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ECHOES FROM THE ABYSS?

PHILOSOPHY AND ‘GEOPOLITICS’ IN HEIDEGGER’S *BEITRÄGE* AND *BESINNUNG*

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At this moment I am sitting at my desk, writing on Heidegger’s thought in the period after the *Rektoratsrede* and before the Second World War, the period of *Beiträge* and *Besinnung*. We all know of the phantom which haunted Germany in that period, and which was about to break loose: the separation of one’s own ethnic kind from the world community, cleansing it from foreign ‘elements’, ending up in a vortex of mass murder. Something comparable is happening at this very moment. The policy of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo is carried out with the meticulousness familiar from the days of the Nazi regime. The representatives of the world community who, united in NATO, defend human rights and freedom, are reluctantly compelled to use violence in order to eradicate ethnicity. This raises a simple question: What does Heidegger’s thought in the period between 1935 and 1940 tell us *now*, in the face of the struggle between humanism and ethnicity in Kosovo?

We have to face the fact that Heidegger’s thought has no solidarity whatsoever with the contemporary planetary community of humanism and human rights. In 1935, Heidegger sees Europe being ground between the millstones of America and Russia, which are metaphysically the same. Both are paragons of unshackled technolo-

gy, of the unfounded organization of everyman (das *Man*, i.e. the essence of democracy and socialism), and of the planetary economical conquest. In fact, both are forms of Americanism: the completion of being as the will to power. For its mask of democratic and humanistic morality, Americanism is even ghastlier than Russianism. 'Ghastlier than any Asiatic wildness is this uprooted morality, which extends to unconditional hypocrisy', says Heidegger in 1939¹.

It is unthinkable that Heidegger would consider the war in Kosovo a liberation war, justified by human rights or humanity. It is equally unthinkable that Heidegger would consider Germany liberated in 1945.² The end of the war was the end of the possibility for Germany to be the centre of a Europe that would *not* be ground between the millstones of liberalism and bolshevism. In 1935, Heidegger says, full of hope: When the great decision over Europe should not fall through destruction, it can only fall through the unfolding (*Entfaltung*) of new spiritual forces (*Geistiger Kräfte*) from the centre (*Mitte*)³.

At this moment however, Germany is no centre of Europe and Europe is no Occident. Germany takes its stand in NATO's strike against Yugoslavia. There is not the slightest sign that Germany and Europe have not joined the reign of unshackled technology. Nevertheless, *that* Europe should be saved as the Occident and that the Germans should be saved in order to undergo the 'distress of their essence' (*Not ihres Wesens*)⁴ is the very core of Heidegger's philosophy, up to its latest phases.⁵ That means: Only if we can be convinced that the humanitarian war in Yugoslavia does *not* serve freedom and humanity, only if there is an experience of Milosević and Americanism as being the same, can Heidegger's thought have any sense at all. Heidegger's thought is a possibility for another Germany within another Europe, *or it is nothing*. It is at odds with the very heart of our epoch. But then it is impossible for us interpreters at the same time to take Heidegger seriously and to belong to the world community which believes in Germany's liberation in 1945 and in Kosovo's liberation in 1999.

Heidegger's most important works from the period we refer to are *Beiträge zur Philosophie* (1936-38) and *Besinnung* (1938-39). To a superficial reading it is clear that these works are articulated (*gefügt*) according to an outline (*Aufriß*) or a prestructure (*Vorriß*). The fissures (*Risse*) of this outline are the articulation of these works. Heidegger considers this articulation to be of the utmost importance.⁶

The articulation of these works enables us to follow Heidegger's road of thinking, distinguishing its beginning as hearing an echo from our own epoch (*Anklang*) and a passing on from our origin, Greek thought (*Zuspiel*). From these inklings thinking

may make a *leap* (*Sprung*) into the unknown, eventually finding a new ground (*Gründung*).

At this point, we have to stop abruptly and turn away from our interpretation. What has happened to us? We are convinced that the joining or articulation (*Fuge*) of Heidegger's works is not the same as the unfolding of a system of thought according to the architecture of reason. Von Herrmann says it poignantly: Heidegger *distinguishes* the joining-character of thought from the concept of a system, which reigns over philosophy, science and technology alike.⁷ But here we are overwhelmed by an undermining experience. As soon as we make *distinctions*, we belong to the heart of systematic thinking. As soon as we *describe* Heidegger's mode of articulation and *compare* it to systematic thought, the distinction between thought and system fades away. The description or interpretation of Heidegger's thought and this thought itself are ships passing in the night. There is no direct road to reading *Beiträge* and *Besinnung*.

There is even no direct road to *writing* these works. In *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, Heidegger points to his own failure to speak the language, which is demanded from him. The *Beiträge* are still a framework (*Rahmen*), but no articulate whole (*Gefüge*), *Besinnung* is a centre (*Mitte*), but not a source (*Quelle*) (GA 69, p. 5). Heidegger insists that *Beiträge* has not yet reached that form which is necessary for their publication as a 'work' (GA 66, p. 427). He calls both *Beiträge* and *Besinnung* 'preparatory works' (*Vorarbeiten*) (GA 69, p. 173).

This provisional nature necessitated giving a public title to *Beiträge* and withholding their genuine name. All essential titles have become void as the fundamental words are used-up (*Vernutzung*).⁸ Heidegger's own work is unable to overcome this abuse. It is transitional. The time of the construction of systems is over. But the time of the building up (*Erbauen*) of the essential shape of things is still to come. Our epoch is an in-between. It is questionable whether our generation or even the next is destined to find a truly speaking word. This may be reserved for the generation after the next (*das übernächste Geschlecht* — GA 66, p. 417).

The experience of not being able to say the word, as it demands to be said haunts Heidegger's thought up to its latest unfoldings. In the conversation with the Japanese we hear: 'The complying (*gemäße*) word is still failing today. The outlook for that mode of thinking that takes pains (*sich abmüht*) to answer to the essence of language, continues to be completely disguised.'⁹

Here we may get a first glimpse of Heidegger's experience of our contemporary epoch as being unfounded and not free. Our *words* do not cause us any problems. Why

should they? They do their job. Heidegger's experience is: *that* our words work should be food for thought. It shows that our words belong to the same essence as our technology. For us, language is just one more tool. It is an indispensable but indifferently usable means of communication, as trivial as any public means of transportation, such as the streetcar everybody jumps on and off. Everybody goes on speaking and writing in a language, which keeps us *out of harm's way* (EM, p. 38-39). This means: For us it *is impossible and even unnecessary to speak a language in which our own epoch of technology could be experienced in its essence*. Our epoch is unbounded, it is not limited by a word which could give it a ground.

Heidegger experiences what our epoch never experiences: A distress of language (*Sprachnot*). This distress can never be overcome either by the circulation of information or by hermeneutic interpretation. Both *belong* to the speechlessness of our epoch of technology: language is a means of communication is technology. *Gadamer* upholds the tenets of hermeneutics in maintaining that Heidegger's distress of language may be overcome in a 'dialogical movement of thinking'. But here he is begging Heidegger's question: is hermeneutics able to answer to the reign of information technology? Is the dialogical movement not the refusal of the experience of speechlessness that underlies each word?¹⁰

All words belong to the hermeneutical movement of becoming familiar and understandable. In that movement, the words *conceal* Heidegger's experience of speechlessness (GA 65, p. 83). The staying away of primordial speechlessness affects all *our efforts* to interpret Heidegger. If Heidegger experiences the distress of language in *his own* works, who do we think *we* are, bluntly neglecting this distress, and continuing to interpret these works, using unspeakable words like *Ereignis*, *Wahrheit des Seyns* and *Anfang* as if we are not concerned, staying out of harm's way, and neglecting Heidegger's preliminary warning: making oneself understandable is philosophy's suicide (GA 65, p. 435)? Instead of starting interpreting Heidegger head over heels it is necessary first of all to ask: what could prevent us from using the words as we know them?

