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What is called literature?
Heidegger, responsive figuration, and the aspect of be-ing

by
Marthinus Christoffel van Niekerk

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

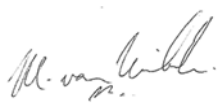
Doctor of Philosophy

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Supervisor: Professor Merle Williams

Declaration

I declare that this thesis, *What is called literature? Heidegger, responsive figuration, and the aspect of be-ing*, is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by means of complete references. The thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not previously been submitted for a degree or examination at any other university.



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Marthinus Christoffel van Niekerk

Synopsis

From the metaphysical orientation of Western thinking, being is understood as presence, truth as correspondence, and language as representation. This understanding inclines reflections on the nature of literature towards the question "What is literature?", and calls for responses that seek determinative commonalities between literary objects. In this thesis, I attempt a different approach to the being of literature, prompted by Heidegger's thinking, which understands being dynamically and non-substantively as the self-withholding clearing which grants beings their appearance. Language does not unfold primarily in meaningful references between objects, but in dis-closure; it responds to the aspect of be-ing, showing beings in their being by showing the possibility of meaninglessness in every appearance. This is what clears and holds open a reach for referential play. Language therefore entails a response to the self-withholding of being, and in that sense itself speaks. In this light, "What is called literature?" becomes a question concerning how being calls on language to respond as literature, and human beings are called on to participate responsively in this dialogue. Two different but interconnected ways in which literature calls are investigated. On the one hand, literature promises a reach of discursive representability; it demands the disclosure of beings as orderable and immediately available. On the other hand, literature figures a rift, a drawing in the sense both of a meaningfully gathered marking, and of a drawing open which draws away. I read William Blake's *The First Book of Urizen* to trace how it literalizes the tension between these callings of literature. It figures a rift, and puts into play a differencing relation between a poetic attunement to delay and non-arrival, and the demand for arrival arising from its positioning within the realm of discursive availability which characterizes the contemporary field of literature.

Keywords

Martin Heidegger, William Blake, *The First Book of Urizen*, figuration, literature, responsiveness

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Referencing and abbreviation of commonly cited works

Referencing

I have used a shortened note Chicago referencing style. Where I have consulted both English and German copies of Heidegger's works, I have given the German page number first. The English page number follows after a forward slash.

Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from William Blake's works have been taken from David V. Erdman's *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Page numbers are prefaced with an "E". Where I have cited *The First Book of Urizen*, I have used Erdman's plate numbering, though I have also consulted digital copies of the plates available on *The William Blake Archive*. Where I have quoted *Urizen*, I have given the plate number first, followed by chapter and verse numbers, followed by the page numbers from Erdman (prefaced with an "E").

Below is a list of abbreviations of frequently cited works.

Abbreviations

Adam	Essick, *William Blake and the Language of Adam*
AWP	Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture"
AM	Heidegger, *Aristoteles: Metaphysik Θ 1–3*
Beiträge	Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*
BPT	Heidegger, "Basic Principles of Thinking: Freiburg Lectures 1957"

"Brief"	Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'"
BT	Heidegger, *Being and Time*
Composite	Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art*
Contributions	Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy: (From Enowning)*
"Doctrine"	Heidegger, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth"
DSIG	Heidegger, "Die Sprache im Gedicht"
EM	*Einführung in die Metaphysik*
"Essence"	Dastur, "Heidegger and the Question of the 'Essence' of Language"
ET	Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*
EW	Heidegger, "Die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen und der Wille zur Macht"
FCM	Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*
"Flower"	von Herrmann, "'The Flower of the Mouth': Hölderlin's Hint for Heidegger's Thinking of the Essence of Language"
Freedom	Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*
Freiheit	Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit Einleitung in die Philosophie*
GDD	Heidegger, Grundsätze des Denkens: Freiburger Vorträge
Geschichte	Heidegger, *Die Geschichte des* Seyns
GM	Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit*

HEP	Heidegger, “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry”
HHA	Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymne: ‘Andenken’*
HHR	Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn: ‘Remembrance’*
History	Heidegger, *The History of Beyng*
IM	Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*
IOG	Derrida, *Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*
HCP	Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy: an introduction*
“Holiday”	“Heidegger, As When On A Holiday”
HW	Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit*
HWD	Heidegger, “Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung”
Incarnality	Schalow, *The Incarnality of Being: The Earth, Animals, and the Body in Heidegger’s Thought*
“Le Thor 1969”	Heidegger, “Seminar in Le Thor 1969”
“Letter”	Heidegger, “Letter on ‘Humanism’”
LIPT	Heidegger, “Language in the Poem”
Literal	Hilton, *Literal Imagination: Blake’s Vision of Words*
Logic	Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected “Problems” of “Logic”*
Logik	Heidegger, *Grundfragen der Philosophie. Ausgewählte “Probleme” der “Logik”*
“Macht”	Heidegger, “Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst”

MGS	Heidegger, “Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins”
MHB	Heidegger, “Metaphysics as History of Being”
NL	Heidegger, “The Nature of Language”
NW	Heidegger, “Nietzsche’s Wort “Gott ist tot”
OCM	Heidegger, “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics”
OECP	Heidegger, “On the Essence and Concept of Φύσις in Aristotle’s *Physics* B, 1”
OEG	Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground”
OG	Derrida, *Of Grammatology*
OVM	Heidegger, “Die Onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik”
OWA	Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art”
“Play”	Dastur, “Heidegger and Derrida on play and difference”
PM	Dastur, “Play and Messianicity: The Question of Time and History in Derrida’s Deconstruction”
“Power”	Heidegger, “The Will to Power as Art”
PR	Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*
“Question”	Heidegger, “On the Question of Being”
SEC	Derrida, “Signature Event Context”
SG	Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund*
S/Z	Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*)
“Time”	Dastur, “Time, event and presence in the late Heidegger”

TLTL	Heidegger, “Traditional Language and Technological Language”
UK	Heidegger, “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes”
VWBP	Heidegger, “Vom Wesen und Begriff der *Φύσις*. Aristotles, Physik B, 1”
VWDG	Heidegger, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”
“Way”	Heidegger, “The Way to Language”
WCT	Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*
WDW	Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*
“Weg”	Heidegger, “Der Weg zur Sprache”
WHD	Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken?*
WIM	Heidegger, “Was ist die Metaphysik”
WS	Heidegger, “Das Wesen der Sprache”
ZW	Heidegger, “Die Zeit des Weltbildes”
ZWDS	Heidegger, *Zum Wesen der Sprache und Zur Frage nach der Kunst*

Introduction: What is called literature?

We might provisionally articulate the guiding question of this thesis as "What is called literature?" Equally provisionally, we might expand: through this question and its elaboration, we seek a thinking experience of the unfolding of the being of literature.

In order to explicate what we mean, it is necessary to begin with reference to other, perhaps more everyday and intuitive, interpretations of what might be called for by the question "What is called literature?" First, we might consider it to call for categorization and cataloguing; alternatively, we might read it demanding an enquiry into that which determines the basis on which such categorization might take place – as seeking definition. In the first instance, we might respond by identifying various exemplars of what we call "literature", perhaps in addition to what has been called "literature" in the past; in the second, we might look for unifying principles according to which the various instances of "literature" have been gathered together under this single appellation – that is, we might look not only to describe what is called literature, but also to ask what it means for something to be called literature (whether we are seeking a transcendental essence of Literature, or reflecting on social, cultural, political, or other values entailed in such naming). Of course, in practice these two distinct approaches overlap and suggest one another: we might expect a historiographical study of the term "literature" to refer to what in specific contexts has been implied, conceptually speaking, by the name. Likewise, a philosophical or theoretical investigation concerned with the "nature" of literature (its qualities and characteristics, or its essence or *quidditas*), or with specific historical values gathered around the term "literature", is likely to make some reference to specific literary works – if only to demonstrate ways in which the general (whether timeless universal or specific trend) finds specific expression.

This thesis aims to address neither of these questions, though they are not entirely irrelevant to our concerns. We do, in fact, intend to engage with the question of the "being" of literature, as well as the "literary"; we hope also to pursue that question from within a specific historical position. However, we seek neither to define literature nor to categorize certain kinds of writing as literature; we seek neither a universal concept of literature, nor even to identify what we might

call, following Wittgenstein, "family resemblances" between so-called literary works: "networks of similarities" between such works, "overlapping and criss-crossing" in ways which allow us to recognize these works as belonging together.[1] We do intend to draw on familiar resonances we might hear in the word "literature", resonances which echo from long and varied traditions of the production and reception of different literatures. However, as our use of the plural here implies, the single word "literature" may be considered as expressing multiple distinct concepts, and it is our aim neither to unify these into a single idea, nor to trace and catalogue their distinct resonances. We do not intend to develop a concept of literature, or a systematic positioning on literature such as might be described as a "literary theory".

We might approach a little closer to our topic if we allow the question "What is called literature?" to resonate with a related question asked by Derek Attridge in the preface to *The Singularity of Literature*: "What does it mean to respond to a work of literature as literature?"[2] Attridge's wording here suggests an understanding of the literary work not as object, determined in its being by inherent qualities or characteristics, but as dynamic "event". It implies that a manner of *responsiveness* is required for the work of literature to unfold *as literature* – that this unfolding is in some way constituted through a relation between the work and one who responds to the work. Rather than being focused on what we – for whatever reason – might choose to "call" literature, his question positions us to respond as though there were a prior call – one which may be considered to place some sort of responsibility on those who would engage with literature. In the event, Attridge's study suggests that author, reader, and their respective cultural, social and political worlds are interconnected by complex interweavings of responsiveness and responsibility. The work is not an isolated object, but "works" by affecting us in some way – individually, and as members of a culture; we might suggest it produces, elicits, or perhaps simply calls for some form of response. This also suggests that the work itself is effectuated through the responsiveness it calls forth. A responsibility to offer a "just response to the

[1] Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations*, 36 (translation modified). Wittgenstein is of course not discussing literature or literary works, though Terry Eagleton has suggested profitable ways of using his notion of family resemblance or likeness (*Familienähnlichkeit*) for developing an understanding of what is called literature. See *The Event of Literature*, 20 and *passim*. Wittgenstein's original reads: "ein kompliziertes Netz von Ähnlichkeiten, die einander übergreifen und kreuzen".
[2] *The Singularity of Literature*, xi.

singularity of the other"[3] – an "affirmation" of an "otherness which resists… understanding"[4] – plays out in the receptive inventiveness of the author, in the creative receptivity of the (responsible) reader, and in the interconnectedness between both and the "cultural frameworks" they "inhabit".[5] These relations of responsiveness/responsibility may be considered in some way to constitute the literary work, inasmuch as their interplay conditions, and even in a sense composes (and in an ongoing way re-composes), the "inventive event" of literature;[6] at the same time, this inventive event has the capacity to transform its participants – to "allow the same to be modified by the other."[7]

Attridge's focus on what it means to respond to literature rather than on what literature is invites us to extend the question of the "the essence of the literary"[8] beyond the literary object, to "an act, an event, of reading, never entirely separable from the act-event (or acts-events) of writing that brought [the literary work] into being as a potentially readable text, never entirely insulated from the contingencies of the history into which it is projected and within which it is read."[9] What is meant by "essence" when he speaks of "the essence of the literary" in this way appears to differ from what is understood by the term in the Western philosophical tradition. The word "essence", derived from the Latin *essentia*, conventionally suggests *what* an entity is; in medieval philosophy – and in significant currents of subsequent Western philosophy – this essence is distinguished from *existentia*, the existence of an entity, or *that* it is. Essence suggests generality: those qualities or characteristics which, outside of specific contingency or context, draw a number of different individual entities into the commonality of a shared *quidditas* or "whatness".[10] The "essence of the literary" would then conventionally refer to what is common to all individual instances of literariness – that which underlies the literary as a concept.

