or ‘closure’ – has taken place. Between myth and truth there can be no common measure.

Yet although this lack of measure indicates quite emphatically the insufficiency of an attempted transition *from myth to truth*, it also invites us to ponder the nature of the transformation. In order for this to take place, however, it would first have to be possible for this *Ausgangspunkt* to show itself. There would need to be some common ground, some point of coincidence, upon which myth and truth could be brought together in their indifference. And although in this context Benjamin gives no indication as to what such a point might look like or how it might come to show itself, a telling hint in this direction is made elsewhere, in the section of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* entitled ‘Tragedy and Legend’:

The decisive Greek confrontation with the daimonic world order [*der griechische, die entscheidende Auseinandersetzung mit der dämonischen Weltordnung*] gives tragedy its historico-philosophical signature. The tragic relates to the daimonic as does paradox to ambiguity. In all the paradoxes of tragedy ... ambiguity, the hallmark of the daimons, is dying away [*ist ... im Absterben*].³¹

Tragedy has, then, the character of a *confrontation*. Regarded by Benjamin – as by Heidegger, for whom, recall, it is in tragedy that ‘the battle of the new gods against the

old is being fought [*wird gekämpft*]³² – as the locus of a particularly strife-filled configuration of specifically Greek existence, tragedy is seen as a statement of historical intent, therefore, one characterised as a decisive confrontation with that stage of historical existence in which ‘the essence is daimon,’ namely myth.³³ In this regard, tragedy comes to be written as the decisive response of the Greeks to the mythic order of the daimons, as a violent and transformative turning against myth. Tragedy would be the site upon which Greek man confronts the prevailing mythic realm of the daimons, submitting its overwhelming ambiguities to the discontinuity of tragic paradox. Yet if tragedy does remain for Benjamin a kind of *presentation* – it is the expression of something, it gives something to be seen – he is nevertheless at pains to insist that what is properly decisive is to be found less in what it presents (*das Dargestellte*) than in the presentation itself (*der Darstellung selbst*). In light of the opening declaration of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* discussed in chapter two, this insistence is perhaps not surprising,³⁴ and enjoys at least some analogy with Heidegger’s suggestion that tragedy does not *refer* to this battle (*redet es nicht über diesen Kampf*) but itself *inaugurates* and *enacts* the confrontation.³⁵ For the point here concerns how the Greek confrontation with myth is said, how tragedy exposes it or gives it to be seen. In presenting this confrontation, what tragedy exposes or gives to be seen is less a depiction of what took place in this confrontation than the confrontation *itself* in its historical happening. Tragedy is less the dramatic presentation of a confrontation that has already taken place than the ‘historico-philosophical’ enactment and accomplishment of the confrontation itself.

These are the sorts of claims that I shall want to explore in this chapter by way of a close reading of those sections of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* that deal most directly with tragedy. Before moving on to do so, it is important to note that however central such claims may be to Benjamin's case, a sensibly different picture emerges on consideration of the drafts and fragments from which his *Trägodienlehre* is worked up.

The epigraph to the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* is well-known: 'Sketched out 1916. Composed 1925.'³⁶ Each of the surviving sketches helps clarify the basic distinction that will be operative in the later work, namely 'the fundamental antithesis of mourning to tragedy,'³⁷ although often without the same taxonomic concerns. In the sketch entitled 'Mourning Play and Tragedy' dated 1917, for example, the historical dimension is not yet fully in place, Benjamin offering a brief disquisition on Shakespeare's *tragisches Maß*,³⁸ precisely the measure which, in 1925, will be evoked as the defining instance of the mourning play. Nevertheless, historical focus is not entirely lacking in this early sketch and a clear distinction is drawn between this largely technical measure and the one that dominates in 'the tragedy of the ancients,' expressed, moreover, in terms that anticipate Heidegger's reading, as 'an ever more violent [*gewaltigeres*] eruption of tragic powers [*Gewalten*].'³⁹ The opening lines of the same fragment suggest further points of contention as regards the later work. Characterising tragedy in terms of a construction of limits, Benjamin remarks: 'The very least that is to be expected is that the tragic indicates a boundary [*ein Grenze*] no less in the realm of art than in the field of history.'⁴⁰ Translating these remarks back

into the concerns of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, the historical significance of tragedy can now be seen to lie in the fact that it indicates the point at which one historical field – that of myth – passes over into another – that of truth.

This argument, however, does not appear in quite the same form in the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* itself; although far from calling the earlier assertions into question, Benjamin's formulations are now all the more assured, and the claims themselves altogether more emphatic. At least as important now as the historical *Grenzen* remarked by the preparatory study is tragedy's establishment of what – borrowing the phrase from Reiner Schürmann – I shall want to call an *epochal principle*.⁴¹ As the *Ausgangspunkt* at which one constellation of existence (amongst those called, according to the thread of Benjamin's epochal history: myth, tragedy, mourning play, modernity, ..., etc.) collapses into another, tragedy comes to be seen as inaugurating an altogether different framework for existence. As the principle of the prior constellation – here, that of myth and the theurgic – departs, tragedy comes to the fore as the most essential expression of the new constellation. Reading Benjamin in this way, I take it that in the 'decisive, Greek confrontation' with myth enacted and accomplished by Attic tragedy, a new epoch (*Epoche*) is posited (*gesetzt*). And if this epochal positing of tragedy can indeed be identified as the particular *Ausgangspunkt* located in the essay on the *Elective Affinities*, it is because it has the historical sense (*historischen ... Sinne*) of the end of myth (*Ende des Mythos*). Writing of the baroque mourning play, Benjamin observes accordingly that

with its conclusion, no epoch is posited in the way that, in both an historical and an individual sense, the death of the tragic hero so emphatically does. This individual sense, which also has the historical sense of the end of myth, is marked with the phrase that tragic life is 'the most exclusively present [*diesseitige*] of all lives. For this reason the limits of its life always melt into death ... For tragedy, death, the limit par excellence, is an ever immanent actuality that is inextricably bound up with each of its occurrences.'⁴²

In fact, so completely is Benjamin's interpretation of tragedy linked to its establishment of an epochal principle, so total his assimilation of tragedy to 'the philosophy of history,' that he does not refer, except very occasionally, and then only in a quite marginal or incidental way, to the tragedies of Aeschylus or Sophocles as examples or figurative translations of this principle; his concern is, rather, with tragedy "itself" as the essential articulation of that principle.

How can this be? How is it that Benjamin grants such a decisive importance to tragedy in the genealogical unfolding of epochs? What *is* tragedy if it is such as to trace out the boundaries of an epoch? If tragedy could indeed be shown to mark the epochal turning from myth to truth, would this not also entail its being shown to mark the origin of truth itself? And what is tragedy if it marks the origin of truth?

I

These questions begin to find an answer in the context of the meditation on the relation of tragedy to myth that opens the properly tragic sections of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*.

In those sections tragedy is described by Benjamin *not* in terms of fabrication or invention – notions declared to be entirely incompatible with the notion of tragic art – but in terms of a tendentious *transformation* (*Umformung*) of legend (*Sage*). It is here, he declares, that ‘the philosophical determination of tragedy has to begin.’⁴³ Through this transformation, the tragic poet turns myth in a new direction (*neuen Wendung*). Not, Benjamin is quick to add, in the anticipation or search for tragic situations. The properly tragic constellation of existence emerges not *in* but *through* this transformation. And even if, in the course of Benjamin’s examination of Greek tragedy, this transformative ground tends to slip from view, it nonetheless remains the case that the whole of that examination is ordered by an inquiry into the epochal significance of this turning. Just why this is so is suggested by a remarks of a fragment from 1923, which clearly belongs to the germinal investigations of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*. Referring there to Aristotle’s account of tragedy as the μίμησις of an event,⁴⁴ Benjamin states unequivocally that it is legend that provides tragedy with its substance:

This is why, in the μίμησις of the fundamental and – if one can say this – ceremonial event that is presented by the legend ..., with every individual

poetic configuration or variant on the fable, a moment of the most essential position-taking of every new poetry marks the material of the legend.⁴⁵

Legend, the primordial history (*Urgeschichte*) of a people, is the most original saying of myth. It is the saying in which the mythic and pre-historical epoch of the existence of a people (*die vorgeschichtliche Epoche ihres Daseins*) finds its expression. But if Benjamin underlies that it is legend which provides the raw material of tragedy, he does not do so in order that tragedy be seen as a dramatisation of that material: whether as *Umformung* or as *Ausgestaltung*, as transformation or configuration, tragedy is only mistakenly understood as legend in dramatic form. Legend provides the 'new poetry' of tragedy with its raw materials only to the extent that the latter is an essential taking of position with respect to that saying. By taking an essential position, tragedy turns legend in a new direction, re-positions it in respect of its saying of the existence of a people. Such a position, Benjamin stresses, is not taken aimlessly. It has a tendency. Not, however, a tendency in the sense of tending toward something; the tendency harboured by the tragic turning away of legend could only be described as a tending *away*. But away from what, precisely? Away from the saying of myth in legend. 'Through every minor and yet unpredictably profound interpretation of the material of legend,' Benjamin writes in the same fragment, 'tragedy brings about the destruction [*Abbruch*] of the mythic world order, and prophetically shakes it with inconspicuous words [*unscheinbaren Worten*].'⁴⁶

It would be a mistake, therefore, to want to understand tragedy as 'authentic' art, in the sense determined in the essay on the *Elective Affinities*. It does not, in the terms of that essay, 'rest' on truth. No less mistaken, however, would be the attempt to restore tragedy to the level of the inauthentic. Grounded on myth (*dem Mythos grundenden*) only to the extent that it works to bring about its destruction,⁴⁷ tragedy ought rather to be seen as opening onto the epochal possibility of authenticity itself. It is tragedy that opens onto the possibility of an indifference to myth and of the saying of truth. Such is, in Benjamin's eyes, the conception of Greek tragedy at its height.