For anyone to be in the vicinity of Heidegger there is only one beginning: Being thunderstruck, being thrust out of oneself, being turned away from all normal dealings with one's surroundings, and therein being confronted with the simple experience that the coming together of the appearance of things and man's answering to this appearance requires an openness, through which this coming together happens or not. This openness surrounds each and every meeting of things with man, with animals, plants,

gods and other things. As this openness surrounds each human movement, without being seen for its obviousness, it can never become an object of knowledge.

Only in a *Verrückung*, a displacement or estrangement, someone is sometimes able to experience openness. The word *Verrückung* as it is employed here does not belong to any description. In order to speak genuinely, the *Verrückung* must have seized the speaker. It is impossible to understand what the word means without getting out of one's mind.

It is certainly possible to analyse this word, and to see that the German word *Verrückung* combines two elements. It points to *Verrücktheit*, madness or craziness, and it points to the nature of the madness: a jerk or thrust (*Ruck* — cp. GA 65, p. 8). The estrangement is: being torn away and being torn apart. This interpretation is of little avail, however, because this madness differs from every madness we are familiar with: *it is not a transcendence of normality*. There is no road from sanity to madness. The estrangement brings the whole constellation of being in general and human familiarity with it to one side, opening up another side which is no other side in any sane sense of the word: it surrounds, permeates and undermines every possible other side. Only in this non-transcending estrangement may we experience that the 'normal' transgression of borderlines — transcendence — is the very core of metaphysics itself. There is no transition from metaphysics and its progeny, technology and science, to the experience of the open: transition is metaphysics. *Heidegger's* transition (*Übergang*) is no transition, but *Übergehen der Metaphysik*, which is: leaving metaphysics alone in passing over it (GA 69, p. 36).

In the Greek origin of thought, the obviousness of man's relations to things was estranged for the first time. The Greeks were confronted with the impossibility for thinking to get through with respect to the relation between thought and being: the 'yoke' between the sunlike eye and the sun. But the chasm between thought and being was covered up immediately: the nature of being was interpreted in the light of thinking (GA 65, p. 141, 180-86). In Heidegger's thought something incomparable has happened: he experienced that the 'yoke' between being and thought is *nontranslucent openness*. The open between being and thought is totally strange to both (GA 66, p. 210). It refuses to give itself (GA 66, p. 220).

Without the estrangement as the crossing out (*Durchkreuzung*) of the mutual permeability of being and thought, the very articulation of Heidegger's thought, which should be 'distinguished' from every scientific, philosophical or technological system, is just another move of systematics itself. *Every* new scientific or technological innovation

(‘scientific revolution’) starts under the reign of existing theorising. Within this theorising the innovator experiences a certain uneasiness. Something is felt to be problematic. The innovator does not know anything yet, but he has an inkling, he hears an echo within the obvious, an *Anklang*. Thereupon he returns to the tradition of existing frameworks, looking for hints, which point in a new direction. He is looking, in sportive terms, for a pass, a *Zuspiel*, from which he may get a hint. Suddenly, for the innovator everything looks different. He is thrust out of the prevailing obviousness, and is thrown into perplexity. He makes a *leap* (*Sprung*). This *leap* however is no random roving. All the time, the innovator had an inkling of a possible new horizon. Suddenly, his roaming on the sea of confusion strikes land. He has found a new *Gründung*, and will be famous soon.

If we understand Heidegger along this road, we are putting the horse behind the cart. We are all metaphysicians in that we are unable to leave the movement of transcendence alone. Inevitably, we are looking for a road along which we can move from unfamiliarity to familiarity with respect to Heidegger. To this end, we use the seemingly familiar articulation of Heidegger’s work. We evade the shock of unfamiliarity, the *Verrückung*.

Openness is not of the order of things, and it is no foundation for things. Openness is sufficient to itself. In its sovereignty, it is unrelated to man’s subjectivity (GA 65, p. 490) and to being in general.¹¹

The metaphysical way in which being in general and as such appears is in its essence *anthropomorphic*. What appears appears to human thought. But this means: neither man nor things have ever been seen as themselves, i.e. as belonging to openness. As the incommensurability of openness never came up, things eventually — in modernity — became the objects of human subjectivity (cp. GA 66, p. 6). The end is that things appear as the projects of the power of intelligence that facilitates the power of technology, in which they are nothing but possibilities of manipulation (*Betriebung*).

The moment the open is experienced, a dim suspicion of a possible genuine appearance of things may come up: in being left to themselves within the openness surrounding them (cp. GA 65, p. 29, 70, 389-91). As such, genuine things are not man’s objects, but the custody of what is strange (*die Verwahrung des Fremden* — GA 65, p. 454). The direction of the hidden mainstream of Heidegger’s thought, despite many indications to the contrary, is: the dehumanisation of man and things under the sway of openness (cp. GA 65, p. 510). This stream affects every attempt to read Heidegger’s thought. Our interpretative anthropomorphism is against genuine thought, which

lives in utter estrangement (*Befremdlichkeit*) and opacity (*Dunkelheit*), which is unusual, unique and bound to one moment (GA 65, p. 463).

If we continue to speak of a 'structure' or 'articulation' of Heidegger's thought, we should keep our distance from any connection with the architectural, with the building-character of systematic thought. The building of theories, thoughts and of a better world is the building up of anthropomorphism. But Heidegger's thoughts are the seemingly incidentally scattered blocks of a quarry in which primary rocks (*Urgestein*) are broken off. Whether the blocks of stone are closed forms or the bearers of an invisible bridge no one is able to know (GA 65, p. 436).

Heidegger's thought is no building, and it is no road either, if a road has to lead somewhere. Roads which lead somewhere are stepping stones for transcendence or progress — the metaphysics of making familiar what is strange and uninhabitable. The articulation of Heidegger's thought is no road to familiarity. As an antidote against this metaphysical tendency of ours, in the remainder of this 'article' the 'road' of Heidegger's articulation will be *reversed*.

I. FINDING THE GROUND OF A GENUINE WORD

We are all familiar with our essence as the *animal rationale*. In the estrangement it is experienced that this essence itself has no foundation whatsoever. It is anthropomorphic. It evades primordial groundlessness. In calling ourselves the *animal rationale* or *the ζῷον λόγον ἔχον* we live off the unquestioned obviousness that we are first of all a living being, a something. This unquestioned 'being' is seen as λόγον ἔχον. It understands itself as *possessing* logos. Λόγος is man's possession, and as such man's access to all there is. λόγος secures the mutual permeability of being and the human being — evading the insight that human thought is taken as the obvious instance which decides over the nature of being, and that thinking as such is dependent upon a being (man) which, in complete indifference, is as much a being as all other beings (GA 66, p. 159).

It is impossible not to read in the words λόγος and *ratio* the possibility of having grounds. Things appear as founded in their origins. Thinking has a foundation in rational grounds. What the *word ratio* or λόγος conceals is that as man's essence it is *itself* without any foundation whatsoever. What is the foundation of rationality? Where was it decided that rationality is the innermost being of man's thought and reality? Is that decision rational? But that is begging the question and, from the beginning, acting

counter to our own rational essence. Or is the decision irrational? Then rationality is founded in groundlessness. Emptiness shows itself.

If the emptiness of the formula *homo est animal rationale* comes up, we may experience the shakiness of our own identity. It is unclear in what way animality and rationality come together in our 'being'. Man totters from his animality, seen as corporeality, towards his spirituality and backwards. Now the 'spirit' overcomes the 'lower' drives, then again the 'spirit' is cast into powerlessness, and life takes control.