[3] Ibid, 133.
[4] Ibid, 129.
[5] The quotations are from p. 46, but the sentence attempts a broader summary – and interpretation – of some of the book's key arguments.
[6] Attridge introduces the term "inventive event" on p. 43.
[7] Ibid, 124.
[8] Ibid, 138.
[9] Ibid, 59.
[10] For a lucid discussion, see Richard Polt, *The Emergency of Being* pp. 63–64.

We might interpret Attridge's "essence of the literary" as suggesting an "essence" which does not underlie each literary work as substance – does not lie present in the work, determining it beforehand, before any contingent relation to it, as such. This is because "essence" understood in terms of event is not static; rather it unfolds through acts of appropriation which lay out and make explicit potentialities of the work – potentialities which emerge from the multiple and ever-changing references and involvements at work in the interplay between the events of writing and of reading, as well as their contexts. Such essence could therefore not be thought to be *present* in the text, and accessible primarily in the temporal mode of the present. The work works through the "*mobilization* of meanings"[11], which implies through *temporalization*: through the appropriation in each receptive reading of the work's "linguistic operations"[12] into a different way of orienting those operations, of arranging them in relation to an anticipatory projection – itself shaped by past meanings – of the work's structure and patternings. That the work works temporally as event also suggests that the manner in which it emerges and unfolds in its being is related to the manner in which we comport ourselves towards it – the manner in which we anticipate it and relate to it. Simultaneously, our relation to it is perhaps capable of disclosing us in particular ways: not as subjects standing over and against a literary object, but as beings who are responsible, in the sense of being capable of responding to the call to participate in the relations which make up the event of the singularity of the work, and to affirm radical otherness by safeguarding it as other (whether or not we take up this responsibility and answer the call).

Interpreted in this way, Attridge's understanding of the inventive event of literature, and the "essence" which determines this unfolding *as* literature, resonates powerfully with the thinking of Martin Heidegger. These resonances are perhaps not as prominent as we have suggested them to be;[13] although Attridge acknowledges Heidegger,[14] his primary influences lie elsewhere. His emphasis on the event of literature as a potentially transformative engagement with the other seems informed by the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, while the importance he places on the interplay of involvements at work in this event perhaps draws on Paul Ricouer; Jacques

[11] Attridge, *Singularity*, 109 (my emphasis).
[12] Ibid, 109.
[13] While we have read towards a very specific interpretation of Attridge, it is to be hoped that this reading may still be considered a just response to his work.
[14] Ibid, 143.

Derrida's thought may be seen as reflected his concern with the inseperability of the act-events of reading and writing, as well as the importance he places on temporalization and the mobilization of meanings; the latter suggest also Attridge's possible indebtedness more broadly to reader response theory. There is perhaps a degree of commonality with Heidegger in that – like those of Attridge's influences we have picked out – his thought is significantly shaped by phenomenological interests, and bears significant traces of the influence of Edmund Husserl. In any case, we have attempted to draw out possible connections and emphasize them, because although Attridge's question provides the hint which points us in the direction of our concerns, it is with reference to Heidegger's thinking that we will attempt more definitively to articulate them as concerns, following his thinking along the paths that we wish to explore.

Yet the notion of "literature" is seldom considered in Heidegger's work; where is discussed, it is invariably discussed in negative terms. "*Literatur*" names writing posited as object: writing which appears as available in a manner consistent with the technologically-oriented ways of relating to the world – critiqued by Heidegger – which prevail in late modernity/postmodernity.[15] Attridge's insights into the literary resonate not with Heidegger's thinking on literature, but with his thinking on "essence": they resonate with Heidegger's shift away from conceiving of essence as what an entity is, to considering it in the light of its temporal unfolding and relation to other entities and to context. They resonate also with Heidegger's thinking on the human being's relation to this temporal unfolding – the human being's character, we might provisionally suggest, as responsive to this unfolding. What resonates with Attridge is Heidegger's thinking on being.[16]

Being – *Sein* – is not simply one interest among many in the latter's work. It is the very "matter" of his philosophical endeavour, its *Sache.* It is this not only in the sense of what is contemplated,

[15] See for example *Was heisst Denken?*, 139 – hereafter WHD (translated as *What Is Called Thinking?*, 134 – hereafter WCT); *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"* 221 (translated as *Hölderlin's Hymns: "Germania" and "The Rhine"*, 202); *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister"* 38 – hereafter HHI (translated as *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, 32); "Erbetene Vorbemerkung zu einer Dichterlesung auf Bühlerhöhe am 24. Februar 1951", 470–471.

[16] Many translators prefer to capitalize "Being" when rendering Heidegger's *Sein* in English, thereby distinguishing between the substantive *Sein* and the verb *sein* ("to be"). However, we have followed the convention used by translators who wish to emphasize the temporal and dynamically historical character of *Sein*, and use a lower case *b* for both *Sein* and *sein*.

or even disputed, in his thinking – its subject-matter or the object of its investigation. It is also what is intended in that thinking in a far broader sense: it is the circumstance which compels and directs that thinking, which in Heidegger's view is itself a matter *of* being and a matter *for* being. It is not a matter in the sense of a theme, then, but *what matters*. We shall see that perhaps Heidegger's thought draws us to interpreting "what matters" in this regard not as a stative, but rather in the light of the impersonal construction "it matters": being is the non-substantive "it" which grants the possibility of significance, so that things are capable of mattering to us in the first place. Being *is* not the matter – "importance" or "value" is not its (static) state of being; being *grants* the matter.[17] For Heidegger such *mattering*, however, also implies reciprocity: what matters unfolds *as* mattering only when it is taken up as mattering. The matter is not "being" understood as an independent anonymous agency; it is understood in relation with thinking (not only his, but thinking itself), which entails responsiveness to being – which is drawn forth as a responsibility placed on human beings by being.[18]

We might provisionally articulate what Heidegger understands by "being" as "what lets beings be what and how they are".[19] What and how beings are is a matter which *for human beings* pertains to the manifestness of beings – what Heidegger calls "disclosedness" (*Erschlossenheit*). That is to say, it pertains to the specific ways in which entities may be *available* to us, allowing us to notice them or pass them by, to have to do with them, produce them, attend to them, look after them, make use of them, give them up and let them go; allowing us to undertake, accomplish, evince, interrogate, consider, discuss, determine, as well as to leave undone, neglect and renounce.[20] From this perspective, the various ways in which we relate to beings disclose them in different modalities of being, or different ways of being present to us; they also disclose us to ourselves in different ways, and direct (while simultaneously being directed by) how we relate to disclosedness – to the event of being, to mattering – itself. This means that our

[17] See, for example, "Seminar in Le Thor 1969", 363ff. / English, 59ff – hereafter "Le Thor 1969". Heidegger explores these concerns in this context with reference to German rather than English expressions: *Es gibt Sein* ("there is being", but literally "it gives being" and *Es läßt Sein* ("it lets being), rather than "what matters" and "it matters".
[18] The text "Über das Prinzip 'Zu den Sachen selbst'" (5–8) provides a particularly lucid sketch of the "matter" of Heidegger's thinking.
[19] For example, "Die Armut": "Nun ist aber das Seyn, das alles Seiende je und je sein läßt, was es ist und wie es ist" (879).
[20] Modified from *Sein und Zeit*, 56–57 – hereafter SZ (translated as *Being and Time*, 83 – hereafter BT).

responsiveness and responsibility are ontological matters. From this perspective, otherness may be considered an element of the very rising into being of beings: in the manner in which the manifestness of entities could be considered possible only on the basis of differentiation, and in the manner in which being unfolds temporally. From this perspective, the responsible safeguarding of the singularity of the other may be considered a particular way for human beings to disclose themselves as human, and thereby to decide on their own existence as temporal. The responsiveness and responsibility which appear central to Attridge's conception of the inventive event of literature may then be understood in terms of the relation to the world which Heidegger early in his career characterizes as "care" [*Sorge*],[21] and that to which such care responds – the "address" [*Zuspruch*], or the "appeal" or "claim" [*Anruf*] of being.[22]

If Attridge's question pertaining to our responsiveness shifts our focus away from the characteristics of an object or class of objects to those relationships within which literature emerges and unfolds as literature – as singular event – Heidegger's thinking calls on us to consider those relationships which attune such responsiveness, and grant its possibility in the first place. This thinking calls on us to engage in some way – somehow to engage *responsively* – with the event which grants and is granted by that responsiveness. For Heidegger, to be a human being is to respond to beings as *in being*, which means responding to them in, through, and on the basis of a relation to being. From the perspective of his thinking, we might then reconsider Attridge's question, and ask: what does it mean for our relation to being to respond to literature as literature? Or perhaps: how does our relation to being let us respond, or call upon us to respond, to literature as literature? Or even: how does our responding to literature as literature reveal us in our relation to being? And finally, how does our responding to literature as literature happen as our relation to being, and our relation to being happen as our responding to literature as literature?

[21] See *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (translated as *History of the Concept of Time:* Prolegomena), where Heidegger reinterprets Husserl's concept of intentionality as care. See also SZ/BT, where care is interpreted to be the ontological structure of human existence.
[22] See, for example, "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Frangenden", 116 (translated as "A Dialogue on Language, between a Japanese and an Inquirer", 30).

In this light we might return to our opening question – "What is called literature?" – and reconsider its orientation and implications. It is in fact styled after the central question of Heidegger's 1951–1952 lecture series: *Was heißt Denken?* – "What is called thinking?".[23] Our question is styled in this way not simply to call to mind Heidegger's philosophy or establish a connection with it. For Heidegger – whose phenomenology is informed by hermeneutics – language is not fundamentally a means of communication; rather, it significantly determines the situation of our understanding, attuning the manner in which we relate to entities and to other people. How we talk about entities disposes us to them in specific ways, puts them at our disposal in one way rather than another. How we talk about entities also responds to them – and puts us at their disposal – in particular ways.[24] The specific manner of asking a question is already an act of understanding. It recalls some already available way of relating to what we seek to understand, and anticipates understanding it in a specific manner; accordingly, it also contributes to constituting what is enquired about. Recalling Heidegger's question thus entails recalling aspects of his approach, and thereby attuning our way of relating to literature. A more careful consideration of Heidegger's question will therefore enable us to bring more clearly into view what we anticipate will be at stake when we ask "What is called literature?"

