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Martin Heidegger
HÖLDERLIN'S
HYMN
"THE ISTER"

Translated by

William McNeill and Julia Davis

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TRANSLATORS' FOREWORD

The present translation makes available for the first time in English the text of Martin Heidegger's third and last major lecture course on the work of the German poet and philosopher Friedrich Hölderlin. Delivered in the summer semester of 1942 at the University of Freiburg, this course was first published in 1984 as volume 53 of the Heidegger *Gesamtausgabe*. Heidegger had previously offered two other major lecture courses on Hölderlin: a 1934/35 course on Hölderlin's hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine" (published as volume 39 of the *Gesamtausgabe*), and a course on the hymn "Remembrance" ("*Andenken*"), delivered in 1941/42 and available as *Gesamtausgabe* volume 52. The third course, which proved to be the last (although Heidegger had originally planned a more comprehensive interpretation),^[1] was devoted to the hymn "The Ister" but includes an extensive interpretation of the famous second choral ode from Sophocles' *Antigone*, traditionally known as the "ode to man." This interpretation, which occupies approximately half of the present volume (see Part Two), may be compared to an earlier, much more concise interpretation of the chorus that appeared in Heidegger's 1935 course *Introduction to Metaphysics*.^[2] For further information regarding the delivery of the "Ister" course and the editing of the published text, readers are referred to the German editor's Epilogue, which is included at the end of this volume.

Like any text by Heidegger, the "Ister" course poses a number of difficulties for any prospective translator. In addition to the way in which Heidegger interweaves and lets resonate the root meanings of many German words and their cognates—a feature to be found in every Heidegger text—two further issues deserve brief mention here.

First, a special difficulty is posed by the need to translate not just Heidegger but Hölderlin, including the many fragments of Hölderlin's poetry that Heidegger cites in the course of his interpretation. If anything, Hölderlin's German—both in his poetic works and in the so-called "theoretical writings"—is even more resistant to translation than Heidegger's. Although a number of translations do exist in English, these are often not very helpful in the present context, where Heidegger's readings lend the hymns and fragments a quite specific meaning. Our own translations have thus been tailored to suit the context and tenor of Heidegger's interpretations. In addition, we have in each case cited the original German text of the poems, as quoted by Heidegger. (Note that this is not always the

"standard" or orthodox text: Hölderlin's manuscripts, containing many alterations and rewritings, allow for a multiplicity of versions, and scholars may wish to consult the Beißner and Sattler editions of Hölderlin's work for further information in this respect.)^[3] Similarly, in the case of citations from Sophocles, we have sought to translate the spirit peculiar to Heidegger's own renditions of the Greek.

Second, and more important, this lecture course differs from the majority of Heidegger's courses in that it is not merely concerned with the issue of translation from an extrinsic point of view—reading Hölderlin's "Ister" hymn as a dialogue between the German and the Greek, between "one's own" and "the foreign"—but understands itself as the explicit enactment of translation. Heidegger not only translates the Greek, Sophoclean understanding of the human being along with Hölderlin's hymns, but does so in such a way that his own text can be seen as a translation of the dialogue between Hölderlin and the Greeks, and thus as a new or continued dialogue that is itself in need of translation. (Heidegger points out that translation already occurs "within" a given language and is therefore never simply the substitution of one language for another.) A felicitous translation of Heidegger's text into English could thus itself be read as a continuation and renewal of such dialogue. In order to take the measure of this present translation, scholars are therefore invited to refer to the German text as a necessary, and not merely extrinsic or supplementary, moment of the translation offered here. A translation, like any text, can at most be the initiation or continuation of a dialogue, never definitive or conclusive.

We have tried to indicate some of those places where translation is particularly difficult by providing the corresponding German text, either in square brackets or in endnotes. In the interest of readability, however, we have tried to keep such interventions or "reminders" to a minimum. Bibliographical references in the text reproduce the references to the German von Hellingrath edition of Hölderlin as cited by Heidegger. Footnotes correspond to those in the German *Gesamtausgabe*; translators' notes are indicated by square brackets and are printed at the end of the text. Insertions by Heidegger himself are indicated thus: < >. Finally, Greek text included in the German edition has been reproduced accordingly; in Part Two, Heidegger's own translations of the Greek have also been cited.

The translators wish to thank Indiana University Press for their support of this project. William McNeill thanks those students who participated in his graduate seminar of 1993 at DePaul University; it was for them that this translation was first undertaken. Their help has been invaluable in preparing a polished version. The translators also wish to thank Jason Wirth for his helpful comments on the manuscript. Finally, we owe a

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HÖLDERLIN'S HYMN
"THE ISTER"

Part One

Poetizing the Essence of the Rivers The Ister Hymn

*§1. The theme of the lecture course:
remarks on Hölderlin's hymnal poetry*

This lecture course attempts to draw attention to several of Hölderlin's poetic works known as "hymns." The term *hymn*, in German *Hymne*, is formed from the Greek word ὕμνος, meaning song of praise, ode, more specifically a song in praise of the gods, to the glory of heroes, and in honor of those victorious in contests. ὑμνεῖν: to sing, to praise, to glorify, to celebrate and consecrate, and so to prepare the festival. Thus it is that we find a turn of phrase in which noun and verb, ὕμνος and ὑμνεῖν, are immediately united. The most beautiful example we know of are the words of Antigone, in Sophocles' tragedy, which begin at line 806:

ὄρατ' ἐμ', ὦ γὰρ πατρίας πολῖται,

"Seht mich, ihr der väterlichen Erde Männer . . .,"

"Behold me, you men of the paternal earth . . .,"

and which then close:

οὔτ' ἐπὶ νυμφείοις πώ μέ τις ὕμνος ὑμνησεν,

"auch nicht als Bereitung des Festes feiert mich je
ein Feiergusang."

"nor in preparation of the festival
will ever a celebratory song celebrate me."

Initially, however, it must remain open in what sense and with what legitimacy the poetic works of Hölderlin to which we shall refer may be called "hymns." We must first become attentive^[4] to this poetry. Once we have become attentive, we can then "pay attention to," that is, retain, some things that, at favorable moments, will perhaps let us "attend to," that is, have some intimation of what might be said in the word of this poet.

What this lecture course is able to communicate are remarks on the poetry it has selected. Such remarks are always only an accompaniment. It may therefore be that some, or many, or even all of these remarks are simply imported and are not "contained in" the poetry. The remarks, in that case, are not taken from the poetry, not presented from out of this poetry. The remarks in no way achieve what in the strict sense of the word could be called an "interpretation" of the poetry. At the risk of missing the truth of Hölderlin's poetry, the remarks merely provide a few markers, signs that call our attention, pauses for reflection. Because these remarks are merely an *accompaniment* to the poem, the poetry itself must in the first instance and constantly be present as what comes first.

The texts that form the basis of this lecture course are taken from an edition to which every future hearing of Hölderlin's word must have recourse. This edition was conceived around 1911 by Norbert von Hellingrath, who produced the crucial Volumes I, IV, and V.¹ Norbert von Hellingrath died at the age of twenty-eight, in December 1916, at Verdun. (The edition by Zinkernagel may also be used.)

a) The Ister hymn

Our lecture course begins with remarks on a "hymn" that Hölderlin himself never published and that, as first written down and in its draft form, he left without a title. Norbert von Hellingrath gave the poem the title "The Ister" (i.e., the Donau [the Danube]).²

The poem consists of four strophes. The fourth is incomplete. Whether it is meant to be the closing strophe of the poem cannot be decided. The poem reads (IV, 220ff.):

DER ISTER

Jetzt komme, Feuer!
 Begierig sind wir
 Zu schauen den Tag,
 Und wenn die Prüfung
 Ist durch die Knie gegangen,
 Mag einer spüren das Waldgeschrei.
 Wir singen aber vom Indus her
 Fernangekommen und
 Vom Alpheus, lange haben

1. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, begun by Norbert von Hellingrath, continued by Friedrich Seebass and Ludwig von Pigenot (vol. 3, 2nd ed.: Berlin, 1922; vols. 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6, 2nd ed.: Berlin, 1923).

2. Cf. the lecture course "Andenken" of winter semester 1941/42, p. 1 (*Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 52).

Das Schikliche wir gesucht,
 Nicht ohne Schwingen mag
 Zum nächsten einer greifen
 Geradezu
 Und kommen auf die andere Seite.
 Hier aber wollen wir bauen.
 Denn Ströme machen urbar
 Das Land. Wenn nemlich Kräuter wachsen
 Und an denselben gehn
 Im Sommer zu trinken die Thiere,
 So gehn auch Menschen daran.

Man nennet aber diesen den Ister.
 Schön wohnt er. Es brennet der Säulen Laub,
 Und reget sich. Wild stehn
 Sie aufgerichtet, untereinander; darob
 Ein zweites Maas, springt vor
 Von Felsen das Dach. So wundert
 Mich nicht, dass er
 Den Herkules zu Gaste geladen,
 Fernglänzend, am Olympos drunten,
 Da der, sich Schatten zu suchen
 Vom heissen Isthmos kam,
 Denn voll des Muthes waren
 Daselbst sie, es bedarf' aber, der Geister wegen,
 Der Kühlung auch. Darum zog jener lieber
 An die Wasserquellen hieher und gelben Ufer,
 Hoch duftend oben, und schwarz
 Vom Fichtenwald, wo in den Tiefen
 Ein Jäger gern lustwandelt
 Mittags, und Wachstum hörbar ist
 An harzigen Bäumen des Isters,

Der scheintet aber fast
 Rückwärts zu gehen und
 Ich mein, er müsse kommen
 Von Osten.
 Vieles wäre
 Zu sagen davon. Und warum hängt er
 An den Bergen gerad? Der andre
 Der Rhein ist seitwärts
 Hinweggegangen. Umsonst nicht gehn
 Im Troknen die Ströme. Aber wie? Sie sollen nemlich
 Zur Sprache seyn. Ein Zeichen braucht es,
 Nichts anderes, schlecht und recht, damit es Sonn'
 Und Mond trag' im Gemüth', untrennbar,
 Und fortgeh, Tag und Nacht auch, und

Die Himmlischen warm sich fühlen aneinander.
 Darum sind jene auch
 Die Freude des Höchsten. Denn wie käm er sonst
 Herunter? Und wie Hertha grün,
 Sind sie die Kinder des Himmels. Aber allzuredultig
 Scheint der mir, nicht
 Freier, und fast zu spotten. Nemlich wenn

Angehen soll der Tag
 In der Jugend, wo er zu wachsen
 Anfängt, es treibet ein anderer da
 Hoch schon die Pracht, und Füllen gleich
 In den Zaum knirscht er, und weithin hören
 Das Treiben die Lüfte,
 Ist der betrübt;
 Es brauchet aber Stiche der Fels
 Und Furchen die Erd',
 Unwirthbar wär es, ohne Weile;
 Was aber jener thuet der Strom,
 Weis niemand.

THE ISTER

Now come, fire!
 Eager are we
 To see the day,
 And when the trial
 Has passed through our knees,
 May someone sense the forest's cry.
 We, however, sing from the Indus
 Arrived from afar and
 From Alpheus, long have
 We sought what is fitting,
 Not without pinions may
 Someone grasp at what is nearest
 Directly
 And reach the other side.
 Here, however, we wish to build.
 For rivers make arable
 The land. Whenever plants grow
 And there in summer
 The animals go to drink,
 So humans go there too.

This one, however, is named the Ister.
 Beautiful he dwells. The foliage of the columns burns
 And stirs. Wild they stand

Erect among one another; above
 A second measure, from rocks
 The roof juts out. Thus it surprises
 Me not, that he
 Invited Hercules as guest,
 Gleaming from afar, down there by Olympus,
 When he in search of shade
 From the sultry Isthmus came,
 For full of courage were
 They even there, yet there was need, for the spirits' sake,
 Of cooling too. Whence that one preferred to travel
 To the water's sources here and yellow banks,
 Their scent wafting high above, and black
 With the forest of firs, within whose depths
 A hunter likes to roam
 At midday, and growth can be heard
 In the resinous trees of the Ister,

He appears, however, almost
 To go backwards and
 I presume he must come
 From the East.
 There would be
 Much to tell of this. And why does he precisely
 Cling to the mountains? The other
 The Rhine has departed
 Sideways. Not in vain do
 Rivers run in the dry. Yet how? Namely, they are
 To be to language. A sign is needed,
 Nothing else, plain and simple, so that sun
 And moon may be borne in mind, inseparable,
 And pass on, day and night too, and
 The heavenly feel themselves warm by one another.
 Whence those ones too
 Are the joy of the Highest. For how else would he
 Descend? And like Hertha green,
 They are the children of the heavens. Yet all too patient
 He appears to me, not
 Free, and almost to mock. Namely, when

The day is to commence
 In his youth, where he begins
 To grow, another there already
 Drives high his splendor, and like colts
 He grinds at the bit, and far away the breezes
 Hear his activity,

He is saddened;
 The rock, however, has need of cuts
 And of furrows the earth,
 Inhospitable it would be, without while;
 Yet what that one does, that river,
 No one knows.

The poem poetizes a river. The rivers belong to the waters. Whenever we make remarks on such poetry, we must ponder what is said elsewhere concerning the waters:

Der Urahn aber
 Ist geflogen über der See
 Scharfsinnend, und es wunderte sich
 Des Königes goldnes Haupt
 Ob dem Geheimniss der Wasser,
 ...

The forebear, however,
 Flew over the sea,
 Shrewdly perceptive, and the king's
 Golden head marveled
 At the mystery of the waters,
 ...

"The Eagle" (IV, 223)

b) Discussion of the opening line: "Now come, fire!"

The poem "The Ister" begins as a calling:^[5]

"Jetzt komme, Feuer!"
 "Now come, fire!"

"The" fire is called in the sense of being called forth. And yet this calling is different in kind from the issuing of any high-handed summons or command ("citing").^[6] The call simultaneously calls upon that which is called, such invocation attesting to the dignity of that which is called upon. Here, that which is to come comes of its own accord. It is not the call that first moves that which is coming to its coming. Yet if "the fire" comes of its own accord, then why is it called? The call does not effect the coming. Yet it calls something to that which is coming. What does it call to it?

Jetzt komme, Feuer!
 Begierig sind wir

Zu schauen den Tag,
 ...
 Now come, fire!
 Eager are we
 To see the day,
 ...

The ones calling say that they themselves come toward the coming fire. Why do they say this? And who are those who thus call? These questions cannot be answered from the first lines of the poem alone. And yet, we must also admit that in these first words a remarkable relation is opened up. For what is "the fire" that is invoked?

The coming fire is to make visible the day. The fire gives rise to the day, lets this day arise. If "the day" here is the day that is familiar to us daily, then the fire that is called upon in its coming must be the sun. The sun rises day after day. Were it not for this most everyday event, then there would be no days. Still, to explicitly call out "Now come" to one thus coming, to the rising sun, is a superfluous and futile act. But this "Now come" contains more. The call says: we, the ones thus calling, are ready. And something else is also concealed in such calling out: we are ready and are so only because we are called by the coming fire itself. The ones calling here are those who are called, those who are called upon, now in this other sense, which means: those summoned to hear because they are of such a vocation. The ones called to such a vocation and readiness are said to be those of a calling. Which calling is meant? Among the poems of Hölderlin that originate around the same period, we find one whose first strophe reads:

Des Ganges Ufer hörten des Freudengotts
 Triumph, als allerbernd vom Indus her
 Der junge Bacchus kam, mit heiligem
 Weine vom Schlafe die Völker wekend.

From the god of joy Ganges' banks heard
 Triumph, when all-conquering from the Indus
 Young Bacchus came, with holy
 Wine rousing the peoples from sleep.
 (IV, 145)

Here too, as in the hymn, we find "from the Indus," though referring to the opposite direction. Bacchus is named, the "wine god" whose "holy priests" are the poets. The poem, which tells of the all-conquering, rousing journey of Bacchus, bears the title "Poet's Calling" ["*Dichterberuf*"] (IV,

145ff.). The call “Now come, fire!” calls those of a calling. Their calling is song, that is, poetry. Those calling therefore tell of themselves (l. 7f.):

Wir singen aber vom Indus her
Fernangekommen . . .

We, however, sing from the Indus
Arrived from afar . . .

Only those called to a calling can truly call: “come.” And this calling that is called alone has proper necessity in it. This call remains infinitely distinct from what we name a blindly uttered cry. And yet, it remains the case that the fire they call upon, if it is the sun, not only comes of its own accord but comes unceasingly, unstopably, uncontainably, day in, day out. So why this “*Now* come, fire!”? “*Now*”—as though the fire had hitherto remained absent and there had been a long night. “*Now*”—as though the rising of the sun were something unusual in the course of things. In the coming of the days, it is precisely the rising of the light that could least of all differentiate or even distinguish one day from another. In the succession of night and day, the rising of the sun designates an ever recurring, temporally self-deferring, yet otherwise uniform point in time, a “*now*” that has also already been forgotten and fallen into indifference with the breaking of day.

This “*Now*” stands at the beginning of the poem like a star that has suddenly risen and that shines over everything. The word has a distinctive intonation: “*Now* come, fire!” This “*Now*,” thus emphasized and intoned, gives the entire poem its own singular tone. Which “*now*” is meant by the call? When is, or when was, this “*Now*”? The “*Now*” names the time of calling of those who are of a calling, a time of poets. Such a time is determined from out of that which the poets are called upon to poetize in their poetry.

Yet what is that—poetizing? How can poetizing determine a time, lend distinction to a “*now*”? “*To poetize*,” *dichten*—in Latin, *dictare*—means to write down, to fore-tell something to be written down. To tell something that, prior to this, has not yet been told. A properly unique beginning thus lies in whatever is said poetically. Something like a time stemming from and determining the poetry—a poetic time—would then be given. Its “*points in time*” cannot be established in accordance with the calendar; they cannot be “*dated*.” Sometimes, in terms of the numbers by which we calculate time, we can indeed give the year and the day, even the hour when a poem was “*composed*” or completed. Yet such temporal ordering of the activity of poetizing is not straightforwardly identical, nor even the same,

as the timespace of that which is poetized. Moreover, poetic time is also different in each case, in accordance with the essential nature of the poetry and of the poets. For all essential poetry also poetizes “*anew*” the essence of poetizing itself. This is true of Hölderlin’s poetry in a special and singular sense. No calendrical date can be given for the “*Now*” of his poetry. Nor is any date needed here at all. For this “*Now*” that is called and is itself calling is, in a more originary sense, itself a date—that is to say, something given, a gift; namely, given via the calling of this vocation.

The poets who call here have not chosen or fixed this “*Now*” on account of any willfulness, nor by virtue of their own cunning. This “*Now*” has been destined for them as their time. And that is why this “*Now*” will never let itself be grasped “*historiographically*,” for instance by attempting to establish the historical dates of well-known historical events and trying to relate the “*Now*” of the poem to these points in time by means of calculation. Admittedly, we cannot yet recognize straightaway why such an attempt must remain futile. Yet it is also much more essential for us initially to note how directly the naming of this “*Now*” and of “*time*” everywhere belongs to the “*language*” of Hölderlin’s hymns.

In the first hymn, “*As when on feast day . . .*,” the poet says:

Jetzt aber tagts! Ich harrt und sah es kommen,
Now day breaks! I waited and saw it coming.
(IV, 151)

Once again we find the “*Now*,” and once again in connection with the dawning of the day and with a coming.

Jetzt komme, Feuer!
Now come, fire!

This distinctive significance of the “*Now*” demands that in this word of time we also come to hear something distinctly significant and await a concealed fullness of poetic time and of its truth. The “*Now* come” appears to speak from a present into the future. And yet, in the first instance, it speaks into what has already happened. “*Now*”—this tells us: something has already been decided. And precisely the appropriation that has already “*occurred*” [*sich ereignet*] alone sustains all relation to whatever is coming. The “*Now*” names an appropriative event [*Ereignis*]. The first strophe of the hymn, and thus the hymn as a whole, begins with the naming of the “*Now*” in the first line. And in line 15 of the very same first strophe there also follows the naming of a “*here*”:

Hier aber wollen wir bauen.

Here, however, we wish to build.

This line stands proud and emphatic within the first strophe. Where is this “Here”? From where is the “where” determined? Which locale is named?

Wir singen aber vom Indus her
Fernangekommen und
Vom Alpheus, . . .

We, however, sing from the Indus
Arrived from afar and
From Alpheus. . . .

“Indus” and “Alpheus” are names of rivers and streams. One belongs to the land of the “Indians,” the other to the land of the Greeks. Those calling have come from rivers. And to where have they come? The locale, the “Here” as the decisive vicinity, is not yet named directly. Yet the “Here” is once again determined by a river:

Hier aber wollen wir bauen.
Denn Ströme machen urbar
Das Land.

Here, however, we wish to build.
For rivers make arable
The land.

Those who have arrived from afar, from rivers, are to build by a river. The beginning of the second strophe first tells us the river at which those who have arrived are to dwell:

Man nennet aber diesen den Ister.

This one, however, is named the Ister.

“Ister” was the Roman name for the lower Donau, for the river that the Greeks knew only in its lower course and named Ἴστρος. The Roman designation for the upper Donau is “Danubius.” Yet Hölderlin, as we shall see, names precisely the upper course of the Donau with the Greco-Roman name for the lower course of the river, just as if the lower Donau had returned to the upper, and thus turned back to its source.

Accordingly, it was legitimate for the first editor of these hymns, Norbert von Hellingrath, to give this poem the title “The Ister,” assuming, of course, that this hymn does not mention rivers and the Donau incidentally or by way of introduction, but rather tells specifically of the Donau, and tells of it as a river. This is indeed what occurs. This title, which is therefore legitimate, is in keeping with the title that Hölderlin himself gave to another hymn: “The Rhine.” Furthermore, this river too is specifically named in the Ister hymn, again, not just as any river whatsoever, but as “the other” (third strophe, l. 47ff.)—namely, the other of the one that is the Donau. The Donau hymn and the Rhine hymn stand in an essential poetic relation. We must acknowledge the subsequent choice of the title “The Ister” as a suitable one. Moreover, Hölderlin himself gave another hymn the title “At the Source of the Donau.”

§2. *Hymnal poetry as poetizing the essence of the rivers*

It is already clear from these rudimentary pointers that the rivers come to language in Hölderlin’s hymnal poetry. Why, and in what sense, at first remains obscure. We must search for the light with which to illuminate this in terms of what Hölderlin himself tells us of the rivers. A fleeting familiarity with his poetic work as a whole can already teach us that Hölderlin, with a certain predilection, names streams and rivers and waters in general in his poetry. We thus know two poems from the period preceding his hymnal poetry proper: “The Main” (III, 54f.) and “The Nekar” (III, 59f.).

Yet other poems too, from the same period as the hymns, often name rivers and to all appearances do so unexpectedly. The poem “Voice of the People” (IV, 139ff. and 142ff.), two versions of which have been handed down to us, reads in its first two strophes:

Du seiest Gottes Stimme, so glaubt ich sonst,
In heilger Jugend; ja und ich sag es noch!
Um unsre Weisheit unbekümmert
Rauschen die Ströme doch auch, und dennoch

Wer liebt sie nicht? und immer bewegen sie
Das Herz mir, hör ich ferne die Schwindenden
Die Ahnungsvollen, meine Bahn nicht
Aber gewisser ins Meer hin eilen.

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

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

The rivers do not concern themselves with the wisdom of human beings. Yet this is not at all because they are ill-disposed toward wisdom or spirit, but rather because they have their own "spirit." This is why Hölderlin later speaks of the "spirit of the river" in one of his most powerful meditations (V, 272f.). And this is why the rivers are also said to be both "full of intimation" and "vanishing" in the poem just cited. These two terms present an enigma. One of them names the relation of the rivers to what is coming and close to being intimated. The other names the rivers' going away into what has been. Both are, at the same time, in a concealed, unitary relation to what has been and what is of the future—thus to the temporal. What if the distinctive significance of the "Now," the word of time in the river hymns, were also connected to the naming of the rivers? For the second and decisive strophe of the Rhine hymn also begins with "Now however, . . ." (IV, 172). The flow of the rivers does not simply run its course "in time," as if the latter were merely an indifferent framework extrinsic to the course of the rivers. The rivers intimate and vanish into time and do so in such a way that they themselves are thus of time and are time itself.

From the first strophe of the Ister hymn, however, and likewise from the sixth strophe of the Rhine hymn, we also learn that the rivers are a distinctive and significant locale at which human beings, though not only human beings, find their dwelling place. Granted that the Ister hymn is a river hymn, and therefore legitimately bears this title, then our remarks on this poem must also and above all call attention to the poetic essence of the river.

Yet we wander around in errancy if we proceed to bring together, in an extrinsic and disjointed manner, suitable "passages" about rivers and waters from Hölderlin's various poems in order then to construct for ourselves some general idea of what Hölderlin might have "meant" by "rivers" and "waters." Presumably, a single, self-contained river poem can alone bear suitable witness to this. Yet in order to hear it even in its very first resonance requires some careful guidance, which, at the very least, takes care that our hearing is not misdirected from the outset so that we then mishear the poem in all its details as well. We must therefore inquire concerning the domain out of which the naming of the rivers resonates for us, for the rivers are essential within this very domain.

REVIEW

The lecture course provides a series of remarks on some of Hölderlin's poems known as "hymns." The Greek word ὕμνος means song in praise of the gods, ode to the glory of heroes and in honor of the victors in contests. What is essential in "song" and ode is the word. ὑμνεῖν means to say, to tell [*sagen*] in the sense of to praise, to glorify, to honor, to consecrate. The fundamental trait of the word that tells in this manner is celebration: the essential preparation of the festival. The ὕμνος is not the "means" to some event, it does not provide the "framework" for the celebration. Rather, the celebrating and festiveness lie in the telling itself. We thus find an essential turn of phrase in which the noun ὕμνος and the verb ὑμνεῖν emerge from a singular unity: ὕμνος ὑμνεῖ, the festive song celebrates. Thus Antigone, in the Sophoclean tragedy, says the following (l. 806ff.):

οὐτ' ἐπὶ νυμφείοις πῶ μέ τις ὕμνος
 ὕμνησεν

"auch nicht als Bereitung des Brautfestes
 feiert mich je ein Feiergesang."

"nor in preparation of the bridal festival
 will ever a celebratory song celebrate me."

If the Greek world has its own historical singularity, then it can never in any respect be repeated in an imitative sense. Therefore, if we continue to use the term "hymn," then this term can be extended beyond a merely literary, academic title for defining types of poems, and can be essentially grounded, only wherever there are poetic works that relate to festivity and celebration in a sense that is once again singular. Whether Hölderlin's poetic works are such in essence, and, if they are, what the singular fundamental trait is that distinguishes them as festive songs, when and where this festival of song "is"—all these questions we leave open. Instead, we shall attempt the wholly "precursory" task of becoming attentive to Hölderlin's poetry. Our remarks serve that end. They provide a hold for thoughtful reflection. Thoughtful reflection is meant to awaken our attentiveness. Such attentiveness is distinguished in an essential way from mere curiosity that wants only to "get to know" something without gaining knowledge of it. Even the will to knowledge itself is not yet attentiveness in the sense of a fundamental attunement from out of which we always have a sense only for the essential and have the sole vocation of marking out the essential from everything else so as to retain it in the future, to

“attend” to it. The remarks on the poems are themselves not yet the “interpretation” of the poems. And because the remarks proceed from ourselves, and thus come from “the outside” and are therefore disjointed, the poem itself must, above all else, always remain what is first, that is, what is singular. Within a lecture course, we can thus call attention only to a few poems. We must, therefore, be selective. Therein lies an arbitrariness, and this means: a restriction on what a lecture course is capable of at all in this respect.

The lecture course begins with some remarks on a poem that Hölderlin himself did not publish. As first written down and in its draft form, the poem remained untitled. It was only more than one hundred years later that the poem first reached the human ear via the edition of Norbert von Hellingrath. He gave the poem the title: “The Ister.” This name, which appears in the poem itself, was for the Romans the designation for the lower Donau, thus for that river which the Greeks in general knew only in its lower course and named Ἰστρος. The Romans called the upper course of the Donau “Danubius.” Yet in this poem, Hölderlin names precisely the upper course of the Donau with the name for the lower course of the river. This has its own reasons. Yet even if the Donau is indeed named in this poem, then this does not in itself provide legitimate grounds for giving the poem the title “The Ister.” Unless it were the case that the poem should tell, in an emphatic or entirely singular way, of this river alone. The poem would then be a river poem.

Now there are indeed “hymns” that Hölderlin himself entitled with the names of rivers, and not just any rivers: the hymn “The Rhine,” the hymn “At the Source of the Donau.” This sufficiently attests to the fact that Hölderlin speaks of the rivers. Yet what does that mean? Does Hölderlin poetize “about” the rivers, or does he “sing” the rivers? Or is it that he first poetizes the essence of the rivers? And if this is the case, why does he poetize the rivers? After all, they exist already in actuality; why, then, do they need to be poetized?

We should like to clarify these questions by way of remarks on the poem “The Ister.” The poem begins with the call:

Jetzt komme, Feuer!

Now come, fire!

Here there is talk not of a river, but of fire. If we are concerned with being attentive, we must immediately ponder which point in time this “Now” is likely to mean, this “Now” that is intoned so emphatically at the beginning of the poem and that gives the poem its tone. We pay heed to the fact that

“elsewhere” too in his hymnal poetry Hölderlin emphasizes the “Now,” the “point in time,” the right time and the unfitting time, the moment [*Augenblick*]. Yet on the other hand, the first strophe not only names a “Now” in the first line but, in line 15, gives equal intonation to a “Here”:

Hier aber wollen wir bauen.

Here, however, we wish to build.

The “Here” is apparently more readily determined. From the lines that follow, and from the beginning of the second strophe, we gather that the “Here” means: “Here” at that river called “The Ister.”

Yet what is proper to the river is the fact that it flows and thus continually determines another “Here.” In the poem “Voice of the People,” Hölderlin himself names the rivers those that “vanish,” but also those “full of intimation” (IV, 139ff. and 142ff.):

STIMME DES VOLKES

Du seiest Gottes Stimme, so glaubt ich sonst,
In heilger Jugend; ja und ich sag es noch!
Um unsre Weisheit unbekümmert
Rauschen die Ströme doch auch, und dennoch

Wer liebt sie nicht? und immer bewegen sie
Das Herz mir, hör ich ferne die Schwindenden
Die Ahnungsvollen, meine Bahn nicht
Aber gewisser ins Meer hin eilen.

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

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

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

As “vanishing,” they go away, they are no longer present—they flow and pass away. As “full of intimation,” however, they stand in relation to the future. The rivers designate a “Here” and abandon the Now, whether by passing into what is bygone, or into what lies in the future. How are we to grasp and give meaning to [*deuten*] this essence of the rivers? They are evidently “bearers” of an as yet veiled “meaning” [*Bedeutung*].

§3. *The metaphysical interpretation of art*

In our attempt to heed what Hölderlin poetizes when he names the rivers, we will often have occasion to test a form of representation that for centuries has secured itself a validity in poetry, as well as in the interpretation of poetic works and in the way poetizing in general is determined.

According to this form of representation, the rivers and waters that are sung in a poetic work, for example, are grasped as perceivable events of “nature.” Which indeed they are. In the poetic work, however, these things of nature assume the role of appearances that can be grasped as something sensuous [*simlich*], as something that offers a view and thus provides an “image.” Yet in the poetic work such images present not only themselves, but also a nonsensuous meaning. They “mean” something. The sensuous image points toward a “spiritual” content, a “sense” [*Sinn*]. The river that is named and that appears in the image [*Bild*] is a “symbolic image” [*Sinnbild*]. Under the broadly conceived concept of a symbolic image, we also include what is called “allegory.” This word, which stems from the Greek, aptly says what is at issue: ἄλλο-ἀγορεύειν. ἀγορεύειν (ἀγορά, the open, public place for a gathering of the people): to openly and publicly proclaim in a manner that everyone can understand. ἄλλο, something other, namely, to proclaim something other than what the image by itself allows to appear. ἀλληγορία is a proclamation of something else by way of something, namely, by way of something familiar that can be experienced sensuously. Legends and fairy tales, for example, count as “allegories.” Another kind of symbolic image alongside “allegories” are “similes”; yet another kind are “symbols.” σύμβολον derives from συμβάλλειν, which means, to bring together, to hold the halves of a ring against one another and to test whether they fit and belong to one another so that one can then recognize that the possessors of the pieces of the ring themselves belong to one another. The “symbol” is a sign of recognition that demonstrates and thereby legitimizes a belonging together. In the symbol too there lies the reference of something sensuous, the ring, to something nonsensuous—something pertaining to the soul—something spiritual, in the first instance, the belonging together of friends, friendship. The “symbol,” too, is a symbolic image.

We can also count as symbolic images in the broadest sense what we call “examples,” something that, as an instance that can be sensuously intuited, exemplifies and furnishes us with a rule that cannot be grasped sensuously. “Metaphors” likewise belong to symbolic images—μεταφορά, transference. Every “in-signia” is also a symbolic image in a certain way. The distinctions between allegory and symbol, simile and metaphor, example and insignia are fluid, and have not been firmly established with

unequivocal validity. More important than the distinctions is the pervasive framework wherein these variations of “symbolic images,” and the symbolic image in general, have their ground. That framework is the distinction that is made between a sensuous and a nonsensuous realm. In every employment of symbolic images we presuppose that this distinction has been made. The decisive drawing of this distinction, its unfolding and its structuring, which are normative for the Western world, occurred in Plato’s thought. What emerges as essential in that thought is that the nonsensuous, the realm of the soul and of the spiritual, is the true actuality, and that the sensuous realm is a preliminary and subordinate stage. And if one designates the realm of the sensuous, taken in the broadest sense, as the “physical” realm, then the nonsensuous and suprasensuous realm is that which lies over and beyond the physical.

Going over and beyond something is called μετά in Greek. In relation to the physical, the suprasensuous realm is the metaphysical. The distinction made between the sensuous and the suprasensuous is a transition from the physical and from “physics,” taken in the broadest sense, to the metaphysical and to metaphysics. The distinction between the sensuous (αἰσθητόν) and the nonsensuous (νοητόν) is the fundamental configuration of what has long since been called metaphysics. If we name “world” the entirety of what is actual, including its ground and cause, then we may say that, since Plato, all Western conceptions and interpretations of the world have been “metaphysical.” Since that same period, the essence of art (τέχνη, *ars*), and thus the essence of poetic art also, has been determined in accordance with metaphysics. In all metaphysics, the work of art counts as something sensuous that does not exist just for itself; rather, what is sensuous about the artwork is as it is in the artwork: it exists for the nonsensuous and suprasensuous, for that which is also named the spiritual or spirit. Given this, we can understand a statement made by that thinker who, in the first half of the previous century, created the most comprehensive metaphysics of art. Hegel says in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* (*Werke* X, 1, 48): “What is sensuous in the work of art is meant to have existence only insofar as it exists for the human spirit, and not insofar as it itself exists for itself as something sensuous.” As Hegel understands it, an example of something sensuous existing for itself is a piece of material painted over in many colors; such a thing, however, is not a painting by Rembrandt. Yet the painting is not merely placed onto this material thing either; rather, this material thing is sublated into the painting and now is what it is only *through* the latter. With respect to the metaphysical essence of art, we can also say that all art has to do with symbolic images [*ist sinnbildlich*]. “Image” [*Bild*] then stands for what can be perceived sensuously in general, as can sound. The symbolic “sense” [*Sinn*] is the

nonsensuous [*das Nichtsinnliche*], which is understood and given meaning and has been determined in manifold ways in the course of metaphysics: the nonsensuous and suprasensuous are the spiritual; ideals and “values” are the ideational. The superior and the true are what is sensuously represented in the symbolic image. The essence of art stands or falls in accordance with the essence and truth of metaphysics.

§4. Hölderlin’s poetry as not concerned with images in a symbolic or metaphysical sense. The concealed essence of the river

Hölderlin’s poetry too appears in the course of the history of Western metaphysics and art. We can even classify it accurately in terms of its temporal relation to this history. The genesis of the hymns lies between the years 1800 and 1806. Precisely this same time span covers the genesis of the principle work in Hegel’s thought, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). Hegel, the thinker, was the friend of the poet Hölderlin while they were both students in Tübingen and also later during their years together in Frankfurt until 1799. Thus Hölderlin’s poetry, if it is art, will also be metaphysical and will therefore be concerned with “symbolic images.” The German rivers that are sung in Hölderlin’s poems, the Main, the Neckar, the Donau, and the Rhine, are “symbolic images” of German essence and life. Nothing prevents us from interpreting Hölderlin’s river poetry according to this perspective or in such a way.

Perhaps the sense that Hölderlin gives these images of rivers is more difficult to discern than the content of other poetic works written by other poets who also sing of rivers, streams, and brooks, the ocean and the seas. This greater interpretive difficulty may have its grounds in the fact that Hölderlin poetizes more mysteriously than these other poets and perhaps also in the fact that his poetry remains incomplete in many ways, and is indeed occasionally overshadowed and confused by his impending madness.

The rivers in Hölderlin’s poetry are, however, in no way symbolic images that are merely more difficult to interpret in terms of degree. If that were the case, they would still remain essentially “symbolic images.” Yet this is precisely what they are not. The “rivers” are therefore not to count as symbols of a higher level or of “deeper,” “religious” content. Hölderlin’s hymnal poetry, which is the vocation of the poet after 1799, is not concerned with symbolic images at all.

Yet what we have said then means that this poetry must stand entirely outside of metaphysics, and thus outside of the essential realm of Western art. Then all the usual readings and interpretations of these poems would be in vain, because all such interpretation borrows its tools and its effort

indiscriminately from metaphysics and from the metaphysical doctrine of art, that is, from aesthetics.

But if the rivers in Hölderlin’s poetry are in truth not “symbolic images,” then what else can they be? How are we supposed to be able to know anything about them, when all our knowledge, and especially scientific knowledge, has its grounds and hold in metaphysics? It almost seems as though the poet himself were saying that we can know nothing of the rivers. The Ister hymn closes, or more precisely, it comes to a halt, with the words:

Was aber jener thuet der Strom,
Weis niemand.

Yet what that one does, that river,
No one knows.

Does this mean that the slightest effort to call attention to this river poem thus already infringes the poet’s own word? No. The lines just cited tell us that the flow of the river that is named here is an activity that takes its own time, and that such activity is concealed. The concealment of its activity signifies that this river has a distinction. The poet knows of this concealment. How else could he tell us that no one knows what this river does? (Moreover, we must ponder the fact that these words, with which the Ister hymn breaks off, tell in their own specific way of that river that is referred to as “the Rhine,” as distinct (“Yet”) from the “Ister.” All the same, the “poetic” essence of the river in general remains concealed in the knowledge of the poet and conditions that intimate telling: “he appears. . . .”)

The poetic word unveils this concealment of the river’s activity, and indeed unveils it as such an activity. This unveiling is poetic. Whatever song is capable of here, and how much it is capable of, given that it is to tell of the rivers and especially of their “youth” and their origin, this poet knows full well. At the beginning of the fourth strophe of that other river hymn that bears the title “The Rhine,” we hear it said (IV, 173):

Ein Räthsel ist Reintsprungenes. Auch
Der Gesang kaum darf es enthüllen.

Enigma is that which has purely sprung forth. Even
The song may scarcely unveil it.

In this “scarcely” there nevertheless lies the knowledge that, if at all, *only* song can tell something of the “origin,” of the “source,” of the “springing forth,” and of the “flow.” According to that other word, that

of the Ister hymn—“Yet what that one does, that river, / No one knows”—we also know this: whatever the river does is an enigma.

The river’s activity is its flowing, and therein it has its actuality and is the actual river. Yet surely we are familiar with what the actual river, the actual Donau does. If we are unfamiliar with it, then that description of the earth that is concerned with this kind of knowledge, namely geography, will provide us with precise information. Or is the actual river, as ascertained by geography and knowable through everyday experience, not the river as it truly is? Is whatever is straightforwardly ascertained and maintained as actual not that which is?

Was aber jener thuet der Strom,
Weis niemand.

Yet what that one does, that river,
No one knows.

What the river does, therefore, not even the poet knows. The poet nevertheless knows its activity, its flowing; what the poet does not know is what is decided in this flowing. The flowing river as known poetically is the one that is. Is the poetic river other than the actual one? Before we may venture to answer this question, we must rigorously “attend to” whatever is said poetically of the river. Only from what is said poetically can we come to understand that which here is. And the actual river? Should we forget about it or simply relegate it to a symbolic image? Before we judge, let us listen more carefully to what is said poetically of the river.

§5. *The river as the locality of human abode*

According to the word of the Ister hymn (l. 15): “Here, however, we wish to build,” the river determines the dwelling place of human beings upon the earth. “Dwelling” is practically and technically regarded as the possession of accommodation and housing. Such things indeed belong to dwelling, yet they do not fulfill or ground its essence. Dwelling takes on an abode and is an abiding in such an abode, specifically that of human beings upon this earth. The abode is a whiling. It needs a while. In such a while, human beings find rest. Yet rest here does not mean the cessation of activity or the halting of disruption. Rest is a grounded repose in the steadfastness of one’s own essence. In rest, the human essence is preserved in its inviolability. The inviolability and holiness of a locale is called ἡ ἀσυλία in Greek. Hölderlin speaks of “asylums” (V, 271), of the resting sites of human beings: by this he does not mean graves, but rather those locales

where the activity and life of nature is “concentrated,” where “something intimate” gathers around human beings. The abode has its locale. The way in which the locale determines the abode, the manner in which the locale is the locale in each case, we name the locality of the locale [*die Ortschaft des Ortes*]. The locality of the locale bestows rest upon the abode. “Here, however, we wish to build,” here at this river.

The river “is” the locality that pervades the abode of human beings upon the earth, determines them to where they belong and where they are homely [*heimisch*]. The river thus brings human beings into their own and maintains them in what is their own. Whatever is their own is that to which human beings belong and must belong if they are to fulfill whatever is destined to them, and whatever is fitting, as their specific way of being. Yet that which is their own often remains foreign to human beings for a long time, because they abandon it without having appropriated it. And human beings abandon what is their own because it is what most threatens to overwhelm them. One’s own is least of all something that produces itself of its own accord. One’s own must come to be appropriate. And in turn, whatever has become appropriate needs to be appropriated.^[7] All this is true only on the presupposition that initially human beings are not and indeed never “of themselves,” or through any self-making, in that which is their own. In that case, however, to dwell in what is one’s own is what comes last and is seldom successful and always remains what is most difficult. Yet if the river determines the locality of the homely, then it is of essential assistance in becoming homely [*Heimischwerden*] in what is one’s own. By “assistance” we understand here not some occasional support but something steadfastly standing by [*den ständigen Beistand*], this word taken in the full force of its naming, meaning that the river is in advance and everywhere there-by [*da-bei*] and “there” [*da*].

REVIEW

The poem “The Ister” names the river that we know by the name “Donau.” The river is named. That could mean: it is “mentioned” in the poem. Here, however, we use the word “naming” in Hölderlin’s sense. For Hölderlin, naming means something higher. “Naming” means: to call to its essence that which is named in the word of poetizing, and to ground this essence as poetic word. Here, “naming” is the name for poetic telling. Such telling, in being a naming, receives a unique vocation that does not allow itself to be straightforwardly transferred to other poetry or other poets. The historical being of the poetry of Goethe and Schiller is such that it neither has to be, nor can be, a naming, even though Goethe and Schiller are, in

historiographical terms, contemporaries of Hölderlin. Nor does the vocation of poetic telling as naming stem from us merely with hindsight. Rather Hölderlin himself names his poetizing a naming. Hölderlin speaks of this naming, for example, in the hymn “Germania” (sixth and seventh strophes; IV, 184). Here the poet calls upon Germania, the priestess, the most quiet daughter of God, and tells her:

O trinke Morgenlüfte,
Biss dass du offen bist,
Und nenne, was vor Augen dir ist,
Nicht länger darf Geheimniss mehr
Das Ungesprochene bleiben,
Nachdem es lange verhüllt ist;

O drink morning breezes
Until you are open,
And name what is before your eyes,
Mystery no longer may
The unspoken remain,
Once it has long been veiled;

And at the beginning of the seventh strophe:

O nenne Tochter du der heiligen Erd!
Einmal die Mutter.

O name you daughter of the holy earth!
Once the mother.

Likewise in the hymn “At the Source of the Donau” (IV, 160). There, the naming approaches the highest, going beyond the naming of the gods to the naming of “nature,” of the “power of nature,” the name under which Hölderlin thinks that which he ultimately names the holy. In an immediate repetition of the word “naming,” we find (l. 65f.):

Wir nennen Dich, heiliggenöthiget, nennen,
Natur! dich wir, . . .

We name You, then, sacredly compelled,
Nature! you we name. . . .

The poetic telling “of” the river is also such a naming of the river. Hölderlin’s poetizing, particularly during the time of his hymnal poetry, is this naming. Wherein this naming is grounded, how the prevailing of language and the relationship of human beings to language are determined

from it, and how poetry as a work of language and of word first receives its transformed essence from here—of all this we can have no intimation, coming to it from the outside.

Yet we must cast a prior glance at such considerations straightaway, so as to see why we are now beginning with remarks that seek to ask in what way the “Ister hymn” tells of the river. In order that we do not misinterpret Hölderlin’s poetic telling—a telling that is quite other—by way of our habitual representations, we must recognize this habituation itself for what it properly is. This requires above all the insight that our customary view of poetry and of poets, a view played out in many forms, in no way rests upon some contingent arbitrariness of opinion or superficiality of thought.

The fundamental traits of how we and those before us have thought about poetry and the poetic, and thus how we value and attend to such poetry, have, for more than two thousand years, had their grounds in essential decisions. We should not harbor the opinion that such things could be made to disappear at a stroke or overcome via a lecture on some “novel view” of poetry; for what human beings as historical maintain and are able to maintain concerning poetry is determined from out of what they maintain and must maintain concerning the essence of art. And what human beings as historical maintain concerning art is governed by the manner in which human beings as historical are, for their part, maintained and sustained by the essence of art. Yet the way in which art thoroughly spans the being-in-the-world of human beings as historical, the way in which it illuminates the world for them and indeed illuminates human beings themselves, putting in place the way in which art is art—all this receives its law and structural articulation from the manner in which the world as a whole is opened up to human beings in general. As a consequence of, and in each case in accordance with this openness, human beings themselves are thus open to the world. We use “world” here as a name for beings as a whole and according to every respect in which humans “take interest” in beings in an essential way.