Ratio or λόγος evades the void surrounding it. Man's essence moves around in a lack of origin (*Ursprungslosigkeit* — GA 66, p. 24). That our essence totters, lies in its humanisation (GA 66, p. 154). If man's genuine essence belongs to the open that is not human, then *man's essence is inhuman*. Man is the being from whom thinking has to think away, if it is to think about himself in his genuine essence (GA 66, p. 156). In what language is anthropomorphism avoided? Is language not human through and through?

In *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1935), Heidegger sticks with all his endurance to one word, which belongs to the very core of metaphysics: the word *Geist*, normally understood as the opposite of body and life. In its opposition to body and life, *Geist* is form, in contradistinction to the matter it gives form to. That means: the word *Geist*, in its very core, belongs to the essence of technology: it is the power of formation, both of the body and of reality as its representation (cp. GA 66, p. 190). In accordance with its technical essence, *Geist* is intelligence, the power of reasonableness (*Verständigkeit*), prudence (*Überlegung*), calculation and contemplation.¹²

Here we have the opportunity to catch a glimpse of Heidegger's geopolitics. The essence of Americanism is not something political or geographical, but lies in the reign of the word *Geist* as spirit. Americanism is the essence of technology, founded in *Geist* as form (cp. GA 65, p. 191). Within *Geist* as form, everything is represented and accounted for, belonging to the same level, appearing in the blind mirror of the boundless and-so-forth of what is always identical and indifferent. This indifference conceals emptiness: the staying away of openness.

Heidegger is not criticising Americanism. How could he? Americanism is essentially a European phenomenon, it belongs to our own identity (EM, p. 34). It cannot be opposed to anything else. For example, the *völkische* organisation of science (i.e. its national-socialist organisation) moves on the same road as its liberal, Americanistic organisation (GA 65, p. 149). When Heidegger calls Americanism the 'demonical' in the sense of 'destructive evil' (EM, p. 35), it is impossible to find a 'good' opposite.

Heidegger does not speak politically. He does not even speak as a philosopher. Heidegger speaks out of the experience of openness. This experience is: openness is kept away. This keeping away shows itself in the technological character of language. *Americanism is no true word.* It belongs to the concealed emptiness of the essence of technology. The point of the word *Americanism* is the confrontation with the absence of any word in which the emptiness of the word is revealed. In this absence of emptiness it is possible for mankind to dwell in technology: to dwell in humanism. Americanism is the unspeakable unity of humanism and technology.

Now the word *Geist* as reasonable intelligence conceals a second meaning. Time and again, *Geist* switches to its opposite pole. Because *Geist* derives its meaning from man's metaphysical 'identity', i.e. from its metaphysical opposition to life and body, it is not only in charge of humanisation, but switches, without warning, to the opposite side. There it is a powerless tool in the service of life and corporeality. Here the great ideologies of the 20th century come in. Marxism, liberalism (with its concomitant positivism) and national-socialism are the same, in that in all these ideologies *Geist* is intelligence, and as such the superstructure over something which is *against Geist*, and which is the genuine human reality. In Marxism, *Geist* is in the service of material relations of production, in liberalism it is in the service of the organisation of the selfcertainty of life (GA 65, p. 53), in national-socialism it serves 'the organisation and steering of the life mass and race of a people' (EM, p. 36). Whether *Geist* is powerful or powerless, it belongs to the essence of technology.

In their technocratic humanism all contemporary ideologies conceal their own emptiness. Now the great movement which takes place in Heidegger's thought is that *there is no necessity to cling to this experience of emptiness*, thus strengthening the already implicit nihilism of 20th century ideology. What Heidegger experienced is that the emptiness surrounding the word *Geist* is a specifically directed emptiness. *Geist as intelligence does not exhaust the possibilities of the word Geist.* The emptiness of the word *Geist* is the emptiness of the *deep*, the abyss. The deep is no mere nothingness, but shows itself in the word *Geist* itself. There is a possibility of finding a ground, not as a foundation, but as a floating over the deep, within this same word.

Seemingly out of the blue, in *Einführung in die Metaphysik* Heidegger points to a completely different sense of the word *Geist*, quoting the *Rektoratsrede*: '*Geist* is originally tuned, watchful openness to the essence of being (*ursprünglich gestimmte, wissende Entschlossenheit zum Wesen des Seins* — EM, p. 37-38). Heidegger was *verrückt* from himself and the metaphysical word *Geist*. In its emptiness he found an

occasion to be affected by the *word Geist itself*. There he found a new, floating ground.

Many English translations of the word *Geist* rest on metaphysical Latin words like *spiritus* (spirit), *intellectus* (intellect) and *colo* (culture). At the same time, the word contains an echo, which is not yet metaphysical. When the word *ghost* refers to a spirit, it is dependent upon the metaphysics of the *animal rationale*. But the word *ghost* has its roots in an Old-Teutonic or even Pre-Teutonic, Western Germanic word **gaisto-z*¹³ which is not yet metaphysical. This word means: fury, anger, and estrangement, in short *Verrückung*. This appears in the cognate English words *aghast* and *ghastly*. The English language shows what Heidegger much later pointed to, but which already determines his thought in the *Rektoratsrede*: *Geist* is neither pneuma nor spirit, but the flame which shocks, brings out of the mind. *Geist* is the out-of-itself (*Außer-sich*).

In the *Verrückung* the groundlessness of the metaphysical nature of words shows itself. But this groundlessness is no mere emptiness. It may surprise the speaker, not by any etymological play, but from the very emptiness he is thrown into. The uncanny thing is that the word *Geist* in its ghastly meaning does not just *denote* being out of oneself. The word is genuine when the origin of the word *happens* in the word itself. Only when the word *Geist* brings us out of our metaphysical minds can it speak about this happening. When the word is speaking like this, the emptiness is an abysmal *source* of the word (cp. GA 66, p. 255).

But here the word *abyss* is *verrückt* as well. Normally, an abyss, precipice, chaos or chasm is the opposite to true being. First of all, chaos is the opposite of order: it is confusion (*Wirrnis*). In another opposition, chasm is the opposite to being as that which comes to light and stays there (φύσις). Chasm or χάσμα is the yawning of the groundless deep, of impenetrable darkness. In a third opposition, true being is the translucency which allows for the permeability of being and thought: it permits man to find ways out, to come through. The abyss, ἄβυσσος, is its opposite: the bottomless which give no opportunity to come through, the ἄπειρον which forbids transcendence (πρόρος). Here reigns the metaphysical opposition between true being as permeability, light and permanence and its other.

The void Heidegger is thrown into is groundless (*abgründig*). But the word *groundless* undergoes an estrangement. It does not merely point to the absence of foundation or clarity. In losing ground Heidegger *undergoes a Verrückung*. He is being *thrust* from finding any foundation. This thrust is no mere nothingness. It is an inconspicuous movement. The thrust is a movement of exclusion. The exclusion gives a possibili-

ty of experience. It tunes (*stimmen*) and puts out of tune (*verstimmen*). *Abgrund* is no mere absence of foundation, it is a silent thrust of openness.

The word *abyss* itself conceals this movement of openness. The Greek ἄβυσσος is that which is deprived of βύσσοσ or βύθος, of a bottom (the same word). But this deprivation is no mere deprivation. The abyss is no mere nothingness — it is *unfathomable*. It allows no *access*. This forbidding of access *is* openness. The void is no mere vortex engulfing human existence, it permits that man's essence floats over it. In the absence of a foundation it is experienced that the foundation is being denied (*versagt*). Denial is a mode of showing, of opening, of saying (cp. GA 65, p. 379-80). In the movement of inclusion and exclusion the abyss articulates, intersects itself (GA 65, p. 381).