We might begin by noting that in its German form, Heidegger's question can be read as ambiguous; he both plays on its ambiguity and attributes great philosophical significance to this play. The principal ambiguity arises from the various senses which the word *heißen* has in German: to call, to name, to mean, to be called, to be appropriate, to call for. These are not fully conveyed in the English translation. We might approach what *heißen* does convey if we were to use the archaic English word *hight* instead of *call*, but this would sound remote and forced. Moreover, in order to let *hight* resound in a way that echoes Heidegger's play on *heißen*, we would have to shift to an archaic idiom (even more remote and forced), and do away with the modern English syntactic marker "does": not *What does thinking hight?*, but *What hights thinking?* Yet precisely because of the awkwardness of this expression – especially with respect to the absence of a syntactic marker – the archaic term may prove illuminating. For Heidegger, moments where language does not communicate straightforwardly – where meaning is withheld,

[23] A shortened version appears in the 1952 essay "Was heißt Denken?". Heidegger uses a similar formulation in a brief text (two paragraphs) on reading, "Was heißt Lesen?"
[24] See "Gespräch", 84–85/"Dialogue", 4–5.

or displaced – have the potential to reveal how meaning is constituted in the first place.[25] When the apparently ready ways of talking about and grasping beings available in everyday language usage no longer enable us to race ahead[26] to some "content" – when language fails to communicate, when it refuses to let us express ourselves – we are exposed to the contingencies and limits of the language we speak. Moreover, at such moments, language places a demand on us. We are called upon to attend responsively to the expressive possibilities which reside in a particular language – to seek alternative ways of making sense by reconsidering, reworking, recomposing those possibilities. We will therefore attempt to advance our understanding as far as possible through regular English terms – seeking to draw on their reach to develop our interpretation of Heidegger's thinking in this context. Yet we will also mark where his thinking draws us up against the limits of expression in English, and calls for the creative reshaping – or, in the case of the word "hight", recollection – of idiom. By recalling "hight" in this manner, we hope to let it resonate with the word "call" in our question in ways which will extend and enrich the connotative reach of the latter within the context of this thesis.

To this end, we begin by conceptually unpacking the different senses of Heidegger's indefinite, though carefully directed, question. The first sense in which Heidegger asks *was heißt?* draws on two meanings of the word *heißen*: "to mean" and "to call (by name)".[27] Together, they convey: "What do we nominate with the name 'thinking'?"[28] As far back as Hellenistic thought, Heidegger claims elsewhere, "naming always already and in advance has signified[29] *making a proposition* [*Aussagen*], and to make a proposition means to make something known as something."[30] The first manner in which the question is asked is thus concerned with what thinking entails. What is called thinking? "Say it out, Diggon, whatever it hight".[31] However, we shall see that Heidegger specifically aims to avoid merely naming "thinking" in the sense of

[25] As we will see, he considers a disruption of familiarity – a "startled dismay" – to be important for relating responsively to being. See *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, 15 – hereafter *Beiträge* (translated as *Contributions to Philosophy: (From Enowning)*, 11 – hereafter *Contributions*).
[26] See, for example, "Das Wesen der Sprache", 168 – hereafter WS (translated as "The Nature of Language", 74 – hereafter NL).
[27] With reference to the first, one might ask *Was heißt das?* if you seek to understand something or say *das heißt* to explain something. With reference to the second, one might ask *Wie heißen Sie?* – literally "How are you called?" – when enquiring about a stranger's name; one might respond *Ich heiße Marinus* – "I am called Marinus".
[28] WHD, 117 (my translation).
[29] *bedeutet*, as opposed to *heißt*.
[30] "Seminar in Le Thor 1969", 336 – hereafter "Le Thor 1969" (translated as "Seminar in Le Thor 1969", 41).
[31] Edmund Spenser, *The Shepheard's Calendar*, 172.

making a proposition or set of propositions about it. Provisionally, though, we might consider his question as potentially directed towards the nature, essence, or meaning of thinking. The second sense in which Heidegger's question asks *Was heißt*…? is not far removed from this first sense, though in this instance the question turns to the historical contingency of the nomination of "thinking" with respect to specific meanings. In its second sense, the question asks: "how is that which is named, thinking, grasped and defined according to traditional tenets on thinking?"[32]

A third sense in which the question asks marks a crucial shift in emphasis. This shift moves from *heißen* as the call by which something is nominated – either specifically nominated to a name, or more generally nominated to a meaning – to *heißen* as a call which directs a listener in some way. Here we are displaced outside the boundaries of what is addressed in the English translation "What is called…?" In German one might say *es heißt* (literally "it calls") to speak about what is called *for* from whoever is addressed: *Jetzt heißt es aufpassen* (Now it calls to watch out = Watching out is called for now = Now it is time to watch out)[33]. A close equivalent in English would be "it behoves". This sense allows us to see more clearly the connection between our opening question and Attridge's – between a question which asks about what literature is, and one which asks how we are to *respond* to literature. If we sense that literature *calls on us* to respond – or that the singularity of the other calls on us to respond – then this sense might be conveyed in German *es heißt*. Likewise, if language is the matter of our thesis, is what matters to our questioning, we might consider it to be what calls us into the matter.

Although *heißen* in this sense is an impersonal verb, and its construction does not fit grammatically with Heidegger's question, he clearly has it in mind. Rather than asking about what a matter is and how it is (what it is that is nominated by the term "thinking", considered both abstractly and historically), the question in this third sense asks about a way of *comporting* (*Verhalten*) oneself towards a matter – a way of behaving, of relating: "what is required for us to

[32] WHD, 117 (my translation).
[33] The example has been adapted from *Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (DWDS): "heißen".

be capable of essentially right thinking? What is demanded of us in order that we may in each case accomplish good thinking?"[34]

When thinking draws into view as relating, it becomes necessary to consider it as constituted within or through relation*ship* – *Verhältnis*. While not treating it thematically in the context of this lecture, Heidegger frequently draws attention to the connection between the words *Verhalten* and *Verhältnis*, as well as to several other words stemming from the root *halten* ("to hold"). He considers the possibility of any behaviour – whether theoretical or practical – as rooted in our being "held" within various relationships: to entities, to other human beings, and to being itself. These relations "grant a hold [*Halt*] for all conduct [*Verhalten*]" – a hold which may be considered our "abode" [*Aufenthalt*].[35] His characterization of human being as essentially "being-in" (*In-Sein*) – and more specifically "being-in-the-world" (*In-der-Welt-Sein*) – illustrates how the human being is not an independent entity which has to step outside itself to encounter entities.[36] As Heidegger points out in a different context, even noting as we have "that the human being cannot be 'separated from his world'" may be considered misleading, as it "implies the idea of a 'composition' of the human being and world".[37] Comportment (*Verhalten*) is structured through in-volvement, through bearing ourselves within the bearings or relations (*Verhältnisse*) within which we already are borne (held – in a *Halt*).[38]

This third sense of *heißen* therefore also marks a subtle, but crucial, shift in agency. The first two senses, with their strong emphasis on nomination, perhaps imply actions directed by human purpose: what name do we give this, so that we may grasp it; what understanding may we bring

[34] WHD, 117 (my translation). What Heidegger means by "essentially right" – *wesensgerecht* – in this context should not be understood as suggesting "correct". We shall engage more carefully with Heidegger's understanding of *Wesen* or "essence" in the course of the thesis.
[35] "Brief über den 'Humanismus'", 361 – hereafter "Brief" (translated as "Letter on 'Humanism'", 274 – hereafter "Letter"; translation modified). Within this context, Heidegger specifically characterizes this "abode" of being-in as the "truth of being" – a characterization we will address in the body of the thesis. The relation to being is what grants the possibility of the relations to other entities. See also "Grundsätze des Denkens: Freiburger Vorträge 1957", 168–169; 174–176; 164–166 – hereafter GDD ("Basic Principles of Thinking: Freiburg Lectures 1957", 157–160 – hereafter BPT).
[36] See SZ, 52–180/BT, 78–224.
[37] "Zollikoner Seminare", 181–182 (translated as "Zollikon Seminars", 138).
[38] Heidegger's understanding of human comportment as structured through directedness towards entities shows an indebtedness to Husserl's notion of intentionality, which likewise indicates the directedness of consciousness. Intentionality indicates that a psychic act is always *about* an object.

to bear, so that we may name it; how may we interpret the names it has been given, and the understandings whence these names have arisen or towards which they have been directed, that we may ourselves better understand, grasp, utilize and name? They also suggest a division between agent and patient, and the independent presence of each: there is on the one hand what is named, on the other the one who names. But, as we have indicated, when *heißen* shows appropriate action, it is an impersonal verb. *We* do not call this manner of *Heißen – it* calls. There is no agent who names, over and against a patient who receives the name. The "it" is an agentless agent, like the "it" in English expressions such as "it is raining", and – perhaps more pertinently – "it behoves", "it would be appropriate to…" (and, as we have claimed at least concerning the "matter" of being, "it matters").

The final sense in which the question is asked – the sense which Heidegger retrospectively takes as directing all the others – likewise distances *Heißen* or "calling" from human agency. This final sense also moves definitively in that direction towards which the third gestured: away from a *conception of* thinking towards a *relation to* thinking. That is to say, we are directed from the sense that the question seeks information or knowledge, to one which suggests that it places an obligation or makes a demand on the questioner – a demand perhaps simultaneously made by thinking itself. The final sense of *Heißen* also transforms the earlier ones, positioning us to understand naming not as calling in the sense of assigning (designating something as something), but in the sense of an appeal which is made to us. This sense derives from an archaic and literary usage in which *heißen* means "call on" – bid, command, demand, direct, instruct, refer, expect of, even invite: *Tu, was ich dich heiße* (Do what I call on you to do = Do as I command). When *heißt* is understood in this way, *Was heißt Denken?* asks: "what is it that calls us, as it were, commands us to think? What is it that calls us into thinking?"[39] Here we might mark the appropriateness of the obsolete English "hight" for translating Heidegger's *heißt*. This is because, as we mentioned previously, "hight" lacks the syntactical marker "does". That means that the verb maintains an ambiguity concerning the agency which enacts it. "What hights thinking?" (rather than "what does thinking hight?") might at first suggest the human being, the human enquiring subject, as agent, performing acts of cognition: "What is thinking called *by human beings*?" In Heidegger's fourth sense, a translation into "What hights thinking?" could be

[39] WHD, 117/WCT, 114.

taken to place agency in doubt, and to shift it away from the human being. In modern English, the sense we are searching for would likely be "what *means us* to think, *consigns us* to think, *entrusts us* to think, *assigns us* the task of thinking?"