It is certain, however, that this conception is one of tragedy alone? What guarantees that the epochal confrontation with myth can be confined to tragedy? Is tragedy the only site of this confrontation? Does tragedy alone describe unequivocally the epochal principle with respect to the departure of myth? Might not other voices need to be heard? Why not that of philosophy, for example? Might not philosophy also be said to posit an epoch from out of myth?

Despite their speculative character, such questions seem to find an answer in another of the preparatory sketches of 1916:

Socrates: this is the figure through which the old myths are annihilated [*annihiliert*] and remedied ... In the midst of the terrible struggle, the young philosophy seeks in Plato to assert itself.⁴⁸

At least in these remarks, then, it would seem that philosophy, just as much as tragedy, can assume the epochal status of the end of myth. And yet, without ever mentioning tragedy by name, these remarks contrive also to reinscribe tragedy, to reimpose the framework of tragedy upon this other scene, appearing also to suggest that this struggle of philosophy has itself to be understood as a tragic one. Benjamin writes: 'Socrates: that is the sacrifice of philosophy to the gods of myth, who demand human sacrifice.'⁴⁹

What, then, of this reinscription of tragedy? Is there for Benjamin a tragic aspect to philosophy? An aspect from which philosophy itself would come to be determined as tragic? Is there a tragedy of philosophy? A tragedy, perhaps, in which philosophy would also be written as that decisive confrontation with the daimonic order of myth? In a way that recalls, but also extends and deepens the claims of Dastur discussed in the previous chapter, the claims according to which it is tragedy that *prépare l'avènement de la philosophie*,⁵⁰ remember, might one not ask whether the first articulations of philosophy are not themselves tragic?

Germane in this regard are the charges levelled by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* against Euripides and the New Attic comedies of Menander and Philemon. So far as Nietzsche is concerned, it was at Euripides' hands that tragedy died its tragic death. It was Euripides who drove Dionysus from the stage and ensured that it was free to enjoy its posthumous and senile old age. The corpse of tragedy, Nietzsche says, is badly embalmed in the New Attic comedies, decaying there into ever more degenerate imitations.

Yet Nietzsche also says that it was *not* Euripides who fought against tragedy. He also says that tragedy died its death *not* at the hands of Euripides but at the hands of the daimonic power, one neither Apollinian nor Dionysian, that spoke through him, the new-born daimon of Socrates. For Nietzsche, Socrates is the new Orpheus who rises to join Euripides in his struggle against Dionysus. Did he not, so went an old Athenian rumour, assist Euripides in the writing of his plays? This, Nietzsche declares, 'is the new opposition: the Dionysian and the Socratic, and the artwork of Greek tragedy was run aground on this.'⁵¹

Much like Nietzsche, whose analyses are cited and assumed throughout the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, Benjamin's concern in his interpretation of tragedy is as much with the manner of its death as with its origins and life. 'Here,' he writes in the section entitled 'Tragic Death as Framework,' 'it is a matter of its past [*Vergangenheit*].'⁵² I have already called attention to the link to history operating in Benjamin's account of tragedy as a founding epochal principle. Now, however, the accent is entirely different, falling not on tragedy as a principle, but on the way in which that principle itself draws to a close.

If, according to Benjamin, it is a matter of speaking about tragedy in the past tense, then this is because of the privileged position it enjoys as regards a particular turning point (*Wendepunkt*) in the history of Greek spirit (*des Geschichte des griechischen Geistes selbst*), namely the death of Socrates.⁵³

The death of Socrates is narrated by Plato in the *Phaedo*. But this dialogue is not only concerned with the philosopher's death, and tells also of his turn away from

the errancy of his youthful inquiry into sensible nature and into beings (τά ὄντα), that is, away from the *περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία* of those who came before him. The dialogue tells also of Socrates turn to λόγοι and to an examination of the truth of beings as a whole (τῶν ὄντων τήν ἀλήθειαν).⁵⁴ The dialogue that tells of his death, that ‘turning point in the history of Greek spirit itself,’ tells also, therefore, of Socrates’ own turning within Greek spirit, of his turning against the prevailing Greek spirit of his age.

And yet, it is not to this that Benjamin directs us. It is not Socrates’ turning within Greek spirit that is decisive here. Instead, the decisive turning point is to be found at the end of Plato’s account of Socrates’ counter-turning *ἱστορία*. It is to be found in the philosopher’s death.

Why? Why is it on his death that Greek spirit turns? Benjamin is unequivocal: it does so because Socrates’ death *also* marks the death of tragedy.

Like Nietzsche before him, Benjamin sets Socrates in opposition to tragedy, finding in him the very basis for its destruction. In Plato, Benjamin says, Socrates’ *Gespräche* have become the epilogue of tragedy itself. They have become so because at every point Socrates – this ‘figure’ of Plato, according to one of the notes of 1916 already cited, who marks the turning from the paradoxes of tragedy to the transparency of science – stands opposed to each of the elements of tragedy. This opposition ends with Socratism standing triumphant over the bleeding corpse of tragedy; it is Socrates alone who holds the satyric stage.

At the very heart of this turning in Greek spirit, then, directing it and constituting it from within, the death of tragedy is bound together with that of

Socrates. This is a strange, almost monstrous coupling: the death of tragedy is tied in spirit to that of its assassin, the two locked together in a fatal embrace from which neither can emerge alive. And this is why, ultimately, Socrates' death cannot be a tragic one. Certain, Benjamin concedes, it does in many respects *appear* to be tragic. But however strong such a resemblance may be, in his final conversation, which itself turns on the question of death, Socrates sets Greek spirit turning, sets in place the conditions by virtue of which his death cannot be a tragic one:

How remote [the 'ideal' of Socrates' death] is from that of the tragic hero Plato could not have indicated more significantly than he did by letting immortality be the subject of his master's last conversation. If, in the *Apology*, the death of Socrates could still have appeared to be tragic [*tragisch ... erscheinen können*], then the Pythagorean mood of the *Phaedo* shows his death to be free of all tragic ties.⁵⁵

And yet, in a crucial departure from Nietzsche, whose text he carefully follows and cites throughout this section, Benjamin refuses to see the death of tragedy as a tragic one. To Benjamin's mind, the death of tragedy is a far meaner affair than Nietzsche could have possibly imagined. Tragedy dies with Socrates because his death is a cruel parody of the tragedy itself: 'And here, as so often, the parody of a form shows its end.'

Once again, the analogy with the remarks of Dastur is far-reaching:

It is by no means irrelevant that philosophy, as a determined mode of thinking, is tied intimately, and in its very birth, to the event of a particular death, that of Socrates as recounted by Plato in the *Phaedo*. The invention of philosophy coincides thus with that of a discourse on death other than that proposed by mythology or theology, something that immediately implies a homology between death and philosophy, which would be the horizon of the whole Platonic discourse on death.⁵⁶

What has to be taken into account accordingly, therefore, is not simply the opposition between Socratic science and tragic art, however destructively parodic such an opposition may be, but also the impossibility of simply submitting tragedy to the privilege of the philosophical question: τί ἐστὶ ...;⁵⁷ The position here bears analogy, then, with the epochal difference of myth to truth. A philosophical account of tragedy, Benjamin implies, one that would contribute to the 'science' of 'pure aesthetics,'⁵⁸ will everywhere find itself checked by tragedy, everywhere run up against points beyond which the phenomenon itself necessarily resists the essential demands made by that question. 'The legends of Socrates,' writes Benjamin, 'are an exhaustive secularisation of heroic legend by the betrayal of its daimonic paradoxes to understanding.'⁵⁹ Whereas tragedy was determined in terms of a transformative repositioning of legend, philosophy, on the other hand, is determined as an exhaustion and secularisation of the tragic redirection already underway, an exhaustion that rests upon a betrayal of what Benjamin takes to be the outstanding epochal mark of tragedy, namely paradox.

In the eyes of Socrates – his *eye*, Nietzsche will have said⁶⁰ – tragedy cannot but appear irrational, a monstrous affront to the clear insight of the philosopher, marred throughout by paradox, And it is these that he will everywhere have betrayed.

With his death, for example. With his own death which, in the *Phaedo*, he will ultimately rid of its terrors, submitting it to the language of philosophy – to that ‘dazzling unfolding of discourse and consciousness that characterises the Socratic λόγος.’ But this, it ought to be said, is more than just an example. For according to Benjamin, it is only here, in the *Phaedo*, that the impossibility of a tragic Socrates is fully revealed (‘... in the *Apology*,’ remember, ‘the death of Socrates could *still* have appeared to be tragic ...’). According to Benjamin, it is only here, with the parodic death of Socrates, that tragedy actually dies. It is only here that Greek spirit turns. Why? Why here and nowhere else? Why not in the war waged on tragic art by Socratic science?⁶¹ Why is the turning in Greek spirit only disclosed with the philosopher’s death? Any answer to this question is conspicuously lacking from either of the passages in which Benjamin addresses himself to Socrates, and, in several places, he appears to have in fact forgotten his initial precision as regards the philosopher’s death, finding the ancient turn from tragedy to science already engaged by Socratism itself. In lieu of any answer from Benjamin, then, let me suggest the following: It is with Socrates’ death that the ancient turn from tragedy is fully disclosed because it is only here that the philosopher is able to turn on the extreme limit of tragedy itself. This is, of course, to say more about tragedy than about its death: it is to say that tragedy turns on death, that it is in tragic death alone that the properly tragic

dimension of tragedy is disclosed. And what, then, of tragic death? What of tragic death as the very ground of tragedy?

II

'What tendency is hidden in the tragic? Why does the tragic hero die?'⁶² Recalling thus his remarks on the *tendenziöse Umformung* of tragic poetry, these are the questions with which Benjamin begins his reading of the historical signature of tragedy.