If we maintain that the abyss is a ground, we have to be alert. Finding a ground in this sense is incommensurably different from any Cartesian foundation. It is unpredictable and momentary. It is: temporarily being held in openness, floating on it, being thrust to and fro.

The whole point in Heidegger's involvement in Hitler and in national-socialism is that he was convinced that Hitler and national-socialism were sending a thrust through the German people, not in any political or economic sense, but as estrangement in the direction of abysmal openness. The *Rektorsrede* says it poignantly. The difference between the crisis which the Greeks underwent and that of contemporary Germans is a transformation from the Greek in front of being to the completely unprotected exposure to concealment and uncertainty, as it is experienced today. This transformation does not concern the uncertainty of a *political* revolution — it is the uncertainty of being thrown into the abyss.¹⁴ The essence of national-socialism for Heidegger was the courage to ask questions, and to experience abysses (*Abgründe*) of being.¹⁵ Any criticism of Heidegger's national-socialism which does not follow his turn into the abyss of openness belongs itself to its forgetfulness.

In some minor respects, Heidegger's thoughts on politics, national-socialism, and the German people have changed, from the time before, during and after his rectorship. What has consistently pervaded these thoughts however, is the claim that only in the estrangement in the direction of openness political issues can be discussed at all.¹⁶ Only if man's being is threatened (*Gefährdung des Daseins*), only if man's loneliness in the middle of beings is experienced, *only if Being itself is questionable*, there is the possibility for a people to genuinely work and struggle, we read in the *Rektorsrede*.¹⁷

The abyss is no mere nothingness, however. It conceals a message: if we genuinely ask who we are, if we come to genuine self-contemplation (*Selbstbesinnung*), there is the

possibility, that the German people sees its mandate (*Auftrag*), its own mission. In the floating over the darkness there may appear the shimmer of the people's own essence.¹⁸

What Heidegger sensed in the interbellum was a distress, a *Not* (SDU, p. 10, GA 16, p. 239). This distress was not the distress of any ontic needs — it was the distress of being thrown into the abyss. Heidegger's trust in national-socialism was the confidence that the abyss conceals the possibility of dwelling in it. What was missing, and what national-socialism could restore, was a genuine *language* which had its origin in the abyss.¹⁹

It is remarkable that during his rectorship, Heidegger believes that, despite the abysmal nature of openness, the German people through national-socialism may *in fact* reach its own destiny. One indication of a major change in his thought can be found in his letter to Blochmann, of 21-12-34, which was written some time after his abdication from the rectorship. In this letter Heidegger recognises, that not only liberalism and communism are void of any inkling of ontological distress, but that the absence of the abysmal is universal — there *is* no distress, just *that* is the distress. It is implied that the absence of distress is characteristic of national-socialism as well.²⁰ The fundamental thought however that only the abyss is possibly habitable, and that our world is worldless, stays the same — Heidegger's disappointment since *Beiträge* is that national-socialism did not live up to his expectations of an abysmal turn.

2. THE LEAP - A DECISION OF THE ABYSS

The word *leap* as a designation of that which happens when man is being thrown into the abyss has to be approached with extreme caution. The word *leap* is too well adapted to the humanistic reign of subjectivity. Both science and the arts live up to their creative nature through the leaps of the subject's imagination. The reign of metaphysics inevitably presents a leap as a human leap. The moment of the leap in the articulation of Heidegger's thought is nothing of the kind. We have to leap away from the word *leap*.

Heidegger's word *Sprung* is cognate to *ent-springen*: to leap up from an origin, thus being *separated* from this origin. If this separation does not concern beings, but their modes of appearing, this movement of originating belongs to the abyss itself: it separates itself from itself in carving out a mode of appearance. Since the word *leap* points to a separation, it finds its sense in another central word from *Beiträge* and *Besinnung*, a word which has to be read against the grain as well: *Entscheidung*.

The usual English translation of the word *Entscheidung* is *decision*. Both words refer in a pronounced sense to unity. The unity of *Entscheidung* is a unity which is reached *after* a separation. The separation divides the unity from a state of dividedness. It makes an end to dividedness, by a separating settlement. The decision is a cutting of the knot, and is reached through rejection.

Heidegger's word *Entscheidung*, however, is *verrückt*. It does not refer to any separation within or between beings. It refers to the open. The decision of the open is no unity of determination, but an incision. The incision through openness is no cutting, but the marking off of a horizon. Within a horizon a mode of appearing may come up. Decision is the movement of the self-cleavage of openness: *Entscheidung, das Auseinandertreten selbst, das scheidet* (GA 65, p. 88). This separation does not cut off things, but brings them against each other in a horizon, thus giving them the possibility to show themselves as over against the others. Thus the *Entscheidung* is the source of any genuine word. But then, the word *decision* itself is only then a genuine word, *if it is the decision of this same word*. Here we have to make another jump.

The prefix *ent-* in *Entscheidung* normally points to the movement of separation, from conflict to unity. But there is the possibility that the *ent-* in *Entscheidung* refers to *that from which* a *Scheidung* emerges: its source. Then the word *Entscheidung* is suddenly surrounded by its very origin: the undecided, from which every decision, i.e. every incision of a primordial word emerges. Undecidedness is the openness of the void.

An indication of the decision of openness and its non-separative unity can be seen in Heraclitus' word πόλεμος, which does not point to war, but to a coming apart as the origin of the appearance of that which is. This struggle (*Kampf*) is the opening up of 'fissures, distances, widths and articulations' (EM, p. 47). These fissures give the possibility of a face-to-face, of a meeting, in which an opposition comes up through which things appear as being set off over against each other. In this coming apart against each other, gods and men, rulers and ruled gain their identity. This unity is not the unity of separation, but of a face-to-face in which the opposites come to themselves. The whole of these fissures and articulations may be called *world*.

Heraclitus' πόλεμος however does *not* point to the undecidedness of the open (cp. GA 67, p. 77). The open as the horizon of πόλεμος is self-evident to Greek thought. What Heidegger experienced is that in modernity the face-to-face of a world has disappeared. In the humanisation of the subject-object-relation, the subject is the instance that decides over the unity of being. The permeability of being for thought is guaran-

teed by the mathematisation of being, founded in the *ego cogito*. Where the struggle as πόλεμος disappears in complete presence, the world has disappeared. Our epoch is that of worldlessness (EM, p. 48).

It is important to realise that Heidegger does not long for the return of the lost world. He stays within worldlessness itself, and experiences that it is no mere deprivation. Where world has disappeared, in a sense it still appears, in the mode of absence: world is *no more*. At the same time it can never be excluded, that that which once was or which never was is still in reserve, is *not yet*. The open itself is the articulation of the no-more and the not-yet.

Americanism is: the absence of absence, the absence of time within presence. It is the fading away of the world around the earth, showing itself in the flight of the 'gods', the destruction of the 'earth', the mass-character of man (EM, p. 34). The worldlessness of Americanism however is an abyss concealing a treasure. What Heidegger saw in a great moment of enlightenment is that the co-presence of being and thought is *a mode of time*: the obvious mutual translucency of being and thought appears as presence. But then the emptiness, which comes up in the *Verrückung* and shows itself as surrounding presence, is no mere emptiness, *but an indication of time*. In the *Verrückung*, *absence* is being experienced. Absence is not nothing, but an *Entrückung*, a tearing apart, not of the world, but of openness itself, which shows itself as the not-yet and the no-longer with respect to the obviousness of presence. The experienced emptiness is no deprivation, but the cleavage of openness as time, in which the not-yet and the no-longer meet each other. Only there, within worldlessness, is a true *Gründung* possible: finding a ground in language, where it is the playground of the not-yet and the no-more in a transformed presence.