Thus the agency of the "calling" of *Heißen* is shifted more decisively away from the human who nominates comprehendingly, towards an anonymous *it* which directs the human to comprehend. It reaffirms also the sense that thinking takes place in a relation outside itself – in a sense *is* a relation, or an act of relating rather than an exertion of will: a *Verhalten* within a *Verhältnis*, a bearing within already existing bearings, rather than representation, cognizing or theorizing. *Heißen* in this sense is perhaps no longer as easily equated with "one calls" or "they call" as it is in the third sense: it does not expressly pertain to an indefinite pronoun, as though it simply reflected a nomination which had been made by common consensus; it does not lean towards an interpretation of the nomination as stative, as involving correlation between a name and a matter. Moreover, the "it" which compels *es heißt* no longer disappears into the grammatical appendage of the impersonal (*it* behoves); instead, a definite grammatical subject which is not the human being is implied as predicating *heißt*. It is not precisely named, however: the *heißen* does not serve to nominate it, unless the question asks "what does thinking ask of us?" The agent of the verb withdraws even as it is revealed: withdraws into the subject of the question, and its ambiguity. For the question apparently no longer asks about thinking (its essence, its meaning, the history of its interpretations, the kind of discipline it demands); instead, it seems to concern an anonymous agency which in some way compels us to think.

This is in fact not the case. The question is not simply redirected to asking about an esoteric force which commands humans. To conceive of it in this way would be to understand the agent of the verb as a "subject" – both as the grammatical subject and as an actor (some sort of independent entity). We might suggest that rather than scoring out the impersonal third sense of *heißt*, the fourth sense underscores its aporetic quality – perhaps even discloses it as a lacuna. Heidegger calls on the fourth sense to awaken a sense of the strangeness of the "it" of "it calls" or "it behoves" (perhaps even "it matters"); "it" no longer disappears into the expression – we no longer leap ahead to some meaning it represents. Instead, "it" points to the paradox of an agent without cause. Because for Heidegger, the "call" to which we are referring cannot be understood

as emanating from an entity, or from any source which could be understood as entity-like. For example, it should not be seen as an a priori structure, a condition, or a ground. What calls for thinking is not anything that could be considered an agent; it is nothing that could be named – represented by a substantive, or through a description. The calling is, after all, perhaps better understood with reference to the subjectless subject in the form of the indefinite pronoun in the impersonal construction. Heidegger here draws away from any sort of abstraction of thinking (whether that abstraction is in the form of a definition of thought, a thinking methodology, or even an esoteric interpretation which suggests that Being utilizes the instrument of thought to call or instruct human beings).

He looks instead for ways to *enact* thinking *in the relation between the call and the response*. What is important then is to find ways to perform that relation, rather than defining its participants. As we have suggested, the force of the shift in the agency of the verb troubles the unacknowledged assumption that thinking entails the independently directed agency of the human being, whose questioning is a consciously directed act of will. This shift, then, signals an attempt to pursue the question in a manner which is not grounded in subjectivity. It also places a demand on the reader: a demand to attend to the play of language, and also – since the argument does not simply lay out a straightforward conceptual scheme – to participate creatively in the occasion of thinking which takes place in the lecture. The reader is called upon to pick up on the nuances of the interweaving resonances – to appropriate and recompose expressive possibilities.

When the question *Was heißt Denken?* is oriented by the sense that *heißt* means to "call on", we understand the questioner already to be involved in the questioning in some way that has not been chosen – it is not governed by the questioner. Simultaneously, we take the role of questioner heeding the demand to think. Heidegger's questioning brings us into question – or reveals how we are already in question. "We ourselves appear in the text – the weave – of the question", which has "already threaded us into that which we ask about." The questioner is already the patient of the "calling": in thinking we are *hight – hight* to thinking. We are already referred, instructed, invited or appealed to before we become the agent of the nomination of something as something (for example, before we attempt to define thinking by calling it a mental

"process").[40] This *already* is disclosed through the thinking performance, of which we become participants, rather than simply being described.

This performance also indicates that we are already responding to a call *before* we interpret ourselves as subjects, before we posit objects. Questioning, and thinking, are a matter of responsiveness rather than will.[41] The question about thinking is then also a question about us; or, put another way, questioning is a responsiveness to an always prior appeal which also places us into question: what, being called on to think, are we called? What are we, as those who are called on to think? What heeds thinking?

Although the question may therefore be said to perform a kind of turn, this does not mean that the human being becomes the new "object" (or indeed subject) of a now anthropological investigation. Agency becomes so intermingled in the play of the different senses of *heißen* that the impression that the question about thinking can and should have an object is itself brought into question. We are not brought into question as issue, topic or theme, but brought into a questioning relation with what demands questioning – brought into a reciprocity which collapses the possibility of a distinguishable conceptual "theme". The "naming" of thinking also becomes a matter of attending to a call rather than of nominating something as something: it becomes an "intransitive" "event in which at once the namable, the name, and the named appropriate one another."[42] The play on the various senses of *heißen* thus unsettles the ordinary philosophical way of asking "What is…?" (or *Was heißt…?* in German). The usual approach, in Heidegger's view, involves directing the question towards some matter – in the sense of a topic or theme[43] – which we wish to grasp; positioning it as the object of an investigation; developing a grasp of this object by formulating assertions about it which describe or explain it; and then gathering

[40] "… einen Vorgang, der am Menschen vorkommt."
[41] John Sallis points out the emphasis on responsiveness in Heidegger's brief text "Was heißt Lesen?": "reading is not something that one simply initiates; rather it is a response to a certain claim, a demand, already made upon the would-be reader." Sallis elaborates on the phrasing of the question *was heißt Lesen?* with reference to *Was Heißt Denken?*: "It asks: What is reading? What does it mean to read? – but also: What calls for reading? What calls forth reading?" ("Introduction" to *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, 2).
[42] "*Ἀγχιβασίη*", 119 (translated as "*Ἀγχιβασίη*: A Triadic Conversation on a Country Path between a Scientist, a Scholar, 77). "Intransitive naming" is Bret W. Davis's translation of *Nennung*, which is distinguished from *Benennung*, "transitive naming". The latter is naming understood as essentially a form of assertion.
[43] *Thema*. WHD, 119/WCT, 115.

these assertions into a concept or assembly of concepts.[44] This procedure is disturbed by the disarrangement of agent and patient, questioner and questioned, namer and named, as well as by the manner in which the questioner is drawn into question, when *Was heißt Denken?* is asked with a sensitivity to the ambiguous play of the question.

Thinking through the question "what is called thinking?" in this way does not lead to the grasp of an independent object to which we can correlate our understanding through correct assertions: a clearer conception of some matter or a "better" name for it. Thinking in this way rather orients us towards and makes explicit the relation (*Verhältnis*) or set of relations – a *world* – within which thinking *already* moves – already comports itself (*sich verhalten*), prior to any theorization, reflection or philosophy. It also calls for participation in the disclosure of these relations: for a responsive occasioning or enactment of what is revealed. In order to comport towards these relations – which *already constitute* the questioner and the questioning – such thinking makes an appeal; or, perhaps more precisely, thinking tries to let an appeal emerge, although the appeal is already there when we ask about thinking. Bearing in mind that *hight* can also mean "promise", "vow" or "portend", we might even suggest that a meditation on the ambiguity of the question "what hights thinking?" seeks to stretch itself forth towards thought, to what is already "sent forth" (*pro-missum*) and itself always "stretches forth" (*pro-tendit*) as a promise: to respond in a way that continuously anticipates.

Thinking already appeals, and the appeal it makes is not that of an object; thinking already responds, and its response is not the response to an object. Thinking appeals for a relation between the thinker and thinking that is very different from the relation between subject and object, seeking a relation in which thinking responds to the appeal of that which is in this case reflected on, or receives its promise. Something of this relation between the thinker and thinking is enacted in the reflection on *heißen*; something of the appeal or promise, and something of a response or heeding, emerges in the close interplay between questioner, questioned and questioning which unfolds there. Something of the demand of what is called thinking is enacted, and the inquirer – or reader – is invited to respond.

[44] Ibid.

For Heidegger, the relation to a prior calling is essential to human existence. Human being is characterized by its being "addressed", and called upon to respond in some way, to an other who addresses us. Our immersion in relations which constitute a world means that we are "always already addressed by beings other than [ourselves]".[45] Crucially, however, Heidegger shows how we are also always already "addressed" by being – by the very sense that beings *are*, that they are somehow able to address us. We are addressed, therefore, by a radical alterity – an alterity gestured towards through the troubling of agency of the call which we traced in the prior discussion. What calls on us to draw beings into significance – to inhabit the "open" of disclosedness or manifestness – is nothing substantive, nothing resembling an entity. As we shall see, this relation to otherness is what draws us into that relation to beings – that comportment – through which they may address us in the first place, and in which we may disclose them in various modalities of availability. What calls for thinking is then this radical alterity – or a relation to its alterity: the experience of what Heidegger calls the "ontological difference" between being and beings.[46] Heidegger seeks, through his performative interrogation of this call, to attune thinking to this prior demand which attunes and makes possible all demands – to respond to the very possibility of responsiveness, rather than to represent or grasp this possibility conceptually in the manner one comprehends entities. He seeks a thinking comportment determined by the demand of being –[47] an experience of what we might term a pre-reflective, pre-conceptual, or pre-theoretical exposure to the address of the sheer possibility of manifestness.

It is not insignificant that he pursues the possibility of such an experience through a close consideration of language – that language is the site of what we have called the "performance" of the relation between call and response. Heidegger insists that it is "only on the basis of language" that we are capable of being addressed by beings – capable of taking up their being as a concern.[48] Though what he means by "language" is not "a capacity for communication", but "the original manifestness [*Offenbarkeit*] of what is" – a manifestness which is "preserved

[45] "Zollikoner Seminare", 180/"Zollikon Seminars", 137.
[46] See *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 452–455 (translated as *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*) and "Vom Wesen des Grundes", 64–71– hereafter VWDG (translated as "On the Essence of Ground, 130–135 – hereafter OEG).
[47] *Beiträge*, 462–463/*Contributions*, 325.
[48] Zollikoner Seminare", 183/"Zollikon Seminars",139–140.