The law and configuration of the opening up of world and of the way human beings are assigned it has, since Plato’s time, been determined by what subsequently came to be named “metaphysics.” The whole of that which in any way “is” was differentiated by Plato, and has been differentiated henceforth, according to two realms: τὸ αἰσθητὸν and τὸ νοητὸν—the realm that can be apprehended with the senses, and the realm that can be experienced by νοῦς, by the “mind’s eye” [*dem “geistigen Auge”*]. Kant speaks of *mundus sensibilis* and *mundus intelligibilis*. The text that he published in 1770, when he assumed a full professorship in logic and metaphysics at the University of Königsberg and which he

dedicated to Frederick the Great, bears the title: *De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis* (*On the essential form and grounds of the sensuous world and of the world of reason*). According to Plato, the non-sensuous, and therefore suprasensuous, realm contains that which is removed from the fleeting alternation of things given to the senses; it is that which is constant and therefore, in the Greek sense, that which truly is, ἄληθῶς ὄν. By contrast, Plato considers the sensuous realm as encompassing the μὴ ὄν; this is usually translated as “non-beings”—more precisely, we should say: whatever is not truly a being, those beings which, according to Plato’s doctrine, look like beings yet are not, and therefore should not properly be called beings. The Greeks have the word μή for this prohibitive, restrictive, and delimiting No or Not, which means something distinct from οὐκ. οὐκ ὄν names that which merely is not; μὴ ὄν names something that “is,” yet is not in truth; for example, the house that is present at hand is indeed not nothing, but in it the essence of house presents itself only in this particular, and moreover transitory, appearance, in accordance with a particular size, as made of particular material, and according to a particular form. The sensuous indeed makes something perceivable—the essence—but at the same time it shows this essence only in a restricted and disfigured way. Thought Platonically, the sensuous is only ever a restrictive “after-image” [“*Nachbild*”]^[8] of what truly is, of the essence of something, wherein its proper truth and its “sense” [“*Sinn*”] consist, that is, that which can be grasped with the understanding and with reason (*intellectus*)—the intelligible (*mundus intelligibilis*). The sensuous is the symbolic image [“*Sinn-Bild*”], and the suprasensuous is the “primary image” [“*Vor-Bild*”]—παράδειγμα. And insofar as art necessarily has the realm of its presentation in the work, and the work in each case consists of a sensuous workable material such as the resonance of a word, a color, stone, wood, or clay, all art is concerned with the symbolic image, this word taken in its broad, metaphysical meaning.

Now because metaphysics has gone through essential transformations in its two thousand year history from Plato’s time up until Nietzsche, the relationship between the sensuous and the suprasensuous realms, and the determination of those realms themselves, must also have been configured in different ways—in such different ways that the Platonic distinction and hierarchy of the sensuous and the suprasensuous finally became reversed. To the rich inner transformation of the essence of metaphysics, which for us follows an as yet concealed law of a concealed history and is in no way the monstrous outgrowth of arbitrary and changing views of individual thinkers and their “particular” standpoints, to this transformation of the essence of metaphysics there also corresponds a transformation of art in terms of its essence as symbolic image.

That is why, for example, Greek vase paintings, wall paintings from Pompeii, Reichenauer frescoes from the Ottonian era, the paintings by Giotto, a painting by Dürer, and a picture by C. D. Friedrich, are not only different according to their style, for the style is itself of a different metaphysical essence. What actuality is in Dürer’s picture “The Columbine” is determined differently from what is actual in a medieval fresco; more precisely, the two works of art bring what is actual to appear in an image in different senses of actuality. Yet these essentially different kinds of actuality still maintain themselves within the fundamental traits of the metaphysical structuring of the world. Whenever, for example, in contrast to Plato, the individual, actual thing, which can be perceived sensuously, is grasped as what is properly “real” and art sets itself the task of bringing what is actual to appear “realistically,” “naturalistically,” in its particularity and proper peculiarity, then even in the most extreme naturalism the first and sole matter of concern is not to depict an actual, individual thing, but rather to depict precisely actuality as it is. The actuality of the actual, of a landscape, for example, is not something that comes to the fore within the landscape, like the individual tree or the individual stone or the individual wisp of cloud; rather, the actuality of the actual is itself something nonsensuous. Even where the Platonic “devaluation” of the sensuous does not take place, there still is Platonism, there still is metaphysics.

On the other hand, we can readily see that a peculiar relationship to art results from Plato’s original interpretation of the world, of which he speaks in Book Ten of the *Republic*: ἡ γραφικὴ καὶ ὄλως ἡ μιμητικὴ (τέχνη) πόρρω . . . τῆς ἀληθείας . . . (X, 603a): “Those ways of producing and bringing about that are concerned with the engraving of lines and features, and in general with anything image-like, are remote from the truth,” that is, from that which truly is. That which truly is can be properly grasped only in purely nonsensuous thinking. Thinking, philosophy, stands higher than art. Nietzsche then says the reverse: Art is worth more than “truth” (*The Will to Power*, No. 853), that is, worth more than those beings that truly are in thinking. And as a consequence, Nietzsche designates his own philosophy as inverted Platonism. Because Platonism is metaphysics, so too is Nietzsche’s philosophy metaphysics.

With regard to the essence of art understood metaphysically in terms of symbolic images, the representations and concepts of allegory, symbol, simile, metaphor, and even the talk of “illusion,” of the “language of forms” of an art work, have acquired a special role in the interpretation of art works, and especially in the interpretation of poetic art. We might also interpret poetry such as Hölderlin’s river poems in terms of symbolic images, in keeping with our accustomed dependence on such ways of representation. The rivers are “symbols” of some other actuality, assuming

that these river poems are not simply depictions of landscapes, which evidently they are not intended to be.

Yet if Hölderlin's hymnal poetry is a naming, and if naming first elevates and poetizes what is named into its essence, then the river poems cannot be poems "about" rivers, in which the rivers are already familiar in their essence and are taken as images or emblems signifying something else. This is why we are claiming that Hölderlin's river poetry, indeed his hymnal poetry as a whole, is not concerned with symbolic images. This entails the wider claim that this poetic art is not metaphysical. To the extent that, according to the strict Western conception of art, art exists only as metaphysical art, Hölderlin's poetry, if it is no longer metaphysical, is no longer "art" either. The essence of art and of metaphysics are not sufficient to lend this poetry the essential space appropriate to it. If it is not metaphysical, however, then this poetry is not "philosophy" either; for since Plato, all thinking that has been called "philosophy" is metaphysics.

The statement that Hölderlin's poetry is not concerned with symbolic images may, however, initially be taken only as a remark that should help us become attentive to this one river poem, "The Ister," and to hear more clearly what is said in that poem. According to the claim we have just made, Hölderlin's river poetry does not conceive of the river as the "image" of some cryptic sense lurking somewhere behind it. The river is not a symbol or emblem. Yet the Ister hymn itself says the following (l. 49ff.):

. . . Umsonst nicht gehn
Im Troknen die Ströme. Aber wie? Sie sollen nemlich
Zur Sprache seyn. Ein Zeichen braucht es, . . .
. . . Not in vain do
Rivers run in the dry. Yet how? Namely, they are
To be to language. A sign is needed. . . .

Does this not tell us clearly and straightforwardly that the rivers belong "to language," and are thus "expression," and that they are "signs," that is, emblems that signify something else? The poet himself thus attests to the fact that his poetry is concerned with symbolic images. And not only here in relation to the rivers. We need only think of the beginning of another hymn, entitled "Mnemosyne." "Mnemosyne" is the name of a Titan who then became the mother of the muses. "Mnemosyne," that is, she who gathers in thoughtful remembrance, she who thinks commemoratively [*die Gedenkende, die An-denkende*]. The hymn "Mnemosyne" (IV, 225) begins:

Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos
Schmerzlos sind wir und haben fast
Die Sprache in der Fremde verloren.

We are a sign that is not read
Without pain we are and have almost
Lost our tongue in foreign parts.

Again there is a "sign," again we find "language" and "expression." Taking such evidence into consideration, how can anyone dare to deny that the essence of Hölderlin's poetry is concerned with symbolic images? Or are we here faced with the necessity of having to think otherwise, and not in terms of the "symbolic image," what "sign" and "language" mean? However our decision may turn out, this much is initially clear: without clarifying the essence of the rivers, without any knowledge of what "sign" and "language" mean here, we must remain deaf to Hölderlin's poetry. This deafness is certainly not some harmless inability to hear; it is a failure to hearken and an inability to hearken obediently—an entanglement in an essential disobedience and in an unwitting rebellion against whatever turns counter to our habitual representations, wishes, and pretensions.

We first of all ask: What does Hölderlin tell us of the rivers? Line 15 of the Ister hymn reads:

Hier aber wollen wir bauen.
Here, however, we wish to build.

The river gives us a possible "here"—a locale; in giving the locale, the river prevails over the essence of the locale, that is, its locality. Who those are who say "Here, however, we wish to build," at first remains obscure. Presumably they are human beings, or beings akin to humans.

§6. *The rivers as "vanishing" and "full of intimation"* in "Voice of the People"

In the first two strophes of the poem "Voice of the People," it is said of the rivers:

Um unsre Weisheit unbekümmert
Rauschen die Ströme doch auch, und dennoch
Wer liebt sie nicht? und immer bewegen sie
Das Herz mir, hör ich ferne die Schwindenden
Die Ahnungsvollen, meine Bahn nicht
Aber gewisser ins Meer hin eilen.

Unconcerned with our wisdom
The rivers still rush on, and yet

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

We indeed labor in vain over these lines if we fail to think the first two strophes in terms of the poem as a whole, and moreover with respect to the way in which Hölderlin changed the second version compared to the first. But since we must for the moment pass over this poem, we can mention only in passing what Hölderlin tells us of the rivers here, and do so from an obscurity that is almost impossible to overcome.

The rivers are unconcerned with human wisdom because they have their own knowledge, the "river spirit" that lets them hasten along their own proper path. They are thus remote and foreign to humans. And it is almost as though their flowing and tearing tore itself free from every relation to human beings:

Und dennoch, wer liebt sie nicht? . . .
 And yet, who loves them not? . . .

Thus there is indeed a belonging to the rivers, a going along with them. It is precisely that which tears onward more surely in the rivers' own path that tears human beings out of the habitual midst of their lives, so that they may be in a center outside of themselves, that is, be excentric. The prelude to inhering in the excentric midst of human existence, this "centric" and "central" abode in the excentric, is love. The sphere proper to standing in the excentric middle of life is death. The vanishing rivers, full of intimation, do not take the path of human beings. This "not" stands abruptly at the end of the seventh line. And yet, in this separation there is announced something of the extraordinary^[9] way "in which god and human are paired, and the power of nature <the holy>¹ and what is most intrinsic to human beings become limitlessly One in anger" (V, 181). The rivers' intimative vanishing along their own path is like an abandonment of the realm of the human landscape, it is like an unfaithfulness toward that landscape. "And yet, who loves them not?" It almost seems as though the spirit of the river could best be retained in the form of such vanishing, as though thoughtful remembrance proper [*das eigentliche Andenken*] belonged to this enigmatic unfaithfulness. Here, strange perspectives are opened up into the essential and sole way in which it is possible to seize the "power of nature" and the "spirit of the river," namely by a going along with them,

1. <the holy> added by Heidegger.

a going along with them, however, that in turn does not take their path and thus makes way for it. (Hölderlin, meditating on the essence of the tragic in Greek tragedy, on one occasion writes the following: "It is a great resource of the secret working of the soul that at the highest state of consciousness it makes way for consciousness and that, before the god that is present actually seizes it, the soul encounters this god with a bold, and often even blasphemous word, thus maintaining the sacred, living potential of spirit"; V, 255.)

At first, we can see more clearly only this: the rivers themselves, in their flowing, are oriented in a twofold direction. As vanishing, the river is underway into what has been. As full of intimation, it proceeds into what is coming. The river is a singular kind of journey, insofar as it simultaneously proceeds into what has been and what is to come. Although we must here give thought to the fact that intimation^[10] does not simply relate to that which is coming, but at the same time relates to that which has been. Likewise, vanishing proceeds not simply into what has been, but equally into what is to come. Certainly, according to habitual opinion, we only ever have an intimation of what is to come. What has been, however, also lets itself be intimated. We attain what has been *as* that which has been, and thus *as* that which essentially prevails, only in inner recollection.^[11] Yet inner recollection proper is an intimating; for genuine inner recollection does not exhaust itself in merely returning to something bygone and remaining there, becoming ossified in such remaining with whatever is bygone. So long as recollection merely gazes at something bygone, it is not yet inner recollection at all. It does not pursue that which turns inward^[12] in whatever has been, nor does it take whatever turns inward in its relation to the inner middle from which recollection itself comes. Recollection, when nongenuine, remains stuck to the outer surface of whatever is "inwardly recollected," to its merely being bygone, and it relates this outer surface in turn only to whatever is currently present, which itself is only that which is turned outward in what now properly is.

Genuine inner recollection is a turning toward what is undisclosed and turned inward in what has been. Genuine inner recollection is intimation. Perhaps inner recollection is indeed a more originary intimating than that intimating which merely has a premonition of something coming. And inner recollection would be altogether the *most profound* intimation when that which is to come, that with which intimation is otherwise concerned, comes out of what has been. Intimating, and especially those who are full of intimation, extend and proceed simultaneously into what is coming and what has been. Similarly, however, the vanishing of those who vanish is not simply a crude vanishing into whatever is finished and bygone. Vanishing can also be an inconspicuous passing away into what is coming, into

a decisive belonging to whatever is coming. Such vanishing into what is coming does not turn its back on what has been. Rather, such vanishing is intimately entrusted with what has been from out of the fullness of its own proper essence, so that vanishing into what is coming has no need whatsoever of any belated turning toward what has been.

The river is simultaneously vanishing and full of intimation in a double sense. What is proper to the river is thus the essential fullness of a journey. The river is a journey in a singular and consummate way.

We name the consummate essence of the journey [*Wanderung*] a journeying [*Wanderschaft*], corresponding to the locality [*Ortschaft*] of the locale [*Ort*]. The river is the journeying. We are not saying that it is an “image” of journeying, for instance, of humans journeying on their path from birth to death. This path can also be interpreted in a Christian manner, as a passage through the earthly realm, which is regarded as a vale of tears. Such passage is then the meeting of demands through whose fulfillment the kingdom of heaven is earned. What we here name journeying with respect to the rivers is fundamentally different from this Christian representation of an earthly path taken by human beings. This journeying that the river itself *is* determines the way in which human beings come to be at home upon this earth. Yet when Hölderlin says “earth,” he is not at all referring to the “earthly realm” understood in a metaphysical or Christian way, a realm that, as a transitory, preliminary stage to the eternal, remains precisely something to be surpassed, given up, and thereby “lost.” The journeying that the river *is* prevails, and does so essentially, in its vocation of attaining the earth as the “ground” of the homely.

One hymn poetized by Hölderlin bears the title “The Journey” [*Die Wanderung*]. In the eighth strophe (IV, 170) Hölderlin says (l. 92ff.):

Unfreundlich ist, und schwer zu gewinnen,
Die Verslossene, der ich entkommen, die Mutter.
Von ihren Söhnen einer, der Rhein,
Mit Gewalt wollt er ans Herz ihr stürzen und schwand
Der Zurückgestossene, niemand weiss, wohin in die Ferne.

Unfriendly, and difficult to attain
Is the closed one from whom I come, the mother.
One of her sons, the Rhine,
Wished to rush to her heart with force and vanished
The rejected one, no one knows whereto, into the distance.

Once again we find the river’s vanishing and flowing in relation to attaining mother earth. And the same relation is named in the third strophe of the Ister hymn. This is attested by the name “Hertha”—Nerthus, the Ger-

manic name for *terra mater*—“mother earth.” Journeying determines our coming to be at home upon the earth. If one were to interpret the essence of this journey upon the earth as a doctrine pertaining to this life, in contrast to the Christian doctrine of a life beyond, then one would remain wedded to the metaphysical realm and stuck in a mere reversal. Those metaphysical perspectives dealing merely with life “on this side” are entirely dependent upon the denial of a life beyond, that is, everything moves within the distinction between the sensuous and the suprasensuous, a distinction that has already been decided and is interrogated no further. When, in “How the ‘true world’ finally became a fable,”^[13] Nietzsche says that with the downfall of a “true,” suprasensuous world, the sensuous world of semblance also disappears, he by no means escapes from this distinction that sustains all metaphysics. He merely transposes it into the sensuous itself, in positing “values” and “ideas” as conditions of the will to power. Hölderlin’s “earth,” however, which is presumed to be on this side of life, is not the “earthly” in the Christian or metaphysical sense, if only because the earth is divine. And it is divine, again, not in the Christian or metaphysical sense of being created by God. Becoming homely and dwelling upon the earth are of another essence. We may approach it in giving thought to the essence of the rivers. The river is the locality for dwelling. The river is the journeying of becoming homely. To put it more clearly: the river is that very locality that is attained in and through the journeying.

REVIEW

We considered the first two strophes of the poem “Voice of the People” in order to assist us in hearing a word of Hölderlin’s concerning the rivers. The poem we shall leave to itself. The two available versions, conceived around 1800/01, show the many dimensions of Hölderlin’s thought. We cannot go into this here. The very difference between the two versions would require consideration in its own right. The difference does not simply amount to the fact that the second version includes a myth, emulating Pindar. What is decisive is the different shaping of the two final strophes, which in deviating from one another, complement each other in a peculiar way and in their unity first tell us how Hölderlin thinks the essence of the “Voice of the People.” Why the rivers are named in the same way in both versions, and how we are to think the connection between the rivers and the path of the people, is something we can perceive only once we have attained a clear knowledge of the essence of the rivers. The following remark concerning the essence of the rivers may therefore serve, at least indirectly, to clarify the said poem.

The rivers vanish and are full of intimation. Their path goes into what has been and what is to come, yet in such a way that the rivers are that which has been, and that which is to come as well. Because vanishing can also be directed into what is to come, and intimating into what has been, this naming of the rivers testifies to their rich, yet originally unitary essence, which we encapsulate in the name “journeying.” This does not, however, refer to the journeying “of” the rivers as one property among others that pertain to them, which would mean that they would still be rivers without this. Rather, as rivers, they are precisely this: journeying. And if we then proceed to ask who or what is journeying here, or is undertaking such journeying, then initially we can give no answer; for the assertion that it is the rivers that journey is indeed correct yet is not an answer, because it appeals tacitly and indeterminately to an experiential image of those rivers actually named. It presupposes such an image in its answer, instead of now giving thought to the fact that the essence of the rivers as rivers is first to be perceived from out of the journeying. The river is the journeying of human beings as historical in their coming to be at home upon this earth. As, for example, the name “Hertha” indicates, Hölderlin thinks the earth as goddess. Hölderlin does not think the earth in the Christian sense of the “earthly,” as something created by the one and only God of creation and to which this same God as redeemer descended in human form. It is easy, of course, to say that for Hölderlin the earth is “mother earth,” and that “mother earth” is a goddess. Ever since Norbert von Hellingrath opened the Germans’ eyes to Hölderlin’s poetry, the danger of talking about “Hölderlin and his gods” just as one talks about any other literary subject in the field of literary studies has also increased. And because, instead of reading the works of poets and thinkers, it has become the custom merely to read books “about” them, or even excerpts from such books, there is the even more acute danger of the opinion setting in that the gods in Hölderlin’s poetry could be ascertained and discussed via literary means. It makes no essential difference whether one also calls upon Christian theology for assistance and expounds the view that Hölderlin’s doctrine concerning the gods is a fallen version of the one, true Christian monotheism, or whether one “explains” these gods with the aid of Greek mythology and its Roman variations. What is so insidious about this often well-intended zealotry is that it keeps to the facts. Gods do appear in Hölderlin’s poetry. The poet speaks of them. Let us investigate what he has to say about them. What can be more convincing than facts and the reporting of facts?

As though this poetic naming of the gods were played out in an indifferent and accessible realm, such as the realm that these zealous investigators bring with them, which coincides with the realm that metaphysics

has laid down for some two thousand years now with respect to nature, history, human beings, and God.

One might think that one day a precise, complete, philological, historiographical, theological, and metaphysical interpretation of Hölderlin’s poetry could bring together everything that Hölderlin says about the gods. That would by no means guarantee that a relation to the gods could spring from this. For, taken in itself, the interpretation of a poetic work does not even “achieve” a poetic understanding, granted that such understanding could in general be “brought about” in any way. And yet poetic knowing is the fundamental prerequisite for hearing the poetic word concerning the gods.

If, from time to time, we are forced to talk of the “gods” and “goddesses” in our remarks on Hölderlin’s poetry, then we must not let this give the illusory impression that we are enlightened about this in the way that an academic must be enlightened concerning that about which he is speaking. The names “gods” and “goddesses” here merely make evident our lack of knowledge, if not indeed something more fateful, more needful.

Yet how do things stand concerning the rivers? They are not gods. They are not humans. They are not occurrences of nature, nor are they parts of the landscape. Nor, indeed, are they “symbolic images” of the “earthly journey” of human beings. To say what the rivers in each instance are *not* is of little avail, yet it is of some help. Initially, what emerges is that any determination of the essence of the rivers must appear alienating. Our claim is this: the river is the locality of the dwelling of human beings as historical upon this earth. The river is the journeying of a historical coming to be at home at the locale of this locality. The river is locality and journeying.

§7. The river as the locality of journeying and the journeying of locality

The river is the locality of journeying. Yet the river is also the journeying of locality. Such statements make it sound as though empty words were being strung together and exchanged, a procedure that only increases further the already existing indeterminacy of their meaning and of the essence to which they refer. This illusion of a mere playing with words cannot be overcome immediately. We must even concede that such statements cannot be understood directly at all in the way that we understand the assertion that today is Tuesday. The said statements are always incomprehensible within a certain realm of comprehension, and there is an essential reason for this. The incomprehensibility of such statements is not grounded in some contingent lack of a knowledge that would be otherwise

attainable. Even those who once understand such statements are not able to understand them at any hour whatsoever. We are excluded from comprehending such statements so long as the appropriation of an essential transformation in our essence has not “occurred” [*sich “ereignet”*].

Yet why then do we pronounce such statements? In order to prepare such a transformation, or rather, simply so that we may know that the river is an “enigma” [*Rätsel*].

a) The river an “enigma”—poetic mindfulness and presuming

We are here using this name, *Rätsel*, “enigma,”^[14] in its former, originary meaning. According to this meaning, an “enigma” refers to something concealed that we care about when “giving counsel” [*Raten*],^[15] that is, when giving careful thought to it. An enigma is always—if we may say such a thing—a holy enigma. This is the way in which Hölderlin uses the word when, in the Rhine hymn (IV, 173), he says (l. 46): “. . . Enigma is that which has purely sprung forth.” In everyday language, the name *Rätsel* merely has the meaning of a hidden connection, hidden, that is, from our understanding, that is, tricky—a connection that provides our empty acumen with an opportunity to perform its tricks or to give itself headaches (as in a “crossword puzzle” [*Kreuzworträtsel*]). Presumably, a more profound relation lies concealed here, such that modern human beings, even in the vacuous hours of their metaphysical boredom, when they do not know what to do with themselves, still take refuge in enigmas, if only in puzzles of this kind.

The enigma proper, however, is that to which giving counsel [*Raten*] belongs. “Counsel” [*Rat*] means as much as “care” [*Sorge*]. In the word “counsel” we tend to hear only the more shallow meaning of counsel, which relates to utility: giving advice, that is, a practical directive. To give counsel, however, properly means: to take into care, to retain therein that which we care about, and thus to ground our belonging to it. Elsewhere, to give counsel means almost the opposite: to convey a directive and then to take leave of whomever has been counseled. The original force of meaning of the word “counsel” [*Rat*] comes to light in Hölderlin’s hymn “Germania,” namely in the closing lines, which, however, are to be thought only in terms of the full truth of the hymn as a whole. The poet calls upon “Germania,” the “priestess” and her feast days, and concludes by saying to her (l. 109ff.):

Bei deinen Feiertagen
Germania, wo du Priesterin bist
Und wehrlos Rath giebst rings
Den Königen und den Völkern.

At your feast days
Germania, where you are priestess
And defenselessly give counsel
Around the kings and peoples.
(IV, 185)

Taking into care the land of evening round about, namely for that moment when the eagle of old, “who comes from the Indus,” soars over the Alps and brings Germania tidings of the highest, which say (l. 62f.):

“Du bist es, auserwählt
“Allliebend und ein schweres Glück
“Bist du zu tragen stark geworden.

“It is you, the chosen one
“All-loving and a grave good fortune
“Have you gained strength to bear.
(IV, 183)

These hints may suffice to let us think more carefully the names *Rat* and *Rätsel*, at least within the sphere of our present deliberations. The river is a *Rätsel*, an enigma. We should not wish to “solve” it. Yet we must try to bring the enigma as enigma closer to us. To this end, we choose the distinctly unpoetic assertion: The river is the locality of journeying. The river is the journeying of locality.

The river is the locality of journeying because it determines the “over there” [*Dort*] and the “there” [*Da*] at which our becoming homely arrives, yet from which, as a coming to be at home, it also takes its departure. The river does not merely grant the locale, in the sense of the mere place, that is occupied by humans in their dwelling. The locale is intrinsic to the river itself. The river itself dwells.

At the beginning of the second strophe of the Ister hymn, we are told of the Ister itself: “Beautiful he dwells.” Insofar as the river itself dwells in the locale of human dwelling, it, in its dwelling, guards this locale in its essence, it *is* its locality. Yet the river is equally essentially the journeying of locality. The essence of the locale, in which becoming homely finds its point of departure and its point of entry, is such that it journeys. The essence of this journeying is the river. The locale is both there and here, not according to some contingency, but under the concealed law of a journey. The locale is not something that is first there and then here, in a mere succession or arbitrary arrangement of places that are occupied and then relinquished. The previous locale remains preserved in the subsequent one. And the subsequent locale has already determined the previous one. This is why the “there” and the “here,” indeed the transition between the

two locales, are everywhere named by rivers. “Here” at the Ister, “there” from the Indus; and this “from there to here” passes via the Alpheus. The river determines the journey, and the relation grounded therein, the relation of those locales that have been brought about in journeying and thus themselves journey. The journey proceeds from the Indus, thus from the East, via Greece, here to the upper Donau toward the West. In actuality, however, the Donau flows precisely in the opposite direction. If, therefore, the river itself were the journeying from the land of morning to the land of evening, and were able to be this, then the Ister would have to run counter to the actual direction of its own flow. Yet the actual course of the Donau from West to East has been ascertained with such certainty that nothing needs to be said about it. At the beginning of the third strophe of the Ister hymn, however, we are told of the Ister:

Der scheint aber fast
Rückwärts zu gehen und
Ich mein, er müsse kommen
Von Osten.
Vieles wäre
Zu sagen davon.

He appears, however, almost
To go backwards and
I presume he must come
From the East.
There would be
Much to tell of this.

The watchful and guarded eye of the poet sees the river “going backwards,” but what is thus envisaged he can catch sight of only in a poetic vision. The words “He appears, however, almost . . .” are, as a line in this poem, to be thought poetically and do not, for instance, mean the following: It looks almost as though the river were going in the opposite direction, although in actuality this is “naturally” a mere illusion. Rather, thought poetically, this line is saying: The river in truth goes backwards. Such is its provenance. Yet to think such a thing is almost not to be ventured in human thought. A human being can only be mindful thereof.^[16] And for this reason, we are not permitted to decide about it by means of that insistent and vacuous assuredness with which we report facts and ascertain things in such a way as to cut short all discussion. Rather, the poet’s vision can only attempt to be mindful of the true flow of the river. Such vision must already pause before the initial, though genuine appearing of the enigma. “And I presume”—that is, “and to me it is thus,” that is, “I experience the necessity with which the river comes from the East.” That such being

mindful [*Vermuten*] and presuming [*Meinen*] does not mean making some willful assumption or arriving at some empty opinion or fleeting notion, but rather springs from the mindful courage and mind [*Mut und Gemüt*] of the fundamental poetic attunement, is said in the next two lines:

Vieles wäre
Zu sagen davon.

There would be
Much to tell of this.

There “would be much to tell”—namely, if it were now the time for this, were it not first necessary to bear and to bring to bear much else. We may not, therefore, measure this poetic knowledge of the river’s journeying—a knowing that runs counter to what is actually graspable and visible even so far as concerns the immediate appearance of the landscape—according to our cognitive knowledge of what is actual, a knowledge that ascertains “facts” and on the basis of whatever is “factual” pretends to be in possession of what is “true.” Poetic “presuming” has its own truth, and this truth in turn has its own measure. If we point this out, then such a pointer can readily fall prey to misinterpretation within the predominant perspective of modern thought. As far as our calculative knowledge of facts is concerned, art is an illusion: a playful allusion to an illusory world. Yet in its comprehensive claim to universal validity, modern calculative thought is much too calculating for it to be able to overlook the “value” of art understood as illusionistic. Even though art is indeed an illusion, it remains indispensable for spurring life into “activity.” Taken as indispensable in this sense, art too is something “actual” and may therefore be called true. In unison with those forces that come to be “deployed,” art has its own function, which here also means its own “truth.” Nietzsche, in his own ruthless way, already recognized and stated this two generations ago. As a consequence, Nietzsche thus quite correctly conceives the concept of “art” in such broad terms that even the art of statesmanship, that is, politics, is included under the concept of “art.” The Greek word for art is τέχνη. That Plato’s meditation on the essence of the beautiful leads into a discussion of the essence of τέχνη is decisive for the entire Western metaphysical interpretation of art and of its “truth.” Kant’s thoughts concerning the essence of the beautiful and of art are the same in kind and in their intent.

If, with respect to Hölderlin’s poetic mindfulness and presuming, we say that it has its own measure and essence of truth, then this is saying something quite different from what the modern, illusionistic, that is, metaphysical interpretation and calculative assessment of art presumes to say.

Wherein the essence of poetic truth consists and resides, in Hölderlin's sense, we can learn to intimate from the distinction between the poetic essence of the rivers and the actuality that everyday experience grants them. From the flow of the Donau from the East to the land of evening, a flow of which we can scarcely become mindful, we are first able to intimate something of the essence of journeying or of how the essence of the river is fulfilled in the journeying of locality. Yet the way in which becoming homely alone accomplishes this journeying in an unmistakable manner and remains far removed from any adventurous roaming is shown by the locality that is attained in journeying. For the journeying is not just oriented in the direction of the land of evening in a general and indeterminate manner. Rather, the "here" where those arrived from afar wish to dwell, and where the Ister itself "dwells beautiful," is the home of the poet. The second strophe of the Ister hymn tells us this:

... Es brennet der Säulen Laub,
 Und reget sich. Wild stehn
 Sie aufgerichtet, untereinander; darob
 Ein zweites Maas, springt vor
 Von Felsen das Dach. . . .
 . . .
 . . .
 . . . Darum zog jener lieber
 An die Wasserquellen hier und gelben Ufer,
 Hoch duftend oben, und schwarz
 Vom Fichtenwald, wo in den Tiefen
 Ein Jäger gern lustwandelt
 Mittags, und Wachstum hörbar ist
 An harzigen Bäumen des Isters, . . .
 . . . The foliage of the columns burns
 And stirs. Wild they stand
 Erect among one another; above
 A second measure, from rocks
 The roof juts out. . . .
 . . .
 . . . Whence that one preferred to travel
 To the water's sources here and yellow banks,
 Their scent wafting high above, and black
 With the forest of firs, within whose depths
 A hunter likes to roam
 At midday, and growth can be heard
 In the resinous trees of the Ister. . . .

We can determine this landscape accurately with respect to location and time: the poem is referring to the upper Donau valley between Beuron and Gutenstein at the beginning of autumn. So do we have here after all the depiction of a landscape, if not exactly a "realistic" depiction, then at least the portrayal of an "ideal landscape"?

Neither of these hits upon what is poetically true in this strophe. Yet it is not to be denied that the poet is referring to the one, sole, "actual" homely locale by the Donau. The actuality of what is actual here, however, cannot be grasped by our habitual concepts, which is why it is first necessary to think more clearly the essence of the river.

b) The unity of locality and journeying is not the clear and orderly unity of space and time determined in a calculative manner.

Remarks on the modern determination of what is actual

The river is at once locality and journeying in a concealed and originary unity. Such originary unity is different from the kind of unity that comes afterwards, merely unifying whatever is already present at hand by bringing things together. By contrast, originary unity first lets that which is unitary spring forth, yet without it springing free from the ground of this unity.

Are we given any foothold from which we could attain a more secure grasp of the originary unity of locality and journeying? Locality and journeying are here evidently not two items that are simply stuck together; rather, the one belongs to the other. Yet how? Locale and journey belong together like "space and time." For every locale, after all, is a position "in space," and to journey is to follow a sequence of steps. Such succession takes its course in "time." The sequence of "moments," in this case the sequence of individual "now-points," has, after all, from time immemorial been named a "flowing." It is presumably no accident that we speak of the "flow of time." Hölderlin himself, in the course of important meditations, speaks of the "time that tears" (V, 178), just as one also speaks of being "torn along" by the "flow." Similarly, he refers to time as "meandering" (ibid., 256). Meandering is here meant as journeying and proceeding, yet also as changing (being taken away). The unity of locality and journeying would therefore have to be traced back to the unity of "space and time." We are "well-traveled" and "well-versed" in this realm. We do not need to refer at great length to the achievements of the technological era or the world picture belonging to it in order to show that we "get the picture" about the "spatio-temporal world," and that, via our calculations and machinery, we have such convincing power over its "spaces" and "times" that the space of our planet is shrinking and the annual seasons and years of human life are being condensed into diminutive numerical values for the purposes of our calculative planning far in advance. We

speak of our thoughts of conquering space and of time-lapse. "Conquering" and "lapse" are names for a unitary will to control space and time. What is more evident and unquestionable here than the unity of "space and time"? The conjunction of the two terms has already become a commonplace. Without our giving any thought to those procedures that have assured us of the certain and continued existence of the conventional unity of space and time, we make use of this unity. It suffices here to point out in a cursory manner that in the unfolding of the modern world picture, that is, in terms of the mathematical and technical projection of inanimate nature, the aspect of "order" came to be essential with respect to whatever is actual. "Order" here means the calculable accountability of everything actual to everything else that is actual, of every relation between actual things to every other relation, of every relational relation to every other relational relation. Order here means calculable and ordered relationality. Whatever is subject to order must be posited in advance in such a way, and can be posited only in such a way, that it becomes accessible for such order and can be controlled by it.

To this end, "space" itself becomes reduced to "coordinates": x , y , z —"coordinates" meaning lines of ordered relationality. These coordinates, thought analytically, that is, arithmetically and algebraically, are at the same time numbers that, as they change, in each case determine the location of whatever spatial element is selected in each instance. If the spatial element is thought of as being in motion, that is, as something that constantly changes its location "in the succession of time," then a fourth coordinate, namely one-dimensional "time," becomes necessary for the complete ordering of the thing that is in motion. It is only most recently that the decisive step was taken of conceiving of time as a "world-line," and of ordering it as a fourth dimension by relation to the spatial coordinates. The four-dimensional spatio-temporal world, and it alone, determines every worldly element as such an element. Yet for calculative observation, something *is* what it is only through what it performs. And performance, that is, labor per unit of time, is determined in terms of the product of force and distance divided by time. The actuality of whatever is actual is determined, that is, measured, in terms of the magnitude of its actual effect. And the magnitude of the actual effect is not some mere property of whatever is actual but is itself that which alone is valid as actual. What is actual is nothing other than the quantum of actual effect. Only an effective magnitude thus determined and determinable is something actual. More precisely, it is in terms of the actual, thus determined, that all "actuality" is thought.

All modern thinking concerning whatever is actual in any way is a thinking in terms of order, in the sense of a relationally ordering thinking. Performance is ordered by relation to performance, labor by relation to

labor. The name for human activity and endeavor, *arbeit*, comes to refer to the performance of mechanical force. Labor [*Arbeit*] is equated with mechanical energy. "Labor" becomes a well-defined, physical concept in the nineteenth century. Conversely, the predominance of the physical conception of labor with respect to its essential, technological significance has an effect upon the way in which human labor is determined as "performance." The performative principle is an essential principle of human action and comportment.

In Latin, to perform and accomplish is called *fungere*. *Functio* is accomplishment and performance, that which a process yields and provides as its result. The actuality of what is actual consists in its actually effecting, that is, in its actual effectiveness, which is to say, in its performance, in its function. What is actual is no longer that which rests and resides and subsists within itself, namely substance, but rather function. Already in the last century, philosophy clearly recognized and spoke of the transformation of the concept of substance into the concept of function. To the extent that whatever is actual is conceived as function, and at the same time subjected to mathematical and technical calculability, mathematical thinking must also become transformed accordingly.

The beginning of the modern era gives rise to the calculation of flux and of function, a calculating that, metaphysically speaking, is ordered in relation to the actuality of nature as a functional nexus of actual effects in space and time. The entirety of whatever is actual is a system of mutually dependent, functional changes of state. $a = f(b)$. a is nothing other than a function of b . "To be" means nothing other than to be a function and to be a functionary of b . Similarly, to be a cause of something (causality), the actual effecting of whatever has an effect, that is, the actuality of whatever is actual, is thought "functionally." Kant was the first to bring this conception of causality, that is, of effecting, to a philosophical concept: "to be caused *by* something" means: to succeed this "something" in temporal succession in accordance with a definite rule. "Ends" too are only a kind of cause, and purposiveness is a cause-effect relationship that must be capable of being subjected to functionalization.

Because this world order continues to be reconfirmed within its own realm through whatever has been ordered, and because it is becoming increasingly confirmed through the amassing of successful results, the fundamental traits of this ordering, and it itself above all, must appear as something that requires no further confirmation. And this, in part, is what is metaphysically decisive in the transformation of the Western concept of actuality and of being: the fact that the fundamental traits of the ordering of the "four-dimensional world," namely, space and time, both space and time and their coupling, belong to what is unquestioned. The only thing

that is ever questionable is how we can measure and fathom and exploit the world as quickly as possible, as securely as possible, and as completely as possible.

As a consequence of the calculability of spatio-temporal relations of order, space itself, and time itself, together with their unity, are considered to be so clear that any further attempt to undertake to explain them is merely frowned upon, especially since such an "explanation" would yield no useful result. A meditation on the essence of time, for example, accomplishes nothing in terms of improving our apparatus for measuring time, which is why a meditation on the essence of time is rightly counted as one of those things that produces no results. And there are similar grounds pertaining to *that* stance that says that whatever is not worth inquiring into any further in a calculative manner is simply not worthy of inquiry at all. Thus, the sphere of whatever is intrinsically clear comes to be delimited by that which one has already tacitly unified so as to no longer have to think about it. In this sense, space and time are something clear for all those manners of comportment that control space and time. And this is why we also find it "in order" to trace locale and journey, spatial position and change of position, back to "space and time." Their unity, after all, has been adequately demonstrated by their common essence of being coordinates, forms of relational ordering for the world order. And yet a single step of thinking is already enough to destroy this semblance of clarity.

REVIEW

Excursus on technology as the locus of "truth" that determines the essence of whatever is actual

What are the rivers in Hölderlin's hymnal poetry? In what respects and in what way must we think the Ister hymn so as to grasp the essence of the Ister as a river in its poetic truth? Are those respects in which we are to think it at our immediate disposal?

The river determines the being at home of human beings as historical in their coming to be at home. The river is the locality of the locale of the home. The river at the same time determines the becoming of human beings as historical in their being at home. The river is the journeying of that journey in which the becoming of being at home has its essence. The river is not simply one of these (locality) and then the other (journeying) in addition. The river is both, and is so in an originary unity. Human beings, as historical, are grounded in relation to this essence of the river. Perhaps it is in this essence of the river in general that something of the

historicality of human beings as historical is first unveiled. Yet the river is not a "symbolic image" of "human life." It is not a symbolic image at all. On the contrary, we must presumably learn to look toward the historicality of human beings and its essential ground if we wish to grasp the essential scope of the river and its fullness.

When we speak of "human beings" here and throughout these remarks, we always mean the essence of the historical human beings of that history to which we ourselves belong: the essence of Western humankind. "Human beings" means neither "human beings in general," "universal humanity," nor indeed mere "individual" human beings, nor even some form or other in which several or many human beings are united. Yet in the concept of the essence of Western humankind we also necessarily, and therefore always, think those essential relations within which this humankind stands: the relation to world, the relation to earth, the relation to the gods and to alternative gods and false gods. These relations are not, however, simply added on to "human beings" in addition to "their" being human; rather, to be human is in itself to be the unity of this configuration. The becoming homely of human beings thus in itself comprises this full essence of being human. And it is to this alone that the essence of the river relates.

The river is locality and journeying. The enigmatic unity of these essential determinations may be expressed in a formulaic manner in the following statements: The river is the locality of journeying. The river is the journeying of locality. These formulae evoke the impression that we are referring to entirely empty, universal relations. Contrary to this appearance, and in accordance with the word of the hymns, we must think definite and singular relations whose singularity is expressed clearly by way of the proper names that are named in the poem "The Ister." "Hertha" is the Germanic name for mother earth. We are told specifically of the homeliness of the earth in the second strophe. The name "Indus" is named. "Hercules," one of the Greek heroes, is named, the "Isthmus of Corinth" and the river "Alpheus." Heracles here appears in a very obscure relation to the Donau. Greece and the homeland of the upper Donau valley stand in a relation that is clearly named and yet presents an enigma. The Ister has "invited" Hercules from the Isthmus "as a guest." The locales and the journey, the back-and-forth between the foreign and the homely, are poetized in the poem. Yet these relations are alien for us. And we are scarcely offered any immediate foothold we could latch onto in order to illuminate them. All of this forces us almost to pursue locality and journeying in terms of those relations that we can initially grasp in them.

Locale is a spatial determination. Journey, movement, takes its course in time. If locality and journeying indeed belong together in such an originary manner as we have asserted, then the belonging together of

space and time suggests itself as that which must thoroughly govern the unity of locale and journey. How do things stand concerning "space and time"? We do not need to first construct a formula for their unity. Their togetherness—"space and time"—has long been routine for us. Indeed, this routine character took on a form that enabled the modern determination and control of nature and of "history" to become firmly established. The "world" of nature is a four-dimensional spatio-temporal world, wherein time (t), added to the three spatial coordinates x , y , z , forms the fourth path along which the relational ordering of locations and sequences of movement can extend. Yet we need mention only the airplane and the radio in order to see at once that not only are both machines devices that have arisen in the context of modern natural science, but that they are also determining the course of the most recent history of the modern era. For it is by no means the case that it is simply the same processes previously introduced and dealt with by means of the rural postman and the mail coach that are now being accomplished using other means. Rather, the airplane and the radio are intrinsically, that is, in terms of their machine essence and in terms of the extensive scope of their essence, determining the new leeway for playing out possibilities that can be planned and accomplished through human willpower and for its putting things into effect.

The machine of modern technology is essentially distinct from every kind of "tool" not only insofar as it has its own sequence of effects and its own way of producing energy and is thereby a different means in the hand of human beings. What is distinctive about modern technology is that it is no longer a mere "means" at all, and no longer merely stands in the "service" of something else, but that it itself is unfolding a kind of domination of its own. Technology itself demands of itself and for itself, and indeed intrinsically develops, its own kind of discipline and its own kind of awareness of conquest. Thus, for example, the fabrication of factories for the purpose of fabricating fabricated products, namely machines that themselves in turn fabricate machines, in short, the construction of a machine tool factory, constitutes a singular triumph that occurs in stages. The fascinating side of this process can, especially in conjunction with the discipline pertaining to technology, cover over to a large extent the "misery" into which human beings are thrust by technologization. Perhaps there is no longer any such "misery" for those human beings who are completely technological. Conceived metaphysically, modern machine technology is a specific kind of "truth," in terms of which the essence of the actuality of everything actual is determined. The machine that belongs to such technology is different from a "tool," for technology itself is self-subsistent.

One could counter this by saying that technology, as the control of space and time, is surely never undertaken for its own sake, and is therefore by no means an end in itself. And if it is not the end itself, then it can and indeed must remain only a "means." Such considerations, which sound plausible to our common understanding, are nonetheless erroneous. For who says that something that is not a means necessarily has to be an end, and conversely, that whatever is not an end can only be held to have the character of a means? Who says that this end-means relationship is immediately adequate at all as the either/or into which the determination of modern technology has to be forced? The question as to whether modern technology is a means or an end is erroneous already as a question, because it utterly fails to grasp the essence of modern technology. And we fail to grasp this essence because we accept without question precisely that which underpins it, namely, the spatio-temporal order and the unity of space and time.

This same lack of questioning concerning space and time and their unity, which has now become a formula, is what offers itself to us as an immediate place of refuge with whose aid we might determine the unity of locality and journeying and thereby locality and journeying themselves in what is peculiar to them. It is because we have a high degree of machinelike security in our control over spatio-temporal relations that the widespread appearance has arisen that we are also certain of the essence of space and time. Because for physicists and technologists the four-dimensional manifold x , y , z , t remains what is unquestioned in physics and technology, and indeed must remain so, it looks as though the unity of space and time is something that not only requires no interrogation but indeed no longer admits of any questioning. Yet this security of what is unquestioned here is merely an illusion. A few steps are sufficient to destroy this illusion.

§8. *The questionableness of the metaphysical representation of space and time*

We ask: What is, and how is, the self-evident within which we move and which we call space and time? Are space and time something "objective"—present at hand in the manner of "objects," like some gigantic containers in which all possible spatial and temporal positions are accommodated? In that case, where—and that at once means, in what space—is the container itself that we call "space"? And "when" (at what time) is the container itself that we call time? Or is space itself to be found nowhere, and time itself not to be found at any time?

So long as we continue to think space and time as appearing within a space and a time, we are not yet thinking space itself or time itself. We

must therefore refrain from thinking space and time as objects “among” other objects. Space and time are not “objects.” If, however, they are nothing objectlike or objective, what possibility then remains of determining their essence? Whatever is neither objective nor an object and yet still *is*, can only be a subject and something subjective, that is, can only be by virtue of the representational activity of the subject. Space and time are forms of representation in accordance with which we human beings grasp objects and objectively given sequences of events, and indeed do so every time we “order” them. Is space—over which wars erupt between peoples—then merely something that human beings subjectively imagine, and not something “somewhere” present at hand “in itself”? And is the time that tears us along and tears us away merely a subjective representation? We are reluctant to take space and time as merely “subjective” constructs. Yet if space and time are more than subjective forms of representation, and if they are nothing like objects either—if, that is, space and time can neither be something objective nor something subjective, what then are they, if they are at all? Whatever the case, they are something that cannot be accommodated within the schema of “either objective”—“or subjective.” And in that case the unity of space and time cannot consist in space and time being thought together in the representational activity of the thinking subject either, as is the custom.

Yet how, then, do space and time end up in this unity that, after all, is so commonplace? And if space and time truly are, are they something that first came about and came to be? What is their origin? Here, one question leads to another. In place of the clarity and unquestionable nature of the unity of space and time, there arises a singular obscurity worthy of questioning. Let us now recall the assertions we made above that seemed so evident: (1) Locality and journeying are merely particular appearances, cases, so to speak, of the individuation of location and temporal flow, particular instances of spatial and temporal relations. (2) Space and time are familiar and clear to us. If we now think about these assertions, we see that pointing to space and time fails to enlighten us concerning locality and journeying, because that which is meant to shed light here is itself obscure. This may of course be because we are merely groping in the dark and in a vacuum with respect to the essence of space and time, whereas the great thinkers have long since meditated on space and time and established how they are essentially determined. The essence of space and time has indeed been delimited in many respects since Plato and Aristotle. Such delimitation remains thoroughly within the domain of metaphysical thinking and occurs in concepts whose fundamental traits were established by Aristotle.

Modern metaphysics in particular thinks the essence of space and time in respect of the ordering, that is, the measuring, determination of mag-

nitude, and distribution, of the manifold that is given “in” space and time. When Leibniz states: “*tempus nihil aliud est quam magnitudo motus*” (time is nothing other than the magnitude of motion),¹ time is here being thought with respect to the *t* in the formula employed in mathematics and physics. At the same time, however, what we clearly see reappearing in this characterization of time is the Aristotelian determination of time, according to which χρόνος is ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως—that which counts and is counted in respect of motion.² And when Kant grasps space and time as that “which enables a manifold of appearance to be ordered in certain relations” (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B34), the thoroughly unitary character of the metaphysical conception of space and time becomes clear.