When Heidegger speaks of decisions and decidedness in relation to the university and the state, he is never concerned about political or military decisions, but about the essence of university and state as belonging to the fundamental decision of openness. In the *Immatrikulations-Rede* of 25-11-1933 this is made clear. Heidegger speaks of a decision (*Entscheidung*), through which the German people brings itself to itself, i.e. to its own essence (GA 16, p. 200). What is this decision? It is being thrown into time, into the coming of the future, in the unveiling of history and nature. This is what decision is about: the people is brought back into genuine openness or truth (GA 16, p. 201). This does not mean that Heidegger advocates an innocent intellectualism, but that he sees that political decisions decide nothing, unless they are held by the darkness of the abyss.

What is surprising, however, the abyss being unfathomable, is that during his rectorship and shortly after that, Heidegger believes that the ontological decision is there for national-socialism to be taken — and that in fact it has been taken already.²¹

From where this confidence? In *Beiträge*, Heidegger has become more empirical: it is questionable, whether there is a road for thinking in the neighbourhood of the true decision. A people cannot take the decision — a people is nothing but subjectivity. A true decision needs the longest possible preparation by thinking. The certainty about the decision standing before the German people now and here has disappeared (GA 65, p. 98). This does not affect Heidegger's real thinking — that only a decision of the abyss is relevant for the future of Germany and Europe. What did change since Heidegger's rectorship? For Heidegger, national-socialism joins the ranks of liberalism and bolshevism as the complete forgetfulness with respect to the possibility of there being a decision between things and openness. By the end of his rectorate, Heidegger takes seriously the warning of Hölderlin: 'die Jahre der Völker, /Sah ein sterbliches Auge sie?', in recognising that the time of the German people is concealed to this people (GA 16, p. 319).

3. THE PASSING ON OF ANOTHER DECISION

Even if we were able to follow Heidegger in his estrangement, and would experience the crossing out of the permeability of openness, feeling the power of absence, and realising its time-character, even then we are at a loss to find an indication of the *not-yet* and the *no-more* in a *word*.

Heidegger's work has no relation whatsoever with historical interpretations of Greek philosophy or Greek 'culture'. The only meaning of his turning to the Greeks is the possibility of being confronted with a word in which time itself may be experienced.

Before anything else, we have to wait until our estrangement permeates our relation with the Greeks. Only then we may surmise that what happened to them is not that they started writing treatises on philosophy, but that they *themselves* underwent the estrangement of the obviousness in the relationship between beings and man. In the beginning of Greek thought, a big turmoil (*Aufbruch*) went straight through man and through the way of appearing of being as a whole.²² This turmoil was the breakthrough of man's awakening (*Aufbruch*) — of man coming face to face with being as such, without giving up his belonging to it (GA 45, p. 129).

In our own estrangement we may surmise the nature of this turmoil. For the Greeks, 'being' appeared as that which is *there*, which is present and stable, as *against* the absence and changeability of confusion and unboundedness (GA 45, p. 129). In this *against* the genuine estrangement of Greek thought is both visible and hidden. It is visible, insofar as Greek thought experienced the breakdown of the mutual permeability of beings and thought. In the same movement, the estrangement was hidden. Greek thought was immediately turned *against* the looming groundlessness. Greek thought only experienced the abyss as the chaos of impenetrability that had to be avoided. When it was experienced, it was experienced as the confusion and darkness of non-being, to be avoided in the separations of thought.

Here it is of the utmost importance to see what Heidegger does with the word that marks the Greeks' experience of groundlessness. It is well known that Greek thought was founded in a fundamental experience, the *πάθος* of philosophy: *θαυμάζειν*. The *πάθος* of *θαυμάζειν* is: being torn away from the obviousness of man's relation with beings, and therein being confronted with a blockade, an *ἄπορεια*. The *ἄπορεια* is the Greek experience of the abyss: as the impossibility to win one's way through, to find a path, a *πόρος*. The experience of *ἄπορεια* is the experience of the open, but in a specific direction: as the deep that does not permit stability or transcendence. In its efforts to escape from the abyss, to ensure stability and presence, Greek thought shows its character as *τέχνη*, as looking for ways out of blockade and instability.

When Heidegger translates *θαυμάζειν* with *Erstaunen*, in English *astonishment*, he is not the hermeneutic interpreter, shifting from our times to those of the Greeks and back. In his translation he is *already* speaking from *his own* estrangement. In the word *astonishment*, Heidegger does *not* hear *θαυμάζειν*, but its essence or horizon (GA 45, p. 165-66), which only speaks to his own estrangement. Thus he experiences what *stays away*, what is *absent* in the word *θαυμάζειν*. In the translation, Heidegger senses the non-Greek horizon of the Greek word, the abyss that was absent, but may as such be an indication of time itself.

Heidegger calls *astonishment* the experience of neither knowing how to get in nor knowing how to get out. Here he seems to comply with the *τέχνη*-character of Greek thought. The inability to get through seems to be exemplified in the aporetic nature of the question what 'being' may mean. Philosophy seems to be there to find ways out of the *ἄπορεια*: *πόρος*.

But in his translation, Heidegger has been turned away from the whole of this proto-technological constellation. Not knowing a way in nor knowing a way out, as

the character of astonishment, does *not* mean seeking πόροι, but seeing what they avoid: the abyss of openness *itself*. Greek thought sensed the abyss, but stuck to the decision which came over it: the decision between being as stable presence and non-being as unstable absence. In this decision, something remained unseen: the abyss *itself* as undecidedness, as the space from which and through which the decision was made.

The decision by which thought and being appeared as τέχνη is the decision for presence, as against absence. Openness as the horizon of presence faded into absence, and with it the very nature of presence and absence as time. In the word *Erstaunen*, Heidegger hears what Greek thought could not hear: the absence of the not-yet and the no-more itself. The decision of Greek thought was not merely against the unstable and the absent — it was primarily against the open itself as time.

The translation of θαυμάζειν by *Erstaunen* is not a more or less interesting interpretation of Heidegger's, but it is an opportunity for his own estranged thought. The absence against which Greek thought was decided may not have disappeared altogether. It may still belong to time itself. Perhaps this absence was a staying away which is, as staying away, still in reserve, and thus undecided. Then the Greeks would not be just a no more. They might be a not-yet: the not-yet of the time-character of absence itself. The staying away of undecided openness in the decision for presence would then not be just nothing, but a concealed possibility for us, *in our time of unspeakable technology and democracy*.

In their decision for stable presence, the Greeks were against the abyss that had opened itself. The decision for stable presence evaded primordial groundlessness, and could therefore never find a true ground. A true ground is not a foundation for stability and presence, but a floating over the open (cp. GA 45, p. 112, 188). The decision for foundations and against finding a ground eventually resulted in totally secured presence under the reign of the subject-object relationship and its concomitant worldlessness. If the not-yet of the abyss were to come up from the Greek words, thinking might be passed on a word that would be the horizon for our own epoch.

If there is to be a sense for a genuine university in a genuine state, this can only be found in confrontation with the decision of being and openness which came over the Greeks, but is still in reserve. All science and all politics are bound to the beginning of philosophy (SDU, p. 11). Only through Heraclitus it is visible what *war* really means: war has to be understood ontologically, as the true decision of openness — or it does not decide anything at all (cp. GA 16, p. 282-83). That is what turned out at the end of

the Second World War: nothing was decided at all. Even the difference between war and peace has become indifferent. Is it possible to judge Heidegger's geopolitics from this situation, which is still our own?