[*bewahrten*] by the human being in different ways."[49] We might provisionally suggest that this is because language allows us to articulate the interrelationships and involvements which constitute our world – to disclose these interrelationships *as* significant. They are able to appear as such – as significant, as in being – through the "circuitousness" [*Umwegigkeit*] of "reference to a universal",[50] a sense of what it means for beings to be, articulated by means of discourse. Thus language disposes our relatedness to beings – attunes how we comport ourselves within the relations which constitute our existence. Since we may be considered to "inhabit" these relations as our abode [*Aufenthalt*], Heidegger famously refers to language as the "house of being".[51]

By conceiving of language as our habitation, he directs us towards a turn in perspective – a shift in agency, in disposition – comparable to the turn we traced in the question *was heißt Denken?* Language appears as a shelter and abode, rather than an instrument for communication or expression. He performs a similar turn – perhaps more compelling in the light of its obvious parallels with the chiasmus which structures his question concerning thinking – in "Das Wesen der Sprache". The essay's meditation on the "essence of language" (*das Wesen der Sprache*) turns into one on the "language of essence" (*die Sprache des Wesens*), suggesting that what is "essential" about language is that it speaks on behalf of "essence", or speaks essence: language "says" the disclosure of beings. It is not a human accomplishment or invention. Being addresses us in language;[52] our own linguistic acts are a response to this address. Language cannot be considered to be "in service of thinking"; thinking is "co-respondence" [*Ent-sprechen*] to language, "in service of language".[53]

It is therefore in language that that appeal may be heard which disposes us to relate to what calls for thinking. Heidegger's questioning approach in *Was Heißt Denken* – which, following Karen S. Feldman, we might itself deem a performance[54] – may in fact be understood as attempting to

[49] Zollikoner Seminare", 183/"Zollikon Seminars", 140
[50] *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, 29 (translated as *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 20–21).
[51] "Brief", 313/"Letter", 239 and *passim*. See also esp. GDD, 153–176/BPT, 144–166.
[52] WS, 166/NL, 72 and *passim* (translation modified). Peter Hertz translates *Wesen* as "nature" in the essay's title, but switches to translating it as "being" in moments where Heidegger effects the "turn" in the phrase. See also von Herrmann's analysis of this turn in "'The Flower of the Mouth': Hölderlin's Hint for Heidegger's Thinking of the Essence of Language" – hereafter "Flower".
[53] For example, *What is Philosophy?*, 93; "Die Kehre", 76 (translated as "The Turn", 71; Mitchell translates *entspricht* as "correspond", rather than "co-respond").
[54] "Heidegger and the hypostasis of the performative", 157 and *passim*.

disclose the appeal to think already made in language, to reveal and trace the relation to what calls for thinking already established in language. The manner in which he disturbs the everydayness of everyday words and expressions reveals them as already potentially disturbing. An ordinary question (*was heißt*…?) and an ordinary grammatical construction (the impersonal verb) are complicated such that they no longer communicate straightforwardly. They become demanding: they disclose our involvement and demand our responsiveness, our creative appropriation of semantic possibilities to make sense of them. Simultaneously, their usually unobtrusive ambiguities and paradoxes show traces of the ineffable unfolding of the possibility of manifestness – of being – which for Heidegger issues the call to think in the first place; the ordinary expressions disclosed as extraordinary, as running up against the limits of expression, echo "its" call. Thus, as Theodore Kisiel puts it with reference to Heidegger's engagement with the impersonal construction, it prompts us to enquire "[w]hat is this mysterious It, no longer a substantifying It but a sheer Event…? How are we to talk about It, even name It in its simple but comprehensive happening, find a language for It, such that we are not constantly seduced by the substantifying tendency that the very term 'It' itself brings with it?"[55] Language already relates to what calls for thinking, already relates that call. Heidegger recalls the call, and reissues its demand to the reader.

Heidegger's question thus entails a complex performance. It enquires into the call to think, and shows how this demand may be understood as arising from the manifestness or dislosedness of entities – or perhaps more precisely from the possibility of their manifestness, the possibility that we relate to beings as existent: as *in being*. It shows also how this source of the call to think evades the grasp of our cognizing: how precisely the habit of understanding whatever we think about as *in being* (as existent, as entity-like) frustrates the attempt to relate to the radical alterity of the event of being – the agentless opening up of a realm of manifestness. Yet it also reveals how a relation to this radical alterity is in a concealed way already available to our thinking – that this relation in fact determines our existence as human beings. However, Heidegger's questioning does not reveal this relation – or the possibility of a way of comporting oneself to the agentless granting of disclosedness – by representing it (by conceptualizing it, by describing it, by defining it). His questioning discloses it by recalling – performing – the call to think through

[55] *The Genesis of Heidegger's* Being and Time, 24.

the enactment of a responsive attentiveness to that call. Heidegger's questioning may therefore be understood as oriented not to informing – to describing, theorizing, developing concepts – but to transformation. Its approach potentially unsettles the reader and calls for their responsive attentiveness – calls upon them to adopt a different comportment from the theorizing and conceptualizing usually associated with thinking.[56] It calls the reader into the service of language – invites them to answer, or co-respond, to being. Such a call for responsiveness is arguably the central thrust even of Heidegger's apparently more conceptually oriented work. He says of his "formal indications" (the elements of his philosophical vocabulary which might most readily appear conceptual, and be integrated into philosophical – words such as "care", "Dasein", "being-in-the-world", "existence", "transcendence" and "facticity"):

> the meaning-content of these concepts does not directly intend or express what they refer to, but only gives an indication, a pointer to the fact that anyone who seeks to understand is called upon by this conceptual context to undertake a transformation of themselves into their Dasein.[57]

Heidegger's form of questioning then suggests ways of approaching the question of the being of literature in a manner disposed to responsiveness. His approach draws attention to how we are positioned, both in everyday interactions and in received philosophical approaches, with respect to subjectivity and agency – with respect to how we relate to entities and how we understand them.[58] It also disturbs these inconspicuously assumed positions, and opens the possibility of assuming a different kind of thinking comportment. We therefore recall Heidegger's question in our own – ask "What is called literature?" such that the question resonates with his, such that it cannot be properly asked without reference to his or without rephrasing it also as "What hights

[56] Feldman reads *Being and Time* as structured by a similar performance. She describes how the central "analysis of the call of conscience" *attests* to the call of conscience, and potentially "calls the *reading* Dasein to its ownmost ability-to-be". Thus *Being and Time* acts as "its reader's conscience" ("Hypostasis", 160–161).
[57] *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit*, – hereafter GM (translated as *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, 297 – hereafter FCM).
[58] This aspect of Heidegger's thinking arguably reflects the significant influence of Husserl. Heidegger's phenomenological methods of destruction or deconstruction (*Abbau* and *Destruktion*) and retrieval (*Wiederholung*) may be considered to be developed from or modelled on Husserl's *epochē* and reduction (*Reduktion*). Husserl develops the latter to overcome the natural attitude and encounter the phenomenon (the "things themselves") in its self-manifestation. Heidegger's strategies likewise aim at dismantling unobserved and seemingly "natural" ways in which we are positioned to relate to beings, and to relate to beings in their phenomenal self-showing.

literature?" – in the hope of avoiding taking up the position of subject over against an object or field of objects. "What hights literature?": we might now hear the question as resonating not only with Attridge's ("What does it mean to respond to a work of literature as literature?"), but also with W.J.T. Mitchell's well-known study of our responsive relation with visual images: "What do pictures want?"[59] "What is called literature?": "What does literature want?"

Heidegger's approach potentially also offers compelling philosophical justification for pursuing an understanding of literature in terms of responsiveness in the first place. We have seen how he probes for ways of relating to what calls for thinking through close attentiveness to language. As we have highlighted, language disposes our relation to the manifestness of beings; thinking, inasmuch as it is called for or called forth by this possibility – by being – may therefore be considered as itself calling for a responsive comportment to language, or indeed *within* language.

We have also intimated that Heidegger's concern with language is itself disposed in particular ways. He seeks responsive comportments in and through a demanding language: in ambiguities and lacunae which open expressive and interpretive possibilities, and – through their withholding of clear, permanent, immediate sense – *call for* the individual reader in each case to interpret what they read in a singular way (in a way influenced by their own disposition and context, for example). On the other hand, he probes undemanding language – works to disturb apparently straightforward ways of utilizing language to communicate. It is therefore unsurprising that he frequently turns to literature – especially poetry – as a site for attending to the demands of language, or for submitting to its demands. He suggests even that thinking takes place within the same "neighbourhood" as "poetizing" [*Dichten*]; it "dwell[s] in the same vicinity", in "nearness".[60] Thinking and poetizing entail, and demand, a similar relation to language and to being – perhaps we might say they play out, or unfold in their being, within and through a similar relationship, or occupy the same realm of references and involvements.

[59] *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*.
[60] WS, 165/WCT, 69: "… der in derselben Nähe wohnt" – we have here effectively translated *Nähe* twice (as "vicinity", and as "nearness") in order better to cover the semantic range Heidegger exploits in his word usage.

This realm, we might provisionally suggest, is the realm of pre-reflective, pre-conceptual, or pre-theoretical experience.[61] As we have indicated, Heidegger considers human existence as determined by its relation to manifestness – considers us to be disclosive in our being.[62] Thus *all* our comportments, all our relations to beings – from philosophical contemplation to scientific enquiry to sitting in a chair – bear traces of this relation to being. When I sit in a chair, I do so as one who has a background sense that the chair is *in being*, and for whom its existence – and my own – is at stake. Therefore language also bears traces of our relation to being – of the sense that entities are *in being* in some way, and are therefore also at stake in some way. For this reason, close attentiveness to language – for example to resonant words such as *heißen*, or even grammatical constructions such as the impersonal verb – has the potential to reveal such traces: to disclose ways in which our language anticipates beings as at stake. Moreover, such attentiveness has the potential to reveal what we might term the structure of our various ways of comporting ourselves – to indicate the lines of *Verhältnis* along and within which *Verhalten* is possible. For example, the impersonal verb can be interpreted as reflecting the experience of the manifestness of beings as event-like, rather than substantive. Such an interpretation recollects an anticipation of or response to being as "subjectless and objectless".[63] The experience articulated in the grammatical construction also indicates a possible aspect of the structure of manifestness: the self-withholding of its own substantive appearance as it grants the appearance of entities.

Such traces of a relation to being are largely inconspicuous in everyday language – relegated to the background of our activities and communications, or even covered over through the specific ways in which we comport ourselves in language. In Heidegger's view, such obfuscation is particularly pronounced in the era of late modernity, as a consequence of the prevailing understanding of being – of how and in what way beings are manifest – in this era, as well as the prevailing comportment within language which accompanies this understanding. The importance of poetry to Heidegger may in fact be understood in contrast to what he considers a heedlessness

[61] See for example Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Hermeneutics and Reflection: Heidegger and Husserl on the Concept of Phenomenology*, 44–45.
[62] One might also relate this insight to aspects of Husserl's phenomenology. Husserl identifies an underlying assumption – a "universal positing" – in the natural attitude that the world, and what we encounter in it, is *there* (see *Ideas* I, § 30). He also describes the "categorial intuition" – a form of non-sensory intuition through which the appearance of an objects "is essentially determined" in their "relation" (*Logical Investigations* VI, 283). For Heidegger, all understanding is constituted through a relation of to an overall sense of the manifestness of beings.
[63] Kisiel, *Genesis of Being and Time*, 24.

to the call of being (the call of thinking, the call to think) which characterizes the late modern positioning with respect to language and being. We might therefore clarify his attentiveness to poetry reference to his critique of the modern and late modern relation to being.