If, however, locality and journeying are poetized in Hölderlin’s poetry, and if this poetry does not belong to the domain of metaphysics, then taking refuge in the metaphysical determinations of space and time promises us no help in understanding locality and journeying. Perhaps, in accordance with its “nature,” metaphysics even prevents us from thinking such things as locality and journeying. Of course, it does not prevent this in such a way as to explicitly reject such things, since for this to be possible, metaphysics would precisely have to know something like locality and journeying. Yet *not* to know such things is the essential nature of metaphysics. So why, then, do we turn to metaphysics at all, why are we even becoming involved in these representations of space and time that have prevailed now for two thousand years? Simply because freeing ourselves from such a tradition can neither happen overnight, nor can it occur in a violent manner or without reflection. Simply because only an explicit look at the commonplace representations of space and time and their metaphysical (rather than historiographical) provenance permits us initially to become attentive to that Other that Hölderlin poetizes. In poetizing the rivers, Hölderlin thinks his way into the essential realm of locality and journeying. To state such a thing is initially nothing more than an empty assertion, especially given that Hölderlin nowhere speaks of locality or journeying. That we concede. We must therefore say more precisely: Our pointing thoughtfully toward locality and journeying is meant only to make us attentive to certain marked features in terms of which the intrinsically restful, poetic essence of the river may become clearer and our hearing of the poetic word more accomplished. And since, after all, for all the obscurity of their essence, locality and journeying also carry with them a relation to space and time, the attempt to think locality and journeying in their essence must always do so with a thought to the metaphysical essence of

1. Leibniz, *Werke*, vol. 5 (Gerh.), 139.

2. Aristotle, *Physics* IV (xi), 219b 1.

space and time. For it could be that the essential origin of space and time lies concealed in what we are attempting to think in a unitary manner in the names locality and journeying. It is here too, then, that we would necessarily find the roots of the remarkable state of affairs that we indeed conduct ourselves high-handedly within space and time, and yet pay no heed to their essence. In order, however, that we do not err altogether within the realm we are now approaching, it may be permissible for us to pay attention to some provisional distinctions in a schematic fashion, that is, constantly with the aid of exaggerations and imprecisions.

Space and time comprise the framework for our calculative domination and ordering of the “world” as nature and history. This pervasive measurement of the world in a calculative, discovering, and conquering manner is undertaken by modern human beings in a way whose distinctive metaphysical feature is modern machine technology. Metaphysically, it remains undecided in this process whether this procedure on the part of modern human beings—a procedure of conquering space and of time-lapse—serves merely to bring about a position within the planet as a whole that secures this humanity a suitable “living space” for its lifetime, or whether such securing of space and time is intrinsically determined in such a far-reaching manner as to attain new possibilities of this procedure of conquering space and of time-lapse and to intensify this procedure. Metaphysically, it remains undecided whether, and in what way, this will to planetary ordering will set itself its own limit. And although, when we look at this process that has taken hold of all peoples and nations on this planet, it may seem from time to time as though modern human beings are becoming mere planetary adventurers, we also see here another, almost opposite phenomenon come to the fore: These moves to conquer space are linked to settlement and resettlement. Settlement as a countermove is a move toward being bound to a place. Yet here too our perspective is much too limited for us to be able to decide, or even to become mindful of whether a restriction on having adventures might entail our coming to be at home, or at least might be able to constitute a condition of such becoming homely.

§9. Becoming homely as the care of Hölderlin’s poetry—the encounter between the foreign and one’s own as the fundamental truth of history—Hölderlin’s dialogue with Pindar and Sophocles

Locality and journeying, however, in which the poetic essence of the rivers is announced, relate to becoming homely in what is one’s own. And this is so in the distinctive sense that one’s own, finding one’s own, and appropriating what one has found as one’s own, is not that which is most

self-evident or easiest but remains what is most difficult. As what is most difficult, it is taken into poetic care. Between the spatio-temporal grasping that extends toward world domination and the movement of settlement subservient to such domination on the one side, and human beings coming to be at home via journeying and locality on the other, there presumably prevails a covert relation whose historical essence we do not know. We can attempt only to catch a view of “both sides,” if we may call them that, in accordance with their specific nature in each case. Insofar as we are attentive to Hölderlin’s poetizing of the rivers, we may ponder both the fact that, and the way in which, the spirit of the river bears a relation to becoming homely in one’s own.

That poetry of Hölderlin that has taken on the form of the “hymn” has taken into its singular care this becoming homely in one’s own. The “hymn,” of course, does not represent some ready-made literary or poetic schema, but rather itself first determines its essence from out of the telling of a coming into one’s own. What is one’s own in this case is whatever belongs to the fatherland of the Germans. Whatever is of the fatherland is itself at home with [*bei*] mother earth. This *coming to be* at home in one’s own in itself entails that human beings are initially, and for a long time, and sometimes forever, not at home. And this in turn entails that human beings fail to recognize, that they deny, and perhaps even have to deny and flee what belongs to the home. Coming to be at home is thus a passage through the foreign. And if the becoming homely of a particular human-kind sustains the historicity of its history, then the law of the encounter [*Auseinandersetzung*]^[17] between the foreign and one’s own is the fundamental truth of history, a truth from out of which the essence of history must unveil itself. For this reason, the poetic meditation on becoming homely must also for its part be of a historical nature and, as poetic, demand a historical dialogue [*Zwiesprache*]^[18] with foreign poets. The foreign and the foreign poets are not simply arbitrary here, as though the foreign were merely the indeterminate or manifold other of one’s own. What is one’s own, which the poetic meditation and telling is concerned with finding and appropriating, itself contains the relations to that foreign through which coming to be at home takes its path. In this way, the foreign of one’s own, but also the poets of these foreign parts, are determined in their singularity. In Hölderlin’s poetizing of the hymns, the dialogue with foreign poets is removed from any arbitrariness. Nor do its singularity and univocal character spring from any form of “historiographical” cultural erudition or personal preference that was prevalent at that time. The poets who respond and reply to the care taken by Hölderlin during the period in which he poetizes the hymns are two poets of the foreign and ancient land of the Greeks: Pindar and Sophocles.

Hölderlin's own poetizing of these hymns is therefore accompanied by renewed translations, that is to say, interpretations, of these two poets. This is why, especially in relation to the becoming homely and being homely of human beings in Hölderlin's poetizing of the hymns, we repeatedly hear the resonance of poetic thoughts from Pindar and Sophocles. Without knowledge of this resonance, both Hölderlin's hymnal poetry and, above all, the poetizing of the rivers remain incomprehensible. By this resonance of Greek poetizing in Hölderlin's own poetizing we are not, of course, referring to "historiographical" "influences" or dependencies, which one can demonstrate in all poetry, in all art, in all thinking, and in all faith. If one does resolve to pursue historiographically such influences, then one must continually ponder something essential in order to avoid falling prey to an illusion of historiographical observation, an illusion in which one can easily become fatally entangled, namely, the opinion that demonstrating "historiographical" influences might bring us any closer to whatever it is that has been explained in terms of influences. What we must ponder constantly is this: It is the prerogative of great poets, thinkers, and artists that they alone are capable of letting themselves be influenced. The minor status of minor "poets" and philosophers, by contrast, consists in the opinion that they have everything by way of their own originality [*Originalität*], which is indeed accurate too. Whatever the Greats give they do not have by way of their originality, but rather from another origin [*Ursprung*], one that makes them sensitive to the "influence" of whatever is originary in other Greats. Strictly speaking, however, the relationship between whatever is originary in each case is never one of "influence." And perhaps there is nothing at all strange in the fact that within the commonplace historiographical comparison of works of poetry, of plastic and graphic art, and of thought, we lack any concept for this relationship that exists between works that are originary, and this lack is not at all felt as a deficiency. Because Hölderlin, like no other of his contemporaries, had the privilege of possessing the intrinsic ability to be influenced by Pindar and Sophocles—and that now means, to listen in an originary and obedient manner to whatever is originary in the foreign from out of his own origin—Hölderlin alone, in terms of a historical dialogue and response, was capable of showing us these poets and their poetry in a more originary light.

Part Two

The Greek Interpretation of Human Beings in Sophocles' *Antigone*

§10. *The human being: the uncanniest of the uncanny. (The entry song of the chorus of elders and the first stationary song)*

The resonance of these Greek poets in Hölderlin's poetizing is thus by no means a vague one. Rather, a singular poetic work of a singular poet resonates repeatedly in Hölderlin's poetic telling of human beings' becoming homely. We mean the choral ode from the *Antigone* of Sophocles, immediately preceding the first dialogue between the sovereign Creon and Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus. The poetic radiance of this choral ode strikes us ever anew at essential places in Hölderlin's hymnal poetizing, like the radiance of a rare and foreign stone in an otherwise familiar piece of jewelry.

The choral ode named here is the first stationary song within the whole *Antigone* tragedy. It is preceded by the entry song of the chorus, which immediately follows the dialogue between the two sisters, Antigone and Ismene, in front of the king's palace in the early morning. The chorus is composed of old and experienced men of the city of Thebes. The Greek world is strong enough in itself to acknowledge the radiance and strength of youth and the level-headedness and wealth of experience brought by age as equally important, and to maintain the tension between them. The entry song of the chorus begins (l. 100ff.):

ἀκτίς ἀελίου, τὸ κάλλιστον ἑπταπύλω φανέν
Θήβα τῶν προτέρων φάος,
ἐφάνθης ποτ' . . .

O Strahl der Sonne, das
schönste dem siebentorigen Theben
nie zuvor also scheinende Licht,
endlich erschienen warst du . . .

O radiance of the sun,
Fairest light that ever shined
On seven-gated Thebes, as never before
Did you finally come to shine. . . .

The entry song begins with a call to the rising sun, which pours the most radiant light upon the city. Yet this same song already hints that a darkening irrupts upon what has been lighted, a darkening that must be cleared and decided. The rising light gives what is unconcealed its space and is, at the same time, the acknowledgment of darkness, of darkening and shadows. All this in no way remains in straightforward contrast to that which is bright and transparent; rather everything that is is essentially permeated by its counter-essence. The two main figures, Creon and Antigone, do not stand opposed to one another like darkness and light, black and white, guilty and innocent. What is essential to each *is* as it is from out of the unity of essence and nonessence, yet in a different way in each case. Our modern thought is much too "intellectual," that is, much too calculative and technical in its planning, to penetrate immediately into those realms of being as told of here, let alone to be entirely "at home" therein. For our initial task it must suffice to juxtapose the beginning of this entry song with the beginning of the first stationary song of the chorus, so as to intimate something of the range and oppositional nature of the truth within which this tragedy sways back and forth and yet stands. What truly stands steadfast must be able to sway within the counter-turning pressure of the open paths of the storms. What is merely rigid shatters on account of its own rigidity. What is said at the beginning of the first choral ode corresponds to the rise of radiant light (l. 332ff.):

πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδ' ἐν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει·

Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch
über den Menschen hinaus unheimlicher waltet.

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing
beyond the human being prevails more uncannily.

There the fairest rays of emergent light, here the most uncanny "essence" of the human being.

REVIEW

The essence of the river consists in its being the locality and journeying for human beings as historical, and thus in its sustaining the essence of the historicity of Western humankind. Locality and journeying thus implicate one another in a properly peculiar way. It is of decisive importance, yet at the same time difficult, to think their unity. If we think locale and journey as determinations of space and time, then it appears that the

long-since familiar unity of space and time offers us a hold from which to illuminate the unity of locality and journeying. A brief consideration, however, revealed that space and time themselves remain obscure and questionable for us in their essence. Indeed all great thinkers of Western metaphysics have in each case thought the essence of space and time in terms of their own fundamental positions—yet for all the diversity of their metaphysical concepts of space and time, that essential determination that Aristotle set forth in his *Physics* shines through in each case. The *Physics* is the first attempted "metaphysics," or "ontology," of nature. Yet if the *Physics* of Aristotle intends something essentially different from modern natural science, which we know under the name "mathematical physics," we may nonetheless take a hint from the fact that the normative delimitation of the essence of place and of time for all metaphysics is to be found in a "physics." Roughly speaking, this entails that place and time are not conceived in terms of their relation to history or to human beings as historical, but rather are thought with respect to mere processes of movement in general. As such, the places and sequences of events in human history also fall into "dimensions," that is, into those realms in which space and time can be measured numerically. The representations of space and time that have held reign for almost two and a half thousand years are of the metaphysical kind. Yet insofar as Hölderlin's hymnal poetizing falls outside of all metaphysics, insofar as its poetizing of the rivers necessarily poetizes the historicity of human beings, and thus locale and time, metaphysics can be of no direct assistance to us in illuminating locality and journeying and their unity. For our thinking remains everywhere metaphysical, and this is not only because remnants of the Christian world view remain operative everywhere, if only in terms of a reversal and secularization, but rather because metaphysics first begins to achieve its supreme and utter triumph in our century as modern machine technology. It is a fundamental error to believe that because machines themselves are made out of metal and material, the machine era is "materialistic." Modern machine technology is "spirit," and as such is a decision concerning the actuality of everything actual. And because such a decision is essentially historical, machine technology as spirit will also decide this: that nothing of the historical world hitherto will return. It is just as childish to wish for a return to previous states of the world as it is to think that human beings could overcome metaphysics by denying it. All that remains is to unconditionally actualize this spirit so that we simultaneously come to know the essence of its truth.

When we say "all that remains," then that sounds like "fatalism," like merely a tired surrendering to the course of things. Yet in truth, this "all that remains" is not the last escape route. Rather, it is the first historical

path into the commencements of Western historicity, a path that has not at all been ventured hitherto. Because our thinking is still metaphysical through and through, and indeed more decisively than ever, we must also keep in view the metaphysical determination of space and time in our attempt to think the poetic essence of the river from out of *our* thinking. The unity of locality and journeying is not a unity that consists in linking two things together, but a unity of origin. We will learn to grasp this unity when we attempt thoughtfully to reflect upon the essence of history. For Hölderlin, that essence is concealed in human beings' becoming homely, a becoming homely that is a passage through and encounter with the foreign. *That* foreign, of course, through which the return home journeys, is not some arbitrary "foreign" in the sense of whatever is merely and indeterminately not one's own. The *foreign* that relates to the return home, that is, is one with it, is the *provenance* of such return and is that which has been at the commencement with regard to what is one's own and the homely. For Hölderlin, the Greek world is what is foreign with respect to the historical humankind of the Germans. From this we learn something important: The Greek world is not identical to, or even the same as, the "German world." The relationship to the Greek world, therefore, cannot at all be one of identification or assimilation, not even in the sense of taking the Greek world as the measure or model for the perfection of humankind. For Hölderlin, the Greek world is therefore never "classical antiquity." Yet nor is the Greek world for Hölderlin the object of a romantic desire to return. And finally, the Greek world is for Hölderlin of another essence and another historical determination than the Greek world of the young Nietzsche. Furthermore, we forget all too easily that Nietzsche, at the height of his metaphysical thinking, denies the Greek world in favor of the Roman world. Because Hölderlin's relationship to the Greek world is, to put it in catchwords, neither classical, nor romantic, nor metaphysical, Hölderlin's tie to the Greek world is not looser but rather just the opposite, it is more intimate [*inniger*]. For only where the foreign is known and acknowledged in its essential oppositional character does there exist the possibility of a genuine relationship, that is, of a uniting that is not a confused mixing but a conjoining in distinction. By contrast, where it remains only a matter of refuting, or even of annihilating the foreign, what necessarily gets lost is the possibility of a passage through the foreign, and thereby the possibility of a return home into one's own, and thereby that which is one's own itself.

We know today that the Anglo-Saxon world of Americanism has resolved to annihilate Europe, that is, the homeland [*Heimat*], and that means: the commencement of the Western world. Whatever has the character of commencement is indestructible. America's entry into this planetary war is not its entry into history; rather, it is already the ultimate

American act of American ahistoricity and self-devastation. For this act is the renunciation of commencement, and a decision in favor of that which is without commencement. The concealed spirit of the commencement in the West will not even have the look of contempt for this trial of self-devastation without commencement, but will await its stellar hour from out of the releasement and tranquillity that belong to the commencement. We only half-think what is historical in history, that is, we do not think it at all, if we calculate history and its magnitude in terms of the length of duration of what has been, rather than *awaiting* that which is coming and futural in what has first been as the commencement. We stand at the beginning of historicity proper, that is, of action in the realm of the essential, only when we are able to wait for what is to be destined of one's own [*die Zu-schickung des Eigenen*]. Yet being able to wait is not an actionless or thoughtless letting things come and go, it is not a closing of one's eyes in the face of some dark foreboding. Being able to wait is a standing that has already leapt ahead, a standing within what is indestructible, to whose neighborhood desolation belongs like a valley to a mountain. Yet could such a thing ever happen without, through the pain of sacrifice, the historical humankind of this commencement first becoming ripe for whatever is of the commencement as its own?

The essence of one's own is so mysterious [*geheimnisvoll*] that it unfolds its ownmost essential wealth only from out of a supremely thoughtful acknowledgment of the foreign. This mystery of the coming to be at home of human beings as historical is the poetic care of the poet of the river hymns. This poet, even though he sees only a first ray of this mystery light up—presumably he saw more than he was able to tell—must therefore enter into a historical dialogue with the poets of the foreign land, and indeed with those poets in whose poetizing there spoke to him a telling of human beings in their becoming homely. That is why we hear everywhere in Hölderlin's hymnal poetizing the countering resonance of a poetic work that poetizes the essence of human beings. We mean the first stationary song of the chorus in Sophocles' *Antigone* tragedy.

§11. *The poetic dialogue between Hölderlin and Sophocles*

It is almost as though this choral song from the *Antigone* of Sophocles spoke ever anew to the poet Hölderlin in his hymnal poetizing. And why should it not? For the essential relations of the poetic dialogue between Hölderlin and Sophocles are already being outlined more clearly for us. The essence of the river names locality and journeying of human beings as historical. Locality and journeying bear the essence of becoming

homely. Therein lies the historicity of human beings. Historicity is the distinctive mark of that humankind whose poets are Sophocles and Hölderlin—for something having the character of a commencement once occurred [*hat sich ereignet*] in the Greek world, and that which has the character of a commencement alone grounds history. The resonance of the first stationary song from Sophocles' *Antigone* tragedy in Hölderlin's hymnal poetizing is a historical-poetic necessity within that history in which the being at home and being unhomely of Western humankind is decided. Cf. Hölderlin, *The Death of Empedocles*, first version, act one, scene one (III, 79):

... Wir haben auch
 An grossen Männern unsre Lust, und Einer
 Ist izt die Sonne der Athenerinnen,
 Sophokles! dem von allen Sterblichen
 Zuerst der Jungfrau herrlichste Natur
 Erschien und sich zu reinem Angedenken
 In seine Seele gab.—
 — jede wünscht sich, ein Gedanke
 Des Herrlichen zu seyn, und möchte gern
 Die immerschöne Jugend, eh' sie welkt,
 Hinüber in des Dichters Seele retten,
 Und frägt und sinnet, welche von den Jungfern
 Der Stadt die zärtlichernste Heroide sei,
 Die seiner Seele vorgeschwebt, die er
 Antigonä genannt; . . .

... And we do
 Take pleasure in great men, and one
 Is now the sun of Athenian women,
 Sophocles! To whom of all mortals
 The most magnificent virgin nature first
 Appeared and gave herself to pure commemoration
 In his soul.—
 — each desires to be
 A thought of the magnificent, and well would like
 Ever-beautiful youth, before it withers,
 To be taken into rescue in the poet's soul,
 And wonders and ponders which of the city's
 Virgins is the most tender-serious heroine
 That appeared before his soul, the one he
 Named Antigone. . . .

Since Hölderlin himself translated the entire *Antigone* tragedy of Sophocles, it seems appropriate to hear the aforementioned choral ode as

Hölderlin translated it. Yet this translation can be understood only in terms of the whole of what Hölderlin has passed on to us, and moreover, only in immediate proximity to the original Greek word. This is true of every translation; yet within the context of our task in these "remarks" on the Ister hymn we must be content with some makeshift assistance, that is, we must make do with a translation that, with respect to what we have to think through, paraphrases and emphasizes some things in a clearer manner, without being able to relate all of this explicitly to the whole of the tragedy. Reference to the choral ode is not to be omitted in these "remarks" on Hölderlin's Ister hymn. Yet the manner in which we make such reference remains somewhat makeshift. It cannot be grounded in detailed fashion, because the sole grounds that are capable of grounding the explication and perspective given here have their own simple ground in an interpretation of the Greek world that is essentially different from all interpretations hitherto. That the following translation and explication of the choral ode thus bears the appearance of being "dogmatic" is unavoidable.

The choral ode comprises lines 332-375 and has two strophes, each with a corresponding antistrophe. In translation, the song of the Theban elders tells the following:

1. Strophe

Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch
 über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt.
 Der fährt aus auf die schäumende Flut
 beim Süd Sturm des Winters
 und kreuzt zwischen den
 in die Tiefe sich reißenden Wogen.
 Der Götter auch die erhabenste, die Erde,
 abmüdet er die unzerstörlich Mühelose,
 umstürzend sie von Jahr zu Jahr,
 hintreibend und her mit den Rossen
 die Pflüge.

1. Gegenstrophe

Auch den leichtschwebenden Vogelschwarm
 umgarnt er und jagt
 das Tiervolk der Wildnis
 und des Meeres einheimisch Gewoge
 der umher sinnende Mann.
 Er überwältigt mit Listen das Tier,
 das nächtigt auf Bergen und wandert,
 den rauhmähnigen Nacken des Rosses
 und den niebezwungenen Stier
 mit dem Holze umhalsend
 zwingt er ins Joch.

2. Strophe

Auch in das Getöne des Wortes
 und ins windige Allesverstehen
 fand er sich, auch in den Mut
 der Herrschaft über die Städte.
 Auch wie er entfliehe, hat er bedacht,
 der Aussetzung unter die Pfeile
 der Wetter, der ungattigen auch der Fröste.
 Überall hinausfahrend unterwegs erfahrungslos ohne Ausweg
 kommt er zum Nichts.
 Dem einzigen Andrang vermag er, dem Tod,
 durch keine Flucht je zu wehren,
 sei ihm geglückt auch vor notvollem Siechtum
 geschicktes Entweichen.

2. Gegenstrophe

Gewitziges wohl, weil das Gemache
 des Könnens, über Verhoffen bemeisternd
 verfällt er einmal auf Arges
 gar, Wackeres zum anderen wieder gerät ihm.
 Zwischen die Satzung der Erde und den
 beschworenen Fug der Götter hindurch fährt er:
 Hochüberragend die Stätte, verlustig der Stätte
 ist er, dem immer das Unseiende seiend
 der Wagnis zugunsten.
 Nicht werde dem Herde ein Trauter mir der,
 nicht auch teile mit mir sein Wähnen mein Wissen,
 der dieses führet ins Werk.

1st strophe

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing
 more uncanny looms or stirs beyond the human being.
 He ventures forth on the foaming tide
 amid the southern storm of winter
 and crosses the surge
 of the cavernous waves.
 And the most sublime of the gods, the Earth,
 indestructible and untiring, he wears out,
 turning the soil from year to year,
 working the ploughs to and fro
 with his horses.

1st antistrophe

And the flock of birds that rise into the air
 he ensnares, and pursues
 the animals of the wilderness
 and of the ocean's surging waves,

most ingenious man.

He overpowers with cunning the animal
 that roams in the mountains at night,
 the wild-maned neck of the steed,
 and the never-tamed bull,
 fitting them with wood,
 he forces under the yoke.

2nd strophe

And into the sounding of the word
 and swift understanding of all
 he has found his way, even into courageous
 governance of the towns.
 And he has pondered how to flee
 exposure to the arrows
 of unpropitious weather and its frosts.
 Everywhere venturing forth underway, experienceless without any way out
 he comes to nothing.
 The singular onslaught of death he can
 by no flight ever prevent,
 even if in the face of dire infirmity he achieves
 most skillful avoidance.

2nd antistrophe

Craftiness too, as the work
 of his ability, he masters beyond expectation,
 and if he falls on bad times
 other valiant things succeed for him.
 Between the ordinance of the earth and the
 order ordained by the gods he ventures:
 Towering high above the site, forfeiting the site
 is he for whom non-beings always are
 for the sake of risk.
 Such shall not be entrusted to my hearth,
 nor share their delusion with my knowing,
 who put such a thing to work.

That an adequate interpretation of this choral ode—even disregarding the constraints already named—is beyond our capabilities in all respects, requires no further elaboration. Here too, remarks must suffice. What is now to be mentioned specifically for the sake of clarification has been extracted from the whole of the choral ode and is therefore, if one may say so, one-sided. Yet the “sides” to be clarified here are not arbitrary. They already have their distinctive significance in the way in which the song hinges together. The four parts that have been extracted attune, in their belonging together, the concealed lineaments of the song, and they concern

what we want to inquire about with a view to the poetic essence of the river. If we explicate the choral ode in such a way, then we are thinking always in the direction of illuminating the essence of the rivers, that is, of the fundamental law of becoming homely. In recalling this poetic work of Sophocles, we are in the process of thinking through the heart of Hölderlin's hymnal poetizing in the form it takes with respect to its commencement. It appears that we are here taking a detour. In the realm of such efforts, however, detours are sometimes the nearest ways.

We shall explicate briefly:

1. The first two lines (333–34) of the first strophe, which appear to be the prelude to the whole choral ode but in truth point to its inner middle; indeed, they are the essential ground of this tragedy, and even of Sophocles' poetic work as a whole:

πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει·

Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch
über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt.

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing
more uncanny looms or stirs beyond the human being.

2. The middle part of the second strophe (l. 360):

παντοπόρος ἄπορος ἐπ' οὐδὲν ἔρχεται

Überall hinausfahrend unterwegs erfahrungslos ohne Ausweg
kommt er zum Nichts.

Everywhere venturing forth underway, experienceless without any way out
he comes to nothing.

3. The middle part of the second antistrophe (ll. 370–71):

ὑπίπολις ἄπολις ὅτω τὸ μὴ καλὸν
ξύνεστι τόλμας χάριν.

Hochüberragend die Stätte, verlustig der Stätte
ist er, dem immer das Unseiende seiend
der Wagnis zugunsten.

Towering high above the site, forfeiting the site
is he for whom non-beings always are
for the sake of risk.

4. The closing lines of the second antistrophe that immediately follow, and that gather up within them the whole of the choral ode and thus first bring the decisive lines at the beginning to their truth (ll. 373–75):

μῆτ' ἐμοὶ παρέστιος
γένοιτο μῆτ' ἴσον φρονῶν ὅς τὰδ' ἔρδοι.

Nicht werde dem Herde ein Trauter mir der,
nicht auch teile mit mir sein Wähnen mein Wissen,
der dieses führet ins Werk.

Such shall not be entrusted to my hearth,
nor share their delusion with my knowing,
who put such a thing to work.

§12. The meaning of δεινόν. (Explication of the commencement of the choral ode)

πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει·

Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch
über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt.

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing
more uncanny looms or stirs beyond the human being.

The decisive word, which falls at the beginning of the choral ode, is τὰ δεινὰ, τὸ δεινόν. We translate: *das Unheimliche*, the uncanny. If every translation is always only the result of an interpretation and not something preliminary to it, then the translation of δεινόν by “*unheimlich*,” “*uncanny*,” can first be seen as justified, or even as necessary, only on the basis of the following interpretation. For this translation is initially alien to us, violent, or, in “philological” terms, “wrong.”

a) A remark concerning translation

Yet who decides, and how does one decide, concerning the correctness of a “translation”? We “get” our knowledge of the meaning of words in a foreign language from a dictionary or “wordbook.” Yet we too readily forget that the information in a dictionary must always be based upon a preceding interpretation of linguistic contexts from which particular words and word usages are taken. In most cases a dictionary provides the correct information about the meaning of a word, yet this correctness does not yet guarantee us any insight into the truth of what the word means and

can mean, given that we are asking about the essential realm named in the word. A “wordbook” can give pointers as to how to understand a word, but it is never an absolute authority to which one is bound in advance. Appealing to a dictionary always remains only an appeal to one interpretation of a language, an interpretation that, in terms of its procedure and its limits, usually cannot be clearly grasped at all. Certainly, as soon as we regard language merely as a vehicle, then a dictionary that is tailored to the technique of communication and exchange is “in order” and is binding “without further ado.” Viewed with regard to the historical spirit of a language as a whole, on the other hand, every dictionary lacks any immediate or binding standards of measure.

This is certainly true for every translation, because every translation must necessarily accomplish the transition from the spirit of one language into that of another. There is no such thing as translation if we mean that a word from one language could, or even should, be made to substitute as the equivalent of a word from another language. This impossibility should not, however, mislead one into devaluing translation as though it were a mere failure. On the contrary: translation can even bring to light connections that indeed lie in the translated language but are not explicitly set forth in it. From this we can recognize that all translating must be an interpreting. Yet at the same time, the reverse is also true: every interpretation, and everything that stands in its service, is a translating. In that case, translating does not only move between two different languages, but there is a translating within one and the same language. The interpretation of Hölderlin’s hymns is a translating within our German language. The same holds true for an interpretation that has as its theme, for example, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, or Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the knowledge that we are here necessarily concerned with a translating, there lies the acknowledgment that such “works” are, in accordance with their essence, in need of translation. Such need is not a lack, however, but rather the inner privilege of such works. In other words: It pertains to the essence of the language of a historical people to extend like a mountain range into the lowlands and flatlands and at the same time to have its occasional peaks towering above into an otherwise inaccessible altitude. In between are the “lower altitudes” and “levels.” As translating, interpreting indeed makes something understandable—yet certainly not in the sense that common understanding conceives it. Staying with our image: The peak of a poetic or thoughtful work of language must not be worn down through translation, nor the entire mountain range leveled out into the flatlands of superficiality. The converse is the case: Translation must set us upon the path of ascent toward the peak. Making something understandable should never mean assimilating a poetic or thoughtful work to just any opinion

or to the horizon of understanding of such opinion. Making something understandable means awakening our understanding to the fact that the blind obstinacy of habitual opinion must be shattered and abandoned if the truth of a work is to unveil itself.

This interim remark about the essence of translation is meant to recall that the difficulty of a translation is never merely a technical issue but concerns the relation of human beings to the essence of the word and to the worthiness of language. Tell me what you think of translation, and I will tell you who you are.

b) On the translation of τὸ δεινόν

We have the task of translating the fundamental word of this choral ode, which is a fundamental word of this tragedy and even of Greek antiquity itself. What is meant by τὸ δεινόν? The dictionary informs us: δεινόν means that which is fearful and therefore arouses fear. Yet fear does not necessarily have to be that habitual fear or fearfulness that readily degenerates into the avoidance and trembling of cowardice. The fear that the δεινόν awakens can also be that fear pertaining to reverence and awe. The δεινόν, as the fearful, is then not that which is frightening, but rather that which commands and calls for reverence: that which is worthy of honor. The fear in such reverence is not avoidance or flight, but rather a turning toward something in heed and respect, the awe pertaining to admiration, a standing firm in honoring that which awakens such fear.

As the frightful, the δεινόν can thus instill fear and chase one into open flight, yet as that which is worthy of honor, it can also awaken awe, and thus become binding and take one into its concealed protection. We may already gather from this that something counterturning prevails in what the Greeks name δεινόν. Yet on each occasion, the δεινόν, be it frightful or worthy of honor, is such as to be capable of many things, that is, powerful. That which is powerful [*das Gewaltige*] can be something that looms over us, and then it approaches what is worthy of honor; it can also be what is actively violent [*das Gewalttätige*], and then it approaches the frightful. That which is powerful always exceeds our usual and habitual powers and abilities. The δεινόν is therefore at the same time that which is inhabital. But whatever lies beyond the habitual need not necessarily lie “outside” of the habitual as does the extraordinary [*das Ungeheure*], which directly and essentially exceeds the habitual, so that in a certain way it stands outside of the habitual. The inhabital can, on the contrary, also remain within the habitual in governing all that is habitual and turning itself to everything with equal ease. What lies beyond the habitual is then that which is skilled in everything. Such skillfulness is beyond the habitual

insofar as it admits of nothing that exceeds its own capability. What is inhabital about being skilled in everything, the *δεινόν* of such skillfulness, that is, what is fearful and powerful about it, is its uncompromising leveling out, from which nothing is able to withdraw. To summarize, we can more or less delimit the range of meaning of the *δεινόν* as follows. It means three things: the fearful, the powerful, the inhabital. Each time it can be determined in opposing ways: the fearful as that which frightens, and as that which is worthy of honor; the powerful as that which looms over us, and as that which is merely violent; the inhabital as the extraordinary, and as that which is skilled in everything. Yet in its essence, the *δεινόν* is neither merely the fearful, nor is it merely the powerful, nor merely the inhabital, nor any of these according to merely one side; nor is the *δεινόν* simply all these heaped together. What is essential in the essence of the *δεινόν* conceals itself in the ordinary unity of the fearful, the powerful, the inhabital. What is essential to all essence is always singular. The full essence of the *δεινόν* can therefore unfold itself only in something singular. In translation, we have rendered τὰ δεινὰ by “*das Unheimliche*,” “the uncanny.” This word is not meant to indicate some further meaning in addition to those previously mentioned; rather, it is meant to name all of them together, and indeed not by bundling them together in an extrinsic manner, which is linguistically impossible and nonsensical. Rather, it is meant to name them in such a way that the term “*das Unheimliche*,” “the uncanny,” as it is to be understood in what follows, grasps the concealed ground of the unity of the manifold meanings of *δεινόν*, thus grasping the *δεινόν* itself in its concealed essence. This is also to concede at once that the translation of *δεινόν* by “*unheimlich*,” “uncanny,” goes beyond what is expressed in the Greek with regard to the degree of its explicitness. We may also say that the translation is incorrect. Yet perhaps it is more true on that account than the translation “fearful,” “powerful,” “inhabital.”

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Hölderlin, in his telling of the rivers, poetizes the becoming homely yet simultaneous being unhomely of human beings as historical. The historicity of history consists in such “being,” which is this “becoming.” Yet the poet does not catch sight of this historicity “of” human beings as an indeterminate, vacillating property of some ideal creature called “man.” This poet’s poetizing is itself the historical being of Western human beings as historical. Such poetizing must therefore remain in historical dialogue with those foreign poets who, in their own way, poetized the

essence of human beings with respect to this becoming homely. The pure fulfillment of this poetic necessity in the foreign land of the Greeks is a choral song in the *Antigone* tragedy by Sophocles. Hölderlin must have “lived” in a constant dialogue with this choral song, such that the word of his hymnal poetizing speaks from out of this dialogue and articulates it. Indeed, he must have done so not only at the time of his hymnal poetizing, but also during the time that followed, when the everyday world had become foreign to him.

To know something of this choral song therefore means to hear Hölderlin’s hymnal poetizing rush from its source, if only from afar. The choral song of the Greek *Antigone* tragedy will disclose itself to us only by way of translation. Genuine translation is always an encounter [*Auseinandersetzung*], and thus has its own possibilities and limits. This is why an interim remark was needed, touching upon not only the essence of translation, but also the mutual relationship between two languages that lies therein and thus our relation to the word. Every translation is interpretation. And all interpreting is a translating. To the extent that we have the need to interpret works of poetry and of thought in our own language, it is clear that each historical language is in and of itself in need of translation, and not merely in relation to foreign languages. This indicates in turn that a historical people is not of its own accord, that is, not without its own intervention, at home in its own language. It may therefore be that we speak “German,” yet talk entirely “American.”

If becoming homely belongs essentially to historicity, then a historical people can never come to satisfy its essence of its own accord or directly within its own language. A historical people *is* only from the dialogue between its language and foreign languages. That is presumably why we still learn foreign languages today. Both we and the Japanese learn the Anglo-American language. This has its own technical and practical necessity, which no sane person can doubt. The only question that remains is whether we recognize the essential danger over and beyond the usefulness of such knowledge of languages. This danger lies in the fact that we now generally assess every relation to a foreign language solely in terms of our commonplace, technical relationship to commonplace foreign languages. If we do that, then translation, for example, counts for nothing more than a technical measure. “Translating” is a kind of “detour” in the circulation of language. We scarcely have any intimation remaining of the fact that translation can still be a dialogue, assuming, of course, that the language to be translated is still of such a kind as to be an essential language. “Translating” [“*Übersetzen*”] is not so much a “*trans*-lating” [“*Über-*setzen”] and passing over into a foreign language with the help of one’s own. Rather, translation is more an awakening, clarification, and unfolding

of one's own language with the help of an encounter with the foreign language. Reckoned technically, translation means substituting one's own language for the foreign language, or vice versa. Thought in terms of historical reflection, translation is an encounter with a foreign language for the sake of appropriating one's own language. It is therefore certainly not a matter of indifference whether one no longer learns any foreign languages at all, or whether, for example, one learns only English or American for technical and practical purposes of communication, or whether (and this is not just a mere example) we seek to gain entry into the linguistic spirit of the Greek language.

The decision that thus falls with our choice of foreign languages is in truth a decision about our own language, namely the decision as to whether we use our own language too merely as a technical instrument, or whether we honor it as the concealed shrine that, in belonging to being, preserves within it the essence of human beings.

Back to the "humanist *Gymnasium*,"^[19] then. No. For at historical moments of the kind now preparing itself, any mere "back to" is a self-deception, whether it is a return to classical antiquity or to the New Testament. For it would always be too shortsighted were we to think that learning the Greek language is something to be recommended so that we can read the great poets and thinkers in the original, so as to count as "educated," and, as a consequence of such education, to appear as a "cultured people." We learn the Greek language so that the concealed essence of our own historical commencement can find its way into the clarity of our word. Yet it belongs to such a task that we recognize the singular essence of the Greek world and acknowledge it in its singularity. We may learn the Greek language only when we must learn it out of an essential historical necessity for the sake of our own German language. For we must also first learn our own German language; and because we think that this happens of its own accord, we shall learn it with greatest difficulty and thus endanger it most readily through mere neglect. To learn language means to learn to hear, not only to hear pronunciation, but rather to hear what is pronounced. Harkening and being able to harken are the fundamental condition for any genuine reading of the genuine word. It is here that interpretation and translation have their own and singular element. We have given a translation of the choral ode from the *Antigone* tragedy (ll. 332–75) on p. 57f. The following explication emphasizes four parts.

1. The first two lines of the beginning (ll. 333–34):

"Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch
über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt."

"Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing
more uncanny looms or stirs beyond the human being."

2. The middle part of the second strophe (l. 360):

"Überall hinausfahrend unterwegs erfahrungslos ohne Ausweg
kommt er zum Nichts."

"Everywhere venturing forth underway, experienceless without any way out
he comes to nothing."

3. The middle part of the second antistrophe (ll. 370–71):

"Hochüberragend die Stätte, verlustig der Stätte
ist er, dem immer das Unseiende seiend
der Wagnis zugunsten."

"Towering high above the site, forfeiting the site
is he for whom non-beings always are
for the sake of risk."

4. The closing lines of the second antistrophe (ll. 373–75):

"Nicht werde dem Herde ein Trauter mir der,
nicht auch teile mit mir sein Wähnen mein Wissen,
der dieses führet ins Werk."

"Such shall not be entrusted to my hearth,
nor share their delusion with my knowing,
who put such a thing to work."

Concerning 1.: The first lines contain the fundamental word of this tragedy, indeed of Greek tragedy in general, and thereby the fundamental word of Greek antiquity. τὸ δεινόν means, on the one hand, the fearful, but also the powerful, and finally, the inhabital. Each of these three meanings—which are intrinsically related to one another—at the same time refers, whether explicitly or not, to something counterturning. The fearful is something frightful, yet also that which commands admiration. The fearful shows itself both in horror and in awe. The powerful can be that which everywhere prevails and looms over us, yet also that which is actively violent, that force that compels all necessity into a singular, uniform compulsion. The inhabital is the extraordinary that directly and essentially exceeds everything habitual, so that in a certain way it stands "outside" the habitual. The inhabital, however, can also spread in the opposite direction within the habitual, as skillfulness in all and everything. We are

here translating τὸ δεινόν as “*das Unheimliche*,” “the uncanny.” The purpose of this interpretation is to think these three meanings in their unity, together with their counterturning character in each case—“unity” here meaning only that we can come to experience the ground of their originary and reciprocally counterturning belonging-together. With this translation, which interprets the Greek word for us, we are not trying to claim that the Greeks had a conceptual grasp of what *we* are seeking to name in our word “*das Unheimliche*.” Nonetheless, we must grant that the Greek word τὸ δεινόν not only designates the uncanny, but, as a genuine word, names what it tells of in such a way that, as a word, it itself is of such a kind as that which it names, that is, it is itself an uncanny word. We might perhaps already have some intimation of this from the provisional explication that has been given.

§13. The uncanny as the ground of human beings.
(Continued explication of πολλὰ τὰ δεινά and πέλειν)

The first two lines of the choral ode, however, do not name δεινόν in an indeterminate or incidental manner. At the beginning of the first line we find πολλὰ τὰ δεινά. The genuine meaning of πολλὰ is not “many” in the sense of mere number or amount; rather, it always means that which is many in kind, multiple, manifold. Multiply folded, that is, placed together and thus individuated and, as thus folded, simultaneously interwoven and hidden, is the uncanny. Thus it appears folded and strewn among many kinds, yet in such a way that it is here not unfolded into the simplicity of its full and pure essence. All these ways of the uncanny in their uncanniness thus fail to attain that uncanny that human beings are. The uncanniest of the uncanny is the human being. This supreme level of the uncanny is that which among its kind altogether cannot be exceeded because it is singular, not only with respect to degree or amount, but above all with respect to its kind. Accordingly, here too the uncanny must unfold its own essential ground, one that does not manifest itself among the remainder of what is uncanny, because it is lacking there. The singular kind of uncanniness pertaining to the human essence must, however, itself come to light in the choral ode, since the latter tells exclusively of human beings—though it also tells of the sea and of the earth, of the animals of the wild and of storms, of infirmity and death, of understanding and of the word, of the gods and of ordinances, for to all these things human beings stand in relation, and all these each in their own way bear the pull and the traits of the fearful, powerful, and inhabital.

If the human being is the supreme δεινόν and if the essence of the δεινότης in its singular kind thus appears in human beings, and if we rightly perceive this essence in uncanniness, then strictly speaking, the human being alone can be called by the name “the uncanny.”

From our preceding discussions of the essence of the rivers we know that Hölderlin poetizes their essence out of a poetic care for the becoming homely of Western historical humankind for the Germans. Becoming human is provenance from the unhomely; the homely always remains related to the unhomely in such a way that the latter is present in the former. And if, in Hölderlin’s poetic dialogue with Sophocles’ choral ode, this proper poetic care of becoming homely comes to language, then there must presumably be an intrinsic relation between the becoming homely, that is, being unhomely of human beings as poetized by Hölderlin, and that human being who is poetized by Sophocles as τὸ δεινότατον, which we translate: *das Unheimlichste*, the most uncanny. We are hereby pointing to a connection that presumably extends beyond the merely extrinsic resonance of the words “*unheimisch*” [“unhomely”] and “*unheimlich*” [“uncanny”]. In that connection we also find the reason why we insist upon this translation of δεινόν that initially strikes us as violent. Properly considered, the habitual word usage described in the dictionary can in general provide us with no direct information here, since the word δεινόν in the choral ode is evidently a poetic word. As a poetic word, it even challenges the translation itself to attempt poetically to go beyond what is usual. Where to, and in what direction of meaning, is certainly something that we cannot decide immediately. If the translation of a poetic work is itself to be poetic, then an attempt such as this, which is to be undertaken with regard to a poetic work by Sophocles, can be recognized relatively easily in its presumptuousness. Even Hölderlin wavered in his translation of the word δεινόν. It is instructive for us to pay heed to this. Hölderlin published a complete translation of Sophocles’ *Antigone* tragedy in the year 1804. In it, Hölderlin translates the beginning of the choral ode as follows (V, 202):

Ungeheuer ist viel. Doch nichts
Ungeheurer, als der Mensch.

There is much that is extraordinary. Yet nothing
More extraordinary than the human being.

τὸ δεινόν is the extraordinary. Apart from this translation, the fragment of an earlier translation of Hölderlin’s has been preserved, one that Hellingrath dates from the year 1801, that is, from the decisive year of

Hölderlin's hymnal poetizing. This fragment comprises only the first strophe of the choral ode. Here the translation reads (V, 1):

Vieles gewaltige giebt's. Doch nichts
Ist gewaltiger, als der Mensch.

There is much that is powerful. Yet nothing
Is more powerful than the human being.

Here, τὸ δεινόν is the powerful. If a comparative assessment of Hölderlin's two translations is permitted at all, then we may say that the one cited first, that is, the later of the two, is presumably the more mature, more poetic than the earlier one. The earlier one indeed lets one essential trait of the δεινόν emerge in conveying δεινόν as "powerful," a trait that points to what the Greeks otherwise call ὀρμή—that which forcibly irrupts and bursts forth from out of itself—the "violent" in the broadest sense, which is not restricted to what is merely "brutal." By contrast, the later translation of δεινόν as "extraordinary" is thinking more in the direction of the inhabitual in human emergence and action. According to the contemporary use of the word, *das Ungeheure* indeed points to the idea of something immense; yet for the most part we think this too readily in a merely quantitative sense, not on account of any mere superficiality of thought, but rather as compelled by immediate appearances. Our linguistic usage is a sure sign of this. The fact that we must everywhere talk of "extent" points to the presence of the immense. Yet *das Ungeheure* in the sense of something immense in "extent" only appears to be merely quantitative. Whatever is immense is itself specifically "qualified." This priority of quantity is itself a quality, that is, essential in kind, namely as that of measurelessness. The latter is the principle of what we call Americanism; Bolshevism is only a derivative kind of Americanism. The latter is the properly dangerous configuration of measurelessness, because it emerges in the form of the democratic bourgeoisie and mixed with Christendom, and all this in an atmosphere of a decided ahistoricity.

That which is immense, however, can in turn be met directly only by way of the immense, yet without thereby succumbing to the immense itself. For this reason we must learn to recognize in *das Ungeheure*, in the extraordinary as the immense, the concealed essence of the extraordinary, so that from out of the essential we may stand the test of this encounter. For it is an encounter that, to first appearances, displays a uniformity in all aspects, yet in truth comes from essentially different, fundamental historical positions whose difference is so essential that ahistoricity and historicity are decisively at issue. The "extraordinary" need not necessarily be thought merely in the sense of the immense. The extraordinary [*das Ungeheure*] is properly and at the same time that which is not ordinary [*das Nicht-Ge-*

heure]. The ordinary [*das Geheure*] is what is intimately familiar, homely. The extraordinary is the un-homely.

Whether, or to what extent, Hölderlin thought of this meaning cannot be decided. Presumably Hölderlin thought *das Ungeheure* in the sense of the inhabitual, the powerful, rather than in the sense of the un-homely. The fact that even in his later translation Hölderlin in other places (e.g., l. 96 and l. 243) translates δεινόν by "gewaltig," "powerful," just as in the earlier rendition, also points to this.