4. AN ECHO OF OUR EPOCH OF MACHINATION AND EXPERIENCE-OF-LIFE?

Even if we believe that we are swinging over the deep, that the deep is the articulation of openness as time, and that we may get a hint from the hidden possibilities of Greek thought, even then we know that our words are mere shells of themselves. We feel the speechlessness that prevented *Beiträge* from being an articulation and *Besinnung* from being a source. We live in a crossing-over which is unfounded and without articulation (*das Ungegründete und Ungefüge des Übergangs* — GA 67, p. 6).

This speechlessness is inevitable. Even the arrival of openness as such would not lift our worldlessness. Only if this worldlessness would disappear, and if there would be a new sense of Heraclitus' κόσμος speaking from the open as time, a world, in which earth and its other, gods and men would appear in a transformed face-to-face to each other, would there be the possibility of seeing something of the world. It is better if we accept that this possibility is kept in reserve for the generation after the next.

When we start reading the 'articulation' of Heidegger's thought by hearing an 'echo' from our contemporary epoch, instead of first undergoing the shock of estrangement, we are completely entangled in the groundlessness of metaphysics. It is all too attractive to follow Heidegger in something familiar and obvious, hoping to gain by that an increase of familiarity. We are happy to follow Heidegger in the belief that he is a critic of our time of planetary technology, information and publicity, and of the experience of life concomitant with it. We have a cosy feeling of familiarity, if we read about an unholy conjunction of machination (*Machenschaft*) with contemporary lived-experience (*Erlebnis*). Machination seems to be the way technology moulds our world, in the sway of pragmatism, the input-output-system, the measure of success, the power of calculation, organisation, the ever-increasing pace of mass-culture and publicity (cp. GA 65, p. 120-24). And we can be as critical of contemporary techno-experience, as the craving for ever increasing stimulants — *Erlebnistrunkenboldigkeit* — organised in the movie-industry of Hollywood, being essentially the same as the news-industry of CNN, which at this moment brings the Kosovo-war in my living-room.

If we read Heidegger this way, we are turning things upside down in a diabolical way, staying out of harm's way ourselves. This supposed criticism of our epoch does *not* speak from the open and preserves our identity. We think we are familiar with what Heidegger says about our epoch, evading the painful thought that we *ourselves* are at stake, not only in the sway of technology, but *in our own* Americanistic, democratic identity.

Only through the shock of estrangement can we see that the words *Machenschaft* and *Erlebnis* have nothing to do either with technocracy or with Hollywood-CNN. Heidegger's words speak from the openness, the void *between* technology and Hollywood: anthropomorphism. Machination is neither technology nor cunning, but the staying away of a decision of openness, which gives the possibility for all things to appear as objects of man knowing his way around (*Sichauskennen*). On the other hand, lived-experience (*Erlebnis*) does not point to the human desire for ever increasing lust and pain, but to the other aspect of the staying away of a decision of openness: all things are what they are as their representation in the *ego cogito* (cp. GA 45, p. 149, GA 65, p. 129). Machination and lived-experience are the presence of the mutual permeability of subjectivity and objectivity.

But even now I am still *describing* Heidegger's thought. I am not exposed to the words *machination* and *lived-experience* in the least. This absence of exposure is the very nature of these words. They *are* no words. In their self-sufficiency they show that there is no room for a decision between their obviousness and the open. This is what we are confronted with if we try to say the word *Americanism*. This word refuses to be said genuinely, since there is no conceivable 'other' to Americanism. There is no Europe, no people, no centre, even no Milosević to be opposed to 'Americanism'. 'Americanism' is no name — it is without bounds. It is humanity and its presented universe itself. Milosević was already americanised before he started believing in ethnic separatism. Even if Milosević had had an inkling of 'the own' (*das Eigene*) of a people, this inkling was already taken over by machination.

There are only three words that demarcate the possibility and impossibility to say the words *Machenschaft* and *Erlebnis*. These are the words *decided* (*entschieden*), *undecided* (*unentschieden*) and *decisionless* (*entscheidungslos*) (GA 65, p. 443). If these words speak to us, we may experience that machination is essentially the totality of presence, the translucency of the relation of being and human thought. In this complete presence, even the separation between something and its essence or nature is redundant. Machination has no possible other, it is the absence of a sense for the word *Entschei-*

dung. It is the erosion (*Untergrabung*) of every possible decision, and thereby of every word (GA 66, p. 16). Machination is decisionlessness (*Entscheidungslosigkeit*).

The essence of machination is that it needs no essence, word or horizon (cp. GA 65, p. 108, 229). What Heidegger sees in his estrangement is that this all-pervading presence is a concealed decision. The absence of horizon is the denial of the distinction between presence and the time-character of openness. The unshackled, endless possibilities of technology and democracy live off this denied and concealed decision to undermine each and every possibility in an ever-growing desert (GA 69, p. 46N).

Heidegger's pointing to the growth of the desert as decisionlessness is not critical or negative in the least. In the growth of decisionlessness lies the possibility of just this word *decisionless*. If for one moment a denial of decision is *experienced*, this word has spoken: The denial of a word is language.

Heidegger's great experience is that the privative suffix *-less* is *not* necessarily privative. Absence may point to time, hiding and saving possibilities of appearing and disappearing. Decisionlessness is *not* just the negation of decision. It may be that which has *not yet* been decided, and may thus be a source of possibilities, just as the desert may be the emptiness from which new possibilities may come up. *Decisionless* may mean: undecided. *Undecided* may mean: not yet decided, full of unborn possibilities of decision, *entscheidungsträchtig* (GA 65, p. 405-06, cp. GA 67, p. 10).

The primordial possibility of a decision is the decision between decisionlessness as the destruction of decision, and decisionlessness as undecidedness. 'The only decision (*Entscheidung*) is that between decisionlessness (*Entscheidungslosigkeit*) which has come to power through machination, and readiness for decision (*Entscheidungsbereitschaft*) (GA 69, p. 61). Perhaps the open *has* already decided itself: perhaps it has already outlined the horizon surrounding machination. Up to now, this decision is no decision for humanity — humanity being anthropomorphic. The possibility of an arrival of the word *decision* itself in human thought, thereby depriving it of its self-centredness, is the echo Heidegger hopes to hear in machination.

In his mastership and possessorship of nature, man has reached freedom. But the word *freedom* conceals the primordial decision of modernity: the staying away of undecided openness. In the growth of technology and humanism, the open has to be *kept* away, as the threat of the abysmal. The urge to keep away openness comes to light in the necessity of the exertion of will and power. Man and reality appear under the sway of the will to power. Freedom is the freedom of domination. That means: freedom as exertion of power is giving up freedom in another sense of the word. This other sense

is: freedom as the free space of a world (*das Freie*), which allows for the appearance of things being themselves — or forbids it. Freedom in this sense is the freedom which gives things and humans their non-human horizon (GA 65, p. 328-29).

5. HEIDEGGER'S »GEOPOLITICS« AND »WE«

Only if our identity has been shaken by the upheaval of the 'articulation' of Heidegger's thought in the period from 1935 to 1940 — the upheaval from and into openness — is it possible to have access to Heidegger's 'geopolitics' from that period, as it appears in his words *Germany* and *Americanism*.

It is just one more move of machination, preventing us from being confronted with our own identity, if Heidegger is accused of opposing liberalism, humanity and human rights with the intention to defend the ethnic separatism of national-socialism. In *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1935), as well as in *Beiträge* (1936-38), as in his course on Hölderlin's hymn *Der Ister* (1942)²³, Heidegger remains convinced of the inner truth of national-socialism — but that has nothing to do with ethnicity. For Heidegger, the organisation of the race of a people is just one more move of the anthropomorphism of the subject-object relationship (EM, p. 36, cp. GA 65, p. 117, 149, 203). The decision of ethnic separatism is a decision in the sense of cutting a knot: it is intrinsically violent in moving away from openness. Where these decisionless decisions are taken, whether for or against racism, humanity is in the grip of the will to power: 'The saving of a race (*Rasserettung*) and the protection of freedom are, on alternating opposite sides, the pretexts behind which pure power sows its wild oats' (GA 69, p. 154).