He answers: Tragic poetry rests on (*ruht auf*) the idea of sacrifice.⁶³ It is in the sacrificial death of the tragic hero that the properly tragic dimension of such poetry is made clear. It is in sacrifice that tragedy comes to be gathered into its most extreme possibility (*äusserste Möglichkeit*). Yet the gathering that is at issue here is *not* a gathering of each of the possibilities released by tragedy into an actuality; that is, *not* a gathering in the sense of a teleology. Benjamin declares: sacrifice shelters not a 'guaranteed finality' but its 'absence.'⁶⁴ Indeed, were it not for the problematic insistence upon actuality, upon *Wirklichkeit*, Benjamin's citation from Lukács would be an admirable expression of the point: 'For tragedy, death – the limit par excellence – is an ever immanent actuality that is inextricably bound up with each of its occurrences.'⁶⁵

One could, then, outline this schema in the following way: Sacrifice constitutes the end of tragedy only insofar as, from the outset, tragedy takes its lead from this end that shows itself as such, comes fully into force, only at the very end of the drama. It is

not a matter of it having been sighted or seen in advance, for it will only come to be seen in retrospect. The point, then, is that sacrifice needs to be seen less as the dramatic terminus of the tragedy than as the very form under which it unfolds. The following passage makes the point succinctly:

In terms of its object – the hero – tragic sacrifice is distinct from every other, being at once a first and a final sacrifice. A final sacrifice in the sense of the expiatory sacrifice to the gods who preside over an ancient right; a first sacrifice in the sense of the representative deed in which new contents [*neue Inhalte*] of the life of a people announce themselves ... Tragic death has this double meaning.⁶⁶

The double meaning of tragic death is far from straightforward. The first meaning refers to sacrifice as an act of atonement to the gods who preside over an ancient order, as an expiatory gesture that meets the demands made by that order. The second refers to sacrifice as the act of standing-in-for, what Benjamin here calls *der stellvertretended Handlung*, in which a new, as yet unborn community is gathered together and begins to take shape through the sacrificial object of the hero.

Now in one sense this is certainly unproblematic. Sacrifice is the site upon which some object, here the hero, is offered to the gods as a stand-in or scapegoat for the community in order to secure the rights of this latter. It is the site of the crushing antinomy that binds together man and god. In another sense, however, it is profoundly

problematic. For Benjamin will not be content merely to allow these two meanings to sit comfortably alongside one another, and will want also to turn the second meaning back *against* the first. The death of the hero is oriented thus *not only* (*nicht nur*) toward the first meaning of sacrifice outlined above, but above all (*vorab*) toward undermining it. If the sacrifice of the hero gathers the tragedy into the exhaustion of its possibilities, then it also points beyond these; not, however, in the sense of pointing toward other possibilities hitherto unremarked, but in the sense of a profound disruption which, by exhaustively gathering together such possibilities, also opens onto another space beyond them. Thus, in strict observance of the ancient statutes, tragic sacrifice points *also* to the establishment of new ones (*alter Satzung willfahrend, neue stiftet*). An expiatory sacrifice according to the letter (*nach dem Buchstaben*) of the ancient law, tragic death also tears the pages from that book in the spirit (*im Geist*) of the laws of the new community, consigning them – along with the hero – to ashes in the rites of the funeral pyre.

The point here, then, is that tragic sacrifice is the site of a transformation (*Verwandlung*) from the order of the gods to that of the life of the community. But how is this transformation to be understood? In the context of a long and carefully composed semantic chain, the *neue Inhalte* of the community that are announced by the sacrifice indicate, no doubt, that it has to be understood as a transformation in support (*Halt*).⁶⁷ It is a transformation from an existence supported (*halten*) by the deadly obligations to the gods into one supported by the rules and measures of the new community.

But what of the hero? What is his position in all this? If it is his death that constitutes the site of the transformation of this *Halt*, what supports *his* existence? Benjamin's response is unequivocal: Nothing. Belonging neither to the decaying order of the ancient Olympians nor to that of the community *in statu nascendi*, the hero marks, rather, the fissure between the two, the point of the violent passing over from one to the other. Suspended between the two, his position as a sacrifice cannot be a response to the demand of an external law. His death, demanded neither by the cruelty of the gods nor by the community to which it give shape, is not imposed from without but, says Benjamin, takes place as something 'that is intimate, personal, and inherent to him.' A self-sacrifice, then, in which the hero incalculably squanders himself, gives himself up to a self-imposed law: Would this not be a sacrifice in the most proper sense of the term? An absolute sacrifice? A sacrifice with no conceivable hope of return? In fact, the hero is seen here to be placed in a precarious position, the position of what one might venture to call a tragic autonomy.⁶⁸ In this imposition of autonomy, the hero resolutely takes up the tragedy of an existence (*tragische Dasein*) in which 'his life unfolds [*rollt ... ab*], indeed, from [*aus*] death, which is not its end [*sein Ende*] but its form [*seine Form*].'⁶⁹

The schema being advanced here is, of course, identical to the one that we saw to structure the drama itself. Little wonder, then, that Benjamin insists that, 'in his spiritual-physical existence, the hero *is* [*ist*] the framework of the tragic system.'⁷⁰ And little wonder, also, that it is to this determination above all – the determination of death not as the termination of a life byt, intrinsic to and operative throughout an

existence now revealed as tragic, as the sole form in which the existence of the hero can unfold, a form that comes fully into force only in and as his being positioned as sacrifice – that Benjamin's remarks here are addressed.

The *Origin of the German Mourning Play* sketches this unfolding of tragic existence in terms of what Benjamin calls the pre-given framework (*virgegebenen Rahmen*) of the hero's life. With this gift – which, given in advance, guides the unfolding of the hero's existence – the question of fate is raised. Nowhere is Benjamin's interpretation of tragedy more accurately defined than by this question. For even if fate is not tragic *a priori*, as Benjamin stresses in more than one place, there is no tragic existence that does not unfold under its sign. And yet, the peculiar fate of this gift has so little to do with causality that it could only be understood in relation to freedom. It is, to be sure, the very opposite of freedom, but this opposition only takes place on a common ground of a joint dissociation from anything like a subjection of fate and freedom to causality. By articulating the site of tragedy by way of the link between fate and freedom, Benjamin does not say that tragic art is the presentation of freedom at its most extreme limit, its retrospective recognition and unconditional affirmation in the acceptance of tragic fate. He says, rather, that it is tragedy alone that allows us to think the most peculiar fate of all – the *fatum* of *libertas*.⁷¹

III

Tragic fate unfolds toward (*rollt ... zu*) death. This unfolding toward death, in which the properly tragic *fatum* is seen thus to turn on a reference to finitude, does not befall the tragic hero as if from elsewhere but comes, rather, from the precarious nature of his own position, namely, that of autonomy. Such is, therefore, the paradox of tragic fate: it is *also* tragic freedom. But what sort of freedom is this? It is the freedom for the hero to give himself that which is most properly his own. He gives himself that which, from the beginning, is his own. And yet, in giving himself to himself – the ordeal of autonomy – what the hero in fact gives is nothing less than that which is given in advance of him. This is the central paradox of tragic existence. It is the very structure of fate in an existence now disclosed as tragic that means that Benjamin is able to write of the hero not simply that his ‘fate unfolds toward death,’ but that ‘his life unfolds, indeed, from death, which is not its end but its form.’

Up until this point at least, Benjamin’s account of fate appears in many ways to align itself along a very traditional axis, translating the principle of autonomy as presented by the critical philosophy, the ‘circularity’ of freedom and the moral law as described by Kant,⁷² into a language of *Schicksal* taken from the conjunction and reconciliation of freedom and necessity projected by German Idealism. In this regard, recall that the fate of the tragic hero was broadly stated as follows: ‘his life unfolds, indeed, from death, which is not its end but its form.’ With the next sentence, however, a quite different inflection is given to this account: ‘tragic existence finds its task only because it is governed from within [*in ihm selbst gesetzt sind*] by the limits of linguistic

and bodily life given to it from the beginning.⁷³ However familiar the autonomy that accompanies the tragic hero's embracing of the finitude exposed by his fate may be, the limit of *language* that is given alongside it is less so. It is difficult to divine exactly what link there could be between fate and language. All the more so, indeed, when one sees that Benjamin will even want to understand fate precisely by way of just such a link. How?

The answer, much like fate itself, turns on the question of necessity (*Notwendigkeit*). The necessity built into the framework of the hero's existence is, says Benjamin, neither a magical nor a causal one. It is, rather, the speechless (*sprachlose*) necessity of defiance:

It would melt away like the snow before the south wind under the breath of the word. But the only word that can breathe is unknown [*aber etnes ungekannte allein*]. Heroic defiance contains this unknown word locked within itself⁷⁴

Benjamin calls this silence ὑβρις, the hero's refusal to justify himself in the face of the gods. In this regard, it marks the outstanding site of that decisive *Auseinandersetzung* which, as was noted at the outset, gives the specifically historical character of tragedy. Outstanding not only because this silence elevates the hero of the tragedy above the central figures of other dramatic forms, but also because it constitutes the proper articulation of what is genuinely tragic (*echter Tragik*) in the drama. Still, it would be a mistake to think that tragic silence can be reduced to a failure or default of

language. Tragic silence, Benjamin insists, is not the negation of language. It is neither impossibility, i.e. the impossibility of speaking, nor possibility, i.e. the possibility of not speaking. Rather, it belongs essentially to language. It is, even, language in its most ordinary and proper sense, as Benjamin suggests in certain notes of 1916–17.⁷⁵ For in order to keep silent, the hero must have something to say, something to communicate. ‘Heroic defiance contains this unknown word locked within itself.’ The question that needs to be asked, then, is how the ‘wordless sphere’ of the hero is able to bear in this way the entire burden of the exposition.⁷⁶