In translating δεινόν as "unheimlich," "uncanny," we are thinking in the direction of the non-ordinary. For the uncanny, as this translation intends it to be thought, is not in the first instance meant to retain anything of an impression that merits being designated "powerful" or "extraordinary" on account of its inhabitual "intensity." We mean the uncanny in the sense of that which is not at home—not homely in that which is homely. It is only for this reason that the un-homely [*das Un-heimische*] can, as a consequence, also be "uncanny" ["unheimlich"] in the sense of something that has an alienating or "frightening" effect that gives rise to anxiety. In that case, Sophocles' word, which speaks of the human being as the most uncanny being, says that human beings are, in a singular sense, not homely, and that their care is to become homely. Yet the task is now to show to what extent the choral ode itself justifies this interpretation. To be able to recognize this, it is now necessary to ponder the weight of one particular word that concludes the first two lines of the choral ode and intrinsically captures their content, as it were. We mean the word πέλει, which it is also important to clarify with respect to the third point that we wish to explicate.

The word πέλειν is old and means to stir, to come forth, to find and abide in one's locale and site. In Homer and Hesiod, πέλειν is the usual word for εἶναι, which we translate as "being." For us, of course, the word "being" remains a broad though also an empty and indeterminable concept. Indeed, Hölderlin too translates πέλειν in a quite bland and indeterminate manner, on one occasion by "is," and on another occasion by "there is." We say instead:

Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch
über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt.

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing
more uncanny looms or stirs beyond the human being.

πέλειν: to emerge and come forth of its own accord, and thus to presence. ὁ πέλας is the neighbor who has his presence in the immediate vicinity, which is to say, however, that he is not present at hand before us as fixed or motionless but rather actively stirs in presencing, goes back and

forth. *πέλαγος*: that which stirs itself of its own accord and thus does not flow away but remains and abides within itself in its surging. *πέλαγος* is thus the word for “the sea.” Hölderlin’s most sublime elegy bears the title “The Archipelagus” (IV, 88–101), meaning the Aegean Sea. Hölderlin names this foremost sea of the Greeks the “arch-sea,” the “enduring one” (l. 23), that is, the one that abides amid change and becoming. The elegy closes with the following appeal (l. 288ff.):

Aber du, unsterblich, wenn auch der Griechengesang schon
Dich nicht feiert, wie sonst, aus deinen Woogen, o Meergott!
Töne mir in die Seele noch oft, dass über den Wassern
Furchtlosrege der Geist, dem Schwimmer gleich, in der Starken
Frischem Glücke sich üb', und die Göttersprache, das Wechseln
Und das Werden versteh', und wenn die reissende Zeit mir
Zu gewaltig das Haupt ergreift und die Noth und das Irrsaal
Unter Sterblichen mir mein sterblich Leben erschütteret,
Lass der Stille mich dann in deiner Tiefe gedenken.

Yet you, immortally, though even Greek song itself
No longer celebrates you as before, from your waves, O god of sea!
May you ring yet often in my soul, that over the waters
Fearlessly may spirit stir, like the swimmer, practice
Fresh fortune of the strong, and know the language of the gods, know
Change and becoming, and if the time that tears
Should seize too violently my head, if need and errancy
Among mortals disrupt for me my mortal life,
Leave me then to remember the stillness in your depths.

πέλειν here means the concealed presencing of stillness and tranquillity amid constant and unconcealed absencing and presencing, that is, amid the appearing of change. In this the gods speak and tell of what remains in keeping it silent. Such is to be thought only in “thoughtful remembrance” [“*Andenken*”]. *πέλειν* does not mean the empty presencing of what is merely present at hand, but means that remaining that is what it is precisely in journeying and in flowing. In such a way also is—which in Greek is to say: *πέλει*—whatever is uncanny in all beings, and in such a way the human being is the most uncanny. Uncanniness does not first arise as a consequence of humankind; rather, humankind emerges from uncanniness and remains within it—looms out of it and stirs within it. The uncanny itself is what looms forth in the essence of human beings and is that which stirs in all stirring and arousal: that which presences and at the same time absences.

We are still in the habit of taking the uncanny more in the sense of some kind of impression, instead of thinking it as the fundamental kind of essence

belonging to human beings. Yet even though we are making an attempt to grasp the uncanny more decisively as the unhomely, we may still easily fall prey to the danger of thinking this essential trait of human beings in a merely negative way, in accordance with the sound of the word: mere not-being—namely not being within the homely, a mere departing and breaking free from the homely. And indeed, everything that ensues in the first strophe and antistrophe seems to speak in favor of this conception of the unhomely:

Der fährt aus auf die schäumende Flut—

He ventures forth on the foaming tide—

Yet this is no mere homeless wandering around that merely seeks a location in order then to abandon it and take its pleasure and satisfaction in a mere traveling around. The human being here is not the adventurer who remains homeless on account of his lack of rootedness. Rather, the sea and the land and the wilderness are those realms that human beings transform with all their skillfulness, use and make their own, so that they may find their own vicinity through such realms. The homely is sought after and striven for in the violent activity of passing through that which is inhabitable with respect to sea and earth, and yet in such passage the homely is precisely not attained. If the unhomely one were simply the mere adventurer, he could not even be *δεινός*, uncanny, in the sense of the frightful and powerful; for the adventurer is at most strange and interesting, yet does not attain the higher realm of the *δεινόν*, to whose essence there belongs a counterturning that is enunciated in the middle of the second strophe (l. 360):

Überall hinausfahrend unterwegs und doch erfahrungslos ohne Ausweg
kommt er zum Nichts.

Everywhere venturing forth underway, yet experienceless without any
way out

he comes to nothing.

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τὸ δεινόν we translate as “*das Unheimliche*.” This German word is intended to render what is meant in the Greek word: the fearful, powerful, and inhabitable, including their counterturning character in each case, and to grasp this in a unitary manner, that is, in terms of the ground of its unity. Sophocles has the chorus say: *πολλὰ τὰ δεινά*—manifold is the uncanny. And the uncanny is indeed manifold of its own accord, in keeping

with the intrinsic equivocality of its essence. As a consequence of this manifold essence, the uncanny is then also multiple in the way it appears in each case. This multiplicity in the appearing of its essence then first conditions a diversity among that which appears. The multifarious essence of uncanniness intensifies its essence as a whole. *πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ* therefore in no way means merely that there is a great range of uncanny things in terms of number. The uncanny is not “given” at all in the sense of being merely present at hand. Of the uncanny we are told: *πέλει*, as emphasized by its intonation at the end of these two lines. The uncanny “is” in the manner of a coming forth (looming), and in such a way that in all its stirring it nonetheless abides within the inaccessibility of its essence. Hölderlin’s most sublime elegy, “The Archipelagus,” lets us intimate something of the essence of *πέλειν*.

We are otherwise accustomed to understand the uncanny as that which gives rise to anxiety, as something in the face of which we are seized with terror or shy back. If we think it in this way, we take the uncanny in terms of the impression it makes upon us. Yet to the extent that we intend the uncanny as meaning the extraordinary in the sense of something objective, as that which it is in itself and not merely with respect to the impression it makes upon us, we think the uncanny as the immense and vice versa. In our translation, however, the word is to be conceived in a more ordinary way. The uncanny means that which is not “at home,” not homely within whatever is homely. Accordingly, we must therefore think the extraordinary not as the immense, nor merely as that which is not the ordinary, but as that which, without the ordinary, resides within that which is not ordinary. Such abode in that which is not ordinary, such not being homely, neither first results as a mere consequence of wandering around, nor does it consist merely in the adventurous. Being unhomey is no mere deviance from the homely, but rather the converse: a seeking and searching out the homely, a seeking that at times does not know itself. This seeking shies at no danger and no risk. Everywhere it ventures and is underway in all directions.

§14. Further essential determinations of the human being

a) Venturing forth in all directions—without experience. (Explication of the middle part of the second strophe)

The adventurer is merely not-homey; the *δεινότητα*, by contrast, is the most uncanny being in a specific manner of being homely, namely that which, within its own essence, finds no entry to this essence, remains

excluded from it and without any way out that could allow it to enter the center of its own essence. The one who is properly unhomey relates back precisely to the homely, and to this alone, yet does so in the manner of not attaining it. The adventurer, by contrast, finds the homely precisely in what is constantly and merely not-homey, in the foreign taken in itself. To put it more precisely: For the heart that seeks adventure, this distinction between the homely and the unhomey is altogether lost. The wilderness becomes the absolute itself and counts as the “fullness of being.” And to ascribe romantically a particular toughness to the adventurer would be to forget that where danger is posited as the absolute, danger has lost its entire dangerousness.

The unhomey one is deprived of the homely; deprivation is the way in which the unhomey one possesses the homely, or to put it more precisely, the way in which whatever is homely possesses the unhomey one. What becomes manifest in these relations is the essence of uncanniness itself, namely, presencing in the manner of an absencing, and in such a way that whatever presences and absences here is itself simultaneously the open realm of all presencing and absencing. Initially, we can certainly grasp most readily the counterturning character within the uncanny without any immediate or clear comprehension of what this counterturning moves between, or on what grounds it persists. What is counterturning in the *δεινόν* is also enunciated purely and poetically. *παντοπόρος ἄπορος*—placed abruptly alongside one another, and yet interwoven and admitted into one another, these words name the essence of the *δεινόν* from the side of *πόρος*. *πόρος* means that irruption of autonomous power that ventures forth in all directions, everywhere finds its way through, reaches everywhere, and thus becomes acquainted with everything. *παντοπόρος* is a being that experiences everything and yet remains without experience, insofar as it is unable to transform that which it has made its way through into an experience that would let it attain any insight into its own essence. Instead, *ἐπ’ οὐδὲν ἔρχεται*—human beings come to nothing. This is not meant as a denial of their success, nor is it meant to deny success in the mastery of things, in capturing prey or the spoils of the hunt. What becomes manifest, presumably, is that all these things that are attained, taken by themselves, merely incite and drive one to further hunting, and, taken by themselves, do not have the propensity for bringing human beings into what is by essence their own. For no skillfulness, no acts of violence, and no artfulness can stave off death. Death is not some state of affairs like others, that can be circumvented. Nor is it something that first “comes to” human beings from without; rather, the being of humans in itself proceeds toward its death. Human beings, however, mostly know of this essential trait of themselves only in the manner of evading it and thereby

conceding their exclusion from entry into their own essence. Human beings are "at home" on every passageway through beings. Human beings reach everywhere, and it seems that in this way they also "come to something" and, as we say, earn a living. The Greek word *πόρος* can also mean precisely this. It can then stand for "wealth" as opposed to *πενία*, poverty. In human beings reaching everywhere, however, and in each case coming to "something," they still come to nothing, because they remain stuck with particular beings in each case, and fail to grasp their being or essence in such beings. The "nothing" to which they come is that which, turning counter to being, directly excludes human beings altogether from being. For this reason, *οὐδέν* is used here rather than *μηδέν*. Driven to busy themselves with all beings in every way, human beings are simultaneously (as though) driven out from being, however much effect beings may have, however "effective" they may be as actual in their actual efficacy, indeed however fearful or powerful or inhabital they may be. For the powers and forces of nature too can indeed be fearful in their effect; other things in their sublimity can indeed demand awe; the inhabital can indeed compel our astonishment; yet all such things are *δεινόν* only in the manner of their effect upon humans, they are not uncanny in the manner of the human being's very being. For it belongs to this kind of uncanniness, that is, unhomeliness, that whatever is of this essence knows of beings themselves and knows of them as beings, addressing them and enunciating them. This is something of which no thing of nature and no other living being is capable. Human beings alone stand in the midst of beings in such a way as to comport themselves toward beings as such. For this reason, it is left to beings of this essence alone to forget being in their relation to beings. As a consequence of this state of forgetting, the human being is in a certain manner outside of that wherein all beings are beings, namely, outside of being. For this reason, beings even refuse to human beings that which humans hope from them, namely that with and among beings they may come to something. Human beings simultaneously stand in the midst of beings in such a way that in relation to those beings they are *ἄπορος*. Yet only as *παντοπόρος* are they *ἄπορος* and vice versa. In those beings they come to, and in which they think themselves at home, they come to nothing. Thinking they are homely, human beings are those who are unhomely.

This kind of uncanniness, namely unhomeliness, is possible for human beings alone, because they comport themselves toward beings as such, and thereby understand being. And because they understand being, human beings alone can also forget being. Uncanniness in the sense of unhomeliness thus exceeds infinitely, that is, in essence, all other forms of the uncanny. Strictly speaking, unhomeliness is not at all one form of the uncanny among others but is essentially "beyond" these, something the

poet expresses in calling the human being that which is most uncanny. The most powerful "catastrophes" we can think of in nature and in the cosmos are nothing in terms of their uncanniness compared to that uncanniness that the human essence in itself is, insofar as human beings, placed among beings as such and set in place for beings, forget being. In this way, the homely becomes an empty and errant wandering for them, one that they fill out with their activities. The uncanniness of the unhomely here consists in the fact that human beings themselves in their essence are a *καταστροφή*—a reversal that turns them away from their own essence. Among beings, the human being is the sole catastrophe. Yet here it is at once necessary to remark that we fail to recognize this essential determination of human beings if we devalue the catastrophic as the "disastrous" and evaluate this in turn according to the standards of a pessimistic view of the world.

We are immediately inclined toward such interpretations because, without yet knowing it, we stand in the long tradition of a Christian world view that, among other things, has also misled us in our coming to know the Greek world, if only in the formless form of the allegedly pagan classicism of Goethe and Schiller. We would be removing all gravity from the poetic determination of the human essence contained in the choral ode of Sophocles were we to interpret the uncanniness of unhomely human beings as the kind of being pertaining to a creature driven out of "paradise" and therefore in need of redemption. This would be already to weaken and eliminate in advance the "negative" moment in the uncanny, granted that it is such, and to do so would be precisely to contradict the originary and essential Greek experience of human beings in the commencement. The history of the Greek world attains the pinnacle of its essence at that very point where it preserves and brings to appear the counterturning in being itself. For here alone is there the necessity of remaining within the grounds of that which is counterturning, instead of taking flight into one or the other side. At that historical moment when one side of the counterturning character of being is devalued as the lesser and lower, the Greek world falls out of the orbit of its essence and its downfall has been decided. The sign of this change is the philosophy of Plato. The decisive reason why we contemporaries and latecomers are scarcely able to perceive the essence of the *δεινόν* as enunciated in its completeness by Sophocles for the first time—but also for the last time—thus extends back into realms that, in a concealed manner, sustain our own history. The metaphysics that begins with Plato within Greek thinking itself was not up to the essence of the "negative." Even though it escapes being equated with the empty nothing, the negative is always conceived as something negative in the sense of the lesser, something that ought not to be, the *μή*.

It may seem that we can readily come to the assistance of this reductive and negating conception of the negative by thinking the negative positively at the same time, indeed by thinking it as the positivity proper of the positive. This occurs in the metaphysics of German Idealism in Hegel and Schelling. A reflection of this stance toward negativity appears again in Nietzsche. In German Idealism, as everywhere in metaphysics, the Platonic-Christian devaluation of the negative is in truth retained, though simultaneously rendered innocuous and canceled out by its being accommodated in advance within the Absolute. This overcoming of negativity, however, represents merely another form in which the issue of negativity is left to remain “as before,” rather than touching upon its essential origin. Yet as soon as we attempt to touch upon this origin, it becomes apparent that even to name that which we are referring to by using the term “negative” is to think what we are seeking to know here in terms of “negation,” in terms of *negare*, that is, negating. Negating is one way in which human beings take up a stance toward things. The same is true of the positing of what is positive. We can indeed grasp everything that has the character of a “not” in terms of negation, yet negation does not in turn exhaust the essence of the “not.” In particular, it contains no indication of that realm from out of which the essence of whatever has the character of a “not” becomes manifest, if it manifests itself at all.

The unbroken domination of metaphysical thinking and its rich tradition that has undergone many transformations make it almost impossible for us to think adequately the poetic word παντοπόρος-ἄπορος in respect of its inward counterturning. Whatever belongs to the “un-” in the uncanny is of an essence other than that which we could ever grasp with the aid of negations that slide back and forth. We approach whatever belongs to the “un-” [*dem Un-artigen*] more closely in recognizing it as that which belongs to evil [*das Bös-artige*], provided we do not conceive of evil in the sense of something morally bad, that is, as characteristic of human activity, but rather as an essential trait of being itself, within whose realm humans journey along their path. Thus Hölderlin says in the poem “Ripe, Bathed in Fire . . .” (IV, 71):

. . . Aber bös sind
Die Pfade . . .
. . . Yet evil are
The paths. . .

This marginal remark concerning the metaphysical essence of negativity is intended merely to indicate that this provisional explication of the essence of uncanniness too must move in a twilight. Yet if these hints keep

us from too hastily accommodating what is said in the choral ode within our conventional way of thinking, then we shall at least maintain a stance that is prepared to experience the word of this choral song as itself something uncanny, and we shall resist dissolving its content into everyday opinions and commonplace trivialities. We shall then receive more thoughtfully those words of the choral ode in which the preceding lines are gathered as though in a new vessel, that is, we shall awaken to that essential realm from out of which and back into which they speak.

b) Towering high above the site—forfeiting the site.

The πόλις as site.

(Explication of the middle part of the second antistrophe)

ὑψίπολις ἄπολις ὅτω τὸ μὴ καλὸν
ξύνεστι τόλμας χάριν.

Hochüberragend die Stätte, verlustig der Stätte
ist er, dem immer das Unseiende seiend
der Wagnis zugunsten.

Towering high above the site, forfeiting the site
Is he for whom non-beings always are
For the sake of risk.

These lines (370–71) are constructed in a manner corresponding to the middle part of the second strophe. Again we find that the counterturning words, ὑψίπολις-ἄπολις, abruptly follow one another. In the articulation of this phrase the παντοπόρος-ἄπορος is taken up again. It remains for us to ask: In what way? The answer must demonstrate to what extent the inwardly counterturning essence of uncanniness now comes more decisively to the fore. In the articulation of the first counterturning phrase the key word is πόρος, in the second it is πόλις. πόρος is the passage or passage through to something, a passage that leads to something and to nothing. We are not told where the passage goes, nor where whoever takes it arrives; we are not told what we meet in such passage, nor what whoever takes it “gets.” παντοπόρος indeed tells us that human beings everywhere get through and everywhere “get” something within their power. The “everywhere,” however, leaves indeterminate the realms of human activity; nor do these need to be specially named here since the choral ode indeed names many things before and after this word.

By contrast, it is now the πόλις that is named, that is, a particular realm of πόρος, as it were, one field in which the latter emphatically comes to pass. The πόλις. Today—if one still reads such books at all—one can scarcely read a treatise or book on the Greeks without everywhere being

assured that here, with the Greeks, “everything” is “politically” determined. In the majority of “research results,” the Greeks appear as the pure National Socialists. This overenthusiasm on the part of academics seems not even to notice that with such “results” it does National Socialism and its historical uniqueness no service at all, not that it needs this anyhow. These enthusiasts are now suddenly discovering the “political” everywhere, and scholars of the previous century, who first accomplished the careful work of creating texts and editions, are made to appear like blind idiots in the face of these “most recent discoveries.”

We think we are educated as to what πόλις means. For whatever the πόλις is must “naturally” be determined with respect to the “political.” Presumably the “political” and the πόλις will be connected. The question remains, however, as to how this connection must be thought in the first instance. Evidently, the “political” is that which belongs to the πόλις and can therefore be determined only in terms of the πόλις. Yet the converse is precisely not the case. But if this is so, if the “political” is that which belongs to the πόλις and essentially ensues from it, just as “the logical” proceeds from the essence of the λόγος and “the ethical” from the essence of ἠθος, then it is of little help to us to arm ourselves with any ideas whatsoever of the “political” so as to delimit the essence of the πόλις using such weapons. To proceed in this way would merely be to explain that which conditions in terms of the conditioned, the ground in terms of the consequence, that is, to explain nothing at all but rather merely to confuse the essence of explanation. If, however, we can avoid this almost ineradicable confusion that is becoming widespread in all explanations of “the logical,” “the aesthetic,” “the technical,” “the metaphysical,” “the biological,” and “the political,” then we have gained an important insight with respect to our present “case,” an insight we may express as follows: *The πόλις cannot be determined “politically.”* The πόλις, and precisely it, is therefore not a “political” concept. This is indeed how things stand, provided that we wish to remain serious in our reflections and follow a clean train of thought.

Yet what is the πόλις of the Greeks? No “definition” can ever answer such questions; or rather the “definition,” even if it points in the right direction, provides no guarantee of an adequate relation to what is essential. For it could be that whatever is essential wishes, in itself and of its own accord, to remain within the realm of that which is worthy of question. Who says that the Greeks, because they “lived” in the πόλις, were also in the clear as to the essence of the πόλις? Perhaps the name πόλις is precisely the word for that realm that constantly became questionable anew, remained worthy of question, made necessary and indeed needed certain decisions whose truth on each occasion displaced the Greeks into the realm

of the groundless or the inaccessible. If we therefore ask: What is the πόλις of the Greeks? then we must not presuppose that the Greeks must have known this, as though all we had to do were to enquire among them. Yet are not extensive reflections on the πόλις handed down to us in Greek thought—Plato’s comprehensive dialogue on the πολιτεία, that is, on everything that concerns the πόλις; the far-reaching lecture course by Aristotle, ἐπιστήμη πολιτική, “The Politics”? Certainly; yet the question remains, from where do these thinkers think the essence of the πόλις? The question remains whether the foundations and fundamental perspectives of this Greek thought at the end of the great Greek era were then adequate even to question the πόλις at all, and to do so in the Greek sense. Perhaps there lies precisely in these late reflections concerning the πόλις a genuine mistaking of its essence, namely of the fact that it itself is what is question-worthy and that it must be acknowledged and preserved in such worthiness. If this is the case, then it seems as though we must think more Greek than the Greeks themselves. It does not merely seem so, it is so. For in the future we ourselves must, in relation to ourselves, think more German than all Germans hitherto; for nothing passed down to us can directly bestow what is essential, nor does the latter appear without signs from the tradition.

Perhaps the πόλις is that realm and locale around which everything question-worthy and uncanny turns in an exceptional sense. The πόλις is πόλος, that is, the pole, the swirl [*Wirbel*]^[20] in which and around which everything turns. These two words name *that* essential moment that the verb πέλειν says in the second line of the choral ode: that which is constant, and change. The essentially “polar” character of the πόλις concerns beings as a whole. The polar concerns beings in that around which such beings, as manifest, themselves turn. The human being is then related in an exceptional sense to this pole, insofar as human beings, in understanding being, stand in the midst of beings and here necessarily have a “status” [*status*] in each case, a stance in their instances and circumstances. The word “status” [*status*] means the “state.” Therefore πόλις does indeed mean as much as “state.” We are already on a path of errancy once more, however, if, thinking πόλις as state, we knowingly or thoughtlessly stick to ideas that have to do with modern state formations. Since even a cursory glance can distinguish the Greek πόλις from, for example, the eighteenth century “state,” we come to be assured that the Greek πόλις is not so much a “state” as a “city.” But the “city” here does not mean something merely distinguished from the village, but precisely that which is “stately”—the Greek πόλις is supposed to be the “city state.”

Yet this stringing together of two indeterminate concepts that are without direction as regards their determinative ground can never provide any

determinate concept of the essence of the πόλις with respect to its ground. All that emerges from stringing together half-thought ideas is an illusion that misleads us into the view that everything is clear once the πόλις has been determined as the city state. Here too there is no way to make that step that alone can free our perspective within the sphere of our question concerning the πόλις, namely, to think the πόλις not in terms of its relation to the state or to the city, but at most to do the converse, that is, to think the state and the city from out of their relation to the πόλις. Yet what is the πόλις if its distinctiveness lies in being a kind of pole? It is neither merely state, nor merely city, rather in the first instance it is properly “the stead” [“*die Statt*”]: the site [“*die Stätte*”] of the abode of human history that belongs to humans in the midst of beings. This, however, precisely does not mean that the political has priority, or that what is essential lies in the πόλις understood politically and that such a πόλις is what is essential. Rather, it says that what is essential in the historical being of human beings resides in the pole-like relatedness of everything to this site of abode, that is, this site of being homely in the midst of beings as a whole. From this site and stead there springs forth whatever is granted stead [“*gestattet*”] and whatever is not, what is order and what is disorder, what is fitting and what is unfitting. For whatever is fitting [“*das Schickliche*”] determines destiny [“*das Geschick*”], and such destiny determines history [“*die Geschichte*”]. To the πόλις there belong the gods and the temples, the festivals and games, the governors and council of elders, the people’s assembly and the armed forces, the ships and the field marshals, the poets and the thinkers. Yet we are never to think all these according to the civil state of the nineteenth century. None of these are merely pieces of embellishment for some state ordinance that puts value on producing “cultural achievements.” Rather, from out of the relation to the gods, out of the kind of festivals and the possibility of celebration, out of the relationship between master and slave, out of a relation to sacrifice and battle, out of a relationship to honor and glory, out of the relationship between these relationships and from out of the grounds of their unity, there prevails what is called the πόλις. For this very reason the πόλις remains what is properly worthy of question, that which, on account of such worthiness, prevails in permeating all essential activity and every stance adopted by human beings. The pre-political essence of the πόλις, that essence that first makes possible everything political in the originary and in the derivative sense, lies in its being the open site of that fitting destining [“*Schickung*”] from out of which all human relations toward beings—and that always means in the first instance the relations of beings as such to humans—are determined. The essence of the πόλις therefore always comes to light in accordance with the way in which beings as such in general enter the realm of the unconcealed: in

keeping with the expanse of those limits within which this occurs, and in keeping with the way in which the essence of human beings is determined in unison with the manifestness of beings as a whole.

This connection has also been maintained in Aristotle’s thinking. Toward the beginning of his *Politics*, Aristotle designates the human being as ζῷον πολιτικόν. Translated in a superficial way, this oft-quoted word means: “the human being is a political being.” In ascertaining this, however, people are content to let their knowledge of Aristotle’s *Politics* rest. No one asks why the human being is and is able to be a “political being.” One pays no attention to the fact that Aristotle also provides the answer to this question at the beginning of his *Politics*. The human being is a ζῷον πολιτικόν because the human being, and only the human being, is a ζῷον λόγον ἔχον—a living being that has the word, which means: *that* being that can address beings as such with respect to their being. Who or what the human being is precisely cannot be decided “politically” according to *that* thinker who names the human being the “political being,” because the very essence of the πόλις is determined in terms of its relation to the essence of human beings (and the essence of human beings is determined from out of the truth of being). Aristotle’s statement that the human being is ζῷον πολιτικόν means that humans are those beings capable of belonging to the πόλις; yet this entails precisely that they are not “political” without further ado. But how is this determination of the essence of human beings accomplished? Where is the word that gives the measure to this determination? We can hear it as the choral song of this tragedy, this tragedy that is a poetizing.

REVIEW

We have to understand the extent to which, according to the choral song of the *Antigone* tragedy, the human being is the most uncanny of all beings. Commensurate with the Greek meaning of δεινόν, we equate the uncanny with the fearful, the powerful, the inhabital. Here each of these can in itself assume an oppositional form. For us, the uncanny signifies in the first instance the unity of these three, together with their possible oppositional forms in each case. Thought directly, that which is most uncanny would then be this full essence of the uncanny, taken in its highest possible degree of intensification in every possible respect. Were we to think that which is most uncanny in this way, however, we would not hit upon what constitutes the proper and accordingly singular essence of uncanniness, namely being unhomely. Many kinds of things can be fearful, powerful, inhabital, yet they need not have the kind of essence specific to the

unhomely. Whatever is unhomely in its essence, however, exceeds infinitely, that is, in essence, everything uncanny.

That which is un-homely is not merely the non-homely, but rather that homely that seeks yet does not find itself, because it seeks itself by way of a distancing and alienation from itself. Whereas those uncanny things we otherwise meet are counterturning merely in the sense that, extrinsic to the particular way in which, for example, something is fearful, there is in each case something oppositional to this, what properly characterizes the unhomely is a counterturning that belongs intrinsically to its essence. This inward counterturning is to be found in every manner of the unhomely as its intrinsic and essential constitution. The remaining ways in which things are uncanny in each case have their oppositional form extrinsic to them and are not intrinsically counterturning in the manner of the unhomely. For the unhomely to be possible in its essence, it requires a significance and a ground, a ground in which it remains the distinction of human beings to rest and to prevail in their essence.

The fact that there is pronounced in the choral ode this inward, counterturning character of the δεινότατον, that is, of the most uncanny, which human beings are, is indicated by the words παντοπόρος-ἄπορος and the phrase ὑπίπολις-ἄπολις. As venturing forth in all directions, human beings arrive everywhere and yet everywhere come to nothing, insofar as what they attain in venturing forth is never sufficient to fulfill and sustain their essence. Whatever human beings undertake turns in itself—and not in the first instance in any adverse consequences—counter to what humans are fundamentally seeking from it, namely, becoming homely in the midst of beings. That which is counterturning, however, if we are to think it in a Greek way, is never to be interpreted as some adverse property of things, as a lack, or indeed as “sin.” In the Greek world there is no sin whatsoever, since sin is simply the counterpart of faith understood in a Christian way. But the statement that there is no sin in the Greek world is by no means saying that anything and everything is permitted there. Rather, the statement means that the “negative” is different in kind from “sin,” that is, different from transgression or rebellion—understood in a quite specific respect—against a God of creation and redemption, again understood in a specific respect. Yet the so-called “negative” does not become weakened when, or because, we do not interpret it as “sin”; on the contrary, the negative retains its own essence and does not assume the role of something that could or ought to be eliminated and overcome. Because, as a counteressence, it has its own essence, it must be sustained and respected together with its counteressence from out of the grounds of their unity.

This hint concerning what is inappropriately termed the “negative” is intended to indicate that the “un-” in the un-homely does not express a

mere lack or simply a shortcoming. The turn of phrase παντοπόρος-ἄπορος names in a “general” and “indeterminate” way a counterturning within the essence of human beings. So it seems, at any rate. For what is named second, ὑπίπολις-ἄπολις, speaks in the direction of a particular realm within which human action is accomplished. This is the realm of the “political.” Yet what is the latter? If “the political” is that which belongs to the polis, and therefore is essentially dependent upon the polis, then the essence of the polis can never be determined in terms of the political, just as the ground can never be explained or derived from the consequence.

What, then, is the πόλις, and how is its essence manifest specifically for the Greeks and according to their way of thinking? The πόλις is and remains what is properly worthy of question in the strict sense of the word, that is, not simply something questionable for any question whatsoever, but that with which meditation proper, the highest and most extensive, is concerned. That this is the case can be seen even from those late reflections that are passed down to us in the works of Plato and Aristotle. Plato, in his *Republic* (Book V, 473c ff.), says, among other things, the following:

Ἐὰν μὴ . . . ἢ οἱ φιλόσοφοι βασιλεύσωσιν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἢ οἱ βασιλεῖς τε νῦν λεγόμενοι καὶ δυνάσται φιλοσοφήσωσι γνησίως τε καὶ ἰκανῶς, . . . οὐκ ἔστι κακῶν παύλα . . . ταῖς πόλεσι, . . .

Wenn nicht entweder die Philosophen Herrscher werden in der πόλις oder aber die jetzt sogenannten Herrscher und Machthaber in echter und geeigneter Weise “philosophieren”—ist kein Ende des Unheils für die πόλις.

Either the philosophers must become rulers in the πόλις, or the present so-called rulers and powers that be must “philosophize” in a genuine and appropriate manner, otherwise there will be no end to disaster for the πόλις.

Modern human beings will indeed consider this view of Plato’s to be distinctly “Platonic,” that is, in this case to be groundless and extravagant. It is well known that “philosophers” lack any “experience of life” and, moreover, are unpractical. So how are they to assume the business of the state? Yet Plato does not mean that philosophers are to assume the business of the state, because πόλις, properly speaking, is not the “state,” and the “business” in it is not what is essential. Nor does Plato mean that the rulers should “busy themselves” with “philosophy,” as though this were something like collecting beetles. According to what Plato says elsewhere, the philosophers stand in the radiance and light of being, which is why it is very difficult for ordinary eyes to discern whether or not someone is a philosopher. The statement cited from Plato, which has been greatly abused, means rather the following: The πόλις is founded upon the truth and essence of being, in terms of which all beings are determined. Yet this

relation is valid for the πόλις in the first instance because it is the site in which all beings and all relational comportment toward beings is gathered. It is the “pole” among all beings and for all beings in their being. Yet being for the Greeks means πέλειν. If this is the case, then Plato is saying nothing other than the fact that everything must be determined in terms of the “political,” and that the “political” has unconditional priority. Plato’s thinking is thus not so “removed from life” at all, but entirely modern.

Yet to think this would merely be the flipside of the said misinterpretation of Plato, and a further error. The doctrine of the unconditional priority of the political on the one hand, and on the other hand the conception of the πόλις as the ground that is worthy of question and as the site of beings, are separated from one another by an abyss. One therefore does no service either to contemporary political thought or to the Greeks if one mixes together, in the overenthusiasm of the “scientific approach,” everything that stands by itself in its own essence and in its specific historical uniqueness. One does no service whatsoever to our knowledge and evaluation of the historical singularity of National Socialism if one now interprets the Greek world in such a way as to say that the Greeks were all already “National Socialists.” We, in the present instance, are not concerned with the “political,” but with the essence of the πόλις and, more precisely, the essential realm in terms of which it is determined, that is, from out of which and in accordance with which it must remain what is *worthy* of question for the Greeks. The very fact that the poet Sophocles speaks of the relationship of human beings to the πόλις, and does so in the context of this telling of the δεινόν, already points to the decisiveness with which the πόλις is experienced as the site and midst of beings.

§15. Continued explication of the essence of the πόλις

According to the word of this poetizing, the πόλις itself conceals within it the possibility of a counterturning abode therein—ὕψιπολις, towering high above the site; ἄπολις, forfeiting the site. The πόλις is here not some indifferent space that in turn admits of the empty possibilities of “towering high” and of downfall; rather, it is the essence of the πόλις to thrust one into excess and to tear one into downfall, and in such a way that the human being is destined and fitted into both these counterturning possibilities and thus must be these two possibilities themselves. Human beings do not “have” these possibilities in addition and extrinsic to themselves, rather their essence consists in being those who, in ascending within the site of their essence, are at the same time without site. To be in such a way, however, means to be determined in essence by the unhomely, to be coun-

terturning. To tower into the heights of one’s own essential space and thus govern that space, yet simultaneously to plunge downward into its depths and be lost in that space. Uncanniness does not first ensue as a consequence of this twofold possibility. Instead, the veiled ground of the unity of this twofoldness prevails within the uncanny, a ground worthy of question, and one from out of which this twofoldness has its power to carry that carries humans high into the extraordinary and to tear them away into violent activity. Because human beings must let prevail—in accordance with its most extreme counterturning character in its historical being—that uncanniness that appears and simultaneously veils itself within the πόλις, they are the most uncanny beings. And being unhomely itself? It stands in an essential bond with the πόλις, that is, with the site of abode of human beings as historical in the midst of beings. This too the poet says clearly enough. Those who lose the essential site of their history, that is, whatever is fitting in all destiny, in towering high above that site, are in such a way only because nonbeings can be in being for them. This entails that the relation of human beings to beings bears within it the possibility of this reversal of a possibility, something that presumably has its origin in the being of beings in general. Human beings are placed into the site of their historical abode, into the πόλις, because they and they alone comport themselves toward beings as beings, toward beings in their unconcealment and concealing, and can be mistaken within the being of beings, and at times, that is, continually within the most extreme realms of this site, must be mistaken within being, so that they take nonbeings to be beings and beings to be nonbeings.

a) The meaning of καλόν and τόλμα

What we here in translation term “nonbeings” is called τὸ μὴ καλόν by Sophocles. If we translate “literally,” we have to say “the un-beautiful.” Genuine translation according to the letter, however, in no way amounts to substituting the “same” words in different languages but in finding a transition into the corresponding word. τὸ καλόν means the beautiful. Yet what is the beautiful? What is meant by the Greek καλόν? Here again we are too misled by the modern interpretation of the beautiful, that is, by the aesthetic conception of the beautiful that relates the beautiful to consciousness and to “enjoyment,” for us to immediately grasp that realm that is intended by the so-called “beautiful” in the sense of the Greek καλόν. Even Plato equates τὸ καλόν with τὸ ἀγαθόν, which we call the “good,” and he names both in the meaning of ἀληθές, which we translate as “the true.” Yet when we speak of the “true,” the “good,” and the “beautiful,” we move, whether knowingly or not, within the realm of modern, enlight-

enment, Masonic thought, a “realm” that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have then elaborated as the “realm” of “values.” This is all very far removed from the Greek world, yet it is merely removed from it, which is to say that it is in turn related to it insofar as what is also prepared, among other things, in Plato’s thinking is the fact that within modernity the essence of the beautiful comes to be determined in terms of consciousness of the beautiful, that is, in terms of the sensation of the beautiful, in terms of αἴσθησις, that is, aesthetically.

Aesthetics is the way in which the essence of the beautiful and of art is delimited metaphysically, namely in terms of modern metaphysics. This modern metaphysical explanation of the beautiful attains its completion in Nietzsche’s metaphysics, in which art in the more restricted sense is conceived as the “spur of the will to power,” and as this alone. It is not by chance that Nietzsche uses the word “stimulans.” For Nietzsche’s metaphysics of the will to power, art belongs to the “stimulants” and must therefore of necessity be nurtured. The way in which, at the beginning of metaphysics in Plato, the poets, for example, and their role in the πόλις are dealt with, in truth already corresponds to what is announced in the completion of metaphysics. Insofar as Western metaphysics begins in Plato’s thought, Plato also prepares the subsequent aesthetic interpretation of the beautiful and of art. Yet to the extent that Plato simultaneously stands in the tradition of the Greek thinking of the “commencement” and is a transition, he also still thinks τὸ καλόν non-aesthetically. This can be seen in his equating of καλόν with the ὄν. What is beautiful are beings, and those beings that are “in truth” are the beautiful. We can immediately recognize the essential belonging together of beings and the beautiful if we think beings and the beautiful in a Greek manner.

Beings are what emerge of their own accord and thus come to presence. According to Plato, however, the beautiful is τὸ ἐκφάνεστατον: that which steps forth most purely into appearance, namely within the realm of the senses, and yet as such is simultaneously ἐρασμιώτατον (ἔρωσις): that which transports us into a relation to the distant and the constant, that which shines through in everything nonconstant. Yet τὸ ἀγαθόν, the good, that is, that which makes all that appears fit to appear and is therefore that which appears most purely and before everything else, is also conceived by Plato within the same perspective of appearing and presencing. The good is the highest idea, that is, τὸ φανότατον, and that which appears in everything is the good, that is to say, that which makes possible everything in its being. In the pre-Platonic sense, τὸ μὴ καλόν therefore means non-beings [*das Un-seiende*], those beings that are not altogether nothing—but rather, as beings, are “opposed” to beings in a counterturning way—that is, something that confuses the senses and entangles us in that which

is without subsistence and is thus unable to let anything come to constant presencing, except the possibility of not being, a mere threat to being, the absencing and annihilating of beings. To the extent that human beings are “together” with non-beings, so that they take non-beings as beings, they have entrusted beings to the danger of annihilation, put them at stake. Such comportment toward beings is τόλμα, risk. Where all indulgence is turned toward risk, and every comportment toward beings is as it must then be for the sake of risk, the relation of humans to beings is tensioned within the most extreme tension between the supreme heights of mastery of the site of their history and the most profound depths of the forfeiture of this site. τόλμα, risk, in which nonbeings must appear as beings, is the tension of the bow upon which the essence of human beings extends into the counterturning tension of the unhomely. In accordance with, and as a consequence of, this relation of risk, which thus places human beings and them alone in the open site in the midst of beings, human beings as those who are essentially un-homely are the most uncanny beings.

Insofar as human beings venture forth and are everywhere underway, they exceed the site of their historical essence. The πόλις, therefore, is not some isolated realm, the so-called “political,” within a manifold of other realms of human ventures and procedures (πόρος). Rather, the πόλις is the site within whose expansive realm every πόρος moves. The distinction between the phrases παντοπόρος-ἄπορος and ὑπίπολις-ἄπολις is not that between the universal and the particular, but between venturing through the site, that is, through its expansive realm, and the site itself. It is in this respect that we must attempt to think the double and counterturning relation between “underway in every direction—without any way out” and “exceeding the site—without-site,” in order to comprehend in what sense and why the human being is the most uncanny being in the midst of beings.

Beings themselves as emergent and appearing are, as such, simultaneously self-concealing and mere appearing. Thus beings themselves play out their appearances [*Schein*] and hide nonbeings within such appearances. In this way beings themselves do not let humans be homely in a direct way, with the result that human beings, as the sole beings that comport themselves toward beings as such, at the same time and at once lend every indulgence to risk; for in the realm of risk all forces and abilities may be awakened and set in motion and brought into play, so as thereby to attain a stand within the site in the midst of beings.¹

Insofar as human beings are in the midst of beings in such a way that they comport themselves toward beings as such, they must, in accordance

1. Cf. §16, Review. No blind recklessness.

with their essence, seek to become homely within a particular site. Yet because beings themselves play out their own appearances, human beings, in undertaking the risk of becoming homely, must place everything at stake in such play and therefore encounter *this*: the fact that the homely refuses itself to them. Constantly on a path toward the homely site, and at the same time placed at stake in the play that repudiates the homely, human beings in their innermost essence are those who are unhomely. And because only human beings, on account of that relation toward beings that distinguishes humans alone, can be unhomely in this way, supreme uncanniness belongs to their essence. (This distinction of being the most uncanny does not, therefore, mean a mere addition, an increase in the amount of uncanniness in respect of its so-called “extent.” This would at most be to think in an “American” way the determination of being the most uncanny.) Yet because active violence and power are also to be found within the δεινόν, one might think that the δεινότατον means that human beings are the most actively violent beings in the sense of that animal full of cunning that Nietzsche calls the “blond beast” and “the predator.” Such predatory uncanniness of human beings as historical, however, is an extreme derivative and essential consequence of a concealed uncanniness that is grounded in unhomeliness, an unhomeliness that in turn has its concealed ground in the counterturning relation of being to human beings.

It is by no means the case, therefore, that human beings make themselves into the most uncanny beings merely on their own initiative, as it were. “On one’s own initiative” is already indicative of a way in which being itself lets human beings be in their essence, insofar as, on account of that essence, they comport themselves constantly toward being. Kant once said that what distinguishes human beings from all cattle is that human beings can say “I,” that is, “have” a self-consciousness. This specifically modern depiction of human beings must be overcome by a more originary one, one that has recognized that human beings are distinguished from all other beings by the fact that they can say “is,” the fact that they can “say” at all. Only because human beings can say “it is” can they also say “I am,” and not vice versa. And it is because human beings can say “is,” because they “have” a relation to being, that they are able to “say” at all, that they “have” the word, that they are ζῶον λόγον ἔχον.

It may now have become clearer in several respects why, and in what sense, δεινόν is here translated as “*unheimlich*,” “uncanny.” To say that the human being is the most uncanny being does not mean that human beings arouse most fear or instill the greatest terror. This would be merely to take the uncanny as though it were some impression that is made upon us. *Das Unheimliche*, however, the uncanny, is not meant to be understood in terms of an impression but to be conceived in terms of *das Un-heimische*, the

un-homely, namely, that unhomely that is the fundamental trait of human abode in the midst of beings.

b) The open

What is characteristic of human abode is grounded in the fact that being in general has opened itself to humans and is this very open. As such an open, it receives human beings for itself, and so determines them to be in a site. We here speak of the open with regard to what is said in the word and concept ἀλήθεια, unconcealment of beings, when correctly understood. As unconcealed, beings are in the open. The open, in accordance with its essential conception, has an unequivocal and singular content and relation to what was experienced at the commencement of Western thought yet at once became lost as a fundamental experience. To “see” the open, thus understood, is the distinction of human beings. The animal is animal precisely on account of its not seeing the open, as understood in this way, which is also why it is unable to say the “is” or being, that is, is altogether unable to say. The animal is ἄλογον—without the word.²

The uncanniness of human beings has its essence in unhomeliness, which, however, is what it is only through human beings in general being homely in being, that is, not only “seeing the open,” but in seeing it, also standing within it.

Thus understood, the uncanniness of human beings that is rooted in un-homeliness is named poetically in the choral ode by the word δεινόν but is not thoughtfully unfolded. Because, even within this poetic telling, the unhomely essence of uncanniness comes to light only by way of intimation, and yet decisively, uncanniness thus conceived remains closed off in the realm of what is scarcely sayable throughout all subsequent determinations of human beings in the Western tradition. And because, ever since modernity, being in general and the human being, as well as the relation between them, are thought of as “consciousness” and in terms of “self-consciousness,” everything that cannot be accounted for within the realm of consciousness is placed in the sphere of the unconscious—a sphere first posited in terms of consciousness—the sphere of whatever is inaccessible to consciousness (*ratio*). What Rilke calls the open goes back to this fateful, modern, and metaphysical concept of the “unconscious.”

2. Although Rilke’s eighth Duino elegy begins: “With all its eyes, the creature sees the open,” it should be clear after what has been said that if our concept of the open, which points toward ἀλήθεια, can be compared at all with Rilke’s word, then at most it thinks the complete opposite. The grounds for this profoundly untrue word of Rilke’s are the same as those that sustain Nietzsche’s metaphysics, grounds that we may designate imprecisely and by way of a catchword as unsurmounted biologism. This by way of an aside, because the thoughtless lumping together of my thinking with Rilke’s poetry has already become a cliché.

The "irrational" as a "domain" remains the preserve of feeling and instinct. Here the δεινόν can appear only as the powerful, extraordinary, and uncanny regarded in terms of its impression. Perhaps this interpretation of the δεινόν, which is the sole interpretation that suggests itself to our habitual thinking, has led to our failure to recognize the proper, poetic truth of the choral song, a failure of such proportions that this truth is not sought in the sole place where it can be found. The truth of the choral song is by no means exhausted in the assertion that human beings are the most uncanny among the uncanny, and are nothing else besides. And yet it does seem that the first lines of the song indeed bring together, in advance, the entire truth of the song into this one telling:

Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch
über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt.

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing
more uncanny looms or stirs beyond the human being.

**§16. The expulsion of the human being as the most uncanny being.
(The relation of the closing words to the introductory
words of the choral song)**

If we relate the closing words of the song directly to the beginning, then we see that the closing words pronounce a rejection and expulsion of this most uncanny being that the human being is. The closing words thereby indeed confirm the opening words, which state that nothing is more uncanny than the human being. The decisive word of the choral song therefore lies in its expressing this truth about human beings, namely their being the most uncanny of all that is uncanny.

The closing words indeed relate to the human being as "uncanny." Yet it is necessary to ask what kind of relation this is, and in what way the closing words bear on the introductory words of the choral song:¹

μήτ' ἐμοὶ παρέστιος
γένοιτο μήτ' ἴσον φρονῶν ὅς τάδ' ἔρδοι.

Nicht werde dem Herde ein Trauter mir der,
nicht auch teile mit mir sein Wähnen mein Wissen,
der dieses führet ins Werk.

Such shall not be entrusted to my hearth,
nor share their delusion with my knowing,
who put such a thing to work.

1. Cf. p. 61.

These closing words pronounce a double μήτε: Such shall not be entrusted to the hearth, "nor" shall they share with me. . . . This "not" is a rejection. We can at once hear it more clearly: The rejection is an expulsion from the hearth. Who is expelled here? From which hearth is the one rejected kept distant? Who is rejecting here? Who is by the hearth? And what is the hearth?