The target of Heidegger's critique is the "utilization" of language.[64] Language is taken to be – related to as – a *means*: a "means for exchange and understanding", for "communicating and notifying".[65] When we relate to language as a tool, positioning ourselves as subject, as the agent who creates, shapes and wields language, we *disclose* it as a tool. What calls for language appears in this regard to be the necessity to convey information; what calls forth language appears to be the possibility of representing meaning. We are likewise positioned in a specific way in relation to language and to the manifestness of beings. What language calls for – what it demands of us – is to receive and convey present meanings in utterances, to participate in the circulation of information. The kind of appropriative engagement with the expressive possibilities of language – and demand for responsive attentiveness – which we traced in Heidegger's meditation on *heißen* is absent.

Utilization is a manifestation of the relation to language Heidegger sees as having played out within the history of metaphysics. This history is determined by the understanding of being as presence, and its interpretation, in various ways, as an entity or as entity-like – as quiddity, essence, substance, and so forth. The metaphysical relation to language arises from the assumption "that beings occur before and lie opposite to (*ἀντίκειται*) thinking, seeing, and representing";[66] lived experience is understood in terms of *Vorstellung* – "representation" (literally "placing before"). In this understanding, words are taken as "already constituted objects" which refer to concepts or entities which are themselves also already constituted.[67] Language is taken as representing: as making already "existing" entities, relationships, structures, etc. present to oneself and to other human beings (language is thus *used* to represent).

[64] WHD, 133 (my translation).
[65] "Traditional Language and Technological Language", n.p.
[66] *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, 130 (translated as *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 130).
[67] Françoise Dastur, "Heidegger and the Question of the 'Essence' of Language", 226–227 – hereafter "Essence".

Simultaneously, the manifestness of entities is understood as their representability. Moreover, being appears as representable *to* the human being – the "subject" who represents. With their being posited in this way, beings appear as lying over against us, separate from us; Heidegger draws attention to the ways in which the German word for "object", *Gegenstand* (analysable as *gegen*: "opposite", "counter", "over against" – *Stand* "stand") suggests this juxtaposition. The "relationship" of object to the self or subject is taken as the "normative realm" for the appearance of beings. What is most in being about beings is understood as what can be represented about them: abstracted, universal permanent presence in the form of, for example, idea or substance.

Within technological late modernity, the projection of beings as objects over against subjects undergoes a transformation, as does the prevalent relation of human being to language. The being of beings as *Gegenstand* becomes reinterpreted as *Bestand*: what is frequently translated as "standing reserve".[68] Entities are disclosed as resources; what seems most at stake in our relation to them is the possibility of their utility. Technology affords ever-increasing ways of encountering them as immediately available (to our understanding, but also for our use), as orderable, and as replaceable.[69] There is a concomitant shift in what we expect of language, and prize in it, towards utility. Heidegger marks an "increase in the power – the demand as well as the performance" – of "technological language", "devised for the widest possible spread of information." Language is called upon to be information: a "schema of abstract signal transmissions" designed to "yield" clear messages.[70]

In Heidegger's view, the language of utility is unsuitable for thinking about being or attending to its call. For Heidegger, being is not representable – is never "directly never sayable"[71]. Its alterity is such that there can be no comparable term to which it can be related in order to be grasped. The ontological difference suggests that there is nothing from which being could be distinguished as different, since it is no thing – is not an entity, is not substantive. It may even be misleading to say that it "is" in any way – to suggest that it could be considered the subject of a

[68] See, for example, "Le Thor 1969", 105/English, 61.
[69] We will discuss this notion in more detail in Chapter 1. See Andrew J. Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger* (esp. 36–49) for a comprehensive and convincing account.
[70] "Traditional Language and Technological Language", n.p.
[71] *Beiträge*, 460/*Contributions*, 324.

predicate (hence Heidegger's repeated consideration of another German impersonal expression: *es gibt* – "there is" – literally "it gives"). Instead, we might provisionally say that being happens, that it happens as the opening within which beings are given; it might therefore be understood as letting be, rather than, for example, quiddity, essence or formal cause.[72] However, then we must also say that it happens as withdrawal, as the withholding of itself, as the concealing of the event of revealing or letting. We might therefore try to understand disclosedness as dis-*closedness*, marking a relation of manifestness to unavailability, as un-concealment.

The relation to language from within which we reach for the immediacy of clear communication – race ahead to the content of an expression – is unsuitable for attending to the concealing-revealing event of being *as* event, as concealing-revealing. It cannot account for the temporal and relational manner in which the manifestness of beings arises, and plays out in references and connections, as constant interplay between possibility and actuality. Representational and utilitarian language are unsuited to attending to the manner in which *presencing* unfolds singularly in each case through the responsive interaction between the human being and the possibility of manifestness, or event of being. Such language tends to *restrict* relationships, to isolate words from multiplicities of meaning, to break words themselves down into units of sense-content and sensible form – to make the prioritized element of the word (its meaning, its representation) as fully present as possible. As soon as we try to represent the granting-withholding event, to describe it, explain it, or even name it, we relate to as though it were capable of being analysed and isolated, projected as lying over against us. We relate to it as though it were capable of being re-presented, as though it had already been constituted as "present". We anticipate it as present, and, comporting ourselves towards it as present, recall it as present. Our involvement with it, our receptiveness to it (as that which lets us represent in the first place), our position as the patient of the calling – rather than the agent who nominates – recedes from our view and from our understanding. Yet the giving of what is given "calls" by withholding itself, and since ordinary language and the language of utility are concerned with presence, they cannot articulate the interplay between presence and absence occasioned in this way.

[72] See "Le Thor 1969", 101ff./58ff.

As Andrew J. Mitchell points out, the language of poetry, by contrast, is able "to reverberate with ambiguities and variant meanings, to form connections with other words, other thoughts, and other things through the relations it unfolds and the relations it allows",[73] in ways which may make it more suited to engaging with the revealing-concealing event of being. Poetry reveals while also concealing, appears while also drawing away; it draws together sense in such a way that withdrawal is also always maintained, as meaning is dispersed across a multiplicity of resonances. It may even be considered to entail a kind of self-withdrawal in its very figuration, its placement into a figure.[74] The language of poetry is then perhaps responsive to the revealing-concealing movement of being in that it occasions the *failure* of language to achieve full expression, to communicate with complete clarity and without surplus or loss of meaning, to represent the subject to itself or to another.[75] It shows, but in a manner which gathers into "enigma", rather than laying bare its sense.[76]

Moreover, poetry articulates a singular – "*distinctive*" (to echo Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann's apt emphasis) – experience of the manifestness of beings, rather than attempting to establish a general uniform meaning. It makes explicit specific possibilities for the meaningful appearance of beings within a specific context, rather projecting what it encounters outside of any temporal or contextual particularity, to address it in terms of its discursive representability.[77] Thus poetry also addresses as singular the reader who recollects this experience in a reading: addresses her as a factically involved human being, rather than as a subject over against an object. Poetry's ambiguities and lacunae demand that its sense in each reading be drawn forth anew, but also anticipate the inevitable disappearance of whatever meanings are drawn forth in this way. The specific event of my reading – or even writing – a poem is by nature contingent and impermanent; my understanding will change over time, the manner in which I seize the poetry in my reading will slip into forgetfulness.

[73] Mitchell, *The Fourfold*, 195.
[74] See "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes", 61ff. – hereafter UK (translated as "The Origin of the Work of Art", 38ff. – hereafter OWA).
[75] See WS, 52ff/NL, 60ff.
[76] See, for example, HHA, 24/HHR, 21. "Enigma" here translates "Rätsel".
[77] von Herrmann, *Hermeneutics and Reflection*, 44 (original emphasis).

Poetry therefore arguably invites a relation to beings which differs from representation and utilization, This shift in our relation to beings potentially also shifts the way in which we disclose ourselves in our relation to being – a shift which may approach the affirmation of an otherness that resists understanding, as discussed by Attridge.

The poetic failure of language perhaps also potentially opens a site for a bearing in language (a linguistic *Aufenthalt*) independent from complete incorporation into the order of *Bestand* – of immediate availability, orderability, serviceability and replaceability. The non-arrival of meaning opens the possibility of a shift in agency with respect to language perhaps not unlike the shift we traced in the word *heißen*. We might anticipate our relation to language, and to the beings we disclose through language, as no longer involving the setting-over-against of the subject, but as attuned to responsiveness. Or put another way – since in Heidegger's view, our position as subject is actually itself a response to a certain way in which being has manifested itself – the possibility of *a different kind of responsiveness to language or through language* than making available, ordering, and utilizing is opened. Poetry demands that we let "the word speak to us"[78] – and that we heed its enigma – rather than taking it up as a communication tool.

Again, we hearken back to Attridge's question: W*hat does it mean to respond to literature as literature?* And again, we refer to our reworking of that question: *how does our responding to literature as literature reveal us in our relation to being?* Might our responding to literature – *Dichtung*, in Heidegger's language – entail (or at least prepare for the possibility of) a transformation in our very responsiveness, from one which seeks to master and utilize, to one which attends to otherness by letting its otherness remain ungraspably other? *How does our responding to literature as literature happen as our relation to being, and our relation to being happen as our responding to literature as literature?*

These questions now return us to Heidegger's concern with the call of thinking and the address of being. Thinking is responsiveness to the address of being such that it might be considered the saying of the unconcealment of being. For as long as we remain disclosed to ourselves as

[78] *Hölderlins Hymne: 'Andenken'*, 24 – hereafter HHA (translated as *Hölderlin's Hymn: 'Remembrance'*, 20 – hereafter HHR).

subjects, and for as long as being reveals itself to us as the totality of what can be represented – or as standing reserve – our responsiveness will entail a denial of the concealing and withdrawing movement of being; paradoxically, this in itself entails a kind of withdrawal of being, a denial of its revealing-concealing and eventful character. But were we simply to try to change this situation, for example by developing a different conception of what being and human being entail, this would entail yet another enactment of our disclosure of an order of availability, orderability, etc. (disclosing a different interpretation of ourselves to ourselves as available; utilizing it to change our condition; etc.). Yet poetry offers to thinking the hope of a different language in which to say the unconcealment of being – the potential, perhaps, to say it as the interplay between presence and non-presence, as alterity, as revealing-concealing event. Such saying might anticipate the possibility – anticipate it rather than presenting it – of a transformation in the manner in which we relate to and disclose beings, as well as disclosing ourselves through our relation to beings and our understanding of being. This might also prepare the possibility for being to reveal – and conceal – itself in a way that calls for us to take up a different relation to it – the very relation for which the language of poetry, and its thoughtful saying, has prepared us.