And yet, it is not as if the conjunction of language and fate can be a simple one, and a certain turning commences as soon as the question of language comes into play a turning into excess. In contrast to the austerity and irony of Socrates’ wilful silence in the face of death, a silence that only reflects back onto that ‘dazzling unfolding of discourse and consciousness which characterises the Socratic λόγος’ – the philosopher, says Benjamin, is struck dumb only by falling silence (*verstummt er wo er schweigt*) – in contrast to this, then, the properly tragic hero pays with his life for the right to be silent. However, in the silence that accompanies and that alone affords an expression of his sacrificial death, the very meaning of the tragic conflict is inverted (*denn seine Bedeutung schlägt um*). What had initially appeared as the judgement of the gods upon the hero is now, through the hero’s silence, changed into a trial of the gods themselves, a trial in which the hero himself appears as chief witness and, ‘against the will of the Gods, displays “the demi-God’s honour.”⁷⁷ Taking care not to cut short this analogy between the formal structure of the Athenian law courts and that of tragedy

itself,⁷⁸ Benjamin notes that it is the word that takes centre stage in both. Athenian law and tragic drama both turn around the λόγος. What is of principle interest here, however, is not the predominantly linguistic character of their set exchanges but the point at which the word finds itself able to break free of such constraints, an excess that is in each case unanswerable:

The important and characteristic feature of Athenian law [*Recht*] is the Dionysian outburst, namely, the fact that the drunken, ecstatic word is able to breach [*durchbrechen*] the regular encircling of the ἀγών, that a higher justice can emerge more out of the persuasiveness of living discourse [*lebendigen Rede*] than from the trial of conflicting groups struggling either by armed combat or by bounded forms of language [*gebundenen Wortformen*]. The ordeal is breached by the λόγος in freedom [*das Ordal wird durch den λόγος in Freiheit durchbrochen*] ... Tragedy is grasped in this picture of the trial proceedings.⁷⁹

Λόγος, then, does not refer here to the various λόγοι – legal or dramatic, for example – of Attic Greece, but to this specific moment of excess in which the word leaps over the boundaries by which such λόγοι are themselves defined. It is a matter of a word that is excessive, of a word that, by exceeding the limits that would otherwise circumscribe it, releases itself into freedom. This word is called ecstatic. But Dionysian? Presumably this, from *The Birth of Tragedy*: ‘And now let us think of how into this world built on shining and moderation and artificially dammed up, there sounded, in ever more

alluring and magical ways, the ecstatic tone of the Dionysian festival.⁸⁰ And yet, it is not as if Nietzsche did not also write that, 'under the magic of the Dionysian ... singing and dancing, man expresses himself as a member of a higher community: he has forgotten how to walk and speak [*das Sprechen verlernt*].'⁸¹ It is not as if the ecstatic truth of the Dionysian word is not *also* a forgetting or an un-learning of language, as if the boundless tone of Dionysian ecstasy does not also flee the ground of language. The point is worth insisting upon because if Benjamin *does* call this proper to tragedy Dionysian, then he will *also* say that it is the gift of language itself, the word from whose echo coming generations *learn* their language (*erlernen ihre Sprache*).⁸²

At this point, then, everything gives us to think that tragedy is in some way bound up with the origin of language.⁸³ It is certainly possible that this claim will come as no surprise. For if it is in tragedy that the destruction of myth as the ground of existence takes place, this destruction is also an opening onto another ground, one that is perhaps already captured by language, that is, by λόγος. As has already been suggested, however, it is by no means certain that the remarks from the essay on the *Elective Affinities* or those from the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* can so easily be aligned along such an axis. Equally, it is not as if tragedy can be simply assimilated to that 'authentic' stage of art, in the sense of an art grounded on truth. If one is to follow the thesis according to which tragedy is the origin of language, then it will have to be in a way that does not force an immediate path from μῦθος to λόγος.

How is it, then, that language finds its origin in tragedy? Here is how Benjamin sketches this gift of language, describing the excess of the tragic word:

The further behind the tragic word leaves the situation – which can no longer be called tragic when it catches back up – the more surely has the hero escaped the ancient statutes to which, when at the end they overtake him, he flings only the mute shadow [*den stummen Schatten*] of his essence, flings his own self as a sacrifice, whilst his soul is sheltered [*hinabergerettet*] in the word of a distant community. In the countenance of the suffering hero the community learns reverent gratitude [*lernt denn ehfurchtigen Dank*] for the word with which his death endowed it [*sie begabte*], a word which, with every new direction in which the poet turns legend, lights up another place as a new gift [*an anderer Stelle als erneuertes Geschenk aufleuchtet*]. Far more than tragic pathos, tragic silence becomes the treasure [or shelter: *Halt*] of an experience of the sublime of linguistic expression.⁸⁴

Language begins in the response of the community – its learning thanks or gratitude to what is given to it by the death of the hero, a death that is now to be thought ecstatically and not metaphysically. From out of this sacrifice, language happens.⁸⁵ But what is it that is given by the hero's death? Assuredly not a life. What is given, rather, is the excessive power of the word itself, of the ecstatic word that sounds out beyond itself. Through this excessive power of the word – one that no longer belongs to the faultless imposition of the divine word that it brings to a close, and does not yet belong with those easily spoken *Sitten* (morals, customs, etc.) that constitute the

communicable contents of the community onto which this death opens – the gift of another place or another position (*anderer Stelle*) is revealed. What place? What position? Recall again the initial context of Benjamin's meditation, that context in which tragedy was called an essential taking of position (*wesentlicher Stellungnahme*) with respect to the saying of the existence of a people in legend. The place or the position which, according to the passage being considered here, is given by the gift of language is that of a place or position other than the one grounded or supported by myth.

It is in the silence of the hero, then, that everything is gathered. It is in tragic silence that the ecstatic movement from out of myth finds its outstanding expression. This schema, prepared for from the very beginning of Benjamin's remarks on tragedy in the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, defines tragedy in terms of language. It is the very structure of the origin of language in an existence now disclosed as tragic. Out of the 'monstrous emptiness [*ungeheurer Leere*]' of the tragic hero, writes Benjamin, 'the distant, new commands of the gods sound out [*tönt ... wider*] and from this echo [*Echo*] coming generations learn their language.'⁸⁶

IV

Following these remarks Benjamin launches on a remarkable series of assertions, citing entirely unchanged a passage from his own essay of 1921, 'Fate and Character.' The passage – which, both in the context of the essay and in the denuded form in which it is placed into the *Habilitationsschrift*, already circles around the concept of

fate – draws together the entire *Trägodienlehre* advanced thus far in the course of a long description of precisely that confrontation with the daimonic marked at the outset.

Let me try, then, as briefly as possible, to outline the principle context in which this confrontation is described.

Although treating of concerns largely identical to those of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, the tone of this earlier examination of fate is significantly different. Here, it is less a matter of fate per se than of how fate can be disclosed. So whereas according to a famous remark by Leibniz, *fatum* is itself originally *dictum*,⁸⁷ for Benjamin it is only in the reading of *dicta* that fate can be disclosed. As much as the clairvoyant or the gypsy woman, the central figures of Benjamin's essay, fate is a matter of *reading*.⁸⁸ But whereas the folds of Leibniz's tropology require there to be a specific *dictum* that can give itself as fated and so impose itself *as* fate, namely the *decretum Dei*, for Benjamin, as one might surmise from the foregoing remarks on language, the relation of fate to its *dicta* cannot be understood causally. If fate can never be grasped in itself but only through the traces or signs of its passing, then these are not actually fated to appear. Indeed, nowhere is the difficulty of reading fate made more acute than with the divine word. Not only does this word bind fate to a law of causality; it also points toward the 'error' by which fate finds itself locked into a religious context: 'to mention a typical case [*Fall*], fate-imposed misfortune is looked upon as the response [*Antwort*] of God or the gods to a religious offence.'⁸⁹ The error here lies not in the connection of fate to the divine word, but in its comprehension as a

fall. For guilt and misfortune do not merely provide the outstanding *dicta* of fate, they are also its *only* ones. One cannot, so Benjamin avers, be fated to innocence or to fortune, for example. Indeed, so little can fortune be thought of as a *dictum* of fate that Benjamin presents it instead as the hall-mark of divinity and so of a thorough-going removal from fate itself. Fortune, he writes, 'is what releases the fortunate man from the chains of the Fates and from the web of his own fate. Not for nothing does Hölderlin call the blissful gods "fateless".'⁹⁰

Now once the sole *dicta* of fate are seen to be those of guilt and misfortune, 'for insofar as something is fate it is misfortune and guilt,' then fate can no longer be thought in terms of the context of religion, 'no matter how much the misunderstood concept of guilt seems to refer to it.'⁹¹ The only balance capable of taking the measure of this fate, Benjamin calls right (*Recht*). Only on this balance can misfortune and guilt become measures of the person (*Maßen der Person*). It is in right alone that a fateful sort of existence (*schicksalhafte Art des Daseins*), one unreservedly described by such *dicta*, can come to be measured.⁹² The question that needs to be asked, therefore, is this: What is right? Benjamin calls it a 'remnant of the daimonic level of human existence in which rules of law determined not only the relationships of men, but also their relationships with the gods.'⁹³ It is due only to an historical confusion of right with justice that such statutes still continue to hold sway long after 'victory over the daimons.'

But where is this victory? Where is it won? Where is it that the mythic *Rechtssatzungen* of the daimons are first broken? Benjamin's answer is unequivocal, and it is, of course, tragedy.

Here, now, is the central passage of the essay, the one cited at length in the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*:

It was not in right but in tragedy that the head of the genius raises itself for the first time from out of the fog of guilt, for in tragedy daimonic fate comes to be broken [*durchbrochen*]. But not by the supercession of the pagan incalculable interconnection [*Verkettung*] of guilt and atonement by the purity of the man who has expiated his sins, who is reconciled with the pure God. Rather, in tragedy pagan man recognises himself [*bessint sich*] to be better than his God, but this knowledge leaves him without speech, it remains dumb. Without confessing itself, it secretly gathers its forces. There is no question of the "moral world order" being restored, but the moral man, still mute, still immature [*noch stumm, noch unmündig*] – as such is he called the hero – elevates himself in the shaking of that agonised world. The paradox of the birth of the genius in moral speechlessness, moral infantility, is the sublime of tragedy.⁹⁴

In connection with this passage, several points need to be considered.