One can answer these questions very straightforwardly, and thereby demonstrate that they are not serious questions worth asking. It is quite obvious who is expelled here as the most uncanny by the chorus of Theban elders. It is Creon, ruler of the state. And the πόλις is even spoken of in the strophe that immediately precedes. The word that nothing is more uncanny than the human being thus merely means that among the human race a few individuals attain the highest degree of uncanniness, that is, of violent activity and arrogance, and thereby in general reach into the realm of the uncanny, but that "otherwise" and habitually human beings are well-disposed creatures and harmless beings, especially if they are of such an innocent nature as this Antigone, whom evil Creon sends to her death because she has overstepped his command to leave her brother Polyneices unburied.

This interpretation of the Antigone tragedy, which is indeed harmless, presupposes that Antigone, who after all is also a human being, remains outside the realm of the δεινόν. The words of the choral song do not refer to her. The question as to whether this view grasps or misses the essential truth of the tragedy, and thereby the truth of the choral song too, can evidently be answered only through an interpretation of the poetic work as a whole. Yet we do not need to take on such a task here. It suffices to hear a word from Antigone herself, a word she speaks in the dialogue with her sister Ismene that introduces the entire tragedy. Strictly speaking, the word from Antigone is her final word in this dialogue, which is followed only later by the choral ode, and which the choral ode therefore also keeps in mind.

REVIEW

"Überallhinausfahrend unterwegs, erfahrungslos ohne Ausweg
kommt er zum Nichts."

"Venturing forth underway in all directions, without experience or way out
he comes to nothing."

"Hochüberragend die Stätte, verlustig der Stätte ist er
dem immer das Unseiende seiend
der Wagnis zugunsten."

"Towering high above the site, forfeiting the site
Is he for whom non-beings always are
For the sake of risk."

These two statements name what is unhomey in human beings, and do so by indicating that human beings indeed never attain their essence among whatever beings they "get" or get "hold of" on any occasion. The second statement names that proper realm within which human beings, venturing everywhere in all directions, fail to arrive at any experience. In the midst of beings, the *πόλις* is the open site of all beings, which are here gathered into their unity because the *πόλις* is the ground of such unity and reaches back into that ground. The *πόλις* is not some special or isolated region of human activity. Yet the fact that all activity and occasioning undertaken by human beings as historical has in every respect the *πόλις* as its site, as the locale to which it belongs, is not to be conflated with the modern "totality" of the "political," which historically is quite different in kind. This merely leads to a falsification of the Greek by way of the modern, and indeed of the modern by way of the Greek.

Because modern thought grasps all beings in terms of consciousness, modernity conceives of all history "historiographically," that is, according to the manner and way in which it is established in (investigative) human consciousness. As self-consciousness, however, such consciousness is intent on being unconditionally certain of itself and thereby of all beings that can be experienced. The fundamental guise of such certainty that provides its measure is the surveyability and indubitability of everything that can be calculated and planned. That consciousness that wishes to be certain of history must therefore be a consciousness that plans and acts. The fundamental modern form in which the specifically modern, self-framing self-consciousness of human beings orders all beings is the state. For this reason, the "political" becomes the definitive self-certainty of historiographical consciousness. The political is determined in terms of history grasped according to consciousness, that is, experienced in a "technical" manner. The "political" is the way in which history is accomplished. Because the political is thus the technical and historiographical fundamental certainty of all action, the "political" is marked by an unconditional failure to question itself. The failure to question the "political" belongs together with its totality. Yet the grounds and subsistence of such belonging together do not rest, as some naive minds think, on the arbitrary willfulness of dictators but in the metaphysical essence of modern actuality in general. Such actuality, however, is fundamentally different from that way of being in which and from out of which the Greek world was historical. For the Greeks, the *πόλις* is that which is altogether worthy of question. For

modern consciousness, the "political" is that which is necessarily and unconditionally without question. The way in which the *πόλις* is the middle of beings for the Greeks means something completely different from the unconditional priority of the modern "totality of the political." (How unconditional this metaphysically grounded priority of "the political" is can be seen, e.g., in the fact that the curial government of the Catholic Church has long since appropriated, and is attempting to assert, this modern political form of government.)

Because the *πόλις* is the site of beings, it also contains the most far-ranging extremes in terms of the possibilities of all human comportment toward beings, and thus of being unhomey. The grounds for this, however, become manifest in the fact that human beings can take beings as not being and non-beings as being, a possibility that in *τόλμα*, in risk, becomes a necessity in a certain way. In risk, however, humans risk not only this or that, but always and in the first instance themselves, indeed not only themselves as individuals, but themselves in their essence. Only if we think in this direction will we encounter the proper essence of being unhomey.

The fact that this unhomey essence of human beings is thought and intimated in the word *δεινόν*, or more precisely in the words concerning human beings as the most uncanny, is something that can never be straightforwardly read off from the word *δεινόν*. Indeed, not even an interpretation of the choral ode need necessarily open up any insight into the unhomey essence of the uncanniness of human beings. For if to begin with we understand *δεινόν* merely in the sense of the inhabitual and the uncommon—which indeed always remains correct—then this choral ode will appear in a quite different light. The equivocality of the *δεινόν* and the indeterminacy in such equivocality constitute the grounds for the multiplicity of interpretations of this choral ode and for the way in which the closing words are either thought or simply passed over as something self-evident.

A recent interpretation of Sophoclean tragedy states: "One can designate it in its entirety as the high song of culture." In keeping with the poet's intentions, of course, one would also have to note that to "culture" there belongs "religion," and that "religion" has its subsistence solely in "culture." This view then enables us to clarify straightaway that Antigone stands for the "value" of "religion" as opposed to the "values" of "culture" and "state." It can come as no surprise to note that such interpretations appeal to "Luther" among many others in order to find some meaning in Greek tragedy. And it would be a cheap undertaking to "refute" ceremoniously such enterprises and such views, leaving one's own opinion to "sparkle" as the only correct one.

This hint concerning the possibility of multiple readings is necessary if we are to recognize how remote we all are from this Greek poetizing and

how little we know in regard to those fundamental conditions that must be fulfilled if we are to have any intimation of the truth of this poetizing. If we are to approach this truth, it is nowhere enough for us merely to keep to our customary representations of human beings and of the world, occasionally making them more "profound" by relating them to modern "anthropology" or "existentialist philosophy." If we do so, then the equivocality that stands behind the abyssal Greek experience of being will remain concealed from us.

We must keep in mind that here the essential truth can *not* be reduced to some formula. The modern representation of the human being as a "personality," that is, as a subject determined in terms of self-consciousness, leads us to expect that in the dramatic and poetic presentation of human beings we will also find the emergence of so-called "characters" everywhere, or of "types" that can then be classified in terms of some psychological formula that establishes whatever is "properly specific" to them. If we remain within the constraints of this way of thinking, however, then in regard to the Greek tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles we are everywhere thinking too narrowly. Our interpretations then altogether fail to say anything, assuming that a choral ode of the kind we are now considering ought to say something to us. For even if we distance ourselves emphatically from the opinion that hears in this choral ode a glorification of the human being's ascent from simple huntsman to "state governor" and "culture-creating personality," even if the word at the beginning of the choral song strikes us differently and expunges such modern views, even then the question of what this poetry is saying remains. This question first reveals its import when we give thought to the closing words of the choral ode:

Nicht werde dem Herde ein Trauter mir der,
nicht auch teile mit mir sein Wähnen mein Wissen,
der dieses führet ins Werk.

Such shall not be entrusted to my hearth,
nor share their delusion with my knowing,
who put such a thing to work.

These words, in a "not" and a "nor," twice pronounce a rejection, indeed a rejection of the human being, who earlier became manifest as the most uncanny one. Whom does this rejection concern? Who announces this expulsion from the hearth? Out of what authority is it spoken?

The most simple solution to these difficulties is to "explain" that the chorus is spoken by the Theban elders. They have no wish to know of anything uncommon but want merely to have "their peace," as it were.

According to this interpretation of the closing words, the choral ode would then not be the "high song of culture" but a song in praise of mediocrity, and a song of hatred toward the exception. Any judgment concerning this interpretation is more difficult than it may seem; for this chorus plays a most noteworthy, undecided, and fluctuating role within the tragedy as a whole, especially where it engages directly with the speeches and replies. Despite all such circumstances, however, which have not yet been adequately interpreted in their specifically unitary character, one thing remains clear: Assuming that what speaks in this choral song is human mediocrity in its avoidance of everything essential, then it would be impossible for the most profound insights into the human essence also to be pronounced by these same mediocre characters, and indeed in such supreme knowing and such dignified telling. We may not impute such a stylistic contradiction to the poet Sophocles. We must keep the closing words of the choral song, and these words above all else, within that realm of saying that has opened itself up for us. The first question to consider in our explication of the closing words is then whether this expulsion from the hearth concerns the figure of Antigone as well. How we answer this question depends on whether Antigone belongs to the essence of human beings as that essence is depicted here, or whether she is excepted from this essence. Does Antigone stand outside the relation to *δαιμόν*? Is this tragedy supposed to present a figure who in fact remains untouched and untouchable by the *δαιμόν*? If we think only fleetingly of the equivocal essence of the *δαιμόν*, then we can now readily recognize that the answer to these questions will be determined according to whatever fundamental trait of *δαιμόν* we have our eye on, whether a single trait or all of them, all of them not merely together, but from out of their ground. But let us first listen to what Antigone herself says in her introductory dialogue with her sister Ismene.

§17. *The introductory dialogue between Antigone and Ismene*

What does the introductory dialogue between the two sisters tell us? What has occurred? The two sisters' brothers, Eteocles and Polyneices, have been killed in a duel. Prior to this, Eteocles drove Polyneices out of their common home town, Thebes. Polyneices then returned to attack Thebes with a newly assembled army under seven commanders. Creon, the brother of their mother, Jocasta, who himself assumed sovereignty over Thebes following the death of the two brothers, has Eteocles ceremonially buried and at the same time forbids the burial of Polyneices, on punishment of death. Antigone, however, has within herself decided to act contrary to this prohibition. In this "wish," she believes herself to be at one with her sister.

In the introductory dialogue, however, Ismene tries to dissuade Antigone from her resolution. We shall here listen only to the concluding exchanges, in which the stance and essence of each of the sisters become manifest in an increasingly clear manner.

Regarding the translation, we may recall something already mentioned. Although the German language, more so than any other, often harbors the intrinsic power to translate the Greek word, in this case—namely in rendering this dialogue and exchange—every attempt to provide a rendition remains far behind the Greek word. Even Hölderlin's rendition—although, as ever, it preserves the noble element—remains markedly distant from the plastic, rigorous, and yet not harsh structuring of these speeches and counter-speeches. Sometimes it altogether fails to render what is essential. The words and counter-words of the two sisters are like an encounter between two swords whose sharpness, gleam, and power we must experience in order to apprehend something of the lightning that flashes when they strike.

We shall now listen only to the final exchanges in the dialogue (ll. 88ff.). Ismene says to her sister with respect to her decision to honor her unburied brother:

I: θερμὴν ἐπὶ ψυχροῖσι καρδίαν ἔχεις.

Ein heißes, doch den Kalten (Toten) zugewandtes Herz hast du.

You have a fiery heart, though turned toward the cold (dead).

A: ἀλλ' οἶδ' ἀρέσκουσ' οἷς μάλισθ' ἀδεῖν με χρεή.

Doch weiß ich, von woher gegrüßt, am höchsten zugefallen mir die Not.

Yet I know from whence I am greeted, there falls to me supreme necessity.

I: εἰ καὶ δυνήσῃ γ'· ἀλλ' ἀμηχάνων ἐρῶς.

Wenn auch du viel vermagst, doch steht, wogegen auszurichten nichts,
darauf dein Sinn.

Though you are capable of much, yet your intent directs itself to that
against which nothing can avail.

A: οὐκοῦν, ὅταν δὴ μὴ σθένω, πεπαύσομαι.

Warum nicht dann, wenn offenbar ist, daß die Kraft mir schwindet, wird
auch die Ruhe schon um mich gedeihn.

Why not, then, when it is manifest that strength must fail me, peace will
flourish around me too.

I: ἀρχὴν δὲ θηρᾶν οὐ πρέπει τάμειχαινα.

Als Anfang aber jenes zu erjagen, unschicklich bleibt's, wogegen
auszurichten nichts.

Yet to commence in pursuit of that remains unfitting, against which
nothing can avail.

A: εἰ ταῦτα λέξεις, ἐχθαρῆ μὲν ἐξ ἐμοῦ,
ἐχθρὰ δὲ τῷ θανάτῳ προσκείσῃ δίκη.
ἀλλ' ἔα με καὶ τὴν ἐξ ἐμοῦ δυσβουλίαν
παθεῖν τὸ δεινὸν τοῦτο· πείσομαι γὰρ οὐ
τοσοῦτον οὐδὲν ὥστε μὴ οὐ καλῶς θανεῖν.

Wenn dies du sagst, im Haß stehst du, der mir entstammt,
im Haß auch trittst entgegen du dem Toten, wie sich's schickt.
Doch überlaß dies mir und jenem, was aus mir Gefährlich-Schweres rät:
ins eigne Wesen aufzunehmen das Unheimliche, das jetzt und hier erscheint.
Erfahren nämlich werd' ich allenthalben Solches nichts,
daß nicht zum Sein gehören muß mein Sterben.

If you say this, in hatred you stand, arising from me,
and the hatred of he who is dead will come to meet you, as is fitting.
Yet leave this to me, and to that within me that counsels the dangerous
and difficult:

to take up into my own essence the uncanny that here and now appears.
For everywhere shall I experience nothing of the fact
that not to being my dying must belong.

I: ἀλλ' εἰ δοκεῖ σοι, στείχε· τοῦτο δ' ἴσθ', ὅτι
ἄνους μὲν ἔρχῃ, τοῖς φίλοις δ' ὀρθῶς φίλη.

Doch wenn's dir so erscheint, dann geh! Dies aber wisse, daß
ohn Wahrheit bei dir selbst du gehst, den Freunden freilich wahrhaft
Freundin bleibst.

If thus it appears to you, then go! Yet know this, that you go
without truth beside you, though to your friends you truly a friend remain.

This rather cryptic word from Ismene concludes the dialogue between the sisters. The word from Ismene that directly precedes it, however, is the one in which there is gathered everything that must first come to light in this dialogue. And what must thus appear at the very beginning, though as yet uncomprehended, is nothing other than the essence of Antigone. The penultimate word from Ismene in this dialogue runs:

I: ἀρχὴν δὲ θηρᾶν οὐ πρέπει τάμειχαινα.

Als Anfang aber jenes zu erjagen, unschicklich bleibt's, wogegen
auszurichten nichts.

Yet to commence in pursuit of that remains unfitting, against which
nothing can avail.

In order to clarify this word, we require a few pointers concerning the construction of the entire line, the likes of which we seek in vain in any other poetic work. At the emphatic beginning there stands ἀρχήν, and at the no less emphatic end of the line, τὰ μὴ χανᾶ.

τὰ μὴ χανᾶ: that against which nothing can avail, that which, therefore, itself remains something altogether of no avail. Such is that which is destined to us, *destiny* [*das Zu-geschickte, das Geschick*] and its essential ground. If we think the line in terms of its ending, then the adage says that it is not fitting [*nicht schicklich*] to make that which is of no avail into the all-determining commencement (origin) of all human being. Within the construction of the adage it is precisely this point, that it remains unfitting, which is placed between the essential words at the beginning and end, such that this being unfitting sustains the tension that arises in this line between what is unreconcilable: ἀρχή and τὰ μὴ χανᾶ. A German poet would have to be capable of saying this adage in its astonishing structural articulation. Our translation is merely an awkward stopgap, concerned solely with clarifying these words.

Als Anfang aber jenes zu erjagen, unschicklich bleibt's, wogegen
auszurichten nichts.

Yet to commence in pursuit of that remains unfitting, against which
nothing can avail.

In order merely to indicate the difficulty of providing a rendition, and its remoteness from the original word, we may cite Hölderlin's translation of this line:

Gleich Anfangs muß Niemand Unthunliches jagen.

Right at the commencement no one must pursue what cannot be done
(V, 191).

This translation fails to render what is essential, despite its poetic character. ἀρχή means that from which something proceeds, namely, such that that from which something proceeds is not left behind but determines and prevails in advance out beyond everything proceeding from it. ἀρχή means at once beginning, point of departure, origin, rule. Taken by itself, ἀρχή

can indeed frequently mean simply something like “right at the commencement” or “initially.” In that case, the word merely expresses the order of a sequence. Yet in the words of Ismene, ἀρχήν is spoken with regard to τὰ μὴ χανᾶ, that which is of no avail, that is, with regard to that over which human beings can neither rule nor dispose. And furthermore, the word here stands in a poetic context. Thus there are many reasons why it does not have the meaning that can pertain to it in everyday language. Moreover, were we to take ἀρχήν in its merely “temporal” meaning, this would result in the “remarkable” sense, that is, nonsense, of this line meaning that to pursue at the beginning what is of no avail would be improper, though later and at the end it might well be permitted. A different, more recent translation evidently links the οὐ in the line with ἀρχήν and understands the ἀρχήν in the sense of ἀρχήν οὐ, which means: “not” at all—namely, it is “not” at all befitting to strive for what cannot be achieved. The translation of the line thus runs:

Man soll nicht jagen nach Unmöglichem.

One should not pursue the impossible.

This is a commonplace that bears no relation whatsoever to what comes to word in the dialogue; as though the stance and comportment of Antigone were just any arbitrary human activity to which “one” could apply general “rules of life.” As though that with which Antigone’s “pursuit” is concerned were not τὰ μὴ χανᾶ. That against which nothing—essentially nothing—is of avail, τὰ ἀμύχανα, is that which resists that entire μηχανόεν that is named explicitly in the second antistrophe of the choral ode as the work of the human being who ventures forth in all directions. As though whatever it is that is of no avail, and which Antigone has decided in favor of, were some arbitrary impossibility rather than that which concerns her dead brother, namely, the law of the dead, and thereby the fundamental law of the living. As though her decision in favor of that which is of no avail did not directly and necessarily make that which is of no avail into the point of departure governing all actions. Provided that we accept these words in the context of the dialogue and take this dialogue as the essential prelude to the poetic work as a whole, we cannot but translate them as we are venturing to do here.

The οὐ belongs where it stands, to πρέπει. This word, in the present context, where that which is of no avail is named, also has the meaning accorded it by the Greek language. τὸ πρέπον is that which is fitting in the essential sense, that which is structurally articulated and ordered within the law of being. It remains οὐ πρέπει, unfitting (counter to what is fitting):

namely, *θηρῶν*, the pursuit of that against which nothing, essentially, is of any avail because it is that which is destined to us and is fitting. Just as with the word *τάμηχονα*, we would fail to recognize this line's relations to the concealed truth of the entire poetic work if we were to overlook the fact that in the first antistrophe of the choral ode there is specific mention of *θηρῶν*, of pursuit. The word of Ismene is filled with the resonance of what is essential in the entire poetic work. Yet the artistic and poetic status of this line does not merely lie in its content and in the construction appropriate to this, but also in the fact that by this word Ismene indirectly pronounces the essence of Antigone, that is, in such a way that Antigone, in countering, affirms that which her sister has rejected:

εἰ ταῦτα λέξεις, ἐχθαρῆ μὲν ἐξ ἐμοῦ,
ἐχθρὰ δὲ τῷ θανόντι προσκείσῃ δίκη.

Wenn dies du sagst, im Haß stehst du, der mir entstammt,
im Haß auch trittst entgegen du dem Toten, wie sich's schickt.

If you say this, in hatred you stand, arising from me,
and the hatred of he who is dead will come to meet you, as is fitting.

Antigone thereby takes this upon herself into her ownmost essence, namely, to pursue that against which nothing can avail as the point of departure governing everything. Were Ismene's word merely to present the commonplace view concerning what is best, namely that one should not want something impossible, then we would be unable to perceive why insisting upon a piece of sound advice should awaken her sister's hatred, indeed even the hatred of her dead brother. Furthermore, we would be underestimating the figure of Antigone were we to suppose that Ismene had no intimation whatsoever of what her sister has decided to do, that Ismene, in modern terms, played the role of someone naive who had no intimation. What is to be decided is clear to both of them, though in different kinds of knowing.

a) The essence of Antigone—the supreme uncanny. *παθεῖν τὸ δεινόν*

Antigone knows that no one can take her decision away from her and that she will not flinch in her resolve. Thus she says, passing directly from her harsh words to a gentle tone:

—ἀλλ' ἔα με καὶ τὴν ἐξ ἐμοῦ δυσβουλίαν

Doch überlaß dies mir und jenem, was aus mir Gefährlich-Schweres rät.

Yet leave this to me, and to that within me that counsels the dangerous and difficult.

And with what is this counsel concerned?

παθεῖν τὸ δεινὸν τοῦτο·

ins eigne Wesen aufzunehmen das Unheimliche, das jetzt und hier erscheint.

to take up into my own essence the uncanny that here and now appears.

Thus there falls the decisive word, *τὸ δεινόν*. It is the third word, and yet the central word, which, within this brief exchange, points directly to the choral ode. *παθεῖν τὸ δεινόν*. *παθεῖν*: to suffer, to bear. This first of all entails that the unhomey is nothing that human beings themselves make but rather the converse: something that makes them into what they are and who they can be. Here, however, *παθεῖν* does not mean the mere "passivity" of accepting and tolerating but rather taking upon oneself—*ἀρχὴν δὲ θηρῶν*, making it through to the end, that is, properly experiencing. This *παθεῖν*—experiencing the *δεινόν*—this enduring and suffering, is the fundamental trait of that doing and action called *τὸ δράμα*, which constitutes the "dramatic," the "action" in Greek tragedy. Yet this very *παθεῖν* is also the proper relation to the *δεινόν*, taking this word in the entire fullness of its essence and its enigmatic equivocality.

In the Greek tragedy the "heroes" and "heroines," if we may use these terms at all, are neither "silent sufferers" nor "martyrs" in the Christian sense, nor those "masters" who set out amid a great din and extravaganza in the modern dramatic artwork. "The tragic" is not to be measured, as modern human beings think, according to the passion of which we can have a psychological "lived experience" and that belongs to the person of genius, but rather according to the truth of being as a whole and in keeping with the simplicity in which it appears. This is why in the Greek tragedy virtually nothing occurs. It commences with the downgoing. What is the "uncanny," in which Antigone knows she has been ultimately counseled, acquainted as she is with the foreboding, the perilousness, and the gravity of this counsel? The uncanny is nothing other than this: the fact that she takes as her all-determinative point of departure that against which nothing can avail, because it is that appearing that is destined for her (*ἐφάνη*, l. 457), and of which no one knows whence it has arisen. In fittingly accommodating herself (*παθεῖν*) to this, Antigone comes to be removed from all human possibilities and placed into direct conflict over the site of all beings and into a sublation of the subsistence of her own life. Antigone is within the unhomey in a way that exceeds every other being unhomey. She looms over the site of all beings not merely like Creon, who in his way also looms high therein. Rather, Antigone even steps out of this site altogether. She is utterly unhomey. *τὸ δεινὸν τοῦτο*—this uncanny that

Antigone takes upon herself is by no means the fearful and inhabital experience of an early death, which she herself faces with certainty. For her dying is, if it is anything at all, that which constitutes *καλῶς*, a belonging to being. Her dying is her becoming homely, but a becoming homely within and from out of such being unhomely. This becoming homely is neither to be misinterpreted in a Christian manner, nor may we falsify the *καλῶς θανεῖν* into some kitschy “beautiful death.”

If what we have just now remarked touches upon the concealed truth of this Greek tragedy, then Antigone is not just any *δεινόν*. As a human being, she not only also belongs to the most uncanny that looms and stirs among beings; rather, within the most uncanny, Antigone is the supreme uncanny. Yet may we still speak of an intensification in the realm of that which in itself is already the most uncanny? Certainly—provided that we think intensification not quantitatively but in an essential way, and provided that we comprehend the most uncanny being in terms of its essence, namely, the fact that the most uncanny being is that which is *intrinsically unhomely*. Yet this being un-homely, and precisely this, bears further intrinsic possibilities of “intensification.” What if that which were most intrinsically unhomely, thus most remote from all that is homely, were that which in itself simultaneously preserved the most intimate belonging to the homely? What if this alone, of all things, could be unhomely in the proper sense? Yet what is the homely here? We must first elucidate something else.

If Antigone is now the most unhomely human being, and thus the most uncanny of all that is most uncanny, then she in the first instance must be referred to in the closing words of the chorus. Must not the expulsion then concern her in the first instance? These closing words appeal to a hearth from which the most uncanny being is to remain expelled.

b) The equivocality of the poetic work

In these few pointers alone concerning essential words in this poetic work, we have now encountered something enigmatic, namely, that these words maintain themselves in a peculiar equivocality. May we then expect the closing words to constitute an exception? The appearance of decisive clarity in the closing words is indeed perhaps mere appearance, perhaps even supreme appearance.

If we here speak of the equivocality of the word in the poetic works of the Greeks, then we do not mean that the poet is playing with words, or that only the poetic way of dealing with “material” avails itself of this artifice. The following is rather the case: The Greek poetic work is intrinsically equivocal, because what is to be poetized is equivocal in the truth

of its essence. For our contemporary way of grasping things, of course, we must seek detours and first establish *one* meaning and a univocality so as to proceed from there to understand things in a more ordinary way.

c) Knowledge of the hearth and delusion. The unsaid in what is said

What is meant by this word concerning the “hearth”? The hearth is the site of being-homely. *παρέστιος* (from *παρά* and *ἔστια*): *ἔστια* is the hearth of the house, the locale at which there stand the gods of the hearth. What is essential to the hearth, however, is the fire in the manifoldness of its essence, which essentially prevails as lighting, illuminating, warming, nourishing, purifying, refining, glowing. The word *ἔστια* is derived from a root meaning “to radiate” and “to burn.” In all the temples of the gods and in all sites of human habitation, this fire has its secure locale and, as this locale, gathers around it all that properly occurs [*sich ereignet*] and is bestowed. Through this fire, the hearth is the enduring ground and determinative middle—the site of all sites, as it were, the homestead pure and simple, toward which everything presences alongside and together with everything else and thus first is. Latin *Vesta* is the Roman name for the goddess of the hearth fire. Her priestesses are called “vestal virgins.” *παρά*: alongside—beside, or more precisely, in the sphere of the same presence; *παρέστιος*, the one who is present within the sphere of protection and intimacy belonging to the homestead and who belongs to the radiance and warmth and glow of this fire.

Who, in the closing words of the choral song, enunciates the *μήτ' ἔμοι παρέστιος γένοιτο*? “Such shall not be entrusted to my hearth . . .”? Who by this word expels from the hearth whoever is most uncanny? Evidently the Theban elders. They must therefore be able to appeal to a belonging to the hearth. They must be the homely ones. Yet who gives them the right to appeal to the homestead? Are not *they* too human beings? Is the word that they enunciate at the beginning of their song not valid for them also? Whatever the answer to these questions, it at once becomes clear that a knowledge of the *δεινόν* speaks from out of this choral song, and a knowledge of the fact that, among the uncanny, the human being is the most uncanny. Such knowledge, however, must surely already know beyond the uncanny and know beyond even the most uncanny being. Such a word must know more, that is, here something more essential, than the mere fact that human beings are the most uncanny of all beings. And if the most uncanny consists in being unhomely, then this knowledge must be closer to the un-homely, indeed closer to the homely, and from such nearness have some intimation of the law of being unhomely. The very ones who expel the most unhomely one from the hearth indeed appeal,

in the same words, to a knowledge of theirs that they distinguish from that of others:

μήτ' ἴσον φρονῶν

nicht auch teile mit mir sein Wähnen mein Wissen

nor share their delusion with my knowing.

This translation is intended to emphasize more clearly for us the fact that whoever is expelled does not and cannot have proper knowledge of the hearth. Their knowing must remain a delusion [*Wähnen*] that readily descends into and becomes set in mere madness [*Wahn*]. Yet what this proper knowing is from which the most uncanny one is excluded, these words do not tell us. If, however, such exclusion, and the contrasting that distinguishes between knowing and knowing, become most necessary precisely wherever the illusion becomes widespread that knowing is always ἴσον, the same, then even a proper knowing must in appearance seem like delusion. And this is indeed how what we are calling intimation seems. By intimation, however, we are by no means to understand only the first mere glimmer of knowledge. This would be permitted only if "proper knowing" consisted in an unconditional "theoretical" certainty such as mathematical knowledge and proof. Yet that knowing that pertains to genuine intimation is other in essence, and bears no comparison with a form of knowing that pays for its profit of certainty with the loss of everything essential, although it can pay this price and readily does so, because such knowing is merely a calculating and knows how to proceed with numbers. (Calculation as a kind of genuine madness.) That knowing, however, that expels the most uncanny one from the hearth can itself know of the hearth only if it stems from a belonging to the hearth. The choral song nowhere speaks of such a belonging. Yet must everything that is said also be enunciated? Is it not perhaps the case that what is properly to be said must be kept silent? And where else could it be kept silent than in what is said?

If this is the case, then something else lies concealed in the words enunciated by the choral song. The "content" of what is enunciated does not exhaust the truth of what is said. We must first have become clear in regard to this as soon as we set about grasping, even in the vaguest outlines, this Greek tragedy and the poetic work within it. That the truth of the choral song is *not* exhausted from the outset by the "content" that can be "cited" verbatim, was something "natural" for the Greeks. That is to say, in their way of being and comporting themselves toward beings, they were prepared for the fact that what is true stands in an essential alliance with

concealment and self-concealing (cf. Heraclitus, Fragment 93). The Greeks had a "natural" ear for the unsaid in what is said, and they thought and spoke from out of the unsaid.

Merely citing, however precisely, the "content" of what is enunciated will not therefore lead us to the truth to be found in the word of this poetizing. And if we do initially let ourselves be guided by the "content" of what is spoken, then our view of the content must at least be complete. We must ponder what is spoken in these closing words. They speak of the "hearth," thus of the site of everything homely. The choral song speaks this word concerning the "hearth" not merely at the end; rather, everything that it says is first thought and already spoken from the perspective of this final word. The closing words that expel from the hearth and distinguish between delusion and knowledge are by no means merely a practical application or conclusion added on to what has been said thus far. The closing words first tell of that knowledge from out of which every word of the choral song is spoken. These words tell of the δεινόν and δεινότατον that the human being "is." That knowledge, however, which is enunciated in the closing words, is knowledge of the "hearth," of the locale of being homely and thereby of the homely itself. Only from out of this knowing can the δεινόν be recognized as δεινόν at all, and only the recognition that springs from this can recognize human beings as the δεινότατον. All knowledge of the δεινόν, of the uncanny, is sustained, guided, illuminated, and articulated by that knowing that knows of the hearth. Yet if the "hearth" determines the homely, and if the δεινόν is that which, in its supreme configuration, must remain excluded from the hearth, then the δεινόν can be the uncanny only if it has the essential nature of the *unhomely*. Far from speaking against an interpretation of the δεινόν in the sense of the unhomely, the closing words of the choral song unequivocally demand this interpretation as the sole possible one.

Yet this insight brings us only to the place where understanding can genuinely begin. For we must now give thought to the following: If the uncanny as such is knowable only from the perspective of the homely, then all telling of the δεινόν must already have thought beyond this δεινόν. But in what direction? In the direction of the homely, the hearth. Yet the knowledge of the hearth is not directly enunciated. It does, however, call itself a φρονεῖν, a pondering and meditating that comes from the φρήν, that is, from the "heart," from the innermost middle of the human essence itself. And what is this knowledge pertaining to the middle directed toward? If this "hearty" knowing is an intimating, then we must never regard such intimating as an opining that floats around in unclarity. It has its own lucidity and decisiveness and yet remains fundamentally different from the

self-assuredness of calculative understanding. What does this knowing know, and what must it know?

§18. The hearth as being. (Renewed meditation on the commencement of the choral ode and on the closing words)

We shall succeed in answering this question if we meditate once more on the decisive words with which the choral song begins and whose interpretation the choral song itself is:

πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδεν ἄνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει·

Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch
über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt.

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing
more uncanny looms or stirs beyond the human being.

In what direction does this saying look? It speaks of the uncanny; it speaks of that which is most uncanny; it enunciates the fact that among the multiplicity of uncanny things, the human being is the most uncanny. The saying tells of the δεινόν and names πέλειν—stirring and looming, abiding in itself amid change, emerging forth from out of itself, yet as this coming and going, remaining nevertheless within itself. This is what the Greeks otherwise call φύσις, and this is the word for being. And the same is also named τὸ πέλειν. Surveying the uncanny entirely and in all its possibilities, this saying looks toward the being of all beings. In whatever direction that which is most uncanny ventures as that which is most unhomey, insofar as it still is as the most unhomey, it everywhere remains within the sphere of being. No matter where that which is most uncanny seeks a way out, no matter to where it is thrust back and cast down, it falls back into the sphere of being. Being sets no limits to the one who ventures forth in all directions, because, in their peregrinations, human beings are destined to encounter an infinite array of “new” beings. And yet human beings find no way out in this and trip up, and in all this do not know what it is that restricts them and defeats them: they do not know that it is being, the very same that opens all doors to them. For all its unhomeyness, the unhomey remains within the sphere of being. The unhomey remains related to the homey. Granted that there are various possibilities of this relation, then there are also various ways of being unhomey. In that case, the expulsion of the uncanny one will correspondingly have various meanings.

From the choral ode itself we initially know only that unhomey one who, among beings and through his or her own activity in each case, seeks a way out toward the homey and seeks the site of beings. Their activity achieves only a reversal of beings into nonbeings. Yet if such an uncanny one is expelled from the hearth, if the closing words of the chorus deny them any genuine knowledge, do they not by way of such expulsion come to stand outside of being? Not at all—for they are not denied every kind of φρονεῖν, rather they are spoken of as having the *delusion* of being truly among beings, without this being the case. This rejection tells us that the uncanny one has an essential relation to the hearth, but it is that of forgetting and blindness, as a result of which he or she is unable to have being in view or in thoughtful remembrance [*Andenken*]. Through their expulsion we are first told in all harshness where the uncanny one belongs—namely to being, which determines all beings, preserves them in such determination, and keeps them protected. Does this mean that the hearth—around which alone everything, and especially human beings, can be homey—is being? Yet the closing words of the choral song nowhere speak of being. Assuredly. And we are far from asserting that it ought to do so, since, as the closing words that sustain everything, they rather have the character of a keeping silent. And yet the hearth, ἐστία, is named. And the words do appeal to a knowing that must be related to the hearth and to the homey and to being homey. How else should it set itself off against the delusion of the unhomey one?

REVIEW

It is already evident from the introductory dialogue between Antigone and Ismene that Antigone too, indeed she in a supreme sense, belongs to the realm of δεινόν. She makes the pursuit of that which is of no avail the origin of her essence. She chooses destiny as that which alone is fitting. She thereby takes it upon herself to be unhomey. This experience and undertaking is the supreme action and proper history of the humankind she belongs to, the τόλμα of her very essence. What her being unhomey consists in, however, remains concealed at first. And for this reason, what belongs to becoming homey and being homey also remains unsaid. It appears that the choral ode in general everywhere keeps merely to telling of the un-homey. The closing words indeed appear entirely to confirm such appearances. For the closing words too, and precisely these, speak negatively, in the manner of an expulsion. Accordingly, both what is named in the choral ode, the δεινόν, the uncommon and uncanny, and also the

manner and way in which it is spoken of in the end, namely in a rejection, are “negative” in each case. Or might this negative pertaining to the “un-homely” and the “negation” of the unhomely one inherently shelter and conceal precisely what is “positive”? And in that case, would not the closing words—if they indeed speak from out of the truth and with proper legitimacy of an expulsion—have to stem from a knowing that knows something other than merely the unhomely? The closing words indeed appeal to a knowing, φρονεῖν, that does not ponder the same as the knowing that belongs to those who are expelled:

μήτ' ἴσον φρονῶν

nicht auch teile mit mir sein Wähnen mein Wissen.

nor share their delusion with my knowing.

This translation is intended to emphasize more clearly the fact that whoever here pronounces the expulsion is appealing to a knowing that is other. What kind of knowing this is, we are not told. Yet we can indirectly clarify for ourselves what this knowing must know if it is justly to pronounce this expulsion. For someone to be able to expel the most uncanny of all beings from the homely hearth, they must know of the hearth itself. And this knowing, if it is to be genuine, must spring from a belonging to the hearth and thus stem from a kind of being homely. Yet for someone to know the most uncanny of all beings, they must also know beings in the totality of their uncanniness, that is, of their being in general. Such knowing must thoughtfully extend to everything that looms and stirs—πέλει. This knowledge that expels from the hearth must know of the being of all beings, which does not necessarily entail that such knowing explicitly think a concept of being. The words concerning the expulsion of the most uncanny of all beings from the hearth must know the hearth as being homely but must also know the being of all beings. Is this knowledge therefore twofold: a knowledge of the hearth and a knowledge of the being of all beings? Or does knowledge of the being of beings consist in knowledge of the hearth? Is knowledge of the hearth then knowledge of the being of beings? Yet such knowledge of the being of beings that specifically thinks beings in this respect is a distinctive kind of thinking, a thinking that, since Plato, has claimed the name “philosophy” for itself. If, in the closing words of the choral ode, a knowledge of the hearth is pronounced as knowledge of being, then this would mean that the poetic work is telling us a “philosophical truth.” Or is this due merely to our explication of the choral ode, an explication that coins the poetic Greek word concerning the

“hearth” into some remote or even contemporary concept of “being”? That is not the intention of our remarks. Rather, everything depends on pointing out the direction from which these closing words of the choral ode become comprehensible as a poetic word.

Perhaps that knowing, the φρονεῖν of whoever is speaking here, is not merely formed into a poetic statement by the poet of this choral song but is itself meant as a poetizing knowing. In that case the closing words would not be a mere rejection. In that case the choral ode would not end with a mere turning away from what was earlier named in that powerful word. So long as we keep this possibility in view, we resist the danger of reformulating the closing words into the guiding principles of some philosophical treatise. In addition, however, the interpretation of this word of the “hearth” in terms of being is not the importing of a later view or foreign meaning into the Greek world, because Greek thinkers themselves undertook this interpretation. To begin with, we must refer to what was said concerning the general signification of the word ἔστια. Directly connected with this is the fact that, in Hesiod and in the “Homeric hymns,” Ἐστία is named as the first-born daughter of Chronos and Rhea (Hesiod, *Theogony* 454). Pindar likewise, at the beginning of the eleventh Nemean ode, names Ἐστία as Ζηνὸς ὑψίστου / κασιγνήτα καὶ ὁμοτρόνου Ἥρας, as sister of Zeus the Highest and of Hera enthroned with him.

§19. Continued discussion of the hearth as being

a) The belonging together of poetizing and thinking

Granted that “mythology” is not some doctrine of the gods invented by humans because they are not yet “mature” enough to do exact physics or chemistry, and granted that mythology is that historical “process” in which being itself comes to appear poetically, then thinking in the sense of essential thinking stands in an originary relation to poetizing. What kind of originary belonging together of poetizing and thinking this is cannot be explicated here; still less can we go into the habitual determination of this relationship at any length, the view that considers philosophical thinking as liberating the mythological poem from the mythical and as recasting its remaining content into the rigid grid and debris of empty concepts. According to this view, thinking in general is then nothing other than the “demythologizing” of the myth. One represents this process as though it were the draining of a marshland, a process that, when complete, leaves “dry” ground remaining. As though thinking already lay waiting within

poetizing and needed only to be liberated from the “poetic.” As though thinking did not have its own proper origin, one equally essential, yet for this very reason fundamentally distinct from that of poetizing.

Thinking is not the sediment of the demythologized myth. This widespread enlightened opinion, which determines the usual image of the essence of Western thinking, neither knows what poetizing is, nor does it understand the essence of thinking. Here we must heed the fact that “enlightenment,” in the sense of the thoroughgoing explanation of everything in terms of those grounds perspicuous to reason, belongs to the essence of metaphysics. And this is why, at a particular point in time within the history of metaphysics, an age explicitly named after “enlightenment” comes to assert itself. In terms of its essence, however, the “Enlightenment” begins with the beginning of metaphysics, that is, with the beginning of “philosophy,” which is to say, with that thinking of being that is undertaken for the first time by sophistry, by Socrates and Plato. And part of this process entails that Plato comes to assume a very ambiguous position with regard to the poets.

From the perspective of such thinking—namely, metaphysical thinking—thinking is indeed in certain respects, though not altogether, a “demythologizing.” But metaphysical thinking is not the sole thinking of being. Above all, it is not the essence of Greek and of Western thinking in its “commencement.” And yet, what we must now go on to say concerning ἔστία seems to confirm as legitimate the enlightened view of the relationship between poetizing and thinking. We have a word that has been passed down to us from Philolaos, a thinker from the Pythagorean school (fifth or fourth century), that reads (Fragment 7; in Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, I, 5th ed., 410):

τὸ πρᾶτον ἁρμοσθέν, τὸ ἓν, ἐν τῷ μέσῳ τὰς σφαίρας ἔστία καλεῖται.

Das als der anfängliche Einklang Wesende, das einigende Eine, in der Mitte der Kugel wird “Herd” genannt.

What essentially prevails as harmonious commencement, the unifying One in the middle of the sphere, is called “hearth.”

The hearth is accordingly the middle of beings, to which all beings, because and insofar as they are beings, are drawn in the commencement. This hearth of the middle of beings is being. Being is the hearth. For the essence of being for the Greeks is φύσις—that illumination that emerges of its own accord and is mediated by nothing else, but is itself the middle. This middle is that which remains as commencement, that which gathers

everything around it—that wherein all beings have their site and are at home as beings.

b) Ἔστία and being in Plato

It is not by chance that the thinker who begins that thinking that we call “metaphysics,” namely Plato, reminds us of Ἔστία, and does so in his dialogue concerning the beautiful, the *Phaedrus*. Within the unfolding of Platonic thinking, this dialogue of Plato’s is itself a kind of middle, one from which Plato’s proper doctrine concerning the being of beings emerges. In his second speech concerning eros (246ff.), Socrates speaks on the essence of the soul, whose wings receive from the divine their ability to fly and to soar upward. This pointer provides the occasion for describing the ὑπερουράνιος τόπος, the place of abode of the gods that lies beyond the heavenly firmament; or to be more precise, it provides the occasion for thoughtfully determining its essence in accordance with truth.

The description of the “life” of the gods begins as follows:

ὁ μὲν δὴ μέγας ἡγεμὼν ἐν οὐρανῷ Ζεὺς, ἐλαύνων πτηνὸν ἄρμα, πρῶτος πορεύεται, διακοσμῶν πάντα καὶ ἐπιμελούμενος· τῷ δ’ ἔπεται στρατιὰ θεῶν τε καὶ δαμόνων, κατὰ ἔνδεκα μέρη κεκοσμημένη. μένει γὰρ Ἔστία ἐν θεῶν οἴκῳ μόνη·

Der große Herrscher aber im Himmel, Zeus, fahrend den geflügelten Wagen, ist der erste im Aufbruch, durchwaltend alles und es mit seiner Sorge bedenkend, dem aber folgt die Streitschar der Götter und auch der holden-unholdigen Geister nach elf Zügen geordnet. Elf sind es nur, es bleibt beständig zurück Hestia in der Götter Heimstatt als einzige.

Yet the great ruler in the heavens, Zeus, driving a winged chariot, proceeds first, arranging all things and thoughtfully caring for all things, but he is followed by an army of gods and fair yet fiendish spirits arrayed in eleven squadrons. There are eleven only, Hestia alone always remains steadfastly behind in the homestead of the gods.

Here in Plato’s recollection of the poetizing telling of beings as a whole and the way they are governed and constituted, the following essential point is clearly brought to light: If the gods, dwelling in an inaccessible location beyond the heavens, are indeed those who remain, then among them the one who most remains and is most steadfast is Hestia. She is the middle of all steadfast constancy and presence—that which essentially prevails in being, that which the Greeks experience in the sense of constant presence. In order to fully grasp Plato’s pointer concerning the poetizing of beings,

we would here have to go into the stance that he himself takes toward this poetizing telling, and the way in which he gives his own thinking a determination that exceeds and thus leaves beneath it all poetizing, as a result of which poetizing then essentially remains “mere” poetizing as far as all metaphysics is concerned. In order then to save the legitimacy and nature of poetizing and of art in general in the face of the power of *ratio*, one gives art the distinction of creating “sentimental values” and of being closer to “life.” The distinction between poetizing and thinking becomes a psychological one, that is to say, an “aesthetic” one. The effect upon our so-called “sentiment” is taken as a welcome substitute for the impotence of thinking and its empty concepts. These are said to kill “lived experience.” The immeasurable superficiality of modern human beings here forgets only to ponder the fact that modern human beings nowhere have an originary “lived experience” of artworks anymore—granted that we could have a lived experience of artworks at all—but only of the machine and its destructive essence. It is this, whether we like it or not, that is the “lived experience” of modern human beings, indeed their sole lived experience.

This priority of τέχνη begins where sophistry finds its completion in philosophy: in Plato’s thought. Immediately following his mythological and poetic depiction of the site where the gods dwell, Plato says: Τὸν δὲ ὑπερουράνιον τόπον οὔτε τις ὕμνησέ πω τῶν τῆδε ποιητῆς οὔτε ποτὲ ὕμνήσει κατ’ ἀξίαν, “Yet the site beyond the heavens was never worthily sung by any earthly poet, nor will it ever be.” (The word ὕμνεῖν for “poetizing.”) According to Plato’s doctrine, the poets are not in a position to unveil beings as they are and to place them in a pure light. For this reason, according to Plato’s doctrine of the *Politeia* of the πόλις, they also have an entirely subordinate rank within the πόλις, compared to the “philosophers.” Following this demotion of the poets, we find in harsh contrast these words: ἔχει δὲ ὧδε, “Yet it is as I tell it <concerning the location beyond the heavens>. . . .” Plato knows that this claim to knowledge on the part of thinking is nothing slight or arbitrary but may still be alienating, which is why he says in an interim remark: τολμητέον γὰρ οὖν τό γε ἀληθὲς εἰπεῖν, ἄλλως τε καὶ περὶ ἀληθείας λέγοντα, “for it must now be ventured to say what is unconcealed, especially by one who in accordance with his vocation has to say his disclosive word within the sphere of unconcealment <i.e., in relation to that which is unconcealed as such>.”

In these words from Plato, what remains important for our present considerations is solely the insight into the essential connection between Ἔστιά and being. The hearth, the homestead of the homely, is being itself, in whose light and radiance, glow and warmth, all beings have in each case already gathered. παρέστιος is the one who, tarrying in the sphere of the hearth, belongs to those who are entrusted [*vertraut*]^[21] with the hearth, so

that everyone who belongs to the hearth is someone entrusted [*ein Trauter*], whether they are “living” or dead.

**§20. Becoming homely in being unhomely—
the ambiguity of being unhomely. The truth of
the choral ode as the innermost middle of the tragedy**

The closing words of the choral ode point toward the homestead in which everything homely is grounded. The essential *ground* of the *unhomely* is thereby first unveiled. It is through this that the inner essence of *being properly* unhomely is first determined. Taken directly, the closing words indeed sound like a mere expulsion of the unhomely one. In truth, however, this expulsion from the sphere of the hearth merely impels us to be attentive to the homely and to risk belonging to it. The closing words do not merely reject the unhomely one but rather let *being* unhomely become worthy of question. Being unhomely emerges from its appearance of being merely a condition attached to human beings, something they are embellished with that has become set in habit. Being unhomely shows itself as a not yet awakened, not yet decided, not yet assumed potential for being homely and becoming homely. It is precisely this being unhomely that Antigone takes upon herself. Her suffering the δεινόν is her supreme action. This action is the movement and “drama” of becoming homely. In becoming homely, being unhomely is first accomplished. And this not merely in the sense that, in becoming homely, being unhomely finds its conclusion; rather, Antigone’s becoming homely first brings to light the essence of being unhomely. Becoming homely makes manifest the essential ambiguity of being unhomely.