We have emphasized the importance of *distinctive* language, as indicating distinctive possibilities for relating to being and beings. Heidegger draws on the distinctive resonances of the specific words *Dichtung* and *Dichten* (as well as related words such as *Dichter* ("poet")) to disclose possibilities for this manner of responsive attentiveness to the address of being. These words offer Heidegger much – in their etymology and semantic range, in their connotations and their connections with other significant words and ideas – towards preparing the way for a thoughtful saying of the unconcealment of being. *Dichtung* is the German word for poetry (though it also means artistic writing more generally).[79] *Dichten* is the substantive of a German verb which ordinarily means not only "to form a linguistic artwork in a poetic manner", but also "to compose or invent literary works".[80] Heidegger connects these meanings etymologically with

[79] The usual sense of *Dichtung* in German covers both poetry and "literary art" more generally. We have here drawn phrases from the frequently reprinted *Deutsche Literatureschichte* (Krell and Fiedler, 1).
[80] The first definition is translated from DWDS "dichten"; the second is adapted from "dichten" in Wolfgang Pfeiffer's *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, which is cited in the DWDS definition.

the Latin *dictare*, and therefore *dicere* (to say or speak).[81] This allows him to integrate his meditations on poetry with significant discussions concerning language which centre on the word *Sagen*, the gerund of the German verb which means "to say". He finds another powerful resonance in the Old High German root word *tihtôn*, which he relates to the Greek *δείκνυμι*, "to point",[82] and which he is thus able to incorporate into key explorations of Greek thinking.

We contend that the words "literature" and "literary" offer equally rich opportunities for considering the relations between being, the human being, and language, in a way oriented towards responsiveness, and a possible shift away from metaphysical and instrumentalist ways of disclosing beings – and ourselves. What is called literature calls in ways which may differ in important respects from what is called *Dichten* and *Dichtung*, however. Enquiring into the call of literature might then allow for the opportunity to reinterpret important elements of Heidegger's thinking, and open it to new possibilities.

It remains to be asked, however: *what*, in this context, *is called literature?* We have used the word "literature" as though it does not have a complex history, as though it signifies in a straightforward way, as though it were not the case – as Peter Widdowson reminds us – that "literature, its uses and definitions, are invariably historically specific."[83] Widdowson also remarks – this time citing Robert Fowler's essay on literature in the *Encyclopaedia of Literature and Criticism* – that "literary-theoretical and aesthetic definitions of 'Literature'" invariably run into "innumerable dead ends".[84] We would naturally like to avoid devoting critical space in this thesis to exploring such definitional dead ends. Moreover, we stated at the outset that the aim of this thesis is not to define literature; the preceding discussion should indicate that our study is oriented in a very different direction – one in which the indeterminacy of the word may itself open paths of thought. Although we aim to write from within a historical position, the preceding discussion will also have shown that the manner in which we will adopt that position is not by engaging with a history of debates concerning the value and status of literature.

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[81] See, for example, *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"*, 29/*Hölderlin's Hymns: "Germania" and "The Rhine"*, 28–29.
[82] ibid.
[83] *Literature*, 17.
[84] Ibid, 16. The second quotation is from Fowler, *Encyclopaedia of Literature and Criticism*, 23; cited in Widdowson, *Literature*, 16.

We have intimated that Heidegger considers human existence to be characterized by a background sense that the world, and the beings in it, are *in being*, and that our background understanding of *how* they are in being – of what it means for them to there, of the specific modalities in which they are available to our understanding – is always *attuned* in some way. For Heidegger, the manner in which beings are manifest is capable of transforming. It transforms frequently on what we might term a local level as we disclose beings in different modalities of appearance – I "understand" a chair as *for sitting*, disclose it as available in this way, by sitting on it; I understand it in a different way (as an object, perhaps, or as an instance of a class of objects – objects on which one can sit,) when I examine it, compare it to other chairs, attempt to define what a chair is or describe a chair to someone. The preceding discussion concerning the language of utility will also have indicated how more large-scale shifts in the way in which we are disposed to beings is possible: the extraordinary technological advancement of preceding centuries attunes us to the background sense that beings are capable of being analysed and measured scientifically, and utilized as resources. We might approach a (rudimentary) sense of how Heidegger understands history with such epochal positioning in mind. History entails different ways in which being, or the manifestness of beings, is understood – and therefore ways in which we relate to beings and disclose them as available, as well as ways in which we disclose ourselves through our encounter with them.

It is with such a view in mind that we ask "What is called literature?", "What calls for literature?", "What calls forth literature?", "What does literature call for?" *historically*. Rather than attempting to trace a history of definitions, we aim to consider literature in its relation to our background understanding of the manifestness of beings, and beyond this to the *possibility* of that manifestness. In what way do we anticipate the availability of entities to our understanding when we say "literature" – when we write literature, read it, distribute it, study it? In what way do we position ourselves with respect to language – or in what way are we already positioned – when we encounter language *as* literature? In what way might we hope to encounter it – what positions with respect to language and to beings – may be anticipated, even if not actualized, when we call events of language "literature", or are called to them, respond to them? What

possibilities for meaningful expression, what thinking comportments, are opened by the nomination “literature”, what possibilities covered over?

What we call “literature” is therefore necessarily broad and indeterminate (it is worth emphasizing once again that we are not attempting to trace a chronology of different ways of positing the manifestness of the literary work or object). What we intend with the word is not a univocal term. Our reflection on it is intended to be *distinctive* rather than objective. It is intended, that is, only to *indicate* potential ways of understanding how the diverse possibilities for meaningful activity drawn together under the word “literature” might structure and be structured by our relations to language and to being – and to indicate them through a singular, factically placed interpretive act, marked by limitations of perspective and local dispositions, rather than through the projection of “literature” into a field of objects.

The breadth of our approach – and the intention to trace how the specific nomination “literature” anticipates and directs our understanding of being and relation to entities in specific ways – means that we will devote attention not only to what is called literature in the field of literary studies, but also to “literature” in a broader sense. What is anticipated in the word – what calls it forth, in one sense – is the letter: *littera* is the Latin etymon. Literature draws forth in relation to writing – draws forth as a specific possibility opened by writing: the collection and preservation of an arrangement of letters.

We will trace two directions in which this possibility draws our relation to being – two principal ways in which literature positions us to comport ourselves. We might provisionally mark them as follows: first, literature appears to promise the possibility of permanent stable presence in the form of representations. It enables utterances to draw into presence beyond their original context. Letters offer the appearance of meaning as embodied: they appear to bear a sense which remains present in them through their bearing. They offer the appearance of language as the conveyance and preservation of presence through representation, and of the manifestness of beings – their meaningful presence – as representability. What is called “literature” then names writing in general – written works collectively, but also this collection as the accumulation and preservation of representations, and ultimately the promise of the present availability of everything in

existence in the form of discourse: the promise, as Jacques Derrida puts it, of literature as a site of "ideal formations", whose ideality derives from their being "expressible in discourse".[85] Literature in this sense is roughly the *Literatur* of which Heidegger is critical. The projection of literature as a realm of ideal formations, and the understanding of the manifestness of beings as their discursive representability, covers over the self-concealing aspect of the event of the arising of entities into manifestness, since it discloses their meaningfulness as stable and permanently available in representations. We might consider literature as occasioning what Heidegger calls the "abandonment of being" – the reduction of all that is in being to instrumental value.[86]

Second, writing perhaps discloses language as shaped – as figured. The specific shaping of the writing – not precisely of the individual letter as a mark on the page, but of the shape of the language – comes to be what is specifically valued. "Literature" comes to suggest language which has specifically been composed to vary artfully from its everyday expression. The proximity of this sense to the ancient understanding of the "figure" (the Latin *figura*, Greek *σχῆμα*) might suggest why in current usage we speak of rhetorical, poetic and literary devices and techniques almost interchangeably to name artful variations in language – we may note in this regard similar associations in other Western European languages (*Literatur* in German, *littérature* in French). Through such shaping, literature also perhaps discloses the manifestness of beings as singular and distinctive in each case, rather than as uniform discursive objectivity. Such shaping also therefore figures absences of various kinds in relation to whatever is brought into presence: the apparent displacement of meaning from one form to another, for example, as well as the temporalization involved in the interpretive act of making sense of the figure. What is called literature in this way (what may also for example be called *belles-lettres*, artistic writing) then offers strong parallels with what Heidegger considers significant about poetry. Literature in this sense promises the possibility of relating to being as self-withholding – to manifestness as presencing-absencing.

Our distinction here between two "literatures" should not indicate, however, an absolute distinction between two entirely different phenomena. Our aim is not simply to demonstrate that

[85] *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, 66 – hereafter IOG. See also Dastur, "Play and Messianicity: The Question of Time and History in Derrida's Deconstruction", 188 – hereafter PM..
[86] See, for example, *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, 38 (translated as *The History of Beyng*, 35).

"literature" is or should ideally be or become, equivalent to "poetry" in Heidegger's sense. We will consider as significant the simultaneous anticipation of two distinct demands placed on language and by language through what is called literature. We are concerned with the possibility that the interplay between the demand of literature to represent, and its demand to temporalize and withhold, itself promises possibilities for responsive comportment to being.

Our emphasis on literature as written suggests the necessity of some engagement with the thinking of Jacques Derrida; we have in fact already drawn on his insights for clarification. Although he famously critiques Heidegger's privileging of the voice, one might perhaps even read his philosophical project as at least in some ways pursuing a question not unlike our own version of "What is called literature?" in its manifold senses. By his own account, his thinking at least sets out with a question concerning literature in mind. The questions he claims to have had in mind when pursuing the doctoral thesis he eventually abandoned are reminiscent of Heidegger's: "And first of all, what is it to write? How is it that writing can disturb the very question 'what is?' and even 'what does it mean?'"[87] These questions seem to ask about our relation to writing, and the relation of both to being, as well as attempting to attend to ways in which those relations might be shifted or disturbed by, within or through writing. Derrida, like Heidegger, contemplates the relation between language and being (*heißen* in its first sense) and traces its historical configurations (*heißen* in the second sense); he also disturbs and possibly transforms that relation through the ways in which he searches for a response to the demand or promise of language: a writing which itself disrupts the representational language of metaphysics.