The first point concerns the character of the realm from out of which the hero raises himself. Benjamin describes it here as daimonic (*dämonisch*).⁹⁵ The passage indicates that the issue here is not that of theological demonism, but that of fate and its entanglements, of the mythic order of right that is breached in tragedy. The remark from the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* cited right at the outset of this chapter is even more expressive of this breach: 'The tragic relates to the daimonic as paradox to ambiguity. In all the paradoxes of tragedy ... ambiguity, the hallmark of the daimons, is dying away.'⁹⁶ In terms of the essence of truth remarked at the very outset, paradox, like ambiguity, remains altogether inconceivable. And yet, unlike the ambiguity of the daimonic, which points nowhere – and this “nowhere” to which it points is indeed itself and its mythic entanglements – the paradox of tragedy points beyond itself, to its possible resolution – its *answer*, if you like – at the very least. One could say, orienting the result to the opening onto the epochal possibility of authenticity broached by tragedy: in tragedy, authenticity is already in play and, already, from the outset, in play with the properly tragic itself.

The passage refers, second, to 'the moral man, still mute, still immature – as such is he called a hero.' What man? The man characterised several sentences earlier as 'pagan man,' the man who, in tragedy, becomes aware that he exceeds the measures laid down by the gods; but the man, also, who in the sentence that immediately follows this one, is called 'genius.' What sets the epochal possibility of tragedy in motion is just this awareness on the part of the genius, an awareness which, Benjamin says, is articulated in his speechlessness. Other passages are still more direct. For example.

one from the same context, in which Benjamin states that ‘the struggle against the daimonism of right is bound to the word of the genius.’⁹⁷ In light of the foregoing remarks, moreover, it is difficult not to see this figure of the genius as that of the tragic hero. But there is another point that is essential for grasping the force of this schema. The tragic, Benjamin says here, *sich ... erhob*, raises himself. The point is that the same term is used much earlier, in one of the fragments of 1916, in order to develop the account of the relation of tragedy to language ‘in tragedy the eternal rigidity of the spoken word *sich erhebt ...*’⁹⁸ In the hero’s raising himself, Benjamin continues in the passage being considered here, ‘daimonic fate comes to be broken [*durchbrochen*].’ Again, an identical point can be made: it is precisely this formulation that is used in the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* to express the movement of the ecstatic word that ‘is able to break through [*durchbrechen*] the ἀγών ... The ordeal is broken [*durchbrochen*] by the λόγος in freedom.’⁹⁹ The point here, then, is one of an absolute convergence, one that everywhere borders on identity: the convergence of the hero with language with the opening onto freedom.

Third point: ‘The paradox of the birth of the genius in moral speechlessness, moral infantility, is the sublime of tragedy.’ The genius of tragedy is still mute (*noch stumm*), still immature (*noch unmündig*). He is, literally, still mouthless. *In-fans*, he does not speak. This silence is not something that befalls him. He is mute *in statu nascendi*. And yet, the point here is not simply that this figure is silent. Rather, to take as typical the Kantian formulation, whose principle moments Benjamin retains, it is that the genius, trading in *inventio*, can serve as a tutelary figure, one, that is,

whose achievements 'serve as a model not for imitation [*Nachmachung*] but for following [*Nachahmung*].'¹⁰⁰ The point would be that the tragic hero inaugurates a new model, one which, not bound by the rules of mythic fate, exceeds them in the direction of authenticity and truth.

Final point: the passage begins and ends with reference to fate. Indeed, each of the foregoing points have been oriented toward the ways in which fate comes to be broken in the fated unfolding of the existence of the tragic hero. Here, Benjamin is once again not so very far from a position of Nietzsche's, a position most concisely expressed in a note of 1870–1, according to which 'the most universal form of tragic *fate* is the victorious defeat.'¹⁰¹ A fragment of 1923 by Benjamin speaks in this regard of *seighaften Tode*, the victorious death of the tragic hero.¹⁰² 'In ancient tragedy,' writes Benjamin quite late on in the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, 'every order of fate denies itself [*sich versagenden*].'¹⁰³ It is as if the unspoken word that accompanies the hero to his fatal end has, in some way, forced fate to testify against itself, speaking out against itself in a way that cannot but call it into question from within.

Notes

- ¹ Benjamin's response to Asja Lacis' question concerning his failed Habilitationsschrift: Why do you bother with dead literature? (cited GS I 3: 879).
- ² Letter to Hugo von Hofmansthal of December 1925. *Briefe* II: 106. The reference is to Cassirer's essay of 1922, 'Die Begriffsform im mytischen Denken.'
- ³ *Briefe* II: 106.
- ⁴ See Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen: II. Das mytische Denken* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgemeinschaft, 1953), 96.
- ⁵ SZ 51 note.
- ⁶ SZ 51. On the notion of 'the primitive' in Heidegger, see James F. Ward, *Heidegger's Political Thinking* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 132.
- ⁷ SZ 51.
- ⁸ SZ 51 note. Suggests Heidegger, therefore: a more originary outset (*ursprünglicheren Ansatzes*) is needed here. The remarks to which the note is appended are, of course, those under discussion at the start of the previous chapter.
- ⁹ KPM 264. Heidegger's emphasis. The review, reprinted in the *Gesamtausgabe* edition of *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (KPM 255–70), appeared in *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 5:21 (1928), 1000–12. Apart from the points touched upon here, this text is noteworthy for the startled response it produced from Karl Jaspers as regards the implicit self-interpretation advanced there by Heidegger: 'I was surprised,' remarks Jaspers in a letter of 8 July 1928, 'to see that what I recently suggested might come to be a potential misunderstanding of your philosophy was done by yourself in the "application" of Existenzphilosophie to "primitive" peoples'; *Martin Heidegger – Karl Jaspers Briefwechsel*, op. cit., 102.

- 10 Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen: II*, op. cit., 19.
- 11 KPM 265. Heidegger's emphasis. The point here will, of course, be reiterated in the celebrated *Disputation* with Cassirer at Davos the following year.
- 12 KPM 265.
- 13 KPM 263.
- 14 Jean-Luc Nancy's recent assertion that 'nous n'avons plus rien à faire avec le mythe,' that 'nous n'avons pas du rapport au mythe' and his ensuing call for an 'interruption du mythe' that would 'disjoint le mythe de lui-même,' might well be read as a profitable extension of these sorts of arguments; *La Communauté désœuvrée* (Paris: Bourgois, 1990), 117, 132, 154.
- 15 The same essay, coincidentally enough, that Cassirer himself had refused to publish on account of 'certain technical difficulties'; see Benjamin's letter to Christian Florens Rang of 2 April 1923 (*Briefe II*: 432).
- 16 *Not*, of course, the essay under scrutiny in the letter to von Hofmansthal, but the work under review by Heidegger.
- 17 GS I 1: 162; SW I: 325. On the extent of Benjamin's considerations of myth, see the important overview provided by Winfried Menninghaus in 'Science des seuils: La théorie du mythe chez Walter Benjamin' in Wismann (ed.), *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, op. cit., 529–57, which summarises the more detailed arguments of the same author's *Schwellenkunde. Walter Benjamins Passage des Mythos* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986). As Menninghaus demonstrates, the category of myth will remain central to Benjamin, whose work he recasts accordingly as 'a varied and multiform science of thresholds' (*ibid.*, 543). Witness, for instance, 'the mythological topology of Paris' (GS V: 139) and the 'passage myths' (GS V: 516) which, as late as 1937, can legitimately be

taken as the guiding concern of the *Arcades Project*. See also Helmut Pfotenhauer, 'Les "Passages" de Benjamin et la tradition de l'anthropologie' in Wismann (ed.), *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, op. cit., 827–38, esp. 829–32. To Menninghaus and Pfotenhauer's careful examinations, one might contrast the clumsy efforts of Adorno who aims to present Benjamin's thinking as structured by the 'opposition of myth to anti-myth'; cf. *Über Walter Benjamin*, op. cit., 18. The best recent accounts of these problems concern Benjamin's juvenile essay on Hölderlin; see, in particular, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, 'Il faut,' *Modern Language Notes* 107 (1992), 421–40, and David E. Wellbery, 'Benjamin's Theory of the Lyric' in Rainer Nägele (ed.), *Benjamin's Ground* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 39–59.

¹⁸ Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen: II*, op. cit., 51. Rather significant in view of the previous chapter is the contention of Heidegger's review that this presence, through which 'mythical Dasein is ... overwhelmed [*überwältig ist*] ... means the overpowering [*Übermächtigkeit*]' (KPM 257).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 85. Significantly, given Benjamin's remarks in the essay on 'Fate and Character,' one of Cassirer's prime examples here is that of the movement from astrology to astronomy. As Alexis Philonenko has rightly pointed out, Cassirer does not 'intend to trace clear lines of evolution leading from the mythic to knowledge' (*L'École de Marbourg*, op. cit., 170). Notwithstanding, the 'veritable tangle' (*ibid.*) of Cassirer's characterisation of the relation of the mythic stage to that of truth and knowledge seems merely to confirm Benjamin's divergence from his most illustrious and influential contemporary.

²⁰ GS I 1: 162; SW I: 326. Given the importance that the notion of ambiguity (*Zweideutigkeit*) will assume in the course of Benjamin's account of the relation of

tragedy to myth, it is worth recalling that as late as the unfinished *Arcades Work* of the 1930s, he will speak, admittedly with rather more enthusiasm on both counts, of the ‘ambiguity’ inherent to myth (GS V: 55).