Being unhomely can be enacted in a mere presumptuousness toward beings in order to forcibly contrive from beings in each case a way out and a site. This presumptuousness toward beings and within beings, however, only is what it is from out of a forgottenness of the hearth, that is, of being. Yet being unhomely can also rupture such forgottenness through “thoughtful remembrance” [*Andenken*] of being and through a belonging to the hearth. In the dialogue between Creon and Antigone that follows the choral ode, Antigone tells of where she belongs, tells of whence she knows herself to be greeted. We mean lines 449–457. Hölderlin too, though with different intentions and with a different interpretation, touches on this place in his *Remarks on Antigone* (V, 254) and understands it as unmistakably the “boldest moment” of this “work of art.” Yet because those who seek to explain this tragedy are always eager to find in Antigone’s words an explanation of her actions, that is, a statement about whatever

it is that causes her deeds, they are concerned only with finding some reference to beings, whether the prevailing or ancient cult of the dead, or the familial blood-relatedness. They fail to recognize that in her words, Antigone speaks of neither of these. One is still unable to see that she is not speaking of a being at all. This gives rise to the appearance that she speaks indeterminately—whereas she says quite unequivocally the singular thing that remains to be said here (ll. 449-457):

Creon: καὶ δῆτ' ἐτόλμας τοῦσδ' ὑπερβαίνειν νόμους;

Und offenbar du wagtest, dies zu überschreiten <mein> Gesetz?

And manifestly you have dared to transgress this <my> law?

Antigone: οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε,
οὐδ' ἡ ξύνοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη
τοιούσδ' ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὄρισεν νόμους,
οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον φόμην τὰ σὰ
κηρύγμαθ' ὥστ' ἄγραπτα κάσφαλῆ θεῶν
νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητῶν ὄνθ' ὑπερδραμεῖν.
οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κάχθές, ἀλλ' αἰεί ποτε
ζῆ ταῦτα, κούδεις οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου ἴφάνη.

Nicht nämlich irgend Zeus wars, der mir geboten dies,
noch auch, die heimisch bei den unteren Göttern, Dike
wars, die unter Menschen setzten dies Gesetz,
und vollends nicht so stark erschien mir dein
Gebot, daß es den ungeschriebenen wankellosen Götter-
Spruch vermöchte je mit seinem Menschenwitz zu überlaufen.
Nicht nämlich irgend jetzt und auch nicht gestern erst, doch ständig je
west dies. Und keiner weiß, woher es eh' erschienen.

It was no Zeus that bade me this,
Nor was it Dike, at home amongst the gods below,
who ordained this law for humans,
And your command seemed not so powerful to me,
That it could ever override by human wit
The immutable, unwritten edict divine.
Not just now, nor since yesterday, but ever steadfast
this prevails. And no one knows from whence it once appeared.

That which is determinative, that which determines Antigone in her being, is beyond the upper and the lower gods. And yet it is something that pervasively attunes human beings as human beings. Yet it is no mere human ordinance, for such has no power over divine edict and thus falls emphatically below what prevails even beyond the gods. At no time can

what is determinative here be encountered anywhere as something first posited on a particular occasion, and yet it has already appeared before all else, without anyone being able to name a particular being from which it has sprung forth. It is to that which is unconcealed in this way that the essence of Antigone belongs. To be sheltered within and to become homely in what is thus unconcealed is what she herself names παθεῖν τὸ δεινὸν τοῦτο—passing through this being unhomely amid all beings. In Antigone's taking such being unhomely into her own essence, she is “properly” unhomely. Is Antigone then not affected after all by the rejection announced at the conclusion of the choral ode? Certainly not. She is exempt, exempt, however, not because she stands outside of the δεινόν, but because she properly is the most uncanny in the supreme manner, namely in such a way that she takes it upon her in its full essence, in taking it upon herself to become homely within being.

The closing words reject the unhomely one and point toward the homely. The closing words of the choral ode are of an uncanny ambiguity that concerns being unhomely itself. The closing words speak against the unhomely one, but in the sense of a decision held in reserve, from the perspective of the most uncanny risk that risks nothing less than the essence of uncanniness itself. For this reason, the closing words carry the clear resonance of a knowledge of the hearth. The unhomely one shall not be someone homely, so long as they stick merely and solely to their being unhomely and thus let themselves be driven about amid beings, without any constancy. The closing words reject whoever is unhomely in this way, and at the same time call in the direction of a knowledge of the proper essence of the unhomely one. The closing words conceal within them a pointer toward that risk that has yet to be unfolded and accomplished but that is accomplished in the tragedy as a whole, the risk of distinguishing and deciding between that being unhomely proper to human beings and a being unhomely that is inappropriate. Antigone herself is this supreme risk within the realm of the δεινόν. To be this risk is her essence. She assumes as her essential ground ἀρχὴ τὰμύχανα—that against which nothing can avail since it appears of its own accord, no one knows wherefrom. Antigone assumes as what is fitting that which is destined to her from the realm of whatever prevails beyond the higher gods (Zeus) and beyond the lower gods (Δίκη). Yet this refers neither to the dead, nor to her blood-relationship with her brother. What determines Antigone is that which first bestows ground and necessity upon the distinction of the dead and the priority of blood. What that is, Antigone, and that also means the Poet, leaves without name. Death and human being, human being and embodied life (blood) in each case belong together. “Death” and “blood” in each case name different and extreme realms of human being, and such

being is neither fulfilled in one nor exhausted in the other. That belonging to death and to blood that is proper to human beings and to them alone is itself first determined by the relation of human beings to being itself. The mysterious poem of Hölderlin's, "In Beautiful Blue . . ." (VI, 27), closes with the words:

Leben ist Tod, und Tod ist auch ein Leben.

Life is death, and death is also a life.

In order to remain in the realm of the Greek truth of the Antigone tragedy, we must think beyond the cult of the dead and blood-relatedness and retain the word of Antigone as it is said. We can then recognize that, thought in a Greek sense, she names being itself. This is the ground of being homely, the hearth. From here, it becomes clear that the counterplay of this tragedy is not played out in the opposition between the "state" on the one hand and "religion" on the other, but between what constitutes the innermost counterturning of the $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{o}\nu$ itself, insofar as the $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{o}\nu$ is thought as the unhomely: The counterplay is played out between being unhomely in the sense of being driven about amid beings without any way out, and being unhomely as becoming homely from out of a belonging to being. The essence of the $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{o}\nu$ experienced in a Greek way stands within the poetic purview of this poetizing, yet in such a way that what is poetized is a becoming homely in being unhomely.

The truth of the choral ode cannot, therefore, lie in the first words of its beginning, nor merely in its closing words. It is concealed in that which the directly said not only leaves unsaid but through its saying first poetizes into the unsaid. Yet if this is the case, how can we now give an answer to the question of who is saying these closing words? In terms of what we can directly and correctly ascertain, it is the Theban elders who speak. Out of what authority do they say these words concerning the being unhomely of human beings? To what extent can they exempt themselves from the expulsion of the unhomely one? From where does their knowledge of the hearth arise? What kind of knowledge and what kind of word is this? What voice, whose voice comes to word in the choral ode? What is the chorus in Greek tragedy? This question cannot be discussed at length here. There have been many debates and much careful academic work on the issue. The fact that Greek tragedy in general arose from the "chorus" says, when thought in an essential manner, nothing other than the fact that the chorus is the inner middle of the poetizing of tragedy as poetizing. And the choral ode of the completed, tragic poetic work is in turn the middle of this middle. This is why it is the poet himself who speaks in the "choral ode"

in an exceptional sense. Of course, he speaks in every word of the poetic work, and within the "choral ode" he does not speak as though he were expressing particular views of his own. Rather, the poetic truth of a tragedy, that which is to be said before all else and for everything else, is said in the choral ode. The chorus is not simply the origin of tragedy in terms of its "developmental history"; rather, in the choral *ode*, the chorus becomes the essential middle of the tragedy in terms of the history of its essence. This essential middle poetically gathers around it the whole of the poetic work; the chorus is that which is to be poetized.

Among the many kinds of confusion concerning the question of where the truth of this choral ode which we have explicated resides, we also hear it said that the choral ode is so general in its content that it remains without any proper or clearly specific relation to the remaining content of the Antigone tragedy, so that it really has no place in it. Yet what is misunderstood as general content here is the singularity of the telling of the singular $\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\acute{o}\nu$ and its essential ground, and this appears in the singular figure of Antigone. She is the purest poem itself.

What is to be said poetically is the poetic truth. The poetically true word is that word that names that which poetically is. Yet what is that which poetically is? What does "poetically" mean here everywhere? The poetic seems to be that which a poet says. Yet what does the poet say? What does he have to say as a poet, so that through this saying he can then be a poet?

The poet does not in the first instance say whatever he has poetized, as though the poetic word were merely the linguistic version and statement of whatever is poetized, that is, formed in his imagination. Rather, the poetic saying is itself the poetizing. The poet poetizes that which, in accordance with its essence, is something to be poetized. The poetic can never be comprehended in terms of the poet; rather, the poet can be comprehended only from out of the essence of the poetizing. We must enquire concerning this essence with a view to what that which is to be poetized [*das Zu-Dichtende*] is, and indeed necessarily is.

That which is essentially and necessarily to be poetized lies concealed in something that can never be identified or found anywhere or anytime or in any way as something actual that is, something among actual beings. What is essentially to be poetized is that which can never be found amid beings as beings but which, from the perspective of those beings that can be found, can only be *found out* [er-funden]. Yet such poetizing finding out [*Er-finden*] does not mean finding out some being, but is a supremely pure finding of a supremely pure seeking that does not restrict itself to beings. Poetizing is a telling finding of being. Such finding is supreme, not because what is to be found [*das Zu-findende*] here remains entirely concealed, but

because it is that which is always already revealed for human beings and is the nearest of all that is near. This supreme finding is therefore not a free inventing [*Erfinden*] in the sense of a willful imagining. This finding stands within a singular necessity. What essentially prevails as that which is to be poetized cannot be a being. What is to be poetized, essentially prevailing in the poetic work, is never something that is, but rather being. If in the chorus of the poetic work of tragedy, and especially in the chorus of this Sophoclean tragedy, it is the poet who properly speaks, then it is here that he says poetically that which is truly to be poetized: being. And the poet says it in naming the hearth in the closing words of the choral song that sustain everything. The hearth is the word for being, it is that appearing that is named in Antigone's word and that determines everything, even beyond the gods. Being is not some thing that is actual, but that which determines what is actual in its potential for being, and determines especially the potential for human beings to be; that potentiality for being in which the being of humans is fulfilled: being unhomey in becoming homey. Such is our belonging to being itself. What essentially prevails as being, and is never a being or something actual and therefore always appears to be nothing, can be said only in poetizing or thought in thinking. Let us give thought to what is named in the choral ode as that which the unhomey one who merely ventures around amid beings without any way out is unable to master:

τὸ μέλλον· Αἶδα μόνον
φεύξιν οὐκ ἐπάξεται·

dem einzigen Andrang vermag er, dem Tod,
durch keine Flucht je zu wehren.

the singular onslaught of death he can
by no flight ever prevent.

It is this One to which Antigone already belongs, and which she knows to belong to being. For this reason, because she is thus becoming homey within being, she is the most unhomey one amid beings. Such being and potential for being homey is here said in poetizing. The human potential for being, in its relation to being, is poetic. The unhomey being homey of human beings upon the earth is "poetic."

Let us bring together the words from the beginning and the closing words of Sophocles' choral ode:

πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κούδ' ἐν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει·

Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch
über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt.

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing
more uncanny looms or stirs beyond the human being.

μήτ' ἐμοὶ παρέστιος
γένοιτο μήτ' ἴσον φρονῶν ὅς τὰδ' ἔρδοι.

Nicht werde dem Herde ein Trauter mir der,
nicht auch teile mit mir sein Wähnen mein Wissen,
der dieses führet ins Werk.

Such shall not be entrusted to my hearth,
nor share their delusion with my knowing,
who put such a thing to work.

If we hear these words as assertions that ascertain something about states of affairs, that is, if we hear them unpoetically, then all we shall ever find as the "content" of the choral ode is this: The human being is the most uncanny being. And: This being is expelled from a hearth that cannot be determined in more detail, for reasons that are not given more precisely. Together with the hearth, however, the closing words name the homey and also tell of being unhomey, because they tell of a belonging to the homey and of a not being homey of the unhomey one. All this indeed remains indeterminate. Yet what is thus indeterminate, at this supreme point of poetizing telling, cannot have the indeterminacy of what is empty, vague, and almost arbitrary. The indeterminacy, or what we name in this way, is that which is undecided yet first to be decided for this poetic work and in it. What appears to be indeterminate is what is supremely determined as One, the singular thing that, for the entire poetic work, remains that which is, in advance, to be poetized by it. What is worthy of poetizing in this poetic work is nothing other than becoming homey in being unhomey. Antigone herself *is* the poem of becoming homey in being unhomey. Antigone *is* the poem of being unhomey in the proper and supreme sense. This entails, however, that such being of human beings, their being unhomey-homey in the midst of beings, is said poetically, because it always remains only as a potential for being that pertains to risk—as something to be poetized and poetically decidable. Perhaps what is essentially and only to be poetized in this way, namely, the potential of human beings for being homey, is even the highest thing that the poet must poetize. If this is the case, then Sophocles in the Antigone tragedy poetizes that which is in the highest sense worthy of poetizing. The choral ode πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ . . . is then, in its most intimate relation to the figure of Antigone, the innermost middle of this poetic work of tragedy. And if, accordingly, this choral ode is the supreme poetic work of what is supremely worthy of poetizing, then this might well be the reason why this

choral ode came to speak ever anew to the poet Hölderlin during the period of his poetizing of the hymns. This is not to assert that Hölderlin knew explicitly of this relation to Sophocles' poetizing in the form of those relations we have just now indicated and grasped conceptually. How he in himself knew this choral ode, we can never know. Yet it may become clear to us in what follows that Hölderlin in his poetizing of the rivers (i.e., of the locality and journeying of human beings as historical) was, from out of the vocation determined and destined for him, placed in such a relation to this poet of the Greeks.

Part Three

Hölderlin's Poetizing of the Essence of the Poet as Demigod

§21. Hölderlin's river poetry and the choral ode from Sophocles—a historical becoming homely in each case

The choral ode from Sophocles and the river poems of Hölderlin poetize the Same, and for this reason there is a poetic and historical dialogue between Hölderlin and Sophocles. Yet it is because both poets poetize the Same that they precisely do not poetize something identical; for the Same is truly the Same only in that which is different. What is different here, however, is the historical humankind of the Greeks and the Germans as other in each respective case. And the grounds for the historical difference between these two humankind lies in the fact that they are in each case historical in a different way, that is, must become homely in a different way. This is why they are unhomely in different ways in the beginning. Yet they are so for the singular reason that, being in the midst of beings in different ways, they comport themselves toward these beings and maintain themselves in them. What this difference in their being homely-unhomely in beings is grounded in, however, and what it properly eventuates from [*sich ereignet*]*—to ponder this is the dictate of a thinking that need not be spoken of here. It is enough if from this a small amount of light is shed on the poetic and historical relation between Hölderlin's river poetry and the choral ode from Sophocles. For in this light Hölderlin's poetizing can perhaps become somewhat more luminous.*

Superficially it indeed seems as though Hölderlin's efforts were concerned merely with finding the "artistic rules" (V, 319) essential to German poetizing as distinct from Greek poetizing. It seems as though Hölderlin, in the letters to his friend Böhlendorf in which he speaks of what is proper and what is foreign with respect both to the Greeks and to the Germans, cared only about catching sight of and discovering the genuine German manner of poetizing. However, what is decisive is that his depictions of the Greek and German ways of poetizing already think the essence of poetizing in an ordinary and essential sense. The word of poetizing, in

terms of what it poetizes and the way in which it poetizes, is determined from out of that which is itself to be poetized, because it "is" only as something poetized. Hölderlin's discussions in these letters are not contributions to some future aesthetics of German "literature" but rather a meditation on what it is that is essentially to be poetized. And that is: the becoming homely of the historical humankind of the Germans within the history of the West. Yet the becoming homely and being unhomely of the Germans is not other than that of the Greeks merely because the Germans are historically later than the Greeks and remain admitted into the historical commencement of Western history in the Greek world. Rather, Hölderlin recognizes that the historicity of these two humankind is intrinsically different, insofar as what is proper to the Greeks and what is foreign to them is other than what is proper and what is foreign to the Germans. And from Hölderlin's perspective, the difference between these two humankind shows itself in the fact that they are different in a reciprocal manner, which essentially means: They encounter one another and are thus related to one another. What for the Greeks is their own is what is foreign to the Germans; and what is foreign to the Germans is what is proper to the Greeks.

What is properly one's own, and appropriating it, is what is most difficult. Yet learning what is foreign, as standing in the service of such appropriation, is easier for precisely this reason. That which is easier lets one more readily excel. For this reason the Greeks, in that which is foreign to them, that is, the gift of presentation, excel us in what is our own—in the "clarity of presentation." And for this reason it could also be that the Germans—granted that they learn to use freely what is their own and do not evade the conditions required for such learning—might, in what is foreign to them (the "fire from the heavens"), come to excel what is proper to the Greeks. If, that is, they have become more open, so that "what illuminates" (the heavens) is "open to our open view" ("Der Gang aufs Land," IV, 112). It could be that a "guest-house" (IV, 314) and establishment might be founded and built for the gods, one that the Greek temples can no longer approach.

Whether or not, in determining the historical interrelation between Greek and German historicity, Hölderlin has already hit upon what belongs to the commencement is something we may ask only at that time when Hölderlin's word has truly been heard and when, as the poetizing that it is, it has awakened an appropriate obedience to it and out of such obedience a specific way of listening has been coined. Until such a time, however, it remains a decisive insight that the historical relation between Greek and German humankind can tolerate neither assimilation nor equalization. For this reason all mere "humanist" association and revitalization

("renaissances") remain suspended in the margins of historicity. By contrast, everything depends upon our first experiencing the essence of history in respect of its true law, that is, upon our being struck by the need of historicity.

If, however, the historicity of any humankind resides in being homely, and if being homely is a becoming homely in being unhomely; and if, furthermore, such being homely can be determined only poetically and must be said poetically, then Hölderlin is the first to experience poetically, that is, to say poetically, the German need of being unhomely. For this reason, it is from Hölderlin and from him alone that there first comes that word in which the law of being unhomely and of becoming homely is enunciated. This law, furthermore, is enunciated poetically in multiple forms.

One such form is via the poetizing of the rivers in his hymnal poetry. Yet another—almost as if by way of correspondence to the choral ode—is via the proper and specific naming of this law itself. Sometimes this law is named merely by way of a resonance, sometimes it is said more boldly and decisively. The law of being homely as a becoming homely consists in the fact that historical human beings, at the beginning of their history, are not intimate with what is homely, and indeed must even become unhomely with respect to the latter in order to learn the proper appropriation of what is their own in venturing to the foreign, and to first become homely in the return from the foreign. The historical spirit of the history of a humankind must first let what is foreign come toward that humankind in its being unhomely so as to find, in an encounter with the foreign, whatever is fitting for the return to the hearth. For history is nothing other than such return to the hearth.

**§22. The historically grounding spirit. Explication of the lines:
"namely at home is spirit not at the commencement, not at the
source. The home consumes it. Colony, and bold forgetting spirit
loves. Our flowers and the shades of our woods gladden the one
who languishes. The besouler would almost be scorched"**

A word of the second form was left behind by Hölderlin concealed among his drafts. These few lines became known to us only a few years ago, and even Hellingrath either overlooked them or passed over them, though this shortcoming can never detract in the slightest from the uniqueness of his Hölderlin edition. The lines were published for the first time by Friedrich Beißner in his work entitled *Hölderlins Übersetzungen aus dem Griechischen* (1933, p. 147 [Hölderlin's translations from the Greek]). This careful philological work resumes Hellingrath's interrogative approach from 1910 and

makes many improvements of detail. At the same time, this indispensable achievement of establishing the wording in Hölderlin's poetry and its drafts—work that cannot be valued highly enough—requires interpretation. Such interpretation depends, however, not only on our knowing the wording, but on how essential a guiding view we have of what poetry, history, and truth are, and of what "is" in general and of what is experienced as "being." The respect in which our remarks in this lecture course think these "connections" must have become clearer from our interpretation of the choral ode from Sophocles' *Antigone*. In this interpretation of the choral ode from the *Antigone* tragedy, we constantly remained in the proximity of Hölderlin's poetizing of the rivers, even though our impatience for quick "results" and cheap "evaluations" may consider this detour as taking us out of our way. The words from Hölderlin passed on to us in the work by Friedrich Beißner are as follows:

nemlich zu Hauß ist der Geist
nicht im Anfang, nicht an der Quell. Ihn zehret die Heimath.
Kolonie liebt, und tapfer Vergessen der Geist.
Unsere Blumen erfreun und die Schatten unserer Wälder
den Verschmachteteten. Fast wäre der Beseeler verbrandt.

namely at home is spirit
not at the commencement, not at the source. The home consumes it.
Colony, and bold forgetting spirit loves.
Our flowers and the shades of our woods gladden
the one who languishes. The besouler would almost be scorched.

The lines belong to a draft of the final strophe of the elegy "Bread and Wine." (Friedrich Beißner remarks (*ibid.*) that this fragment was written "in the upright, confused, and hurried script of those late versions in which everything is altered.") If we remember all the remarks we have already made, then we can now understand this fragment taken by itself.

Of what does Hölderlin speak? Of "spirit" and of the "besouler." He names "spirit" pure and simple. We have not touched upon this in our discussions thus far. Who is "spirit"? Around the period when Hölderlin wrote these lines, the word "spirit" found its essential and unequivocal, though not yet fully unfolded meaning in the thought of the thinkers Schelling and Hegel, Hölderlin's closest friends. We would be going astray if we were to think, as has often occurred recently, that Hölderlin merely borrowed the metaphysical concept of "spirit" from "philosophy" and adopted it here and there within his poetry. This opinion is erroneous for two reasons: For one thing, because no poet, especially not a poet of Hölderlin's rank, adopts "concepts." For another thing, the opinion is

erroneous because even though Hölderlin maintains a relation to this metaphysical thinking in a poetic encounter with it, he maintains this relation to it in the manner of overcoming and turning away from it, which does not in turn mean a condemnation of "philosophy." From what we have said, it becomes clear that Hölderlin's word "spirit" is determined in its meaning by German metaphysics yet is not identical with what this metaphysics thinks "systematically" in its concepts of "subjective" and "objective" spirit. According to its metaphysical concept, "spirit" is the "Absolute" pure and simple, the unconditioned, that which conditions and determines every being in its being. Spirit is that which determines everything and therefore that which is essentially common to all beings. Spirit as spirit is communal spirit. According to its metaphysical concept, the distinction of spirit lies in thinking. In its thoughts, spirit thinks that which accrues to every being as a being, that which is fittingly destined to every being. "Thoughts of communal spirit," however, belong essentially to spirit because thinking constitutes the being of spirit. Spirit is "properly" spirit insofar as, thinking what is of the essence, it thinks itself and thus *is* alongside itself [*bei sich selbst*].^[22] Only when spirit is alongside itself in thinking itself is it truly spirit. And its thoughts not only belong to it but are themselves distinctive in *being*. Thoughts themselves "are" in a distinctive sense. This is why Hölderlin, in a line from the hymn "As when on Feastday . . .," says:

des gemeinsamen Geistes Gedanken sind.

thoughts of communal spirit are.

This, of course, is not some metaphysical proposition that has erroneously wandered into poetry. The line from the hymn ponders poetically the fact that spirit is, and, in being, thinks for all beings what is fitting [*das Schickliche*] to their being. Yet insofar as human beings have a distinctive relationship toward beings, the human being is the one who is open for what is fitting and the one who, in being human, is pointed toward what is fittingly destined [*dem Geschick*]. Because, and insofar as, human beings are open to what is fittingly destined and fit themselves to what is destined and thus take over and unfold, dismiss and confuse what is fitting, but also what is unfitting, as the essential ground and non-ground of being human, human beings are historical. And only because humans *are* historical in this way can they "have" history. And only because, and to the extent that, they "have" history can they "make" history with and from out of what they thus have. Yet whether that history that can be made, or even whether history as something we have preserves the essence of history, or whether

this very having, indeed this very making, are not rather the loss of being historical in the sense of becoming unhistorical, is an issue of which we may become mindful from what has been said thus far.

Finding what is fitting in being unhomey is becoming homey. Preserving such becoming is that being historical that attains its essential fullness when it comes to know what has been fittingly destined for it [*das Zugeschickte*] as that which has already been. That which is fittingly destined for human beings is what "spirit" thinks, and thinks as directed toward human beings, so that it is "spirit" in historical human beings that determines historicity. Yet what is fitting and fittingly destined for them always remains for human beings that which is coming toward them, that which is futural. What is fittingly destined for us is never something that has been decided; it remains full of destinings [*Schickungen*] and only is from out of them. What is fittingly destined for us sends its destining [*schickt sich*] in one way and another and always remains in coming. In such coming, however, it can be thought only in being taken up and preserved as what is coming. Reckoned in terms of what is actual, what is coming is that which is not yet actual, yet something "nonactual" that is already "acting." What is coming in its coming is experienced and preserved in poetizing. The historically grounding spirit must therefore first find its site in the "mindful courage" [*Mut*] of the poet. The other word for "mind" [*Gemüt*] is "soul."^[23] Here, soul is not to be understood as the "principle" of animal and plant life, but as the essence of the mind that takes the thoughts of spirit up into the wealth of its mindful courage:

Des gemeinsamen Geistes Gedanken sind
Still endend in der Seele des Dichters.

Thoughts of communal spirit are
Quietly ending in the poet's soul.

Because spirit's thoughts become homey upon the earth in the "soul" of the poet, the poet is the "besouler," insofar as the poet in poetizing lets spirit prevail among beings in letting beings appear in their spiritedness in his telling of them. "Poetizing" is the telling of the thoughts of spirit: Poetizing is spirit poetizing. The poets are "of spirit." Yet in poetizing, what has been fittingly destined with respect to history is told, and thereby the history of human beings in their becoming homey is grounded. "Spirit" is the poetic essence of the holy (cf. "As when on Feastday . . ."), insofar as the holy brings itself to word and, as the word, speaks its claim upon human beings. Spirit has the completion of its essence in the place where it quietly ends: "in the poet's soul." "The besouler" is spirit poetizing. (Cf. the draft of "Bread and Wine," IV, 322: "What is of spirit suffers too, heavenly presence ignites

like fire, in the end.") "Spirit" and the "besouler" are essentially drawn toward being homey and are determined in their essence by and in relation to such being homey. How the "spirit" that grounds the history of a historical humankind is, we are told by Hölderlin's word:

nemlich zu Hauß ist der Geist
nicht im Anfang, nicht an der Quell. Ihn zehret die Heimath.

namely at home is spirit
not at the commencement, not at the source. The home consumes it.

The explication initially required of these two lines must clarify what is meant here by: "not at the commencement, not at the source." Does the second phrase, "not at the source," merely offer another version of what is said in the words "not at the commencement"? If this is the case, then "commencement" means the same as "source," that is, origin. Yet then we have a superfluous accumulation of words that say the same thing twice. One could explain this, however, by saying that Hölderlin became carried away in writing this poetic draft and placed one version after the other. If we accept this, if we understand "commencement" in the sense of "source," then the lines say: "namely at home," that is, in one's own and thus at the origin, that is, "at the source," spirit is "not at the source": that is, "at home spirit is not at home." This is evidently a contradiction, at any rate if we take it literally. Yet if we think in terms of what is being said, then we will hesitate to find merely a contradiction here. If the words are meant to say: "at home spirit is not at all and indeed never at home," and "being at home" cannot be taken as a determination of spirit at all, then these words would certainly be devoid of all meaning. The words, however, could also mean: "namely at home is spirit," not at all simply by the fact that it is spirit and thus in general already resides in the house of its essence. Spirit is and prevails in and from out of its essential realm, but it does not yet belong straightaway to this realm as spirit, that is, in the free thinking and use of what is originary. Spirit is presumably "at home," and essentially so, because it itself grounds the "being at home" of human beings as historical, yet it is not immediately homey in its "at home." This truth is unveiled poetically by the very order of the words and the intonation demanded by it: "namely at home" is spirit *not*, namely "not" at first or straightaway, namely not "at the commencement." Commencement here names beginning. Thus, commencement here means something other than "source." The line now not only contains no empty repetition, but it is only now that the full truth of the words "not at the source" unveils itself. These words do not at all mean that spirit "is" not at the source in the begin-

ning. Spirit is presumably indeed and constantly "at the source," but in the beginning it is "not at home" "at the source." This is why it must first become homely "at the source," and to do so, "spirit" must first specifically go "to the source."

To go to the source proper is the most difficult course. It is difficult both because it is most difficult to recognize in its necessity and because accomplishing it demands the ultimate. How are we first to think explicitly of going to the source at all, given that spirit in its essence, and only from out of its essence, is in general and already spirit? And even if a going to the source should still prove necessary, what could be easier than going to that place in and alongside which it already is? Yet this appearance of what is easiest veils what is most difficult. Pursuing what is easiest, human beings avoid what is most difficult. This is why in the poem "Remembrance" Hölderlin says the following (fourth strophe):

... Mancher
Trägt Scheue, an die Quelle zu gehn;

... Many a one
Is afraid of going to the source.¹

Spirit is never "at home" in the beginning. The words "not at the commencement," "not at the source" may not simply be run together as occurred above. The "not" in the phrase "not at the commencement" does not at all refer to "commencement" but to the words "at home": not "at home" is spirit, namely, "at the commencement." In the beginning, therefore, it is "not at the source," insofar as it is not "at home" at the source, that is, not homely. But why is spirit at the commencement not homely at the source? Hölderlin answers directly: "The home consumes it."

In the beginning of the history of any humankind, the destiny fittingly destined for that humankind is indeed assigned to it. What has been assigned is in coming. What is coming is still veiled and equivocal. For this reason, we cannot immediately delimit unequivocally or clearly attend to whatever it is that is fitting. In the beginning, a historical humankind is unable to move freely within the open and ordered possibilities of its essence. It is still closed off from that destiny that is fittingly destined for it. And it is thereby in a certain manner excluded from the origin of its own essence. The historical humankind in question is not yet intimately familiar with the unfolded and essential fullness of its destiny, is not "at home" in it. In the beginning the heavenly has not yet been interpreted but descends upon us in assailing us from above: "but like flames Life <i.e.,

"one's own"; cf. IV, 321> acts and as consuming, tests us from above" (draft of "Bread and Wine," IV, 321ff.; cf. "The Titans," IV, 208ff.). For this reason, one's abilities to fit oneself truly to one's destiny, that is, to fittingly encounter it, are as yet disordered, unpracticed. One's own disordered abilities clash and push against one another, thereby threatening one another and threatening to erase the proper essence of that humankind. Were the spirit determining history to remain back in this beginning, were it to stay alongside itself in this disordered closure, then it would have to randomly pursue its own abilities within this confused essence. In such confusion, the essential abilities and essential possibilities of what has been assigned to it would wear one another down and strain one another, thereby using themselves up and being consumed. One's own that has not yet been freed, the home itself, left purely to itself, thus eats away at "spirit" and threatens to consume it: "The home consumes it."

Yet the essence of spirit is such that it properly is only when it is alongside itself. For only when, alongside itself, it is able to think the entirety of its all-determining thoughts, can it truly be spirit, that is, "communal spirit." In spirit there thus prevails the longing for its own essence. Therefore, for the sake of its essence and in obedience to the appropriation of what is its own, spirit must, precisely in the beginning, "at the commencement," never be "at home," that is, never be homely. Spirit is essentially unhomely only when, for the sake of what is its own, from out of the will for its essence, it wills the unhomely, the foreign. Thus Hölderlin says:

Kolonie liebt, und tapfer Vergessen der Geist.

Colony, and bold forgetting spirit loves.

"Colony"—this does not mean whatever is merely foreign in the sense of the alien and exotic, that which the adventurer sets out in search of in order to settle his conscience. Spirit is not befallen by some arbitrary desire for the foreign. Spirit "loves" colony. Love is the essential will for what is of the essence. "Colony" is always the land of the daughter that is related and drawn back to the motherland. Spirit "loves" colony; in the foreign it essentially wills the mother who, according to the hymn "The Journey" (IV, 170), is indeed "difficult to attain: the closed one." Yet in spirit's "love" of "colony," it *is*, in an essential sense, "not at home"; it has taken up being un-homely into the will pertaining to its love. This essential "not being at home" is an essential will to become unhomely. The will pertaining to this love "loves colony" so essentially that such love loves even "bold forgetting": "and bold forgetting." The "and" does not merely mean: "and as well," but means to say: "and for the sake of this love and at its service, spirit loves precisely bold forgetting."

1. Cf. the lecture course of winter semester 1941/42: *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 52, p. 169ff.

Forgetting—what is that? Its essence is as manifold as that of non-forgetting, that is, of retention. The ways in which we retain things are determined in accordance with the essential possibilities of experiencing and of thinking of something in general. “Forgetting”—mostly we know it only in the form of “no longer thinking of something.” Yet this can mean that something “escapes” us and has escaped us, or it can mean that we ourselves put something out of our mind and push it aside. On the one hand, forgetting means something escaping us, a loss, and on the other hand it can mean our pushing something away and avoiding it, a fleeing. Such fleeing is easiest whenever it has somewhere to flee to, and this itself takes us prisoner straightaway, so that here, as we say, we “forget ourselves.” In all such ways we regard forgetting as a comportment that we undertake or permit ourselves, insofar as we forget something and are forgetful in relation to many things. Yet there is another state of forgetting in which it is not we who forget something, but rather in which we come to be forgotten and are ourselves those who have been forgotten. There can be historical periods in which human beings are not only forgetful but are themselves the ones forgotten. Being forgotten in this sense then means: no longer being greeted in that essential sense that we have previously outlined.² Here, however, Hölderlin names forgetting together with the love of colony. This forgetting is not simply a looking away from one's home. It is “bold forgetting.” To boldness there belongs a knowledge of that upon which everything in our action and in what we can endure depends in advance. It is from out of such knowledge that boldness has its nobility, in contrast to mere “courage” [“*Mut*”] in the sense of the passion pertaining to a striving. Boldness is a knowing and mindful courage [*der wissende Mut*]. In such knowing there lies the ground of that steadfastness and composure and circumspection that characterize whoever is bold. “Bold forgetting” is the knowing and mindful courage to experience the foreign, an experiencing that, in the foreign, steadfastly gives thought to one's own. The boldness of forgetting in the love of colony is the readiness, while in the foreign, to learn from the foreign for the sake of what is one's own, so as to defer what is one's own until it is time.

Because forgetting is “bold,” the spell of the home remains preserved on the journey to the foreign land. The knowledge remains that the home itself dwells at the source and ground of historical being homely and is the “locality.” This is why Hölderlin's hymn “The Journey” (IV, 167) begins not with the mourning of a departure from the home but with the jubilation of the most intimate greeting:

Glückselig Suevien, meine Mutter,

...

<glückselig bist du zu preisen>

denn nah dem Heerde des Hausses

Wohnst du, und hörst, wie drinnen

Aus silbernen Opferschaalen

Der Quell rauscht, . . .

Blissful Suevia, my mother,

...

<you are to be praised as blissful>

for near the hearth of the house

You dwell, and hear, how within

From silver sacrificial vessels

The source rushes. . . .

The third strophe indeed begins differently, from the bold fortune of this greeting:

Ich aber will dem Kaukasos zu!

I, however, am bound for the Caucasus!

It now stands clearly before us: “Colony, and bold forgetting spirit loves.” Being unhomey is experienced. Venturing into colony demands a peculiar not thinking of the home. At the same time, however, such venturing in turn first bestows a thinking of the homely. This venturing is no mere leaving something behind but is already the first and therefore decisive act of return to the home. This is why Hölderlin, in the concluding strophe of the poem “Remembrance,” says the following:

Es nehmet aber

Und giebt Gedächtniss die See,

Yet what takes

And gives memory is ocean.

This is our claim: In the fragment we are dealing with, Hölderlin names the law of being unhomey as the law of becoming homely. The law [*Gesetz*] is that essential trait [*Wesenszug*] into which the history of a historical humankind is placed [*gesetzt*]. In the law, therefore, this distinguishing trait must be named. Otherwise it remains a mere rule in the realm of the indeterminate. Yet surely Hölderlin speaks only in general terms of being “at home” and of “colony.” What the foreign is, and what the homely is, we are not told. So it appears, if we fail to give thought to the two lines that follow:

2. Cf. the lecture course of winter semester 1941/42: *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 52, p. 188ff.

Unsere Blumen erfreuen und die Schatten unserer Wälder
den Verschmachteteten. Fast wäre der Beseeler verbrandt.

Our flowers and the shades of our woods gladden
the one who languishes. The besouler would almost be scorched.

"Our flowers," and with such intonation: "and the shades of our woods"—this is the homely, and it is named as that which gladdens. Gladness is a safeguarding and guarding over the return home to one's own. Only for this reason can we also be glad "for" others, for their being pointed toward and attaining their own essence and destiny. Gladness receives the unhomely becoming homely. Gladness is reception, which, in its clear stillness, receives being unhomely as though unexpectedly and guides it into becoming homely. Those who guide in this way are the "angels," namely, "the angels for the hearth of the fatherland," those whom the poet "otherwise" wishes to sing when not commemorating the foreign land in translating the Greek poets. Shade and flowers gladden the one who languishes, for "in the fire of the South my locks fell out" ("The Wanderer," (IV, 103), l. 44).

The flowers are "the reflection of the day," and "flowers" are also "the flowers of the word" and "of thoughts" (cf. IV, 122, 251). The flowers refer to the poetizing and the poet. The shades bring coolness, gentle protection from the excessively intense glow of the foreign fire. The flowers bring soft illumination, protection from the excessive brightness of the foreign fire. The flowers and the shades of the woods, however, are "ours": the German ones, the native ones that point toward the homely and that release the one languishing in the foreign fire from the threat of being scorched. Yet this happens in such a way that "the besouler" now also first recognizes that which gladdens as that which is determinative of the homely, and experiences the path to the source as the necessary one. This experience now becomes a way of learning how to freely use what is one's own, since one's own has now been freed for its determination, for the cool clarification of the fire from the heavens, and has thus become "proper." The journeying into the unhomely must go "almost" to the threshold of being annihilated in the fire in order for the locality of the homely to bestow its gladdening and rescuing.

In this "fragment," Hölderlin enunciates historically and poetically, for the singular history of the Germans, the law of being unhomely as the law of becoming homely. Certainly, we shall recognize this only once we have given thought to what Hölderlin poetizes in his hymns, in his telling of the "holy." Here it suffices to recall the first strophe of the "Ister" hymn. It begins:

Jetzt komme, Feuer!

...

lange haben
Das Schikliche wir gesucht, . . .

Now come, fire!
...

long have
We sought what is fitting. . . .

Yet these words too, and those of the other hymns, would in large part remain closed off from us in their essential truth were it not for the fact that the letters we have mentioned have been preserved, the letters in which Hölderlin expresses himself concerning what is our own and what is foreign in our history.³ Here we cite only one part of Hölderlin's letter of December 4, 1801, to Böhlendorf:

Wir lernen nichts schwerer als das Nationelle frei gebrauchen. Und wie ich glaube, ist gerade die Klarheit der Darstellung uns ursprünglich so natürlich, wie den Griechen das Feuer vom Himmel.

We learn nothing with greater difficulty than the free use of the national. And as I believe, precisely the clarity of presentation is originarily as natural to us as was the fire from the heavens to the Greeks. (V, 319)

These words would certainly also require some explication. Here we note only what is most essential. For the Greeks, what is their own is "the fire from the heavens," that is, the light and the glow of that which determines the arrival and proximity of the gods. Yet in order to appropriate this as their own, the Greeks had to pass through something foreign, namely through the "clarity of presentation." They had to be alienated and taken hold of by the latter so as with its aid first to bring the fire into the still radiance of pure lucidity. Through that which was foreign to them, the serene ability to grasp oneself, what was properly their own first became their property. From out of the rigor of poetizing, thoughtful, formative grasping, they were first able to come to encounter the gods in a lucidly ordered presence. Such was the Greeks' building at the essential ground of the πόλις. The weakness of the Greeks lay in their inability to grasp themselves in the face of the excess of destiny and its destinings [*Schickungen*]. From out of the power of the fire, that is, of what was originarily "natural" to them, they had an excess of fate [*Schicksal*]. It became their greatness to have learned the ability to grasp themselves (V, 258), so as thereby first to be "at home" in what was their own.

3. Cf. the lecture course of winter semester 1941/42: *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 52, p. 22ff., p. 130ff., and p. 180.

Conversely, however, what is “natural” to the Germans, that is, that with which they are endowed as their own, is the clarity of presentation, being able to grasp oneself, the formation of projects, enclosures, and frameworks. They become carried away by the provision of frames and compartments, making divisions and structuring. What is thus “inborn” cannot properly become what is their own for the Germans so long as this ability to grasp has not been made to confront the necessity of grasping the ungraspable and of grasping themselves in the face of what is ungraspable. It is from out of such knowledge of the historicity of the Germans, and only out of such knowledge, that Hölderlin's harsh words at the end of *Hyperion* are to be thought. (Cf. II, 282ff.) What the Germans lack, what must therefore first come to be encountered by them as that which is foreign to them, is the “fire from the heavens.” It is this that the Germans must learn to experience so as to be struck by the fire and thereby to be impelled toward the correct appropriation of their own gift for presentation. Otherwise the Germans will remain exposed to the danger and the weakness of suppressing every fire on account of the rashness of their capabilities, and of pursuing for its own sake the ability to grasp and to delimit, and even of taking their delimiting and instituting to be the fire itself. It is therefore the pure self-experiencing of his own poetizing when Hölderlin says of the Germans, as distinct from the Greeks: “whereas the main tendency in the manners of representation in our time <which means: the time of the Germans> is the ability to hit on something, to have destiny [*Geschik*], since the lack of fate [*das Schiksaallose*], the *δύσμορον*, is our weakness.” This remark is found in the discussions that Hölderlin provided with his translation of *Antigone* (V, 258). The law of the historicity of a historical people says that what is “natural” to any humankind is truly their “nature” only as “what is historical” in their history. This is why the use of what is naturally “one's own” is that which is most difficult. The foreign is indispensable and is thus in the service of what is most difficult, that is, it is “easier.”⁴

In order to learn how to freely use what is their own, the Germans must be struck by the fire from the heavens. This is why venturing to the southern land is unavoidable for them. This is why the Northeast is the auguring of their poetic destiny. This is why the Northeast is greeted.

Hölderlin is the one who has been struck by the god of light. He is on his return from the journey to the “fire.” He is the “languishing besouler.”

4. The mention of the “manners of representation in our time” refers in particular to unconditional metaphysics and its question concerning absolute knowledge of the absolute. Yet this question in truth cannot be a question, since in accordance with its essence the absolute wills to be “alongside us,” us human beings, and knowledge of the absolute through us is merely the ray of the absolute that touches us. Cf. my interpretation of the “Introduction” to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 5, *Holzwege*, pp. 115–208).

Hölderlin enunciates the law of becoming homely for the Germans. Yet Hölderlin not only knows *what* the law of the historicity of German and Western history says. Hölderlin knows at the same time the *sole way* in which this law can be experienced and told. This law unveils itself *only* to the poet! Why must this be so? Why must this law of history, and thereby the essential law of Western and German humankind, be said poetically in this decisive historical period for the Germans?

§23. Poetizing the essence of poetry—the poetic spirit as the spirit of the river. The holy as that which is to be poetized

This question too the poet has answered poetically in his own way, yet without posing it in this manner. Only late, in his last and most alienating word, does the answer arrive: the poem “In beautiful blue with its / Metallic roof the church tower blossoms” (VI, 24). Hölderlin there says:

Voll Verdienst, doch dichterisch wohnet
Der Mensch auf dieser Erde.—

Full of merit, yet poetically
Humans dwell upon this earth.—

This word is obscure in its provenance, and yet it is unthinkable without the wakeful spirit of Hölderlin. It contains a restriction placed on something initially conceded. “Full of merit . . .” humans indeed dwell. In what they effect and in their works they are capable of a fullness. It is almost impossible to survey what humans achieve, the way in which they establish themselves upon this earth in using and exploiting and working it, in protecting it and securing it and furthering their “art,” that is, in Greek, *τέχνη*. “Yet”—none of this reaches into the essential ground of their dwelling upon this earth. All this working and achieving, this building and cultivating, is merely *cultura*, culture. Culture is always already only the consequence of a “dwelling,” of a being “at home” of spirit. Such dwelling, however, being properly homely, is “poetic.” The middle and ground of dwelling, that is, the “hearth of the house,” is nothing that could be discerned or seized upon through making or achieving within the realm of whatever is actual. Dwelling itself, being homely, is the becoming homely of a being unhomely. The latter is grounded in the poetic. Yet how and whence and when is the poetic? Is it something produced by poets, or are the poets and the poetic determined by poetry? But what is the essence of poetry? Who determines this? Can it be read off from the many meritorious achievements of human beings upon the earth? It seems so, because poetry

can, after all, be reckoned among cultural achievements from which we can subsequently ascertain, "aesthetically" and in terms of literary historiography, what attributes poetry and its poets have. Is poetry a "cultural achievement"? Are the poets "creators of culture," assuming that they are poets and not mere writers or people concerned only with words? Or is this opinion of modernity concerning poetry, art, and thinking the historical errancy proper to modernity?