What could the 'historical uniqueness' of national-socialism point to? *Einführung in die Metaphysik* clarifies this: the essence of the 'political' is *not* the business of the state or of statesmen. There is only then politics in a genuine sense, if there appears, in and through openness, a 'space' of a world, to which history in a genuine sense can belong (EM, p. 117). *Geopolitics* has a sense only then, if there is an appearance of γῆ, of earth. Contemporary politics is determined by history as it is founded in subjectivity, i.e., as technology (GA 53, p. 118). For Heidegger, the uniqueness of national-socialism was not political, but the possibility of being estranged into openness.

In the Spiegel-interview (1966), Heidegger still maintains that *once* national-socialism *had* the possibility of turning to openness, struggling for a horizon for the essence of technology as Americanism.²⁴ This possibility was the possibility of there

being a true *Führer*. In 1929-30, Heidegger already indicates what a *Führer* (in this case of science) would be. He would not belong to the 'workers' and 'technicians', but would be grown together (*verwachsen*) with its most elementary way of appearing.²⁵ He would belong to the estrangement. Heidegger was convinced that Hitler was a true *Führer*, having undergone the *Verrückung*, and was therefore a destiny (*Schicksal*) (SDU, p. 15), and even a demigod, in the sense of the bearer of a 'knowledgeable truth which has found a ground' (*gegründete, wissende Wahrheit*).²⁶

At least since *Beiträge*, Heidegger realised that *Hitler's* national-socialism, in its acceptance of nihilism and the will to power, was just another face of the essence of technology as evading non-human openness. His disappointment was this: Hitler was the completion (*Vollendung*) of nihilism and the will to power, and therein chained to the reign of machination. In *Besinnung*, Heidegger destroys one fundamental statement of Hitler, showing how it belongs to machination and lived-experience as the *ego cogito*.²⁷ Hitler's ideology belongs to the forgetfulness of openness no less than liberalism and bolshevism.

What is forgotten in the criticism of Heidegger's national-socialism and his supposed attacks on Americanism, is that his questions are *our own*.²⁸ Americanism does not concern 'the others' — it concerns us. Americanism is something European. Even our language is American. As Heidegger says in 1942: Perhaps we speak 'German', but we talk 'American' (GA 53, p. 80). What Heidegger experiences in the ideologies of the 20th century — national-socialism, bolshevism and liberalism — that they are the same — is *our* concern — *if* the estrangement into the open happens to us.

This concern is: both being and man's essence have been decided, in a decisionless decision, as being anthropomorphic. Modernity is the placeless place where it has been decided, without any grounds whatsoever, that a human anticipation (*Vorgriff*) — the anticipation of the proposition, of τέχνη, of certainty — is the criterion for the explication and appearance of being. In *this* sense, the liberation wars of the 20th century are the same as the revolutions of bolshevism and national-socialism — except for their mask of morality (GA 69, p. 208). The obvious desirability of the freedom of humanism and human rights has an inconspicuous other side. Each act of liberation is moved by freedom as will, a will in which nothing can be left to itself, neither man nor things. Together with the inhumanity of Milosević *openness itself is expelled*, and the desert of decisionlessness grows.

In what way are *we* at stake when we hear Heidegger's voice from 1939 speaking to us while the war in Kosovo is going on? Who would we be, if we could accept Heideg-

ger's question, whether we sufficiently recognize that everything ghastly (*grauenhaft*) lies in Americanism and not at all in Russianism (GA 67, p. 150)? The question is: what human identity could answer to the reign of machination and lived-experience? Democratic and humanistic mankind is not in the least prepared to be what its essence should be: the master and possessor of nature. Nietzsche calls democracy the decline of the state, democratic man being unable to answer to the exigencies of modernism. In the same breath he calls Russia the only power which has durability in its body, the only power which can wait (KSA 6, p. 140).

What Heidegger makes us experience, is that even a mankind which would be powerful enough to accept the reign of the will to power, whether it be Nietzsche's *Übermensch* or Jünger's *Arbeiter*, would always be the slave of machination: 'der Mensch als Vollstrecker der Mächenschaft aus der wesenhaften Verflechtung in sie' (GA 66, p. 28). Even in the acceptance of being as will, subjectivity would continue to reign.

What would we be like if we could leave subjectivity and anthropomorphism alone, if we could be estranged into openness? Negatively, the estrangement into openness means: leaving alone as a meaningful goal the will of the human individual to live and survive. Saving lives, for example of Kosovars, is succumbing to the will to live of those whose life is indifferent (*das Lebenwollen der Beliebigsten* — GA 45, p. 90), as long as openness stays away. Who could accept this 'Asiatic' nature of Heidegger's thought? Nevertheless, only the indifference of individual life gives the possibility ever to leave anthropocentrism. Those who may be turned to openness are those whose identity is in a decline (*die Untergehenden* — GA 65, p. 397), and who are prepared to sacrifice their human nature.

The 'positive' side of the 'Asiatic' nature of Heidegger's thought flies in the face of the most cherished aspect of our nature: rationality, as it is shared by every human being. In blatant opposition to that, Heidegger claims that only Germany is the centre for a future Europe, and that only the German language allows for thought (EM, p. 43). It is clear: if a genuine word should come from the open, it can never be answered to, neither in a universal calculus, nor in traditional language. It is only after the shock of the estrangement that a language could show something of its abysmal possibilities. *If* that happens, the language would be the speaker's very *own* language. In this sense, a transformed German language would be the centre of German thought and of Germany, and for nobody else. Whoever is turned to openness is, contrary to the core of rationalism, *unable to think for others*.²⁹

From the beginning of his geopolitical concern, Heidegger has spoken from the abyss. Since 1932, he has transformed and undermined the terminology of power and will, straining those words to the utmost, in the hope that they would speak out of openness itself.³⁰ In shocks and unexpected returns, in the following years Heidegger withdrew the terminology of power from the words in which openness itself speaks. In contrast to *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1935), which used the terminology of power, he distinguished, since *Beiträge* and *Besinnung*, power (*Macht*) and violence (*Gewalt*) as the characteristic of being from the reign (*Herrschaft*) of openness.³¹ In *Die Überwindung der Metaphysik* (1938-9) and *Die Geschichte des Seyns* (1938-40), the rift between openness and being as power has become unbridgeable (cp. GA 67, p. 7). Machination needs and is power. The open does *not* need power (*Macht*) or struggle (*Kampf*). It is the non-violent coming-apart and face-to-face of decision (*Auseinandersetzung*). The open is without power, it is *χάρις*, it is mildness. Even the word *Herrschaft* has to disappear (GA 69, p. 69, 135).

In this shifting of words, the last remnants of anthropomorphism in Heidegger's articulation of thought are left behind. As long as the open is seen in the words of power, there is the illusion that *through* human decidedness for the open (*Entschlossenheit*) man must find a ground — the delusion of the *Rektoratsrede* (SDU, p. 13). The idea that man through *Entschlossenheit* must find a new ground in openness is a repetition of modern anthropomorphism. The time-character of openness and of *Gründung* stays away.