21 In a letter to Scholem of 27 November 1921, Benjamin speaks of his ‘legally binding condemnation and execution’ of Gundolph (*Briefe* II: 128), the pseudonym of Friedrich Gundelfinger, at the time one of Germany’s foremost literary critics and the author of an influential work on the father of *Wilhelm Meister*. The central point of contention here is the manner in which Gundolph, according to Benjamin, ‘attempts to present Goethe’s life as a mythic one’ (GS I 1: 158; SW I: 323). Compare, however, the altogether more positive note on which Benjamin concludes his short essay on Goethe of 1928, written for *Die literarische Welt* (GS II 2: 739).

22 GS I 1: 162; SW I: 326. The point here recalls that made by Heidegger in the Frankfurt lectures on art (GA 5: 64–5; BW 201), cited at the end of chapter 1.

23 GS I 3: 836.

24 GS I 1: 163; SW I: 326.

25 Menninghaus, ‘Science des seuils,’ op. cit., 533, 534.

26 Tiedemann, *Studien zur Philosophie Walter Benjamins*, op. cit., 93.

27 Rochlitz, *Le Désenchantement de l’art: La Philosophie de Walter Benjamin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 83. In this light, it is worth noting that Rochlitz, in his own right a scrupulous and elegant translator of Benjamin, can draw no other conclusion, given his willingness to rely on the rather inaccurate rendition of these lines by Maurice de Gondillac in *Mythe et violence* (Paris: Dönel, 1971), 210: ‘Pour que s’instaure la vérité il faut d’abord qu’on sache ce qu’est mythe, qu’on connaisse, comme réalité indifférent au vrai et destructrice du vrai. C’est ainsi que les Grecs ont dû éliminer le mythe pour

naquissent – après une phrase théurgique, qui n'était art et philosophie qu'au sens impropre de ces mots – l'art véritable et la véritable philosophie, car l'un et l'autre se fondent sur la vérité, exactement au même degré, ni plus ni moins.'

28 GS I 1: 163; SW I: 327.

29 GA 54: 89.

30 *WhD* 5; 10. In a context not entirely different to the one under consideration here, this is precisely the role allocated to Benjamin by Françoise Proust, 'Drame et tragédie,' op. cit., 105.

31 GS I 1: 288; *Or* 106.

32 GA 5: 29; BW 169.

33 GS I 1: 157; SW I: 322. I will come back to this appellation in due course.

34 And not surprising, too, in light of Schelling's assertion that 'everything in myth is to be understood in the way that it is said [*wie sie es ausspricht*], not as if something else is being thought, something else being said'; *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie oder Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie* in Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke* II 1: 195. Such is, as Heidegger remarks in the review cited earlier, Schelling's *Grundeinsicht*, an insight that proves to be no less central to Cassirer than to Benjamin (KPM 255).

35 GA 5: 29; BW 169.

36 GS I 1: 203; *Or* 25. For the sketches, see 'The Fortune of Ancient Man' (GS II 1: 126–9), 'Socrates' (GS II 1: 129–32), 'On the Middle Ages' (GS II 1: 132–3), 'Mourning Play and Tragedy' (GS II 1: 133–7), 'The Meaning of Language in Mourning Play and Tragedy' (GS II 1: 137–40), and 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Men' (GS II 1: 140–57; SW I: 62–74). See also the vast material collected by the editors of the *Gesammelte Schriften* (GS I 3: 868–981). On these fragmentary sketches, see the commentaries of

Tiedemann, *Studien zur Philosophie Walter Benjamins*, op. cit., 94–7, and Caygill, *The Colour of Experience*, op. cit., 52–3. See also the latter's essay 'Benjamin, Heidegger, and the Destruction of Tradition,' op. cit., esp. 9–12.

37 Letter to Schoen of 30 March 1918 (*Briefe* II: 443).

38 Cf. GS II 1: 135. Compare Tiedemann, *Studien zur Philosophie Walter Benjamins*, op. cit., 96, who makes much of this putative difference.

39 GS II 1: 135.

40 GS II 1: 133.

41 For Schürmann's own definition, see *Le Principe d'anarchie*, op. cit., 42: 'I view an epoch as determined by the code that is each time unique – not a convention but ... an epochal law of regional application ... The accession of a code to the level of principle opens a field of intelligibility. It establishes a first, a reference. This code regulates the "establishment" of an epochal order in the sense of setting it in place ... The establishment of a principle is its institution at the beginning of an epoch for which it will serve as the ultimate point of reference and come thus to dominate it.'

42 GS I 1: 314; *Or* 135. The ellipsis is Benjamin's own, the citation coming from Georg Lukács collection of 1911, *Die Seele und die Formen*.

43 GS I 1: 285; *Or* 106. It is important to note that, with respect to the *Tendenz* of this transformation, Benjamin speaks *not* of *Muthos* but of *die Sage*. He uses the term twice in this context. First, in a preparatory study of 1923, then in the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* itself. In part, the earlier use of the term belongs to the quotation from Adolf Graf von Schack with which Benjamin opens that study (GS II 1: 246–7), just as the later use reflects the citation of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf (cf. GS I 1: 284–5; *Or* 106). Whatever the provenance of the term, however, it still needs to be asked: does

Benjamin's "definition" of *Sage* as the primordial history or *Urgeschichte* of a people serve also to define his use of the term *Muthos*? Not at all. Admittedly, the following remark on the German Idealist interpretation of tragedy might, on the surface, appear to muddy the waters somewhat: 'Freedom in its interpretation [of tragedy in respect of history] will always fall short of the accuracy of the tendentious tragic renewal of myth' (GS I 1: 299; *Or* 120). Such a remark aside, although even here matters are not, I do not think, so cut and dried, I want simply to draw attention to the fact that, for Benjamin, tragedy is quite obviously a matter of the transformation *not* of *Muthos*, as *every single one* of his commentators has stated, but of *Sage* as the primordial saying of mythic existence. Compare the emblematic remarks of Rochlitz: 'tragedy is founded upon myth'; *Le Désenchantement de l'art*, op. cit., 107. In this regard, at least, Benjamin's interpretation bears close analogy with the one advanced by Heidegger in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' where, recall, tragedy is described as 'what transforms the sayings of a people [*verwandelt des Sagen des Volkes*]' (GA 5: 29; BW 169). Holger Schmidt makes the same point with respect to Heidegger, pointing out that 'the Heideggerian *Sage* is not to be translated by "fable" nor, more importantly, by "myth",' suggesting, rather, that 'it translates the Greek word λόγος'; 'Heidegger: L'Oeuvre d'art comme péripétie de la pensée' in Eliane Escoubas (ed.), *Phénoménologie et esthétique* (La Versanne: encre marine, 1998), 61–77 (67). Although the remarks cited above from *What is Thinking?* might negate Schmidt's observation, those from the lecture course that treats of Parmenides indicate that it is well taken.

⁴⁴ See *Poetics* 1449b 24–5: 'Tragedy is, then, the mimesis of elevated action [μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας].' Benjamin paraphrases: '... die Tragödie als die besonders geartete μίμησις eines Geschehens erklärt' (GS II 1: 248).

⁴⁵ GS II 1: 248–9.

46 GS II 1: 249.

47 Compare the remarks of note 42, above.

48 GS II 1: 130.

49 GS II 1: 130. I will come back to the notion of sacrifice in due course.

50 Dastur, *La mort*, op. cit., 17

51 Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie in Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich: Walter de Gruyter, Deutsche Tachenbuch, 1988) I: 83; translated by Walter Kaufmann as *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Random House, 1967), 82. See also the lecture of 1 February 1880, 'Sokrates und die Tragödie' (*Werke* I: 533–49, esp. 540–6), an early draft of §§11–15 of *The Birth of Tragedy*. It is worth recalling that without in any way calling into question the emphasis on Euripides, this lecture suggests quite explicitly that the movement that leads from Aeschylean tragedy to the death of tragic art is already underway in Sophocles: 'the wholly gradual decline begins with Sophocles,' Nietzsche writes, 'until finally Euripides, with his conscious reaction against Aeschylean tragedy, brings about the end with impetuous haste' (*Werke* I: 549). Benjamin, who could not have known of this lecture at the time of writing the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, Nietzsche's text not having been released for publication until 1927, the year after Benjamin had finished his Habilitationsschrift, makes precisely the same point, remarking that *Antigone's* illumination by 'an all too rational concept of duty' means that the death of Sophocles' heroine can now only *appear* (*erscheinen*) tragic (GS I 1: 293; *Or* 114).

52 GS I 1: 292; *Or* 113.

53 GS I 1: 292; *Or* 113. It is difficult not to think that Benjamin is drawing here on Kierkegaard's presentation of the ironic life-view of Socrates, 'a magnificent pause in the

course of history,' as an equally ironic turning point in "world history," a turning whose necessary outcome is the advent of modernity; *The Concept of Irony*, translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 198ff.. The other point of reference is, of course, the *Wendepunkt* remarked by Nietzsche himself in *The Birth of Tragedy*: 'Socrates ... a turning point and whirlpool of so-called world history' (*Werke* I: 100), a turning already announced at the very outset of the book in the Foreword to Richard Wagner (cf. *Werke* I: 24). This does not mark an end to Benjamin's borrowings from Nietzsche – whose work, he notes at the outset of his remarks on tragedy, 'founds' his own researches – and one could doubtless read each of the sections of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* that are concerned with tragedy as a dialogue with Nietzsche. In the following remarks, I am indebted to two excellent studies: Michel Haar, *Nietzsche et la métaphysique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), esp. 221–71, and John Sallis, *Crossings Nietzsche and the Space of Tragedy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991).

54 *Phaedo* 99d–e. The edition consulted here is *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, edited and translated by Harold North-Fowler (Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

55 GS I 1: 293; *Or* 114. The reference to the 'ideal' of the dying Socrates is, of course, indebted to Nietzsche (cf. *Werke* I: 91).