Yet if the poetic runs counter to everything meritorious and does not fall within human merit and is nothing that exists in itself, then how can human beings ever experience the "poetic"? And granted that Western, historical humankind has long since been on the way to becoming so unhomey that it forgets the saga [*Sage*] of becoming homely, must we not then first experience the law of becoming homely and first give thought to the essence of poetry? Who other than the poet can give thought to it? The essence of poetry must first be poetized again. The innermost need of history demands the necessity of there being a poet who poetizes in advance the essence of poetry. To be this poet is what is most difficult.¹

This German poet, however, precisely if he intimates the essence of becoming homely and knows its law, must before all else venture into the foreign, so as to let "the fire" come toward him and at the same time to learn in the foreign land how the fire became the quiet shining of the gods. This poet must enter into historical and poetic dialogue with that poetizing which, in its way, already poetized a becoming homely in being unhomey. This German poet must learn to say the "fire" in order then to experience what the word of his poetry must be. What is it that is to be poetized in this poetry? Hölderlin names it "the holy." The poetic naming of what is originally to be poetized, and is therefore the poetic, properly occurs [*ereignet sich*] in Hölderlin's hymnal poetry. This is why the essence of poetizing is simultaneously poetized in this poetry. For this reason, and for this reason alone, this hymnal poetry is in an essential respect river poetry. The spirit of the river is the poetic spirit that experiences the journeying of being unhomey and "thinks of" the locality of becoming homely. As river, that is, as the journeying, the river can never forget the source, because in flowing, that is, in issuing from the source, it itself constantly is the source and remains the locality of its own essence. What is to be said in this hymnal poetry is the holy, which, *beyond* the gods, determines the gods themselves and simultaneously, as the "poetic" that is

1. We should not think, therefore, that a "pointer" to "Hölderlin and the essence of poetry" has been provided in order to furnish aesthetics and literary theory with a new opportunity to acquire a concept of the essence of poetry. What is at stake is something other than merely clearing up the chaotic confusion of literary theory. That "pointer" does not at all seek to compete amid the intentions belonging to literary or philosophical historiography; it leaves "research" to make its own "progress."

to be poetized, brings the dwelling of historical human beings into its essence. The poet of such poetizing therefore necessarily stands between human beings and gods. He is no longer merely a human being. Yet for the same reason he is not, indeed never is, a god. From the perspective of this "between" between humans and gods, the poet is a "demigod." If Hölderlin poetizes the essence of the poet, he must think the essence of the demigod. And he poetizes the essence of the poet in order to find the "poetic" in whose essence the truth of the dwelling of human beings as historical is grounded. Such dwelling springs from a becoming homely in being unhomey, from the journeying of locality. The "poetic" is spirit and the essence of the rivers. The poet of the poetic is the demigod. Hölderlin clearly perceives these relations in the simplicity of their essential completeness and tells of them in the most complete of the river songs, in the hymn "The Rhine." The inner hinge on which the articulation of this poetic work turns is the tenth strophe (IV, 176f.). It begins:

Halbgötter denk' ich jetzt
Und kennen muss ich die Theuern,
Weil oft ihr Leben so
Die sehrende Brust mir beweget.

Demigods I think now
And these dear ones I must know,
For often does their life
So move my longing breast.

"Demigods I think now," namely now that I think the Rhine and the spirit of its river. And this spirit Hölderlin thinks "now," that is, at that time when he must say, "Now day breaks! . . . may the holy be my word" ("As when on Feastday . . .," IV, 151). The insight that the beginning of the tenth strophe is the inner hinge on which the Rhine hymn turns belongs among the very first preconditions for understanding this poetic work of his. By the demigods Hölderlin does not mean Rousseau, who is mentioned in the same strophe, but rather the rivers; the "most noble" of them is the Rhine itself, which is already explicitly named the "demigod" in line 31 at the end of the second strophe. (Cf. the Hölderlin lecture course of winter semester 1934/35: *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 39, p. 183ff. and p. 201ff.) Compare "Bread and Wine," fifth strophe, lines 73f.: "And humans shy away from them <the heavenly>, a demigod scarcely knows how to say who they are by name . . ." (IV, 122). The "demigod" is here thought of solely with respect to the naming of the gods and to the poet's telling naming.

The rivers are demigods. "The rivers" does not refer to all rivers in general, nor to a few arbitrary rivers. "The rivers," in the sense poetized

by Hölderlin's hymnal poetry, are "The Rhine" and "The Donau"—"The Ister"; and both are poetized as different and as belonging together in their essence. It is not by chance, therefore, that the Rhine is named in the Ister hymn and likewise in the eighth strophe of the hymn "The Journey" (IV, 170). The first word of this hymn again names the land of the upper Donau: "Blissful Suevia, my mother." Correspondingly, Hölderlin in the Rhine hymn is always thinking of the Ister, although this name is never mentioned. See in particular the fourth strophe. (Concerning the Rhine and the home, cf. "The Wanderer" ["*Der Wanderer*"], lines 37f. and 49f. Here the relations to the Taunus, to Homburg, and to Frankfurt are illuminated, to the home of the heart, where the poet became a poet.) Yet just as the Rhine hymn poetizes the essence of the rivers in the essence of the Rhine, so too the Ister hymn poetizes the essence of the rivers in the essence of the Ister, that is, poetizes journeying and locality. In the second strophe of the Ister hymn, after we are told of the Ister that it and its dwelling grant shade and measure by the foliage of the trees and the roof of rocks, there thus follows a word that is initially quite alienating, out of context, and sounds almost like an erroneous flight of thought:

So wundert
 Mich nicht, dass er <der Ister>
 Den Herkules zu Gaste geladen,
 Fernglänzend am Olympos drunten,
 Da der, sich Schatten zu suchen
 Vom heissen Isthmos kam,
 Denn voll des Muthes waren
 Dasselbst sie, es bedarf aber, der Geister wegen,
 Der Kühlung auch.

Thus it surprises
 Me not, that he <the Ister>
 Invited Hercules as guest,
 Gleaming from afar down there by Olympus,
 When he in search of shade
 From the sultry Isthmus came,
 For full of courage were
 They even there, yet there was need, for the spirits' sake,
 Of cooling too.

**a) Remembrance of journeying in the foreign—
 Heracles invited as guest by the Ister**

Hercules has been invited as guest by the Ister. A guest is that foreigner who for a time becomes homely in a homely place foreign to them, and

thus themselves bring what is homely for them into the homely of the foreign and are received by the homely of the foreign. Hercules has been invited by the Ister only as a guest. He remains the one he is and yet, as the foreigner "from the sultry Isthmus," from the land of the "fire," is present in the German land. In this hospitality on the part of the Ister there lies the readiness to acknowledge the foreigner and his foreignness, that is, to acknowledge the fire from the heavens that the Germans lack. In guest-friendship, however, there also lies the resolve not to mix what is one's own, as one's own, with the foreign, but to let the foreigner be the one he is. Only thus is a learning possible in guest-friendship, namely, by learning what the "calling" of the German poet and his essence is.

The second strophe of the Ister hymn, which names "Hercules," touches upon those relations that Hölderlin has in view when he says of historical spirit: "Colony . . . spirit loves." For this hospitality on the part of the Ister toward the foreign demigod is only one configuration of this love, namely, that configuration according to which spirit still loves colony even when it has journeyed back into what is properly homely for it.

We are able to understand all this, however, only *if* we first think the Ister as river spirit and the rivers as the essence of locality and journeying, if we know the river spirit as "demigod" and the latter as the essence of the poet, and the poetic in its relation to becoming homely, and becoming homely in terms of being unhomely, and this as what is to be poetized. It has become clear from the choral ode of the Antigone tragedy that, and in what way, being homely is what is properly poetized by the poet, because it is what is to be poetized. This is why in this lecture course we have [also] spoken of Sophocles instead of Hölderlin. We can know nothing of the Ister in terms of the Ister hymn unless we also understand the guest whom the Ister has invited. And we cannot understand this guest so long as we intimate nothing of the poetizing of that land and that humankind from which the guest has been invited. We must attempt, however, to think this poetizing of the Greeks in *that* respect which has addressed the German poet from afar, albeit constantly. Thus our remarks have perhaps not contributed a great deal toward an understanding of the Ister hymn, yet they have contributed something in acquainting us with the general perspective from which we can understand why, in a hymn "about" the Donau, one of the Greek "demigods" is named. Nonetheless, the fact that Hölderlin associates the Donau precisely with Heracles remains alienating. And yet we have a simple explanation for this if we provide an accurate account of Hölderlin's "historiographical," if not to say "literary-historiographical," relationship to the Greek world. Hölderlin translated not only Sophocles but Pindar also. In the third "Olympian Ode," which Hölderlin translated in a fragmentary manner (V, 13f.), Pindar speaks of Heracles'

having brought the olive leaf to Olympia "from the Ister's shaded sources." Yet this "literary-historiographical evidence" explains very little unless we direct our thought toward the essential connection between becoming homely and poetizing, between the poet and the demigod, between the homely and the unhomely.

Hölderlin's word concerning the Ister, which has invited Heracles as guest, thinks an entirely other and new relation that could not be a necessity for the Greek poet and therefore was not even possible. Yet the fact that the Greek demigod has come as a guest to the shades and water sources of the Ister also says that Hölderlin, in his hymnal poetry that poetizes one's "own" and what is "of the fatherland," by no means turned away from the Greek world, let alone turned toward Christendom. The presence of the guest in the homely locale tells us that even in, indeed precisely in the locality of the homely, journeying still prevails and remains determinative, albeit in a transformed manner. The guest, that is, the Greek poet of the heavenly fire, is the presence of the unhomely in the homely. The guest makes the thinking of the homely into a steadfast remembrance of the journeying to the foreign (to "colony"). The appropriation of one's own is only as the encounter and guest-like dialogue with the foreign. Being a locality, being the essential locale of the homely, is a journeying into that which is not directly bestowed upon one's own essence but must be learned in journeying. Yet journeying is at the same time and necessarily locality, a thoughtful, anticipatory relation to the homely, for otherwise the danger threatens of being struck, blinded, and scorched by the fire and its "hot rays."

The river "is" the locality and the journeying at once, because it is the river spirit and as river spirit is of the essence of the demigod. This means here: The river is one that poetizes between human beings and gods. That which is to be poetized is the poetic dwelling of human beings upon this earth. The poetizing of becoming homely, however, must follow the essence of this becoming. Becoming homely demands a going away into the foreign. The poetizing river spirit, because it seeks the homely and must learn to use freely what is its own, must come from the foreign into its own. The river must remain in the realm of its source in such a way that it flows toward it from out of the foreign. The poetizing of the locality of the homely is the provenance of journeying from the foreign:

Der scheint aber fast
Rückwärts zu gehen und
Ich mein, er müsse kommen
Von Osten.

He appears, however, almost
To go backwards and

I presume he must come
From the East.

The Ister appears almost to go backwards. It appears as though it does not go forward or away from the source at all. Yet the Ister does not merely go backwards. How does the appearance of its almost going backwards arise in the first instance? Because it flows hesitantly: such hesitancy can come only from there being a mysterious counterflow that pushes counter to its originary springing forth. The sight thus arises of the upper Donau sometimes standing still beneath the "rocks" and the forest of firs and swirling backwards [*in Wirbeln*]. In such hesitancy the poet intimates the mysterious concealment of the intertwining relations toward the foreign and one's own. The Ister almost goes backwards, because, remaining at the source, it has arrived alongside it from the East. In hesitating, its flowing appears in one direction *and* the other. The flowing is not directly in either of the two directions. The relation to the foreign is never a mere taking over of the Other. The relation to one's own is never a mere self-assured affirmation of the so-called "natural" or "organic."

**b) The law of history: one's own as what is most remote—
the path to one's ownmost as the most difficult**

Everything merely "organic" in nature is foreign to the law of history, as foreign as what is "logical" in reason. What we think we grasp historiographically of history, oppose to one another or equate with one another as the "organic" and as the "logical," is the facade of history. The law of history places historical humankind into a specific essence, as a consequence of which whatever is one's own is most remote and the path to one's ownmost is the longest and most difficult. If this law of history is abandoned, humankind falls into the unhistorical. The unhistorical, however, because it remains merely a breaking off with respect to history, is quite different in essence from the ahistorical. Nature is ahistorical. Unhistorical, and therefore catastrophic in a way that no nature can ever be, is, for example, Americanism. There are particular reasons why we can initially grasp the essence of history more clearly in terms of its non-essence than in terms of its essence. Experiencing this essence remains what is most difficult. The finding and appropriating of one's own remains what is most difficult not only because it is difficult to find one's ownmost essence, but because finding in itself, as the path of journeying into the locality of historical essence, demands the highest and longest and richest meditation. From out of a knowledge of the burden of such meditation, Hölderlin says with respect to the river's almost flowing backwards:

Der scheint aber fast
Rückwärts zu gehen und
Ich mein, er müsse kommen
Von Osten.
Vieles wäre
Zu sagen davon. . . .

He appears, however, almost
To go backwards and
I presume he must come
From the East.
There would be
Much to tell of this. . . .

There would be much to tell concerning that appearance that makes it appear as though the river in its upper course, close to the source, were flowing back to the source; there would be much to tell concerning the presuming that is grounded through such appearance, namely, that something necessary presumably prevails here, something that flows from the foreign in a direction counter to this river's flowing away from the homely. "There would be much to tell," that is, to tell poetically here, to poetize. For the "much" that there would be to poetize here is in fact nothing less than the poetic itself pure and simple, upon whose ground humans dwell. Hölderlin's entire "poet's calling"^[24] is present to the poet in this word that sounds almost prosaic. And there is scarcely another poet who could venture in a poetic strophe this sentence that sounds so unpoetic: "There would be much to tell of this." Yet here these words are determined and pervasively attuned by the highest poetic vocation. This is why they sound and indeed are more poetic than any other "poeticized" turn of phrase.

c) The enigmatic course of the Ister

The Ister remains enigmatic [*rätselhaft*] in its upper course close to the source, this standing still of its dark waters beneath the towering rocks, this swirling [*wirbelnde*] flow that turns back toward the banks it has already abandoned. After all, rivers elsewhere flow away from their source. Yet this one shows a mysterious tendency to cling to the homely land and its towering rocks with their "high-wafting scent of the fir forest." Why is this the case?

. . . Und warum hängt er
An den Bergen gerad? Der andre

Der Rhein ist seitwärts
Hinweggegangen.

. . . And why does he precisely
Cling to the mountains? The other
The Rhine has departed
Sideways.

This question concerns the unusual course of the Ister, the enigmatic path of this demigod, the historical determination and vocation of this poet. Yet the question also ponders the course of that other German river, which, no less than the river spirit of the Ister, appears to be determined from the direction of the East and from Asia, yet from its very origin displays a quite different flow. For in the Rhine hymn Hölderlin says (third strophe, IV, 173):

Die Stimme wars des edelsten der Ströme,
Des freieborenen Rheins,
Und anderes hoffte der, als droben von den Brüdern,
Dem Tessin und dem Rhodanus
Er schied und wandern wollt', und ungeduldig ihn
Nach Asia trieb die königliche Seele.

The voice it was of that most noble of rivers,
The freely born Rhine,
He who hoped for something else, as up there from his brothers,
The Tessin and the Rhodanus,
He departed and wished to wander, and impatiently
To Asia he was driven by that kingly soul.

Yet he did not go in the direction he was driven, toward the East, in that direction of the heavens in which the Rhine does flow from its source for a short stretch; rather, he went sideways and then abandoned the mountains altogether, yet without ever forgetting them ("The Rhine," seventh strophe):

Doch nimmer, nimmer vergisst ers.
Denn eher muss die Wohnung vergehn,
Und die Sazung, und zum Unbild werden
Der Tag der Menschen, ehe vergessen
Ein solcher dürfte den Ursprung
Und die reine Stimme der Jugend.

Yet never, never does he forget it.
For first must dwelling pass away,
And order, and become deformed

The human day, before such as he
 May forget the origin
 And the pure voice of youth.

“Such as he”—that is, someone designated, someone who, between human beings and the gods, must, for both humans and gods, be *the one* that he is. “Such a one” must, despite everything, remain in his origin and always return there. This not being allowed to forget the origin does not exclude that “bold forgetting” that is necessary for journeying into the foreign. Yet how can Hölderlin ask, in relation to the Ister: “And why does he precisely / Cling to the mountains?” Does not the Ister too leave the mountains of its upper course and go into the broad plains of the East? Yet the Ister must come from the East, it goes backwards into the locality of the “source of the Donau.”^[25] Here, in this almost going backwards, there is yet another not being able to forget the origin. Here someone dwells so near to the origin that he abandons it with difficulty (cf. “The Journey,” IV, 167, l. 18f.), not because he simply remains in the homely, merely becoming ossified there, but because already at the source he has invited the unhomely as guest and is pushed toward the homely by the unhomely. The Ister *is* that river in which the foreign is already present as a guest at its source, that river in whose flowing there constantly speaks the dialogue between one's own and the foreign.

**§24. *The rivers as the poets who found the poetic,
 upon whose ground human beings dwell***

Why is this the case? Is there a poetic answer to this? Can an answer to this destiny of this demigod come from anywhere within the realm of human achievement or human history? Can the poetic and its vocation be explained at all in terms of human dwelling, which itself is capable of dwelling only poetically? No. All “psychological” dissection of creative poetic activity, all historiographical reportage on the many types of poet, all idle talk concerning the vocation of poetry and of poets that remains extrinsic, all “aesthetic” enjoyment of poetry, remain forever banished from that realm in which alone the answer can properly be given [*sich ereignen*]. The question concerning poetic vocation can be posed only poetically and can be answered only poetically. Likewise, it is only the thinker who knows what thinking is. The poet alone decides about poetry, and the thinker alone decides about the realm of thought, no one else. Yet they never decide this from out of whatever makes them human, rather they decide only from out of whatever is to be poetized and whatever is to be thought. They

decide solely from out of that to which they already belong. And it is from there that the answer to the ‘why’ of their vocation is already spoken. As a result of this vocation, one thing thus remains true above all else for the poet:

Umsonst nicht gehn
 Im Troknen die Ströme.

Not in vain do
 Rivers run in the dry.

The reason they do not flow in vain, the very grounds of their necessity, has already been indicated in line 16 of the hymn:

Denn Ströme machen urbar
 Das Land.

For rivers make arable
 The land.

Initially, it seems as though it is merely the natural and living force of the water that is meant here, as distinct from the dryness and lifelessness of the land. Yet the rivers are the poets who found [*stiften*] the poetic, upon whose ground human beings dwell. The poetic spirit of the river makes arable in an essential sense; it prepares the ground for the hearth of the house of history. The poet opens that time-space within which a belonging to the hearth and a being homely is possible in general. Yet in what way does this occur? Not in vain do the rivers run. They have in themselves a decided vocation. Presumably, the truth of this vocation has been decided in their calling. Yet may it, on account of this, be taken merely as some obscure, ahistorical urge and be “lived out” and “expressed” within that fateful mire of so-called “lived experiences”? Or does not this calling, *because* it is a historical one that first finds history, require meditation and poetic questioning? How could we doubt this, given all that we have remarked hitherto? This is why the poet too asks: “Yet how?” In what way is it that the rivers run? Even though we may not be permitted to know what each and every one of them does, how do things stand concerning their activity in general? The poets must know this in order to be acquainted with the rivers as rivers and to belong in a visionary faithfulness to the rivers' concealed essence:

Sie sollen nemlich
 Zur Sprache seyn. Ein Zeichen braucht es,
 Nichts anderes, schlecht und recht, damit es Sonn'

Und Mond trag' im Gemüth', untrennbar,
 Und fortgeh, Tag und Nacht auch, und
 Die Himmlischen warm sich fühlen aneinander.

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

Had we not ventured, in our preceding remarks, to attempt to clarify in general that realm to which the essence of the river belongs; and were it not for our now keeping strictly in view the fact that the rivers in their journeying bring about a becoming homely in being unhomely; were it not for our giving thought to the fact that this journeying's attainment of the homely locality and its hearth is the poetizing of that which is properly to be poetized; were it not for our knowing that the poets, as the demigods who are above human beings and beneath the gods, between the two, must name the holy for both—were it not for all this, then we would now stand at a loss and without any clue when faced with these “lines.” Yet even as we give thought to our remarks hitherto, and, instead of merely “applying” them, question our way through them anew, we shall not be so presumptuous or rash as to want to make immediately comprehensible the words we are now hearing. The rivers “are to be to language.” “A sign is needed.”

**§25. The poet as the enigmatic “sign” who lets appear
 that which is to be shown. The holy as the fire that
 ignites the poet. The meaning of naming the gods**

In our very first indication of the fact that, in his thinking “of” the rivers, Hölderlin thinks “demigods” and lets the poetic essence of the poet be concealed in them, we placed emphasis on the fact that the demigod is here experienced as the sayer, the one who names the gods with names. As demigods, the rivers are “to be to language” in a singular sense of the word, they are to be those called to the word and to the saying of the word. Yet because, immediately following this in line 51, we find the statement “a sign is needed,” it might suggest itself here, and appear “more correct,” not to take the word “language” literally but rather in the figurative sense of “sign” and in the more mundane meaning of “expression.” The rivers are meant to serve as an “expression of something,” indeed as “signs of” something else, namely the poets. According to Hölderlin's own word, the rivers are then indeed “sym-

bols” of the essence of the poets. The rivers are natural phenomena, yet they are able, and are intended, to serve as signs of something else, something different in kind yet which may be designated by such signs. Hölderlin therefore says unequivocally enough: “A sign is needed.”

If we presume this, then we think it is evident what “a sign” is. We presume that we know this. And especially if we replace the name “sign” by the influential term “symbol,” then everything seems to be clear. And yet nothing is clear—everything is merely in the realm of the confused and superficial. (This is a flight into an idiom and a catchword that carries with it a nongenuine veneer of profundity. Yet the depth of this profundity is the groundlessness of a mire.)

Yet even if we were to make a strenuous effort to lend a well-grounded meaning to names such as “sign” and “symbol,” we would still first need to ask whether we were not already going astray in so doing, assuming that the path we must take here is to lead us to an explication of Hölderlin's word concerning the rivers. What does the poem say?

Ein Zeichen braucht es,
 . . . damit es Sonn'
 Und Mond trag' im Gemüth', untrennbar,
 Und fortgeh' . . .
 A sign is needed,
 . . . so that sun
 And moon may be borne in mind, inseparable,
 And pass on. . . .

According to this, the sign has a mind [*Gemüt*]; indeed, the mind is manifestly not something added on to the “sign” but is its proper essence. Sun and moon, inseparable—the star of the day *and* the star of the night—in their belonging together are supposed to be preserved and retained in this mind of this sign. “And pass on”—who or what is to pass on? The sign? And in what sense is it to “pass on”? Is it to pass away or to proceed onward? Yet how? What a remarkable sign—a sign that has a mind. A sign is needed, however, not only so that sun and moon may be borne in a mind, but—and this is what is meant by the “and” at the beginning of line 54—so that it may also pass on. The sign that is needed must be such as to journey through the day, yet through the “night too.” For the night is the mother of the day; in her the dawning and rising of the holy is prepared. For this reason, the sign must in particular pass on through the night, and in the night, when everything is veiled, be a pointer that knows the clarity proper to the night and in the night retains the lights of spirit. The sign must journey through this night.

"A sign is needed" *too*, as we are told in turn by the "and" at the end of line 54, in order that "the heavenly feel themselves warm by one another." The belonging together of the gods is therefore conditioned by this sign, through the fact that this sign is. And this same sign bears sun and moon in mind; not only is it mindful of [*vermutet*] sun and moon, it looks up to them, and does so steadfastly, and is filled by their charm [*Anmut*]. Yet it is filled also by the forbearance [*Langmut*] and gentleness [*Sanftmut*] of the alternation of night and day. An enigmatic "sign," one that in particular has a mind and thereby is in such a way that even the gods require it. The mind [*Gemüt*] is the essential ground of all mindful courage [*Mut*], and as such is the sign that essentially distinguishes human beings; in that case, the "sign" that is required would be a kind of human being, and yet not merely a human being, for otherwise one could say "human being" instead of "sign," and with the same degree of clarity as "the heavenly" are named. A sign, human in kind, and yet not merely human, conditioning at the same time the belonging together of the gods, and yet not a god—something between humans and gods, a demigod, then? The rivers "namely are to be to language." "A sign is needed. . . ."

To understand the "sign" that Hölderlin names here as demigod may be highly presumptuous [*eine starke Zumutung*] and an "interpretation" of this line that could not be more violent. Yet if we ponder anew everything we have said thus far, this reading of the word "sign" is not so altogether beyond all possibility. That Hölderlin's poetic word, and thus all the more so any explication that is even remotely appropriate, remains and should remain in the realm of the enigmatic, is something that we indeed presuppose in all these remarks. After all, Hölderlin's word is not meant to be assimilated to the commonplace realm of everyday opinion. Rather, our thinking is to take the word of poetizing as its measure and to let it be the measure that it is. For this reason, despite all its strangeness, we must pursue the pointer we have given one step further. If the sign referred to here bears the "world" in its mind and, standing between human beings and the heavenly, is the demigod, and if Hölderlin "thinks demigods" in the essence of the rivers and comprehends the demigod as the essence of the poet, then the sign can only be the name for the poet. Then the words "a sign is needed. . . ." are saying "only" this: A poet and poets must be. A poet is needed. The poet would then himself be a sign. The poet would not merely be something designated by a sign, by the rivers. The poet himself would be a sign, yet not for designating something else but in such a way that as poet, he is a "sign." The preceding words: "Namely, they <the rivers> are / To be to language," would then acquire a rigorous meaning, the

one already referred to, according to which "language" here does not have merely an indeterminate and broad, figurative sense, meaning something like "expression," but means language in the proper and originary sense: the word. Although our deliberations here remain within the context of the Ister hymn, which, as a river hymn, tells of becoming homely, of a becoming homely that can properly occur [*sich ereignen*] only poetically so that it requires the poet above all and therefore needs this sign, we may even now have some reservations about understanding the words "a sign" in the sense of "a poet."

The essence of the poet is everywhere poetized by Hölderlin in his hymnal poetry. Yet his supreme word concerning the essence of the poet is said in the concluding line of the concluding strophe of the poem "Remembrance":

Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter.

Yet what remains, the poets found.

(It is presumably not by chance that this concluding strophe is found written on the same folio sheet as that on which Hölderlin wrote and drafted the Ister hymn; cf. IV, 367.)

Without going into the truth of these words, we shall for now note only that they are found in the poem bearing the title "Remembrance" [*Andenken*]. Remembrance here does not mean merely thinking of that which has been (namely journeying into the foreign), but simultaneously thinking ahead "to" what is coming, giving thought to the locality of the homely and its ground that is to be founded. Thoughtful remembrance, as this multidirectional thinking that is directed toward what must properly be said by the poet, is a pointing. The poet, as poet, is the one who points, thus something that shows, and is thereby a "sign"—not a thing-like sign, not some sign-thing, which is what we mistakenly take to be the specific nature proper to a "sign." The poet is a sign that has a "soul" in which the thoughts of spirit quietly end: a sign to which a "mind" is appropriate, in which it bears the stars of the heavens. The showing is of such a kind as to first let appear^[26] that which is to be shown. Yet such a sign can, in saying, let appear that which is to be said only because it has before this already been shone upon by that which thus appears as what is to be poetized. This sign must therefore be struck and blinded in the face of the "fire." This is why it is initially unable to find the word, so that it seems as though this showing had lost its tongue.^[27] The draft of a hymn that, in addition to another title, also bears the Greek name "Mnemosyne," has been preserved for us. There is no danger in our translating this Greek word as Hölderlin understands it by "*Andenken*,"

"Remembrance"; for this name names the mother of the Muses, thus the womb and origin of poetizing and thereby its essence. "Mnemosyne," ground of the remembrance of that which is to be thought poetically, of *that* which remains in first giving the ground for all remaining and dwelling of humans, which is founded by the poets. This hymn bearing the title of the Greek name "Mnemosyne" begins (IV, 225):

Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos
Schmerzlos sind wir und haben fast
Die Sprache in der Fremde verloren.

We are a sign that is not read
Without pain we are and have almost
Lost our tongue in foreign parts.

"We are a sign. . . ." Who "we"? "We" does not here mean "human beings" in an indeterminate and general sense but rather those of whom Hölderlin, in the hymn "As when on Feastday . . .," says:

Doch uns gebührt es, unter Gottes Gewittern,
Ihr Dichter! mit entblösstem Haupte zu stehen,

Yet us it behooves, under God's thunderstorms,
You poets! to stand with naked heads.

The poets are "a sign"—they are those who "have almost lost our tongue in foreign parts." This has the same resonance of the same thought: "The besouler <i.e., the poet> would almost <namely, in the foreign> have been scorched" and would thereby have been annihilated and would thus have lost that which is his distinctive sign: the word, language [*die Sprache*]. "Language," that is, here, the ability to tell, is the essence of showing, and being able to show determines the poets in their essence as signs.¹

Language itself is "the power of the word," "grows as it sleeps," "the primordial sign" ("Bread and Wine," l. 68ff.). "A sign we are," we, the poets; we are called upon to show and have experienced that which is to be shown (the fire). Yet we are not yet capable of reading [*Deuten*].^[28] "Long and difficult is the word of this arrival however / White <initially: Bright> is the moment of insight. Servants of the heavenly are / However knowing of the earth, their step is toward the abyss / Youthfully more human yet that within the depths is old." (For lines 87ff. of "Bread and Wine," IV, 322.) Now we have returned from the foreign, underway on

1. Cf. "There fetters no sign" ["*Es fesselt kein Zeichen*"] IV, 323, also IV, 248. Cf. the lecture course of winter semester 1941/42 (*Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 52, p. 32ff.).

our return into the homely. Yet this is to say that we must now first seek what is our own and learn to use it freely. Because these poets are only at the beginning and are still overwhelmed by the foreign fire, "we," the poets, are as yet unread—we are not yet able to read and to show. We are almost as though consumed by fire so that "the pain" has yet to stir. Pain, however, is that knowing proper to being distinct, in which the belonging to one another of human beings and gods first attains the separation of distance, and thereby the possibility of proximity, and thus the fortune of appearing. Pain belongs to being able to show; it belongs to the poet as the knowledge of his own essence. This essence resides in each case in being the between in which the demigod stands and that he has to sustain: the "between" between the heavenly and human beings. The draft of the hymn "Mnemosyne" has another title in addition to this, which simply reads: "The Sign" (IV, 369). From this title it becomes clear that here "the sign" pure and simple is named in its essence. "A sign" therefore does not mean the extrinsic aspect of "a" mere "indicator" or "a" "signal." The sign is showing, which stands in an essential relation to "reading," to pain, and to language. Sign here does not mean "mere showing in the direction of" but rather a sign that stands only at the very beginning of its being a sign. How else could the same poet say in the Ister hymn:

Ein Zeichen braucht es,
Nichts anderes, schlecht und recht. . . .

A sign is needed,
Nothing else, plain and simple. . . .

This alone is the singular need of journeying into the locality of what for the Germans is their ownmost: "A sign" (a poet), "Nothing else, plain and simple"—there is need of this unconditional founding of what remains. "Plain and simple," that is to say: The sign's showing must be simple, and in its simple unequivocality it is also straightforward. It shows that which is to be shown, and nothing else.² Yet to satisfy this simplicity in learning what is one's own, and to know of one's own "plain and simple" at all, is what is most difficult. What Hölderlin in the rigorous claim of these words enunciates almost unpoetically once again (in terms of their

2. There is no need for the affected extravagance, the loud gestures and bewildering din, or the immense monuments characteristic of the un-German monumental of the Romans and Americans. And such things are not needed if the sign remains plain, that is, oriented directly toward that which is to be said, and if it has nothing to do with all those other things that are adverse and detrimental to one's own.

appearance and sound), he says in the hymn "The Titans" in the following way (IV, 209):

Mich aber umsummet
Die Bien und wo der Akersmann
Die Furchen machet singen gegen
Dem Lichte die Vögel. Manche helfen
Dem Himmel. Diese siehet
Der Dichter.

Yet around me buzzes
The bee, and where the ploughman
Makes the furrows there sing toward
The light the birds. Many help
The heavens. These the poet
Sees.

The poet is the sign that is in such a way that its mind has sun and moon in view, "inseparable." The sign remains bound to the day and to the "night too," and survives the transition from the one to the other. A sign is needed too, so that

Die Himmlischen warm sich fühlen aneinander.
The heavenly feel themselves warm by one another.

The poet sees those rare ones who help the heavens. The heavens, the heavenly themselves, are in need of help, specifically, the help of the sign, that is, of the poet. The poet must name the gods, say them in their essence. "A sign is needed . . ."; the poet must *be*, that is, the demigods, the "heroes"; the demigods are the rivers:

Umsonst nicht gehn
Im Troknen die Ströme. Aber wie? Sie sollen nemlich
Zur Sprache seyn.

Not in vain do
Rivers run in the dry. Yet how? Namely, they are
To be to language.

The sign, the demigod, the river, the poet: all these name poetically the one and singular ground of the becoming homely of human beings as historical and the founding of this ground by the poet. Because, in Hölderlin's poetizing of the rivers, these relations constantly stand in a poetic vision from the outset, they return ever anew in the richest poetic variations. For

this reason it can come as no surprise that in the hymn of *that* river that is specifically named and thought on several occasions in the Ister hymn, namely in the Rhine hymn, the eighth strophe says the following:

Es haben aber an eigner
Unsterblichkeit die Götter genug und bedürfen
Die Himmlischen eines Dings,
So sinds Heroën und Menschen
Und Sterbliche sonst. Denn weil
Die Seeligsten nichts fühlen von selbst,
Muss wohl, wenn solches zu sagen
Erlaubt ist, in der Götter Nahmen
Theilnehmend fühlen ein Andre,
Den brauchen sie; jedoch ihr Gericht
Ist, dass sein eigenes Haus
Zerbreche der und das Liebste
Wie den Feind schelt' und sich Vater und Kind
Begrabe unter den Trümmern,
Wenn einer, wie sie, seyn will und nicht
Ungleiches dulden, der Schwärmer.

Yet of their own
Immortality the gods have enough, and if one thing
The heavenly require,
Then heroes and humans it is
And otherwise mortals. For since
The most blessed feel nothing of themselves,
There must presumably, if to say such
Is allowed, in the name of the gods
Another partake in feeling,
Him they need; yet their own ordinance
Is that he his own house
Shatter and his most beloved
Chide like the enemy and bury his father
And child beneath the ruins,
If someone wants to be like them and not
Tolerate unequals, the impassioned one.

An Other must be, who is other than the gods and in his being other must "tolerate unequals." This Other is needed to "partake in feeling" in the name of the gods.^[29] Partaking in feeling consists in his bearing sun and moon, the heavenly, in mind and distributing this share of the heavenly to humans, and so, standing between gods and humans, sharing the holy with them, yet without ever splitting it apart or fragmenting it. Such communicating occurs by this Other pointing toward the holy in naming

it, so that in such showing he himself *is* the sign that the heavenly need. For "feeling" and "bearing in mind" belong to humankind. The human being is human in being thus and thus minded [*so und so zumute*] in each case, a being minded in which beings as a whole show themselves and manifest themselves as such. The sign ("the besouler") bears everything originally in mind in such a way that, in naming the holy, the sign lets the heavenly show itself—the holy as the fire that ignites the poet.³

The poet is thus beyond human beings and yet unequal to the gods, and to humans as well. This Other, therefore, must tolerate what is unequal both in relation to the gods and in relation to human beings. This Other who is needed is the demigod, the poet, the river, the sign. So that the gods "feel themselves warm by one another" ("The Ister," l. 56), they must be able to feel something in general. "Of themselves," however, they "feel nothing." The gods are "without feeling," "of themselves," that is, remaining within their own essence, they are never able to comport themselves toward beings. For this, a relation to being is required (i.e., to the "holy" that is "beyond" them), being as shown to them through the Other who is the sign. Were it not for this sign and its showing and its sharing among one another, then the heavenly would remain without any possibility of having feeling for an Other or of being with one another. In the gods feeling the holy via this showing, and thus feeling "something," they feel themselves in such feeling. In feeling themselves, they feel themselves *as* gods and thus in their belonging to one another. To feel in this way is thus to "feel themselves warm." Were it not for this sign, the heavenly ones would remain dispersed, unable to know or relate to one another.

3. Concerning the needs of the heavenly, cf., from the Titan motifs [*Homburger Folioheft*, p. 49], IV, 216f.:

Wo nemlich
Die Himmlischen eines Zaunes oder Merkmals,
Das ihren Weg
Anzeige, oder eines Bades
Bedürfen, reget es wie Feuer
In der Brust der Männer sich.

For where
The heavenly need a fence
Or marker that points
Their way, or a pool,
Like fire it stirs
In the breast of men.

Cf. the draft at IV, 314f. However alone the heavenly are, and become the heavenly *only* when there is "a third," "gods too are bound by a fate [*Schicksaal*]."

Mortals, however, thirst after prayer. Cf. IV, 322f.: "for nonetheless a prayer arrests the god . . ."; and IV, 379: "and mortals thirst after it, because / Without a hold God lacks understanding."

§26. *Poetizing founding builds the stairs
upon which the heavenly descend*

Through the sign, that is, through the rivers, the heavenly find their way to the unity of their being united, a being united that does not remove their singularity in each case. The heavenly ones' being united among one another at the same time first makes possible their singular relation to mortals:

Darum sind jene auch
Die Freude des Höchsten. Denn wie käme er sonst
Herunter?

Whence those ones too
Are the joy of the Highest. For how else would he
Descend?

The rivers are for "the joy" of the highest god, of Father Aether. The rivers in general first grant the possibility of a joy that in the first instance consists in a relation of the heavenly toward mortals, that is, toward the sons of the earth, being opened up. Cf. "The Only One," first version, l. 66ff. (IV, 188):

Denn nimmer herrscht er [der Vater] allein.
Und weiss nicht alles. Immer stehet irgend
Eins zwischen Menschen und ihm.
Und Treppenweise steigt
Der Himmlische nieder.

For never does he [the Father] rule alone.
And knows not everything. Always there stands some
One between humans and him.
And on staircases
Descends the heavenly one.

Where there are stairs, a dwelling place is there opened up poetically for humans (cf. IV, 217f.). And because the poets are the rivers, dwelling remains related to the water (IV, 224):

Will einer wohnen
So sei es an Treppen,
Und wo ein Häuslein hinabhängt
Am Wasser halte dich auf.

If someone wishes to dwell
So be it near stairs,

And where a cottage slopes down
By the water abide.

Poetizing founding builds the stairs for the descent of the heavenly. And this is why the poets themselves must be like what is below, the earth upon which the stairs are to be built:

... Und wie Hertha grün
Sind sie die Kinder des Himmels.
... And like Hertha green
They are the children of the heavens.

“Hertha” is the Germanic name for “Mother Earth,” the *Terra mater* Nerthus, of which Tacitus in chapter 40 of his *Germania* reports:

Nec quicquam notabile in singulis, nisi quod in commune Nerthum, id est Terram matrem, colunt eamque intervenire rebus hominum, invehi populis arbitrantur. Est in insula Oceani castum nemus, dicatumque in eo vehiculum, veste coniectum; attingere uni sacerdoti concessum. Is adesse penetrali deam intellegit vectamque bubus feminis multa cum veneratione prosequitur. Laeti tunc dies, festa loca, quaecumque adventu hospitioque dignatur. Non bella ineunt, non arma sumunt; clausum omne ferrum; pax et quies tunc tantum nota, tunc tantum amata, donec idem sacerdos satiatam conversatione mortalium deam templo reddat. Mox vehiculum et vestis et, si credere velis, numen ipsum secreto lacu abluitur. Servi ministrant, quos statim idem lacus haurit. Arcanus hinc terror sanctaque ignorantia, quid sit illud, quod tantum perituri vident.

She is not honored among all Germans, but only among a community of Swabian tribes, who believe that she cares for human things and has traveled to be among the peoples. On an island of Oceanus there is a sacred grove with a sacrificial offering arranged in it, a carriage decked with a cloth. Only the priest is allowed to touch it. He recognizes the presence of the goddess in the sacred realm and, harnessing the cattle, he escorts the goddess with supreme reverence. Happy then are the days, and festive the locales that the goddess everywhere honors by her coming and being a guest. No wars are then conducted. No weapons seized. Iron too is closed away; peace and quiet now alone prevail, now alone find love—until the same priest, when the goddess has had enough of being together with mortals, returns her to her sacred realm. The carriage and the cloths and, if you will believe it, the presencing of the goddess herself are then immediately washed in a concealed lake. This service is carried out by slaves, who are then swallowed up by this same lake. From this there stems the hidden terror and the sacred ignorance concerning what it is that is seen by only those who are doomed to death.

In particular, we are told of Hölderlin's poetizing of “Mother Earth” in the concluding strophe of the hymn “Germania” (IV, 184f.) and also in the hymn “To Mother Earth” (IV, 154ff.), as well as in Fragment 4 (IV, 283f.; cf. *ibid.*, 323). “Like Hertha green”—green is what determines the goddess Earth and is thus itself determined by the holy and is “holy green”:

Und das heilige Grün, der Zeuge des seeligen, tiefen
Lebens der Welt, . . .

And holy green, witness of the blessed, profound
Life of the world. . . .

(“*Der Wanderer*,” IV, 103, l. 41f.)

a) “The children of the heavens”

The difficulty in understanding this line of the Ister hymn lies initially in determining what is meant here by “they are the children of the heavens.” We shall simply try to propose two possible readings. In the preceding lines, two things are named in the plural: the heavenly and the rivers. If “the children of the heavens” means the same as “the heavenly,” as the children of the Highest, that is, of “Father Aether,” then the lines would be saying that the heavenly are “green,” “just like” Mother Earth (draft, IV, 367). Because the Highest One in the heavens can descend with his children, the heavenly, via the shared mediation of the communicative sign, the heavenly are as near as the emergence and growth of the verdant earth, which is itself a goddess. The “and” in line 58 would then mean: “And therefore,” because they can descend. . . .

Or does “the children of the heavens” refer to the rivers? It is indeed said in the hymn “The Journey,” line 94: “one of her sons, the Rhine”—one of hers, namely of Mother Earth. According to this, the rivers are indeed the sons of the earth, “earth-sons,” and in Hölderlin's usage this always means human beings. Yet according to the word of the Ister hymn, the rivers are “children” of the heavens, that is, sons of the gods. Yet we already know that the rivers are demigods; they are sons of the earth *and* children of the heavens at the same time. Dionysos—the “god” of the poets—is the son of Zeus and of Semele. Yet in what way are the rivers “children of the heavens”? The beginning of the hymn “The Journey” gives us the answer (cf. IV, 167):

Glückseelig Suevien, meine Mutter,

...
...

denn nah dem Heerde des Hausses

Wohnst du, und hörst, wie drinnen
 Aus silbernen Opferschaalen
 Der Quell rauscht, ausgeschüttet
 Von reinen Händen, wenn berührt
 Von warmen Stralen
 Krystallenes Eis und umgestürzt
 Vom leichtanregenden Lichte
 Der schneeige Gipfel übergiesst die Erde
 Mit reinestem Wasser.

Blissful Suevia, my mother,

...
 ...

for near the hearth of the house
 You dwell, and hear, how within
 From silver sacrificial vessels
 The source rushes, splashed out
 By pure hands, when touched
 By warm rays
 Crystalline ice and, overturned
 By the gently stimulating light
 The snowy peak overflow the earth
 With purest water.

If we read the "children of the heavens" as the waters coming from the heavens, that is, as the rivers springing forth from the water sources of the earth, then the "and" in line 58 means: Because the rivers are the sign that bears sun and moon in mind, that is, in the mindful courage [*Mut*] of the sons of the earth, these rivers, although children of the heavens, are at the same time like Mother Earth and are thus at the same time her children.¹

1. Mother Earth is also given the name Hertha in the poem "Emily before Her Wedding Day" (III, 21ff.) from 1799 (ibid., p. 28). In the Varus valley region the heroes are commemorated:

"Hier unten in dem Thale schlafen sie
 Zusammen," sprach mein Vater, "lange schon,
 Die Römer mit den Deutschen, und es haben
 Die Freigebornen sich, die stolzen, stillen,
 Im Tode mit den Welteroberern
 Versöhnt, und Grosses ist und Grösseres
 Zusammen in der Erde Schoos gefallen.
 Wo seid ihr, meine Todten all? Es lebt
 Der Menschengenius, der Sprache Gott,
 Der alte Braga noch, und Hertha grünt
 Noch immer ihren Kindern, und Walhalla
 Blaut über uns, der heimatliche Himmel;
 Doch euch, ihr Heldenbilder, find' ich nicht."

In keeping with all this, we must presumably read this line of the Ister hymn as referring to the rivers in the phrase "children of the heavens," and take the rivers as meaning the demigods and these geniuses of language as the poets. The rivers are initially named in the essence that is common to them, namely that of being the sign that, in showing, stands between gods and humans.

b) The Ister and the Rhine

Following this general naming of the essence of the rivers, "the" two rivers are specifically named and distinguished in their own specific essence, so that out of such difference the enigmatic fullness of what has "purely sprung forth" may first become visible. Hölderlin therefore continues in the very same line:

Aber allzuredig
 Scheint der mir, nicht
 Freier, und fast zu spotten.

Yet all too patient
 He appears to me, not
 Free, and almost to mock.

"He" is the Ister, of whom it is already said at the beginning of the third strophe, in the same words of an intimate, poetic knowing:

Der scheint aber fast
 Rückwärts zu gehen . . .

"Here in the valley below they have slept
 Together," said my father, "for a long time,
 The Romans with the Germans, and those
 Freely born, the proud and quiet,
 Are reconciled in death with the conquerors
 Of the world, and great and greater still
 Have together fallen into earth's womb.
 Where are you, all my deceased? There lives
 The human genius, god of language,
 Ancient Braga yet, and Hertha grows verdant
 Still for her children, and Walhalla,
 Heaven of the home grows blue above us;
 Yet you, you images of heroes, I cannot find."

Here Hertha, growing verdant, is named together with her children; the sons of the earth are named (cf. "*Der Mensch*," III, 8ff.), yet also and in particular "ancient Braga" is named, the human genius, the god of language. (Cf. Jakob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, I, 4th ed., p. 194f.: the gift of poetry and of eloquence is attributed to Bragi.)

He appears, however, almost
To go backwards. . . .

Thus now: “Yet all too patient / *He* appears to me.” And “he,” the Ister, is contrasted with “the Other” by the words “not free.” The Ister is deprived of that superior freedom bestowed upon the origin and source of the Rhine. Thus, the fourth strophe of the Rhine hymn, which we have already mentioned, asks (l. 54ff.):

Wo aber ist einer,
Um frei zu bleiben
Sein Leben lang, und des Herzens Wunsch
Allein zu erfüllen, so
Aus günstigen Höhen, wie der Rhein?
Und so aus heiligem Schoose
Glücklich geboren, wie jener?

Yet where is one,
To free remain
His life long, and the heart's wish
Alone to fulfill, from
Such favorable heights, as the Rhine?
And so from the womb of the holy
Born happy, as that one?

The Ister, by contrast, is not so freely or so highly born as to spring forth from favorable heights, that is, to plunge downward and from out of the force of such a plunge to be able at once to hasten *away* like the Rhine. In keeping with its lofty origin, the Rhine's kingly soul drove this river “impatiently” (third strophe) toward the East. The Ister, by contrast, “he appears all too patient.” And he “appears” to go backwards. Are these two things the same that here “appear” to be like this? An “all too patient” flowing is a hesitant, whiling, almost stationary, indeed almost backwards flow that does not hasten away from the source, does not wish to leave it, while patiently alongside it. “Precisely” he clings to the mountains, and does so “patiently,” indeed “all too patiently,” since it is otherwise in the nature of rivers that spring forth to “spring” and “hasten” and be jubilant and rage. This one, by contrast, “appears” “all too patient,” and thus appears almost to act contrary to the essence of a river that springs forth, and thereby appears “to mock”:

Nemlich wenn
Angehen soll der Tag
In der Jugend, wo er zu wachsen

Anfängt, es treibet ein anderer da
Hoch schon die Pracht . . .

Namely when
The day is to commence
In his youth, where he begins
To grow, another there already
Drives high his splendor. . . .

There, where the task is to be young and to spring forth and to grow, there is the other, the Rhine, quite other in its essence, which is poetized in the Rhine hymn, a hymn that does not shy away from the word of the “fury of the demigod” (l. 31). Whereas the Rhine comes “from favorable heights,” so that “a jubilation is his word,”

Ist der betrübt;
He is saddened.