Human openness *belongs* to openness. But to this belonging belongs the time character of openness: the absence of being refused, forgotten, expelled. If the time character of the open were to come to human thought, then *Gründung* would mean: forever meandering on a stream full of unexpected reversals. There is no centre in which the inevitable reign of the will to power over beings and the powerlessness of openness can be reconciled. Man is a wanderer, forever held by the open, as well as being chained to the will to power, but never reaching a centre. And if he reaches it, he will not know it at the moment, but only *after* it has happened. There is no moment at which can be said: now a *Führer* into a truly speaking word is *there*. That means: if man reaches his identity, he must be excentric with respect to his identity (cp. GA 53, p. 32-33). Mankind is the wanderer through the brokenness of its words. Then the true sense of the word *Gründung*, if this word can be saved, will be: wandering over the gap of openness, being held by its excentric centre. The name for this centre could be: Europe.

NOTES

- 1 M. HEIDEGGER, *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* (GA 67), Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1999, p. 150.
- 2 In a letter to Arendt (15-02-1950), Heidegger speaks of ‘the fall of the German people’, in: HANNAH ARENDT—MARTIN HEIDEGGER, *Briefe 1925-1975*, Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1998, p. 81.
- 3 M. HEIDEGGER, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Niemeyer: Tübingen, 1953, p. 29. Compare *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, (GA 69) Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1998, p. 108, 119-120.
- 4 M. HEIDEGGER, *Besinnung*, (GA 66) Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1997, p. 61.
- 5 See for example *Das Rektorat 1933-34* from 1945, in: *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität* (SDU), Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1982, p. 25: “ ... die universale Herrschaft des Willens zur Macht innerhalb der planetarisch gesehenen Geschichte. In dieser Wirklichkeit steht heute Alles, mag es Kommunismus heißen oder Faschismus oder Weltdemokratie.” The *Spiegel* interview says essentially the same.
- 6 Heidegger insists that the text *Die Geschichte des Seyns* (1938-40) has the same “inner articulation” (GA 69, p. 173).
- 7 In P. EMAD, “A conversation with Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann”, in: B.C. Hopkins (ed), *Phenomenology: Japanese and American*, p. 160.
- 8 M. HEIDEGGER, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, (GA 65) Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1989, p. 3.
- 9 In a letter to Medard Boss, dated the 20th of November 1969, Heidegger repeats: the complying word — I sense it clearly — has still not been found yet. Thinking is always still making do with *fore-words* — *Zollikoner Seminare*, Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1987, p. 385.
- 10 Compare H.-G. GADAMER, *Das Erbe Hegels*, p. 479, with extracts from a letter from Heidegger dated the 29th of February 1972, in which he writes: “Die nähere Bestimmung der Hermeneutik drängt jedoch zugleich in die Frage, ob und auf welche Weise der eigentümlich universale Anspruch der Informatik als ein im äußersten Maße defizienter Modus der “Verständigung” in die Hermeneutik zurückgeholt werden kann.”
- 11 GA 65, p. 471: “Das Einfache des Seyns hat in sich das Gepräge der *Einzigkeit*. Sie bedarf gar nicht der Abhebung und der Unterschiede, nicht einmal des Unterschieds zum Seien-den.”

- 12 These virtues are the very virtues of contemporary hermeneutics. Hermeneutics belongs to the essence of technology.
- 13 *The compact edition of the Oxford English dictionary*, I, p. 1138.
- 14 Compare “Der Deutsche Student als Arbeiter, Rede bei der feierlichen Immatrikulation (25-11-1933)”, in M. HEIDEGGER, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges*, (GA 16) Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 2000, p. 207.
- 15 In the same speech.
- 16 To give only a few examples. During his rectorship, on the 11th of November 1933, Heidegger maintains that the only true happening is the people regaining the *truth* of its will to be — truth being openness. Only from this truth the genuine will to know jumps up (GA 16, p. 191). In 1942, Heidegger still maintains that a people is only a people in the true sense, when it dwells in historicity and language, i.e. in openness (M. HEIDEGGER, *Hölderlins Hymne “Der Ister”*, (GA 53) Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1984, p. 80. After the war, the “Letter on Humanism” still says what the *Heimat* for the German and for other peoples is: the vicinity of Being.
- 17 SDU, p. 16, 13.
- 18 “Im Kampf, dem eigenen Wesen die Bahn zu schaffen und die Dauer zu sichern, erfaßt das Volk sein Selbst in der wachsenden Staatsverfassung” [25-11-1933] (GA 16, p. 201).
- 19 “Die Sprache kann nur aus dem Überwältigenden und Unheimlichen angefangen haben, im Aufbruch des Menschen in das Sein. In diesem Aufbruch war die Sprache als Wortwerden des Seins: Dichtung. Die Sprache ist die Urdichtung, in der ein Volk das Sein dichtet” (EM, p. 131).
- 20 “Und unsere Not ist die Not der Notlosigkeit, der Unkraft zur ursprünglichen Erfahrung der Fragwürdigkeit des Daseins. Die Angst vor dem Fragen liegt über dem Abendland; sie bannt die Völker in altgewordene Wege u. jagt sie flüchtig zurück in morsch gewordene Gehäuse” (MARTIN HEIDEGGER—ELISABETH BLOCHMANN, *Briefwechsel 1918-1969*, Marbach 1989, p. 83).
- 21 In the *Rektoratsrede* we read: “Wir wollen uns selbst. Denn die junge und jüngste Kraft des Volkes, die über uns schon hinweggreift, hat darüber bereits *entschieden*.”
- 22 M. HEIDEGGER, *Grundfragen der Philosophie*, (GA 45) Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1984, p. 82.
- 23 GA 53, p. 98, 106.
- 24 Spiegelgespräch, in G. NESKE, E. KETTERING, *Antwort*, Pfullingen, 1988, p. 105: “...ich sehe gerade die Aufgabe des Denkens darin, in seinen Grenzen mitzuhelfen, daß der Mensch überhaupt erst ein zureichendes Verhältnis zum Wesen der Technik erlangt. Der

Nationalsozialismus ist zwar in die Richtung gegangen; diese Leute aber waren viel zu unbedarft im Denken, um ein wirklich explizites Verhältnis zu dem zu gewinnen, was heute geschieht und seit drei Jahrhunderten unterwegs ist.”

- 25 M. HEIDEGGER, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, (GA 29/30) Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1983, p. 279.
- 26 M. HEIDEGGER, *Hölderlins Hymnen “Germanien” und “Der Rhein”*, (GA 34) Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1980, p. 210.
- 27 GA 66, p. 122 destroys the following statement of Hitler: “Es gibt keine Haltung, die ihre letzte Rechtfertigung nicht in dem aus ihr entspringenden Nutzen für die Gesamtheit finden könnte”.
- 28 M. HEIDEGGER, “Die Zeit des Weltbildes”, in *Holzwege*, Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1967, p. 103-04.
- 29 Only if, out of the open, a sense of a difference between “earth” and “world” were to come up, would it be possible to surmise the nature of Heidegger’s *Auseinandersetzung* with the Asiatic nature of Russia, which is more essential than the *Auseinandersetzung* of the Greeks with their East (GA 69, p. 120), and which points to Germany’s centre-character. Heidegger sees a geopolitical role for Russia — not for bolshevism which is Americanism —, but for a Russia which has been turned to the open through the alienating power of *Geist* (cp. GA 65, p. 54 and after the war *Die Armut*, p. 6). Whereas an estranged Germany could be the *Besinnung* on the world, the transformed essence of Russianism would preserve the future *earth* (GA 69, p. 108).
- 30 Therefore, it is besides the point to accuse Heidegger of a “massive voluntarism” in his national-socialist period, as Derrida does. It is essential to realise that the key-word *Entschlossenheit* since *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (1930) points to the estrangement into the open, and *not* to resoluteness of the will (M. HEIDEGGER, *Wegmarken*, Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1967, p. 90, 93-94 and EM, p. 16).
- 31 Compare GA 65, p. 281-82. In GA 65, p. 47, Heidegger still retains the word *power* for the relations with *openness*