56 Dastur, *La mort*, op. cit., 20.

57 John Sallis makes more or less the same point with respect to Nietzsche; see *Crossings*, op. cit., 82–3.

58 The term comes from the opening remarks of Benjamin's early essay on Hölderlin where it refers explicitly to the traditional account of tragedy (GS II 1: 105; SW I: 18).

59 GS I 1: 292; *Or* 113.

60 The final reference to Nietzsche, again from *The Birth of Tragedy*: 'Let us think of the Cyclops eye of Socrates fixed on tragedy ... let us think of this eye to which was denied the pleasure of peering into the Dionysian abysses' (*Werke* I: 92; *The Birth of Tragedy*, op. cit., 89). It is again helpful to refer to the remarks of Reiner Schürmann's *Des Hégémonies brisées*, op. cit., 602, in which attention is drawn to the possibility of translating this Socratic monopia onto the structure of tragedy itself. For Schürmann, tragedy 'traces ... a path of sight [*un parcours des yeux*]. The hero sees the laws in conflict. Then – this is the moment of tragic denial – he blinds himself to one of them, keeping his gaze fixed on the other ... Then follows a catastrophe that opens his eyes: the moment of tragic truth ... From denial to recognition, the blinding is transmuted. Hubristic sightlessness [*la cécité hubristique*] is changed into visionary blindness [*aveuglement visionnaire*].'

61 GS I 1: 297; *Or* 118.

62 GS I 1: 285; *Or* 106.

63 GS I 1: 285; *Or* 106. Compare the remarks on 'authentic art' said in the essay on Goethe to 'rest upon truth [*auf Wahrheit beruht*].' There is, of course, nothing particularly novel about a turn to sacrifice with respect to tragedy, and Benjamin's account certainly calls to mind that tradition of questioning that has always sought to place the θυμήλη centre stage, a tradition evoked even by the word itself: what is tragedy if not the song of the goat, ὁ τράγος, the animal of immemorial sacrifice? With regard to this tradition, one thinks most immediately of Hegel's article on natural law, in which ethical life is presented as the point at which the tragic comes to be articulated in absolute terms, but just as much of the invitation, spoken by an ancient Athenian, with which Nietzsche

brings *The Birth of Tragedy* to a close: “Now follow me to the tragedy and sacrifice with me in the temple of both gods” (*Werke* I: 156; *The Birth of Tragedy* 144). Relevant, also, would be Hölderlin, who will not cease to insist upon Empedocles’ position as ‘ein Opfer seiner Zeit’; *Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., 578. More recently, Derrida has tried to show how ‘a radical thought of sacrifice’ is operative in Heidegger’s investigations into tragedy in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*; cf. ‘L’Oreille de Heidegger: Philopolémologie (*Geschlecht* IV)’ in *Politiques de l’amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 414–15.

64 GS I 1: 286; *Or* 107.

65 GS I 1: 314; *Or* 135.

66 GS I 1: 285; *Or* 106–7.

67 Thus, in addition to the new contents (*neue Inhalte*) announced by the sacrifice (GS I 1: 285; *Or* 107), Benjamin refers also to the unarticulated content of the hero’s achievement (*der Gehalt der Heroenwerke*) (GS I 1: 287; *Or* 108), the coming word contained (*erhält*) by his defiance (GS I 1: 229; *Or* 115), and the composure (*Haltung*) of Greek man in the face of fate (GS I 3: 879). At each of the disjunctive moments that structure Benjamin’s reading of tragedy, it is a matter of such support.

68 The reference here is to Kant and, specifically, to the *Groundlaying for the Metaphysics of Morals* of 1785 in which the Critical philosopher describes philosophy, now placed in a precarious position (*einen mißlichen Standpunkt*) as the guardian or self-supporter of its own laws (*als Selbhalterin ihrer Gesetze*) (Ak IV: 425). Doubtless Benjamin is *not* thinking of Kant on this point, yet it is uncertain to my mind whether he can here sustain his insistence upon the ‘independence of the tragic from the ethos [*die Unabhängigkeit des Tragischen vom Ethos*]’ (GS I 1: 280; *Or* 102). The transformation marked by the hero, which might be expressed in the largely Hegelian term employed in

a later section of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, from religious community (*religiöser Gemeinschaft*) to ethical community (*sittlicher Gesellschaft*) (GS I 1: 300; *Or* 121), seems to me to allow one to read tragedy not merely as the origin of the saying of truth, but equally as the origin of ethics. That Benjamin's central objection to the "ethical" interpretation of tragedy is to its imposition of a moral framework onto properly tragic action does not, to my mind, preclude the possibility of such a reading. Nor, moreover, does it preclude the possibility of a further engagement with the claims of Heidegger discussed in the previous chapter.

69 GS I 1: 293; *Or* 1114.

70 GS I 1: 294; *Or* 115. Emphasis mine.

71 Strangely enough, this is precisely the conclusion drawn by Philonenko in his account of the investigations undertaken by Cassirer discussed at the outset. Remarking the 'long process' that leads from mythic existence (what Cassirer terms the *community* of myth) to self-consciousness, 'from the human to man, from fatal existence to reasonable existence,' Philonenko evokes the figure of tragedy as what 'makes man a being who acts from himself and is responsible for his actions.' On the basis of tragedy, he concludes, 'un nouveau monde est né: celui de la liberté et du savoir'; *L'École de Marbourg*, op. cit., 179.

72 See, for example, the remarks of the *Groundlaying* Ak IV: 450ff..

73 GS I 1: 293; *Or* 114.

74 GS I 1: 294; *Or* 115.

75 Thus in a note of 1916: 'Not only does the tragic exist exclusively in the realm of dramatic human discourse [*Rede*]; it is even the only form originally suitable [*ursprünglich eignet*] to human discursive exchange. Which is to say that there is nothing tragic outside of discursive exchange between men and that there is no other form of

discursive exchange than the tragic' (GS II 1: 137). Tragedy, Benjamin suggests in this note, is that form of language, namely discourse, in which language comes itself originally to be disclosed as such; that is, disclosed not as the site of some supposed original meaning of language that has come to be lost, but as 'the word as the pure carrier [*reiner Träger*] of its meaning ... the pure word.' Benjamin calls this pure appearance (*reinen Erscheinung*) of language tragic, adding: 'In tragedy, the word and the tragic arise simultaneously' (GS II 1: 138). See also the remarks of note 83, below.

76 GS I 3: 839.

77 GS I 1: 288; *Or* 109.

78 In point of fact, the analogy belongs not to Benjamin, but to Christian Florens Rang, with whom he conducted a lengthy correspondence during the gestation of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*. Throughout, Benjamin relies heavily on Rang's knowledge of the historical origins of tragedy, noting at one point that 'for the question of Greek theatre I am and remain dependent upon you alone' (*Briefe* II: 430). In response to Benjamin's inquiry of early January 1924 as to whether there may be 'any historical or merely factual connection between the dianoetic forms of Sophocles and Euripides and Attic legal proceedings' (*ibid.*), Rang writes at length, drawing his friend's attention to the properly dialogic structure of the antique trial and noting that what is characteristic of Attic law is that 'the drunken, ecstatic word is allowed to break through the regular encircling of the *agon*' (GS I 3: 894), a reply that Benjamin copied unchanged into the body of his work (cf. GS I 1: 295; *Or* 116). All the material is collected by the editors of the *Gesammelte Schriften* (GS I 3: 887–95), and examined at length in Carrie L. Asman, 'Theatre and *Agon* / *Agon* and Theatre: Walter Benjamin and Florens Christian Rang,' *Modern Language Notes* 107 (1992), 606–624). The analogy between the verbal formality

of the dramatic conflict – most evident in the staged conflict of the Euripidean drama but present also, and used to slightly different effect, in Sophocles' *Electra*, for example, and the central exchange between Clytemnestra and Electra herself – to the set speeches of the Athenian courts is expressed by Benjamin as follows: 'Athletic contests, law and tragedy constitute the great agonal trilogy of Greek life ... and they are bound together under the sign of the contract' between the hero and the Gods (GS I 1: 294–5; *Or* 115).

79 GS I 1: 295; *Or* 116.

80 Nietzsche, *Werke* I: 40–1; *The Birth of Tragedy*, op. cit., 46.

81 *Ibid.*, 29–30; *ibid.*, 37.

82 GS I 1: 293; *Or* 114.

83 In the essay 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Men,' another of the preliminary studies for the *Origin of the German Mourning Play*, Benjamin draws attention to what he calls the 'tragic relation that prevails between the languages of speaking man' (GS II 1: 156; SW I: 73). In light of this remark and the reading of the *Origin of the German Mourning Play* being undertaken here, one could legitimately inquire as to the relation of the gift of language disclosed by tragic fate, which, as I shall argue, directs Benjamin's reading of tragedy, and the origin of (the) language (of men) remarked in this fragment, an origin that comes about on the basis of the most peculiar fate of all: '... thou shalt surely die' (*Genesis* 2:17). It seems to me that one could read these two texts together in such a way that would allow for a more expansive reading of the emergence of language from out of properly tragic guilt.

84 GS I 1: 288; *Or* 109.

85 Again the proximity to Heidegger is marked. *Not*, however, with the lectures on 1934–5 on Hölderlin, in which the *sacrifice of death*, as the giving of that which is most properly

my own, would be the founding gesture of an 'ursprüngliche Gemeinschaft' (GA 39: 72–3). Not with this, then, but with the remarks of the Afterword to 'What is Metaphysics?' in which, recall, sacrifice is named as the concealed thanks (*ver vorgorgene Dank*) of an essential thinking (*das wesentliche Denken*), a thinking that Heidegger refers to language itself, saying in a marginal note that this 'speechless power of thanking in sacrifice' is 'the preliminary leap of the human word [*ist der Ur-sprung des menschlichen Wortes*]' (GA 9: 310 and note).

⁸⁶ GS I 1: 293; *Or* 114.