Mourning pervades the Ister, the river proper to the home of the poet, that is, it pervades the poet himself in his poetic essence. Yet this sadness is “holy mourning” and as such is an originary knowing of the poetic vocation of this poet; a knowing of the necessity of patient whiling “near the origin.” For without such poetizing whiling in the singular necessity of telling of that which grounds all being homely and all essential prevailing, the land would never be made “arable” by the river and could never become the locality for human dwelling, which is poetic:

Es brauchet aber Stiche der Fels
Und Furchen die Erd',
Unwirthbar wär es, ohne Weile;
Was aber jener thuet der Strom,
Weis niemand.

The rock, however, has need of cuts
And of furrows the earth,
Inhospitable it would be, without while;
Yet what that one does, that river,
No one knows.

What the vocation of the Ister is, and what it does as a son of the mother, it well knows, for without its mysterious whiling and dwelling near the origin, without this dwelling to which the foreigner has been invited as guest from the sultry Isthmus, “without this while,” there could in the future be nothing poetic for the Germans, and without this there could

never be a historical dwelling in what is their ownmost, "near the hearth of the house." By contrast, what that river, the Rhine, "does" no one knows. The activity of the Rhine is altogether concealed, namely, because it has "departed sideways" (l. 47ff.), since originally, driven toward the East, then abandoning the Alps, it wished to plunge directly to the heart of the mother of the home ("The Journey," l. 94ff.):

Von ihren Söhnen einer, der Rhein,
Mit Gewalt wollt er ans Herz ihr stürzen und schwand
Der Zurückgestossene, niemand weiss, wohin in die Ferne.

One of her sons, the Rhine,
Wished to rush to her heart with force and vanished,
The rejected one, no one knows whereto, into the distance.

Otherwise the Ister:

Der scheint aber fast
Rückwärts zu gehen und
Ich mein, er müsse kommen
Von Osten.

He appears, however, almost
To go backwards and
I presume he must come
From the East.

The Ister whiles by the source and is reluctant to abandon its locale because it dwells near the origin. And it dwells near the origin because it has returned home to its locality from its journeying to foreign parts. The Ister satisfies the law of becoming homely as the law of being unhomely. It thus grounds the poetic dwelling of human beings and is therefore within its own essence, which is the essence of *that* poet who must poetize the poet.

The concealed poetic truth of the Rhine hymn can only now come to appear, now that this poetic work has been comprehended as a poetizing that necessarily turns counter to the essence of the river, that is, once it has been thought in terms of its relation to the Ister hymn. The hymns of these rivers, however, stand in an originally unitary relation to the hymn "Germania." Yet it is not as though they could be summed up by that hymn. For the relations of the individual hymns among one another follow a law that is as yet concealed from us. Only if we can intimate this law will the Germans be capable of knowing which law of their history has been poetized for them and how their dwelling has already been poetically

grounded. Kept in the right perspective, the Ister hymn provides us with essential pointers. Yet this very hymn is in many respects a draft and breaks off—just as though the essence of this poetry, whose poet is a sign, had to be attested to the extreme. The sign shows—and in showing, it makes manifest, yet in such a way that it simultaneously conceals. So mysteriously does Hölderlin say in the Ister hymn that he is "the" poet and knows what is fitting for his poetry, in his being "saddened" and only with difficulty finding the language he has almost lost so as, in saying the word, to be the sign ("Mnemosyne," l. 1ff.):

Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos
Schmerzlos sind wir und haben fast
Die Sprache in der Fremde verloren.

We are a sign that is not read
Without pain we are and have almost
Lost our tongue in foreign parts.

CONCLUDING REMARK—"IS THERE A MEASURE ON EARTH?"

These "remarks" on the Ister hymn are intended to make us attentive to the perspective from which the essence of the rivers is poetized. This poetizing of the rivers is in itself simultaneously a poetizing of the essence of poetry. And for this reason there are concealed relations that prevail here. Were we to follow our strong initial inclination to twist our interpretation of the poetizing of poetry into the view that this poet, in poetizing the essence of poetry, merely becomes altogether entangled in his own "affairs," then we would lose everything through this view. This poet's poetizing does not revolve around the poet's own ego. No German poet has ever achieved such distance from his own ego as that distance that determines Hölderlin's hymnal poetry. This is the real reason why we of today, who despite all "community" remain metaphysically, that is, historically entangled in subjectivity, have such difficulty in bringing the right kind of hearing to encounter the word of this poetry. What has for a long time hindered modern, contemporary human beings, who think in terms of self-consciousness and subjectivity, from hearing this poetry is simply this: The fact that Hölderlin poetizes purely from out of that which, in itself, essentially prevails as that which is to be poetized. When Hölderlin poetizes the essence of the poet, he poetizes relations that do not have their ground in the "subjectivity" of human beings. These relations have their own essential prevailing and flowing. The poet is the river. And the river is the poet. The two are the same on the grounds of their singular essence,

which is to be demigods, to be in the between, between gods and humans. The open realm of this between is open in the direction of the holy that essentially prevails beyond gods and humans. The unity of locality and journeying cannot be conceived in terms of “space” and “time,” for the space with which we are familiar and the time to which we are accustomed are themselves offspring of a realm that first lets all openness spring forth from out of it, because it is that which clears and [is the clearing event of appropriation].¹

At the beginning of these “remarks” we rejected the obvious view that the rivers are “poeticized” “symbols,” “images” or “signs” that offer a symbolic image of something else. We can now recognize the reason for our rejecting this. The rivers cannot be “poeticized images” or “signs of” something because they in themselves are “the signs,” “signs” that are no longer “signs” of something else, nor symbols of something else, but are themselves this supposed “something else.” The poets, as poets, are these rivers, and these rivers are the poets. “Poetically” they ground the dwelling of human beings upon this earth. The rivers, that is, the Rhine and the Ister, are not symbolic images. The essence of the rivers does not depict or present the “meaningful sense” of the essence of the poet. In their essence, the rivers are the signs, as showing and making arable. These signs that show are the poets. The poets are these rivers. Being a poet essentially prevails from out of the essence of the rivers. The essence of the rivers cannot at all be identified and made visible geographically and then subsequently allocated a symbolic function. The essence of the rivers can, from the outset, be experienced only from out of the poetic dwelling of human beings; the “image” of the river that is supposed to then become a “symbol” first shows itself only in the light of the essence of poetry. (Even before the period of his river poetry, Hölderlin recognizes the river as “the brother of the heavens.” Cf. “To Diotima”: “Come and see the joy around us . . .,” II, 39.) This cannot be understood straightforwardly via the usual paths of representation. Nor should the opinion arise that these remarks might in themselves suffice in order to think the truth of this poetry, or even to experience the poetic word and the word itself in its own essential space. This poetry demands of us a transformation in our ways of thinking and experiencing, one that concerns being in its entirety. We must first dismiss our allegedly natural “representations” of allegedly geographically “actual” rivers and allegedly historiographically actual poets and human beings; we must first altogether let go of the actuality of such

1. weil er das Lichtende und [lichtend-Er-eignende] ist. The square brackets appear in the manuscript.

actual things as providing our supposed measure of truth, so as to enter that free realm in which the poetic is.

Certainly, it is easier to demand this renunciation of a geographical measure than to follow it. For if this measure of what is actual and of beings is invalid, then from where are we to take our measure? Hölderlin himself, in the last and most powerful of his poems, “In Beautiful Blue . . .,” which is a *veritable* δεινότατον, asks (VI, 25):

Giebt es auf Erden ein Maas?

Is there a measure on earth?

And he answers immediately and decisively:

Es giebt keines—

There is none—

This sounds like a token of hopelessness and despair. And yet it names something else and points to something else, provided that we dwell poetically upon this earth and experience what has been poetized in its appearing and in its provenance, which means bearing and suffering it, instead of forcing it and observing it by stealth. If we merely attempt, on our own authority, to set or seize upon the measure, then it becomes measureless and disintegrates into nothingness. If we merely remain thoughtless and without the alertness of an intimate scrutinizing, then we will again find no measure. Yet if we are strong enough to think, then it may be sufficient for us to ponder merely from afar, that is, scarcely, the truth of this poetry and what it poetizes, so that we may suddenly be struck by it. Even the poet follows this law. His hymn “The Journey,” which contains everything we have noted in a fragmentary manner here, closes with the pointer:

Zum Traume wirds ihm, will es Einer

Beschleichen und straft den, der

Ihm gleichen will mit Gewalt.

Oft überrascht es den,

Der eben kaum es gedacht hat.

A dream it becomes for him who would

Approach it by stealth, and punishes him

Who would equal it with force.

Often it surprises one

Who indeed has scarcely thought it.

EDITOR'S EPILOGUE

Heidegger devoted three lecture courses to Hölderlin: a course on "Germania" and "The Rhine" in the winter semester of 1934/35 (*Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 39); a course on "Remembrance" in the winter semester of 1941/42 (*Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 52); and a course on "The Ister" in the summer semester of 1942. This course was advertised under the title "Hölderlin's hymns." It consisted of one-hour lectures and was the first course of Heidegger's that the editor had the opportunity to attend. (It began on 21 April 1942 and ended on 14 July.)

The manuscript comprises 62 pages in folio format, plus 22 pages containing the Reviews. The editor had available a copy belonging to Frau Vietta, which was compared against the original. In addition, the editor was also able to refer to his own transcript.

The divisional structuring of the course and the section headings were provided by the editor. Heidegger explicitly requested that unless he himself had provided structural divisions, this should be done by the editor. In the case of the major (four-hour) lecture courses, Heidegger himself usually read out a structural plan at the beginning, although it was not always possible to fully execute this. The one-hour lecture courses were not normally structured in this way.

Those who were able to experience directly the effect of each of the lectures—their well-roundedness, the progressive interweaving of thoughts, and the intrinsic movement of this thinking—will appreciate how difficult it is to provide appropriate headings. It is not false modesty, therefore, if headings have been chosen particularly economically in the present volume. The references to other lecture courses are Heidegger's own.

The course has been divided into three parts by the editor. Part One discusses the essence of the rivers and why they are not to be understood metaphysically in terms of symbolic images. Locality and journeying, thoughtfully experienced, define the rivers as poetized: becoming homely is the care of the poet. To becoming homely there belongs a traveling into the foreign.

In Part Two, such traveling is presented as the dialogue between Hölderlin and Sophocles and as Heidegger's dialogue with the Greeks. This part contains a reading of Sophocles' *Antigone*, where we find the Greek interpretation of the human being as the most uncanny being. At the center stands the discussion of $\delta\epsilon\tau\nu\acute{o}\nu$ in the choral ode of *Antigone* (l. 332ff.). In this interpretation, the hearth appears as being.

Part Three continues the discussion of being unhomey and becoming homely, showing how Hölderlin has poetized the essence of the demigods in the rivers, and how the spirit of the river is the poetic spirit.

Only Parts One and Two of this text were read in the course. The course concluded with the material from §20 in this edition. This also explains why there are no Review sections available for Part Three. Heidegger wrote his Reviews specifically as introductions to the relevant lecture.

Hölderlin quotations are taken from the Norbert von Hellingrath edition (second printing). Heidegger used the Oxford edition of Sophocles edited by A. C. Pearson (1923).

It should be apparent to every reader that this lecture course shows us not only something of Heidegger's dialogue with Hölderlin, but also something of Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek world in his encounter with Sophocles.

*

I am grateful to my wife, with whom I attended this lecture course, for looking through the text and discussing difficult points. My thanks are due to Dr. Hartmut Tietjen for his thorough checking of the final text. I thank also Dr. Petra Jaeger for comparing the transcribed copy against the original. I am especially grateful to Dr. Heinz Fries and cand. phil. Stefan Winter for their assistance in reading the proofs.

Deyá, 1 October 1983

Walter Biemel

TRANSLATORS' NOTES

[1.] "Remembrance" and "The Ister" were the first of five hymns that Heidegger, in 1941, planned to treat in detail. The other hymns listed were "The Titans" and the draft and final version of "Mnemosyne." For further details, see the introductory pages to volume 52 as well as the Editor's Epilogue to that volume.

[2.] *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Gesamtausgabe, vol. 40). Translated as *An Introduction to Metaphysics* by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).

[3.] See (1) *Sämtliche Werke* ("Stuttgart edition"), ed. Friedrich Beißner and Adolf Beck (Stuttgart, 1943ff.); (2) *Sämtliche Werke. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe* ("Frankfurt edition"), ed. Dietrich E. Sattler (Frankfurt, 1975-).

[4.] In this and the following paragraphs, Heidegger plays on a series of cognates of the verb *merken*: to "notice," but also to "retain" or "remember" something. He introduces his lectures as presenting "remarks" (*Anmerkungen*) that are to make us "attentive" (*aufmerksam*) to Hölderlin's poetry, so that we can then "pay attention" or "attend" to (*merken*) what might be said in the poetry, in the sense of remembering or having an intimation of it. These remarks or *Anmerkungen* are thus to provide "markers," *Merk-male* or "signs" (*Zeichen*) that call our attention (*Aufmerken*). Cf. the discussion of intimation (*ahnen*) and recollection in §6, and the analyses of memory and the sign in Part Three.

[5.] The following paragraphs employ an intricately woven chain of cognates constructed around the verb *rufen*, "to call": *herbeirufen*, "to call forth"; *anrufen*, "to call to," "call upon," "invoke," or "appeal to"; *zurufen*, "to call to"; in addition, a range of nouns built around the same root are used, the most important of which is *die Berufung*, "vocation" in the sense of "calling," as we have rendered it here. (Note that the term *Bestimmung*, one's "determination" in the sense of that which one has been determined or destined to do, also has the meaning of "vocation" and will generally be translated as such, or occasionally as "determinate vocation." "Calling" we have generally reserved for *Berufung* or *Beruf*, as in the poem "Dichterberuf," "Poet's Calling," to which Heidegger refers below.)

[6.] Heidegger is here appealing to the more formal sense of the German verb *zitieren*, which, like the English verb "to cite," can mean to summon as well as to quote.

[7.] The German here reads: *Das Eigene bedarf einer Zu-eignung. Und das Zugeeignete wiederum bedarf der Aneignung.* The term *Zu-eignung* suggests the sense of something “coming to be appropriate,” as we have translated it, a process in which that which is one’s own (*das Eigene*) comes to approach one, comes to be one’s own (Heidegger’s hyphenation emphasizes this “directional” sense). *Aneignung* by contrast implies a more explicit and definitive appropriation in which that which is one’s own is “taken on board,” as it were.

[8.] The German *Nachbild* also suggests a “copy” made from a model or paradigm, from a primary image or *Vorbild*. Heidegger’s hyphenation of *Vor-Bild* in what follows draws attention to the temporal sense of a prior image (the Platonic εἶδος or “form” as paradigm, παράδειγμα), in contrast to the copy as a subsequent or “after-”image.

[9.] The phrase “the extraordinary way” here translates *dem Ungeheuren*. Hölderlin’s use of the German term *das Ungeheure* is discussed by Heidegger in Part Two of the course, in the context of his interpretation of the *Antigone* chorus. There, Heidegger will explain that *das Ungeheure* means *das Nicht-Geheure*, literally, the non-ordinary, the non-familiar, which Heidegger associates with the uncanny and unhomey (*das Unheimliche, Unheimische*). See §13 for Heidegger’s discussion of the term. *Das Ungeheure* also plays an important role in Heidegger’s Parmenides lecture course of 1942/43 (see *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 54, §6. Translated as *Parmenides* by André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz [Indiana University Press, 1992]).

[10.] The word *intimation* here translates the German *ahnen*, which means to have an intimation or “inkling,” a premonition or foreboding of something. *Ahnen* is a key word in Hölderlin’s poetry, where it has a predominantly positive connotation. This word is central to Heidegger’s understanding of what is meant by “thoughtful remembrance,” *Andenken*. In contemporary German, the common phrase “*Ich habe keine Ahnung*” translates as “I have no idea,” or “I haven’t a clue.” The root of the verb *ahnen*, however, also refers to the past, particularly in the noun *die Ahnen*, which means one’s ancestors or forebears—as in Hölderlin’s poem “*Das Ahnenbild*” [The picture of our forebears]. Cf. the similar usage in the compound *der Urahn*, which Heidegger cites from Hölderlin’s poem “The Eagle” in §1 of this volume. In what follows, Heidegger is clearly appealing to a sense in which the word *ahnen* implies a reference to both past and future.

[11.] In the following passages, *inner recollection* has been used to translate *Erinnerung* wherever Heidegger is appealing to the sense of interiority suggested by the German term. The phrase “that which essentially prevails” translates *das Wesende*, which is linked to *das Gewesene*, “that which has been.” *Gewesen* is the past participle of the verb “to be,” *sein*. *Wesen*, which as a noun normally means “essence” (as in the essence or “nature” of

something), or, in a verbal sense, “to be present,” has for Heidegger the sense of “essential prevailing” or “essential presencing,” that is, presencing or prevailing in an essential manner.

[12.] The phrase “that which turns inward” translates *das Inwendige*. The German term is formed from the verb *wenden*, meaning to turn. In what follows, Heidegger also employs the cognates *das Außenwendige* (that which is turned outward) and *Zuwendung* (turning toward). A further cognate, *gegenwendig* (“counterturning”), becomes important in Parts Two and Three of the course.

[13.] The reference is to the famous passage in *Twilight of the Idols*, a passage that is central to Heidegger’s first lecture course on Nietzsche, “The Will to Power as Art,” of 1936/37.

[14.] The German word *Rätsel* is probably best translated as “enigma.” It is, however, related etymologically to the English *riddle* (Old English *raedelle, raedelse*, from *raed*, counsel). As Heidegger explains, the term has a nontrivial meaning in Hölderlin’s poetry. We have therefore generally rendered the noun *Rätsel* as “enigma” and the adjective *rätselhaft* as “enigmatic.”

[15.] The German *das Raten* can mean both “advising” (giving advice or “counsel” [*Rat*] to someone), and “guessing,” as in attempting to find the solution to a riddle or *Rätsel*.

[16.] The phrase “be mindful of” translates the German *vermuten*, which has the sense of “to suspect,” “to suppose,” “to presume,” or “to have a presentiment of.” In the present context, Heidegger relates it to the root *Mut* and to the cognate *das Gemüt*, both of which will become important in Part Three of the course. *Mut* normally means “courage”; *Gemüt* means “mind” or “cast of mind.” As the lecture course unfolds it becomes clear that Heidegger is attempting to awaken a very specific sensibility for these words, one that hears in them the archaic meaning of the root *Mut*, namely something like “mood,” “spirits,” or “cheer” (*Mut* is etymologically related to the English “mood”), while retaining the connotation of courage or resolve. Similarly, the word *Gemüt* is, in Heidegger’s reading, not to be understood in the Kantian sense of the “faculty” of the mind, but means something more like mind in the sense of gathered “disposition,” “feeling,” or “attunement.” *Mut* appears in the second strophe of “The Ister” (written in the old form *Muth*); *Gemüt* (written *Gemüth*) appears in the third strophe, and its interpretation becomes central as Heidegger’s reading gathers intensity in Part Three of the course (see §§22 and 25). Poetic mindfulness as attunement there informs an extended chain of cognates, including *Anmut* (“charm”), *Langmut* (“forbearance”), and *Sanftmut* (“gentleness”). Cf. §51 of the course on “*Andenken*” (*Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 52) for an earlier discussion of these terms.

[17.] The term *Auseinandersetzung* (literally, a "setting apart from [and of] one another") is sometimes translated as "confrontation." In the present course, however, its meaning seems less "polemic," and carries more of the sense of a dialogical exchange or encounter between two parties. We have therefore generally rendered it as "encounter."

[18.] The word *Zwiesprache*, like *Zwiegespräch*, which appears more rarely in the text, has the more precise meaning of a dialogue between two. We have chosen to render it simply as "dialogue," the word we also use to translate *Gespräch* (a more common word for dialogue), rather than employing the somewhat awkward term "interlocution," or the more obscure "duologue," which could also be used to convey the meaning of *Zwiesprache*. Heidegger does not appear to make any significant semantic distinctions between these terms; indeed, in §17 he uses the three words *Gespräch*, *Zwiesprache*, and *Zwiegespräch* interchangeably.

[19.] The *Gymnasium* is a German secondary school that prepares students for college or university. It is roughly equivalent to the American high school or British grammar school. The "humanist *Gymnasium*" emphasized a classical education.

[20.] The German word *Wirbel* has the general meaning of a swirl, whirl, or vortex and implies the turbulence of a spinning or twisting motion. Thus, the compounds *Wirbelwind* and *Wirbelsturm* mean whirlwind or tornado; but a *Wirbel* can also refer to the swirling movement of water, as in an "eddy" or "whirlpool." The term *Wirbel* is used in *Being and Time*, §38, to describe the movement of Dasein's "falling" (*Verfallen*); Macquarrie and Robinson translate it in that context as "turbulence" (*Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson [NY: Harper, 1962]). The word appears again in the first Hölderlin lecture course, where Heidegger speaks of the *Wirbel* of a dialogue (*Gespräch*) (see *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 39, §5). In the present lecture course, it later describes the swirling flow of the Ister close to its source (see §23).

[21.] The word *vertraut*, whose root is the verb *trauen*, "to trust," conveys the sense of being intimately familiar and acquainted with something. Note that it is already associated with the meaning of being as dwelling in *Being and Time*, §12: "Being . . . means dwelling alongside . . ., being entrusted with . . . [*vertraut sein mit . . .*]" (*Sein und Zeit*, p. 54).

[22.] The German phrase *bei sich selbst* might alternatively be rendered as "with itself" or "present to itself." The preposition *bei* here conveys a strong sense of self-presence; for Heidegger, it corresponds quite generally with the *παρά* of *παρουσία*, the Greek word for presence. Cf. its use in §9.

[23.] Cf. our remarks on §7 and the use of these terms.

[24.] An allusion to Hölderlin's poem of the same title, which Heidegger cites in §1.

[25.] An allusion to Hölderlin's hymn "*Am Quell der Donau*" ("At the Source of the Danube").

[26.] The word "appear" here translates the German *erscheinen*, derived from *scheinen*, "to shine," "to appear," or "to seem." *Erscheinen* carries the fuller sense of "coming to appear in shining." In §26 Heidegger will comment on the way in which the Ister "appears" (*scheinet*) to flow backwards. As Heidegger has already indicated, such poetic "appearing" should not be taken as "mere" appearance, in opposition to truth (cf. §7).

[27.] "Tongue" here translates *Sprache*, as in the lines from "Mnemosyne" quoted below. *Sprache* is normally rendered as "language."

[28.] Note that the German *Deuten*—as in the term *deutungslos*, cited above from "Mnemosyne"—does not refer to "reading" in the narrower sense of *Lesen*, but should be understood in the more general sense of "interpreting." The word *deutungslos* might thus be rendered as "without interpretation."

[29.] Note that "partake" translates the German *teilnehmen*, literally to take (*nehmen*) part (*teil*). The following sentences invoke a chain of cognates built around the root *teil*: *Anteil*, "share" or "portion"; *zuteilen*, "to distribute"; *zerteilen*, "to split apart"; and *mitteilen*, "to communicate."

GLOSSARY

English—German

to abandon: *verlassen*
 ability: *das Vermögen*
 abode: *der Aufenthalt*
 absence: *das Abwesen*
 to accommodate: *unterbringen*
 accompaniment: *die Beigabe*
 acknowledgment: *die Anerkennung*
 to be acquainted with: *kennen*
 to act: *handeln*
 activity: *das Handeln, das Tun*
 actual: *wirklich*
 actual effectiveness: *die Wirksamkeit*
 actuality: *Wirklichkeit*
 ahistorical: *geschichtslos*
 alien, foreign: *fremd*
 alienation: *die Entfremdung*
 ambiguity: *die Zweideutigkeit*
 ambiguous: *zweideutig*
 appropriate, becoming: *die Zueignung*
 appropriation: *die Aneignung*
 appropriation (event of): *das Ereignis*
 to arrive: *ankommen*
 art: *die Kunst*
 to ascertain: *feststellen*
 assertion: *die Aussage*
 to attend to: *sich merken*
 attentive: *aufmerksam*
 to attest, bear witness to: *bezeugen*
 attunement: *die Stimmung*
 attunement, fundamental: *die Grundstimmung*
 to avoid: *ausweichen*
 to await: *erwarten*
 awe: *die Scheu*

beautiful: *schön*
 the beautiful: *das Schöne*
 being: *das Sein*
 being-in-the-world: *das In-der-Welt-sein*

beings: *das Seiende*
 to belong: *gehören*
 belonging together: *die Zusammengehörigkeit*
 bold: *tapfer*

to calculate: *rechnen*
 the call: *der Ruf, der Anruf*
 to call: *rufen, anrufen*
 to call to: *zurufen*
 calling, vocation: *die Berufung*
 care: *die Sorge*
 catastrophe: *die Katastrophe*
 to celebrate: *feiern*
 celebration: *das Feiern*
 center: *die Mitte*
 charm: *die Anmut*
 choral ode: *das Chorlied*
 chorus: *der Chor*
 to cite (quote, summon): *zitieren, bestellen*
 city, town: *die Stadt*
 closed: *verschlossen*
 to come: *kommen*
 that which is coming: *das Kommende*
 that which is to come: *das Künftige*
 commencement: *der Anfang*
 communal: *gemeinsam*
 to communicate: *mitteilen*
 concealed: *verborgen*
 to be concerned with: *sich kümmern um*
 configuration: *die Gestalt, das Gefüge*
 connection: *der Zusammenhang*
 counterturning: *die Gegenwendigkeit*
 that which is counterturning: *das Gegenwendige*

date: *das Datum*
 to date: *datieren*
 daughter: *die Tochter*

day: *der Tag*
 deaf: *taub*
 deafness: *die Taubheit*
 death: *der Tod*
 to decide: *entscheiden*
 decision: *die Entscheidung*
 delusion: *das Wähnen*
 demigod: *der Halbgott*
 destiny: *das Geschick*
 dialogue: *die Zwiesprache, das Gespräch, das Zwiegespräch*
 direct, immediate: *unmittelbar*
 discussion: *die Erörterung*
 distancing: *die Entfernung*
 domain: *der Bezirk, der Bereich*
 to dwell: *wohnen*
 dwelling place: *die Wohnstatt*

the earth: *die Erde*
 an effect: *die Wirkung*
 to effect: *bewirken*
 to emerge: *aufgehen*
 encounter: *die Auseinandersetzung*
 to encounter: *begegnen*
 enigma: *das Rätsel*
 enigmatic: *rätselhaft*
 entry song, parodos: *der Einzugslied*
 equivocality: *die Mehrdeutigkeit*
 essence: *das Wesen*
 essential, of the essence: *wesenhaft*
 essentially prevail, to: *wesen*
 evil: *böse*
 eccentric: *exzentrisch*
 experience: *die Erfahrung*
 to experience: *erfahren*
 without experience: *erfahrungslos*
 explication: *die Erläuterung*
 the extraordinary: *das Ungeheure*

father: *der Vater*
 fatherland: *das Vaterland*
 fear: *die Furcht*
 the fearful: *das Furchtbare*
 festival: *das Fest*
 to find: *finden*
 fire: *das Feuer*
 that which is fitting: *das Schickliche*
 fittingly destined: *die Schickung*

fittingly destined, something: *das Geschick*
 fittingness: *die Geschicklichkeit*
 to flow: *strömen*
 forbearance: *die Langmut*
 force: *die Kraft*
 forebear: *der Urahn*
 foreign: *fremd*
 the foreign: *das/die Fremde*
 to forget: *vergessen*
 forgetting: *das Vergessen*
 frightful: *fürchterlich*
 future: *zukünftig*
 the future: *die Zukunft*

gentleness: *die Sanftmut*
 genuine: *echt*
 the Germans: *die Deutschen*
 god: *der Gott*
 the gods: *die Götter*
 to grasp, conceive: *fassen*
 the Greeks: *die Griechen*
 the Greek world: *das Griechentum*
 ground: *der Grund*
 to guard: *hüten*
 guest: *der Gast*
 guest-friendship: *die Gastfreundschaft*

habitual: *gewöhnlich*
 the habitual: *das Gewöhnliche*
 that which has been: *das Gewesene*
 having-been: *das Gewesensein*
 to hear: *hören, vernehmen*
 to hearken: *horchen*
 heart: *das Herz*
 hearth: *der Herd*
 the heavens: *der Himmel*
 the heavenly: *die Himmlischen*
 heed: *die Achtsamkeit*
 historical: *geschichtlich*
 historicity: *die Geschichtlichkeit*
 historiographical: *historisch*
 historiography: *die Historie*
 history: *die Geschichte*
 holy: *heilig*
 the holy: *das Heilige*
 home, homeland: *die Heimat*
 at home: *zuhause*

homely: *heimisch*
 the homely: *das Heimische*
 homestead: *die Heimstatt*
 to honor: *verehren*
 hospitality: *die Gastlichkeit*
 human: *menschlich*
 human being: *der Mensch*
 humankind: *das Menschtum*
 hymn: *die Hymne*

illusion, semblance: *der Schein*
 image: *das Bild*
 immense: *riesig*
 the immense: *das Riesenhafte*
 individual: *einzel*
 indulgence, patronage: *die Gunst*
 infidelity, unfaithfulness: *die Untreue*
 the inhabitual: *das Ungewöhnliche*
 interpretation: *die Auslegung*
 intimate, familiar with: *vertraut mit*
 to intimate, have an intimation: *ahnen*
 intimation: *die Ahnung*
 intonation, emphasis: *die Betonung*
 inward: *inwendig*

a journey: *die Wanderung*
 journeying: *die Wanderschaft*

to know: *wissen*
 knowledge, knowing: *das Wissen*

land: *das Land*
 land of the evening, the West: *das Abendland*
 land of the morning, the East: *das Morgenland*
 language: *die Sprache*
 law: *das Gesetz*
 leeway: *der Spielraum*
 locale: *der Ort*
 locality: *die Ortschaft*
 to loom: *ragen*
 love: *die Liebe*

madness: *der Wahn*
 manifest: *offenbar*
 manifestness: *die Offenbarkeit*
 manifold: *vielfältig*

measure: *das Maß*
 meditation, reflection: *die Besinnung*
 metaphysical: *metaphysisch*
 metaphysics: *die Metaphysik*
 middle, midst: *die Mitte*
 mind: *das Gemüt*
 mindful courage: *der Mut*
 mindfulness: *das Vermuten*
 to be mindful of: *vermuten*
 to be of a mind: *zumutesein*
 moment: *der Augenblick*
 moon: *der Mond*
 mother: *die Mutter*
 multiple: *mannigfaltig*
 mysterious: *geheimnisvoll*
 mystery: *das Geheimnis*

to name: *nennen*
 naming: *das Nennen*
 nature: *die Natur*
 need: *die Not*
 non-beings: *das Unseiende*
 the non-ordinary: *das Nicht-geheure*
 the "now": *das "Jetzt"*

to occur: *geschehen*
 order: *die Ordnung*
 the ordinary: *das Geheure*
 orientation, direction: *die Richtung*
 to be oriented: *sich richten*
 origin: *der Ursprung*
 outward: *außenwendig*
 to overwhelm: *überwältigen*
 the overwhelming: *das Überwältigende*
 own, one's: *das Eigene*

pain: *der Schmerz*
 passage, course: *der Gang*
 passage through: *der Durchgang*
 to pass away: *weggehen*
 past, bygone: *vergangen*
 that which is past: *das Vergangene*
 the past: *die Vergangenheit*
 path: *die Bahn*
 path, way: *der Weg*
 the people: *das Volk*
 poem: *das Gedicht*
 poet: *der Dichter*

poetic: *dichterisch*
 to poetize: *dichten*
 poetizing: *die Dichtung*
 pointer: *die Anweisung, der Hinweis, der Wink*
 political: *politisch*
 politics: *die Politik*
 power: *die Gewalt, die Macht*
 the powerful: *das Gewaltige*
 presence: *die Anwesenheit*
 to presence: *anwesen*
 presencing: *das Anwesen*
 the present, presence: *die Gegenwart*
 to present, set forth: *darstellen*
 a presentation: *die Darstellung*
 to preserve: *bewahren*
 to press: *drängen*
 pressure: *der Andrang*
 presumably: *vermutlich*
 to presume: *meinen*
 to prevail: *walten, wesen*
 to pronounce, enunciate: *aussagen*
 a pronouncement: *die Aussage*
 proper, properly: *eigentlich*
 provenance: *die Herkunft*

readiness: *die Bereitschaft*
 reality: *die Realität*
 realm: *der Bereich, der Bezirk*
 to recollect: *erinnern*
 recollection (inner): *die Erinnerung*
 reflection, meditation: *die Besinnung*
 to refuse: *versagen*
 region: *die Gegend*
 relationship: *das Verhältnis, die Beziehung*
 releasement: *die Gelassenheit*
 remark: *die Anmerkung*
 remembrance (thoughtful): *das Andenken*
 to renounce: *absagen*
 renunciation: *die Absage*
 to represent, set before: *vorstellen*
 representation: *die Vorstellung*
 resonance: *der Anklang*
 to resonate: *anklingen*
 respect: *die Achtung*
 rest: *die Ruhe*

to rest upon: *beruhen auf*
 return: *die Rückkehr*
 to return: *zurückkehren*
 to reveal, unveil: *enthüllen*
 reverence: *die Ehrfurcht*
 risk: *diel/das Wagnis*
 river: *der Strom*
 river poem: *die Stromdichtung*
 to rush: *rauschen*

to say, tell: *sagen*
 scarcely: *kaum*
 science: *die Wissenschaft*
 scientific: *wissenschaftlich*
 to seem: *scheinen*
 semblance, illusion: *der Schein*
 sense, meaning: *der Sinn*
 sensuous: *sinnlich*
 the sensuous: *das Sinnliche*
 sign: *das Zeichen*
 significance: *die Bedeutung*
 to sing: *singen*
 singular: *einzig*
 singularity: *die Einzigkeit*
 site: *die Stätte*
 skilled: *geschickt*
 skillfulness: *die Geschicklichkeit*
 son: *der Sohn*
 song: *der Gesang, das Lied*
 soul: *die Seele*
 source: *die Quelle*
 space: *der Raum*
 sphere: *der Umkreis, die Sphäre*
 spirit: *der Geist*
 to spring forth: *entspringen*
 state (political): *der Staat*
 stationary song, stasimon: *das Standlied*
 stead: *die Statt*
 to grant stead: *gestatten*
 steadfast: *beständig*
 steadfastness: *die Beständigkeit*
 to stir: *sich regen*
 to summon: *bestellen, zitieren*
 those summoned: *die Bestellten*
 sun: *die Sonne*
 suprasensuous: *übersinnlich*
 the suprasensuous: *das Übersinnliche*
 to sway: *schwanken*

swirl: *der Wirbel*
to swirl: *wirbeln*
symbol: *das Symbol*
symbolic image: *das Sinnbild*

to tear: *reißen*
technology: *die Technik*
to tell, say: *sagen*
telling: *das Sagen*
temporal: *zeitlich*
terror: *der Schrecken*
to think: *denken*
time: *die Zeit*
time-like: *zeithaft*
tone: *der Ton*
to tower over: *überragen*
tragedy: *die Tragödie*
tragic: *tragisch*
to transfer: *übertragen*
transition: *der Übergang*
to translate: *übersetzen*
translation: *die Übersetzung*
true: *wahr*
truly: *wahrhaft*
truth: *die Wahrheit*
to turn: *wenden, drehen*
turning toward: *die Zuwendung*
twofold: *zweifältig, zwiefach*
twofoldness: *die Zwiefalt*

uncanny: *unheimlich*
the uncanny: *das Unheimliche*
unconcealed: *unverborgen*
unconcealment: *die Unverborgenheit*
unconcerned: *unbekümmert*

underway: *unterwegs*
unfaithfulness, infidelity: *die Untreue*
unhistorical: *ungeschichtlich*
unhomely: *unheimisch*
the unhomely: *das Unheimische*
unitary: *einheitlich*
unity: *die Einheit*
to unveil, reveal: *enthüllen*

to vanish: *schwinden*
to veil: *verhüllen*
to venture forth: *ausfahren*
vicinity: *das Hiesige*
view, sight: *der Anblick*
violence: *die Gewalt*
violent: *gewaltsam, gewalttätig*
violent activity, active violence: *die Gewalttätigkeit*
vocation, determination: *die Bestimmung*

waters: *die Wasser*
way, path: *der Weg*
a way out: *der Ausweg*
Western: *abendländisch*
the Western world, the land of evening:
das Abendland
a while: *die Weile*
to while: *verweilen*
wisdom: *die Weisheit*
word: *das Wort*
world: *die Welt*
worthiness: *die Würdigkeit*
worthy: *würdig*

German—English

das Abendland: the land of evening, the Western world
abendländisch: Western, occidental
die Absage: renunciation
absagen: to renounce
das Abwesen: absence
die Achtsamkeit: heed, heedfulness

die Achtung: respect, heed
ahmen: to intimate, have an intimation
die Ahnung: intimation
der Anblick: view, sight
das Andenken: thoughtful remembrance
der Andrang: pressure, pressing force
die Aneignung: appropriation

die Anerkennung: acknowledgment
der Anfang: commencement
der Anklang: resonance
anklingen: to resonate
ankommen: to arrive
die Anmerkung: remark
die Anmut: charm
der Anruf: call
anrufen: to call
die Anweisung: pointer
anwesen: to presence
das Anwesen: presencing
die Anwesenheit: presence
der Aufenthalt: abode
aufgehen: to emerge
aufmerksam: attentive
der Augenblick: moment
die Auseinandersetzung: encounter
ausfahren: to venture forth
die Auslegung: interpretation
die Aussage: assertion
aussagen: to assert, enunciate
außenwendig: outward
der Ausweg: way out
ausweichen: to avoid, make way for

die Bahn: path
die Bedeutung: significance
begegnen: to encounter
die Beigabe: accompaniment
der Bereich: realm, domain
die Bereitschaft: readiness
die Berufung: calling, vocation
beruhen auf: to rest upon
die Besinnung: meditation, reflection
beständig: steadfast, constant
die Beständigkeit: steadfastness, constancy
bestellen: to summon
die Bestellten: those summoned
die Bestimmung: determination, vocation
die Betonung: intonation, emphasis
bewahren: to preserve
bewirken: to effect
bezeugen: to attest, bear witness to
die Beziehung: relation, relationship

der Bezirk: domain, realm
das Bild: image
böse: evil

der Chor: chorus
das Chorlied: choral ode

darstellen: to present, set forth
die Darstellung: a presentation
datieren: to date
das Datum: date
denken: to think
die Deutschen: the Germans
dichten: to poetize
der Dichter: poet
dichterisch: poetic
die Dichtung: poetizing, poetry
drängen: to press
drehen: to turn, spin
der Durchgang: passage through

echt: genuine
die Ehrfurcht: reverence
das Eigene: one's own
eigentlich: proper, properly
die Einheit: unity
einheitlich: unitary
einzel: individual, single
einzig: singular, singularly
die Einzigkeit: singularity
das Einzugslied: entry song, parodos
die Entfernung: distancing
die Entfremdung: alienation
enthüllen: to unveil
entscheiden: to decide
die Entscheidung: decision
entspringen: to spring forth, arise
die Erde: the earth
das Ereignis: event of appropriation
erfahren: to experience
die Erfahrung: experience
erfahrungslos: without experience
erinnern: to recollect
die Erinnerung: (inner) recollection
die Erläuterung: explication
die Erörterung: discussion

erwarten: to await
exzentrisch: excentric

fassen: to grasp, conceive
feiern: to celebrate
das Feiern: celebration
das Fest: festival
feststellen: to ascertain
das Feuer: fire
finden: to find
fremd: foreign, alien
das/die Fremde: the foreign/the foreign place
die Furcht: fear
furchtbar: fearful
fürchterlich: frightful

der Gang: passage, course
der Gast: guest
die Gastfreundschaft: guest-friendship
die Gastlichkeit: hospitality
das Gedicht: poem
das Gefüge: configuration, structural articulation, hinging together
die Gegend: region
die Gegenwart: the present
das Gegenwändige: that which is counterturning
die Gegenwendigkeit: counterturning
das Geheimnis: mystery
geheimnisvoll: mysterious
das Geheure: the ordinary
gehören: to belong
der Geist: spirit
die Gelassenheit: releasement
gemeinsam: common, communal
das Gemüt: the mind
der Gesang: song
geschehen: to occur
die Geschichte: history
geschichtlich: historical
die Geschichtlichkeit: historicity
geschichtslos: ahistorical
das Geschick: destiny, something fittingly destined
die Geschicklichkeit: skillfulness
geschickt: skilled
das Gesetz: law

das Gespräch: dialogue
die Gestalt: configuration, figure
gestatten: to grant
die Gewalt: power, violence
das Gewaltige: the powerful
gewaltsam, gewalttätig: violent, actively violent
die Gewaltsamkeit: violence
die Gewalttätigkeit: violent activity, active violence
das Gewesene: that which has been
das Gewesensein: having been
gewöhnlich: habitual
das Gewöhnliche: the habitual
der Gott: god
die Götter: the gods
die Griechen: the Greeks
das Griechentum: the Greek world
der Grund: ground
die Grundstimmung: fundamental attunement
die Gunst: indulgence, favor

der Halbgott: demigod
handeln: to act
das Handeln: activity, action
heilig: holy, sacred
das Heilige: the holy
die Heimat: home, homeland
heimisch: homely
das Heimische: the homely
die Heimstatt: homestead
der Herd: hearth
die Herkunft: provenance
das Herz: heart
das Hiesige: vicinity
der Himmel: the heavens
die Himmlischen: the heavenly
der Hinweis: pointer
die Historie: historiography
historisch: historiographical
hören: to hear
hören: to hear
hüten: to guard
die Hymne: hymn

das In-der-Welt-sein: being-in-the-world

inwendig: inward

das "Jetzt": the "now"

die Katastrophe: catastrophe
kaum: scarcely
kennen: to be acquainted with
kommen: to come
das Kommende: that which is coming
die Kraft: force
sich kümmern um: to be concerned with
das Künftige: that which is to come
die Kunst: art

das Land: land, country
die Langmut: forbearance
die Liebe: love
das Lied: song, ode

die Macht: power
mannigfaltig: multiple
das Maß: measure
die Mehrdeutigkeit: equivocality
meinen: to presume
der Mensch: human being
das Menschentum: humankind
menschlich: human
sich merken: to attend to
die Metaphysik: metaphysics
metaphysisch: metaphysical
die Mitte: middle, midst
mitteilen: to communicate
der Mond: moon
das Morgenland: land of morning, the East
der Mut: mindful courage
die Mutter: mother

die Natur: nature
nennen: to name
das Nennen: naming
das Nicht-geheure: the non-ordinary
die Not: need

offenbar: manifest
die Offenbarkeit: manifestness
die Ordnung: order

der Ort: locale
die Ortschaft: locality

die Politik: politics
politisch: political

die Quelle: source

ragen: to loom
das Rätsel: enigma
rätselhaft: enigmatic
der Raum: space
rauschen: to rush
die Realität: reality
rechnen: to calculate
sich regen: to stir
reißen: to tear
sich richten: to be oriented
die Richtung: orientation, direction
das Riesenhafte: the immense
riesig: immense
die Rückkehr: return
der Ruf: call
rufen: to call
die Ruhe: tranquillity, composure

sagen: to tell, say
das Sagen: telling, saying
die Sanftmut: gentleness
der Schein: semblance, illusion
scheinen: to seem, shine
die Scheu: awe
das Schickliche: that which is fitting
die Schickung: fitting destiny
der Schmerz: pain
schön: beautiful
das Schöne: the beautiful
der Schrecken: terror
schwanken: to sway
schwinden: to vanish
die Seele: soul
das Seiende: beings, that which is
das Sein: being
singen: to sing
der Sinn: sense, meaning
der Sinnbild: symbolic image
sinnlich: sensuous
das Sinnliche: the sensuous

der Sohn: son
die Sonne: sun
die Sorge: care
die Sphäre: sphere
der Spielraum: leeway
die Sprache: language, tongue
der Staat: state (political)
die Stadt: city, town
das Ständlied: stationary song, stasimon
die Statt: stead
die Stätte: site
die Stimmung: attunement
der Strom: river
die Stromdichtung: river poetry
strömen: to flow, stream
das Symbol: symbol

der Tag: day
tapfer: bold, courageous
taub: deaf
die Taubheit: deafness
die Technik: technology
die Tochter: daughter
der Tod: death
der Ton: tone
tragisch: tragic
die Tragödie: tragedy
das Tun: activity, doing

der Übergang: transition
übertagen: to tower over
übersetzen: to translate
die Übersetzung: translation
übersinnlich: suprasensuous
das Übersinnliche: the suprasensuous
übertragen: to transfer
überwältigen: to overwhelm
das Überwältigende: the overwhelming
der Umkreis: sphere, circle
unbekümmert: unconcerned
das Ungeheure: the extraordinary
ungeschichtlich: unhistorical
das Ungewöhnliche: the in habitual
unheimisch: unhomely
das Unheimische: the unhomely
unheimlich: uncanny
das Unheimliche: the uncanny
unmittelbar: immediate, direct

das Unseiende: non-beings
unterbringen: to accommodate
unterwegs: underway
die Untreue: unfaithfulness
unverborgen: unconcealed
die Unverborgenheit: unconcealment
der Urahn: forebear
der Ursprung: origin

der Vater: father
das Vaterland: the fatherland
verborgen: concealed
verehren: to honor
vergangen: past, bygone
das Vergangene: that which is past
die Vergangenheit: the past
vergessen: to forget
das Vergessen: forgetting
das Verhältnis: relationship
verhüllen: to veil
verlassen: to abandon
das Vermögen: ability
vermuten: to be mindful of
das Vermuten: mindfulness
vermutlich: presumably
vernehmen: to hear, apprehend
versagen: to refuse
verschlossen: closed
vertraut mit: intimate, familiar with
verweilen: to while, tarry, linger
vielfältig: manifold
das Volk: the people
vorstellen: to represent, set before
die Vorstellung: representation

die/das Wagnis: risk
der Wahn: madness, folly
das Wähnen: delusion
wahr: true
wahrhaft: truly
die Wahrheit: truth
walten: to prevail, hold sway
die Wanderschaft: journeying
die Wanderung: journey
die Wasser: the waters
der Weg: way
weggehen: to go away, pass away
die Weile: a while

die Weisheit: wisdom
die Welt: world
wenden: to turn
wesen: to prevail essentially
das Wesen: essence, essential prevailing
wesenhaft: essential, of the essence
der Wink: pointer, hint
der Wirbel: swirl
wirbeln: to swirl
wirklich: actual
die Wirklichkeit: actuality
die Wirksamkeit: actual effectiveness
die Wirkung: effect
wissen: to know
das Wissen: knowing, knowledge
die Wissenschaft: science
wissenschaftlich: scientific
wohnen: to dwell, inhabit
die Wohnstatt: dwelling place
das Wort: word
würdig: worthy
die Würdigkeit: worthiness

das Zeichen: sign
die Zeit: time
zeithaft: time-like, of time
zeitlich: temporal
zitieren: to cite (quote, summon)
die Zueignung: becoming appropriate
zu Hause: at home
die Zukunft: future
zukünftig: futural, of the future
zumutesein: to be of a mind
zurückkehren: to return
zurufen: to call to . . .
die Zusammengehörigkeit: belonging together
der Zusammenhang: connection
die Zuwendung: turning toward
zweideutig: ambiguous
die Zweideutigkeit: ambiguity
die Zwiefalt: twofoldness
zwiefältig, zwiefach: twofold
die Zwiesprache, das Zwiegespräch: dialogue, interlocution