⁸⁷ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, translated by Leroy E. Loemker (Boston: Reidel, 1976), 122. For an account of this remark, see Peter Fenves, 'Antonomasia: Leibniz and the Baroque,' *Modern Language Notes* 106 (April 1990), 432–52.

⁸⁸ Surprisingly, the implicit engagement with Kant that runs throughout 'Fate and Character' seems to have gone unnoticed in the huge literature on this essay. This engagement extends beyond the simple exchange of figures in which Benjamin indulges – here, the gypsy woman who appears in 'The Conflict of the Faculties' in order to denote the possibility of what Kant terms *wahrsagende Geschichtserzählung*, history *a priori* (AK VII: 79) – and embraces the entire analysis of fate. So, in his insistence that reading the *dicta* of fate is 'no easy matter,' Benjamin implicitly aligns himself with the disquiet remarked by Kant at the outset of the Analytic of Concepts: along with the concept of fortune (also evoked in 'Fate and Character'), the concept of fate is, so Kant declares, one of those 'concepts that has been usurped' and that now 'circulate with almost universal indulgence, but which are from time to time challenged by the question *quid juris*.' Since no one 'can adduce clear legal ground [*Rechtsgrund*] for the use of such terms, either

from reason or from experience,' they occasion 'not a little embarrassment' (*KrV* A 84–5; B 117). Yet however questionable the concept of fate may be, it is not as if it could itself ever be usurped. Indeed, its very questionability provides the starting point not only for Benjamin's text but for the entire critical enterprise itself which, as we know, takes its leave from the 'peculiar fate [*das besondere Schicksal*]' that human reason is burdened by questions that it can neither dismiss nor answer (A vii). It is in response to such embarrassment and confusion that Benjamin seeks to provide a 'genuine' concept of fate, one that 'takes in fate in tragedy as well as in the foresights of the fortune teller' (GS II 1: 176; SW I: 204). Indeed, the ensuing assertion of *Recht* as the measure of fate begs the question of whether one could not say that Benjamin has therefore provided fate with the *Rechtsgrund* it was so desperately lacking in Kant. For a discussion of the concept of fate in Kant's text, see Peter Fenves, *A Peculiar Fate*, op. cit.. The best account of Benjamin's essay is that of Andrew Benjamin, 'Shoah, Remembrance, and the Abeyance of Fate: Walter Benjamin's "Fate and Character"' in *Present Hope*, op. cit., 56–74. See, in particular, his remarks concerning the 'tear in the continuity of fate' that constitutes 'the place' of tragedy (ibid., 63).

⁸⁹ GS II 1: 173; SW I: 203.

⁹⁰ GS II 1: 173; SW I: 203.

⁹¹ GS II 1: 174; SW I: 203.

⁹² GS II 1: 178; SW I: 207.

⁹³ GS II 1: 174; SW I: 203. Equally, in 'Toward a Critique of Violence' of the following year, where Benjamin will draw attention to the mythic – if not properly daimonic – foundations of right (GS II 1: 197; SW I: 248–52).

⁹⁴ GS II 1: 174–5; SW I: 203. Cited GS I 1: 288–9; *Or* 109–10.

- 95 Benjamin's most extensive remarks on the damonic are to be found in the first part of his essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities* (GS I 1: 146–54; SW I: 314–20).
- 96 GS I 1: 288; *Or* 109.
- 97 GS I 1: 298; *Or* 118.
- 98 GS II 1: 140.
- 99 GS I 1: 295; *Or* 1116.
- 100 Kant, *Critique of Judgement* §47 (Ak V: 309).
- 101 Nietzsche, *Werke* VIII: 192.
- 102 GS II 1: 267.
- 103 GS I 1: 312; *Or* 133.

CONCLUSION

In one of the Bremen lectures of 1950, later published as 'The Turning,' Heidegger addresses himself once again to the question most emphatically raised in the 'Letter on "Humanism",' the question of ethics. As I have tried to show, this question can hardly be said to be absent from any part of Heidegger's thinking: from the *Sein-können* and its extension into a *Sollen*, a having to be, that, in the analyses of *Being and Time*, was to have provided a way of thinking that through which Dasein attains what is most properly its own, to the meditation on dwelling that, continuing and extending the thoroughgoing identity of existence and dwelling established in *Being and Time* ("I am" means ... I dwell in, I abide in the presence of, remember), comprised the central concern of the 'Letter on "Humanism".' This time, however, Heidegger's strategy appears rather different. The question of ethics is raised in its traditional form, Heidegger seeming to pose for himself the second of those questions with which Kant had sought in the Canon to provide a prospectus for the future development of the critical philosophy: *Was sollen wir tun?* As one might expect, however, this question finds no real answer in this essay, if by answer we understand a set of rules or directives that would guide such "doing," Heidegger deferring this question in favour of another, 'more immediate and urgent' question: *Wie müssen wir denken?* And yet, is this simply a deferral? Is Heidegger choosing merely to avoid the question? I think not. In directing himself away from the question of "doing" – which, in the language of the opening lines of the 'Letter on "Humanism"' asks as to action or

doing only in terms of 'the causing of an effect' and not in its more essential sense of 'accomplishment'² – Heidegger is doing rather more than simply avoiding the issue. Why? One answer, Heidegger's own, is that thinking *itself* is doing or action in the most proper sense of the term,

taking a hand in ... if, by taking a hand in we mean to lend a hand to the essence, the coming to presence of being. And this means: to prepare ... for the coming to presence of being that dwells in the midst of beings [*inmitten des Seinden*] into which being brings itself and its essence to words in language.'

The interpretation that I have proposed suggests that the Marburg lecture courses, and *Being and Time* in particular, can and should be submitted to a reading directed by the remarks of the 'Letter on "Humanism".' If the centrepiece of Heidegger's entire enterprise is indeed that of 'laying bare [*die Freilegung*] the *a priori* that must be made visible if the question "what is man?" is to be discussed philosophically,' then this will be the most faithful way of reading Heidegger. For what, as Heidegger himself asks in a lecture delivered in 1951 to the Darmstadt Symposium on *Man and Space*, does it mean to be if not to dwell?³ At the end of that lecture Heidegger offers another formulation: 'Mortals dwell insofar as they initiate their own essence – their being capable of death as death – into the use and practice of this capacity, so that there may be a good death.'⁴ It is only by dwelling properly that man becomes capable of death as death. In the words of one of Heidegger's most insightful commentators:

This is the sole τέλος of dwelling. No *ars moriendi* will gain anything from this thought. And certainly no “ethical science.” Yet Heidegger is obligated to attend to the ἦθος itself.’

Unless, of course, that *ars* be a tragic one.

By contrast, Benjamin’s thinking, although sharing the identical coordinates as that of Heidegger, cannot be said to be a tragic one. That much, at least on its own terms, is clear. Under the hypothesis of an epochal closure, ‘tragedy’ has had its day, namely as the era in which Greek man rises up against mythic fate and, breaking its daimonic rules, inaugurates a new *fatum*, the *fatum* of *libertas*. Under this hypothesis, tragedy emerges and dies away with and as the epochal close of myth, its grip loosened, its law irretrievably dissolved, dying away, finally, at the hands of the philosopher. And yet, might one not wonder whether it is at all possible to sustain the distinction that Benjamin demands? Whether one can, in other words, exclude tragedy from philosophy only by passing all too quickly over the trace of the tragic that would lie at its origin? The question would be, then, one of a certain excess, a certain echo of the tragic held in reserve from the very beginning, and so also of a certain echoing of this reserve which philosophy will not have been able to silence. In the course of exposing the turn from tragic art to Socratic science, Benjamin himself turns, from a language of tension and of excess to one of opposition and conflict. fi not out and out war: ‘the conflict [*den Kampf*] which this rationalism had declared on art is decided

against tragedy ...' If, in the wake of tragedy's destruction of myth, it is this decision that realises the epochal possibility of authenticity broached by tragedy, what is one to make of the manner in which this remark continues: '... against tragedy with a superiority that in the end hurt the challenger more than the challenged?' What of this wound? Has it healed? Might one not speak of philosophy and tragedy in the same terms in which Benjamin speaks of beauty and myth: beauty, he writes in a still unpublished note, 'presupposes the latent action of myth?' If, according to Benjamin, it is philosophy that is left to hold the stage once the tragedy is over, might not some tragic word still echo through its satyric verse? If it is from the echoes that sound out from the 'monstrous emptiness' of the tragic hero that 'coming generations learn their language,' might this word not be language itself?

And might it not then be that, as Peter Szondi once remarked, 'the history of the philosophy of tragedy is not itself free from the tragic'?¹⁰

Notes

- 1 TK 40; QT 40. Cf. Kant., *KrV* A 804–5; B 832–3.
- 2 GA 9: 313.
- 3 TK 40; QT 40.
- 4 SZ 45.
- 5 Cf. VA 147; BW 349.
- 6 VA 152; BW 362.
- 7 Boeder, 'Sterbliche welchen Toden?' *op. cit.*, 45; *Seditions*, *op. cit.*, 167.
- 8 GS I 1: 218; *Or* 128.
- 9 Cited in Menninghaus, 'Science des seuils: La théorie du mythe chez Walter Benjamin' in Wismann (ed.), *Walter Benjamin et Paris*, *op. cit.*, 557.
- 10 Peter Szondi, *Schriften*, ed. Jean Bollack et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991) I: 200.

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The following list contains only those works referred to in this thesis. For a bibliography of the literature on Heidegger, see Hans-Martin Saas, *Heidegger-Bibliographie* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1968) and *Materialien zur Heidegger-Bibliographie 1917–1972* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1975). See, too, the more recent researches of David Kolb, 'Heidegger at 100,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52 (1991). For Benjamin, see Momme Broderson et. al., *Walter Benjamin: Eine kommentierte Bibliographie* (Morsum, 1996).

I. Works by Martin Heidegger

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