There are, however, significant differences between Heidegger's approach and Derrida's. Thus Krzysztof Ziarek, for example, suggests great potential in reading "Derrida's notion of differance"[88] in relation to Heidegger's thinking on language, but also points to a central difficulty entailed in bringing these two thinkers together:[89] "Derrida bases his understanding of

[87] Ibid.
[88] This neologism is frequently left untranslated in English, and given as *différance*. However, we have chosen to render it in English as "differance", spelt with an *a*, to preserve the manner in which its difference from 'difference' is marked only in writing (presuming that *différance* suggests the French pronunciation).
[89] Ziarek suggests that differance could be read as "the productive, spatiotemporal momentum of the unfolding of differences" as understood in relation to Heidegger's thinking of *Ereignis*. *Language After Heidegger*, 109.

writing and grammatology on the deconstruction of the notion of the sign and the reformulation of the role the sign plays in thinking and in the production of meaning".[90] One might argue that Derrida's critique, while pursuing the logic of representational thinking to the point of its collapse, still in some sense maintains that logic. His thinking perhaps continues to concern representation, even as it collapses the distinction between the origin of a pure presence and the supplement of a representation – along with comparable distinctions. His thinking could therefore be interpreted as continuing to concern representation *in that* it collapses these distinctions – in that it re-calls them by countering them. Derrida himself argues that metaphysical systems cannot be escaped, but can only be displaced and transformed from within.[91]

A significant difference then arguably lies in Heidegger's trying to think language non-representationally. He does not set out from an understanding of language as a system of signs, nor does he make the countering of such an understanding the focus of his thinking on language. We will therefore only draw on Derrida specifically to illuminate Heidegger's thinking, to reinterpret it, or to progress it, rather than focusing directly on the rich and extensive work that Derrida himself has produced in its relevance to a thesis on literature.

We will attempt to maintain the course of our inquiry into literature proximate to Heidegger in the multiple respects suggested in the preceding discussion: by tracing significant paths of his thought; by showing ways in which they simultaneously approach the question of the meaning of being, disclose the demand of being, and echo that demand by calling upon the reader to attend to it. We also intend to follow an additional directive of his thinking – one which he offers at the beginning of "Das Wesen der Sprache": "To undergo an experience with language… means to let ourselves be properly concerned by the claim of language by properly submitting to it."[92] This directive circles back on the others: thinking must co-respond to language, which itself voices the call of being. Thinking unfolds as an experience with language, which opens the possibility of responding to being.

[90] *Language After Heidegger*, 109.
[91] See, for example, "Semiology and Grammatology", 24; "Positions", 42.
[92] US, 149/NL, 57.

Our path of thinking will lead us eventually to seek an experience with language through a close engagement with a literary work – with a singular, distinctive event of what is called literature. Through an experience with language, Heidegger hopes "to let that which is peculiarly language's own (*das Eigentümliche der Sprache*) come to be perceived, and *name it*."[93] We hope that a thinking experience of the unfolding of the being of literature might let what is peculiarly language's own – its responsiveness to the demand of being – come to be perceived, and perhaps come to be perceived as literature, or even be called "literature".

Our engagement with a literary work will then serve as the culmination of our attempt to heed to the call of literature. But, as we have indicated, we understand this call as interinvolved with various other appeals or calls – the call of thinking, and also the call of being. It is in Heidegger's thinking that we will seek hints for responding to these multiple calls. While we suggest that the event of literature might in some ways be understood *as* an interinvolvement between language and being, attending to it in a way that might manifest it as such will take a good deal of preparatory work. However, this preparatory work will not merely provide the conceptual background for a practical "application" later in the thesis; it will itself prepare and attempt to progress a shift away from representational thinking and towards a literary calling.

We will therefore engage extensively with Heidegger's thought in order to develop the understanding of being which underlies our approach. It will be necessary to see how we might understand human beings in some essential way in terms of our disclosure of beings, and of ourselves, as well as how our relation to being might then also be understood in terms of this propensity to disclose. Central to these discussions will be Heidegger's understanding of temporality and of presence. We will also need to engage closely with Heidegger's thought concerning language, exploring the significance of *Dichten* and *Dichtung* in this regard. Simultaneously, it will be necessary to read this thought from the perspective of our focus on literature, while searching for ways in which Heidegger's meditations on the relation between poetry and thought as the relation to being might take place as a relation to literature.

[93] "Der Weg zur Sprache", 227n. (original emphasis) – hereafter "Weg" (translated as "The Way to Language" – hereafter "Way"; the cited note is not included in the translation).

These will be the concerns of the first three chapters. Specifically, Chapter 1 will provide a general overview of Heidegger's philosophy. Chapters 2 and 3 will shift to a focus on language. In the former, we will examine the metaphysical situation with respect to language. Here we will also examine in more detail the relation to language called for or called forth by "literature" in its promise of discursive representability. In Chapter 3, we will attempt to draw towards ways of thinking about language non-representationally, with close reference to Heidegger's thinking on poetizing and his engagement especially with the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin. Here we will also attempt to consider ways in which "literature" promises a relation to being as self-withholding revealing-concealing.

It is worth noting once again, however, that this engagement is not meant solely to lay a theoretical groundwork. We have seen in the example of Heidegger's question *Was heißt Denken?* how his thinking arguably *enacts* that which it seeks thoughtfully to explore. It may be argued that this kind of engagement itself calls for and calls forth a kind of responsiveness closer to Attridge's affirmation of an otherness which resists understanding than the usual theoretical process of unpacking, analysing and evaluating the components of an argument. We hope that by attending to Heidegger's philosophical work with the aim of achieving this kind of responsiveness, we will be able to develop our response to the demands and invitations of his work into a significant component of our experience of the unfolding of the essence of literature, rather than simply setting the theoretical grounding for that experience.

It is in the final chapter that we will turn to a specific literary work and attempt simultaneously to attune our responsiveness to that work and to let the work further attune our responsiveness. The work in question is William Blake's prophetic poem *The First Book of Urizen*. This choice is guided by our purpose; *Urizen* does not occur merely as one literary exemplar among many, and our reading of it should not be considered as the application of a strategy which could equally be applied to any other (literary) text.

Urizen seems to place on the reader precisely the kinds of demands touched on above. It is resistant in multiple respects to a straightforward reading. For example, Blake prepared various copies of the "same" book with significant differences between each copy, so that there is no

single unified text; the written text and illuminations likewise refuse to present a unified narrative, and the apparent site of meaning shifts disconcertingly between the media. Ambiguities abound – in the narrative, characterization, setting, and language. Their ubiquitousness arguably effects the kind of unsettling of the everyday relation to language as communicative tool discussed above, and calls upon the reader to participate in the shaping of the book's meaning. *Urizen* perhaps, in a manner which could be likened to Heidegger's own performance of thinking, simultaneously discloses the limits of meaning and calls the reader into a responsive participation in sheltering the possibility of meaningfulness.

Such similarities in approach may perhaps result from significant overlaps between Blake's views on perception and imagination and Heidegger's thought. Nelson Hilton argues, for example, that Blake's works "is an exploration of what it is possible to say", and of how our imagination is addressed "through a language". He even concludes: "[f]or Blake, as for Heidegger, 'language is the House of Being'".[94] Blake and Heidegger both find fault with the interpretation of the being of entities as objectivity, and perhaps share a skepticism of the empiricist position on language – developed especially in the philosophy of John Locke;[95] both seek radical ways of reinterpreting the nature of perception, and foreground the role of imagination in shaping human existence.[96]

However, while these and other similarities between Heidegger and Blake could be productively explored, such an investigation falls beyond the scope of the thesis. Such similarities may speak to Blake's stylistic choices, but our concern is with the demands of the work – or with the manner in which it may position us in relation to being – rather than the intentions of the author.[97]

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[94] *Literal Imagination: Blake's Vision of Words* 9–10. In *Literal Imagination*, Hilton traces and examines in detail multiple ways in which Blake's work discloses the demands of language and elicits the reader's responsiveness.
[95] Northrop Frye's classic work of Blake scholarship *Fearful Symmetry* devotes a chapter to "The Case Against Locke" (3–29). His discussion of Blake's concerns with abstract reasoning on pp. 20–21 show significant parallels with Heidegger. For an example of critical comments the latter levels against British Empiricism, see "Zollikoner Seminare", 185–186 / "Zollikon Seminars", 142.
[96] See, for example, Blake's "A Vision of The Last Judgement": "This world of Imagination is the World of Eternity" (69; E555); and Heidegger's *Beiträge*/*Contributions*: "*As thrown projecting-open grounding, Da-sein is the highest actuality in the domain of imagination*" (312/219; original emphasis).
[97] This is not, however, to suggest a focus on the literary work as object. As the preceding discussion has indicated, Heidegger's thinking attempts to steer away from the conceptualization of beings as objects.

Of greater interest is how *Urizen*'s exploration of the manner in which human beings are addressed by language, as well as its performative call into an imaginative responsiveness to the address of language, specifically concern *written* language. Hilton's insight is once again pertinent: Blake's is a "literal imagination" – imagination figured by and through letters, imagination as literature. The *littera* is specifically at stake in Blake's work generally; but perhaps it is at stake in a particularly pertinent way in *Urizen*, which conflates its cosmogonic narrative with its own ordering as a book – as a written work, as the ordering of thought figured in letters. It thus promises in a singular way to unfold what is peculiar to language (its possibilities and demands for imaginative participation in meaning-making) *as* literature, and unfold what is peculiar to literature as a responsive relation to being.

Chapter 1: Thinking being

We seek a thinking experience of the unfolding of the being of literature. How are we to pursue this experience? By attempting to bring into view that which lets literature unfold in its being, and by attempting somehow to attend responsively to this unfolding. Having taken up clues from both Attridge and Heidegger, we anticipate that is will involve the possibility of a transformation of our relation to language as our relation to being. This in turn would involve (we anticipate) responding to being as unconcealment or disclosure, which would also be (again, we anticipate) to respond to language as literanture.

Since we seek a thinking experience of the unfolding of the being of literature in a manner suggested by Heidegger's thinking, an obvious starting point is a careful consideration of that thinking. We have already indicated some ways in which his understanding of being, human being and language suggest our approach to the unfolding of the being of literature. We now need to develop our interpretation of salient aspects of Heidegger's philosophy in more detail.

The range, depth and complexity of his work make such a task extraordinarily challenging. Thus, from the outset we shall pick out guiding concerns towards which we will develop our discussion. These must initially be stated with limited support; we will need to work towards bringing their significance and meaning to light. Thus we will at times necessarily circle back on our arguments, developing them by slowly adding layers of significance, until the point where their fuller meaning emerges. For Heidegger, such circularity is entailed in any act of understanding: the "'circle' … belongs to the structure of meaning."[98] We can develop an explicit understanding of something only on the basis of an implicit pre-understanding. We are already called into a relation with what we seek to understand – a relation which discloses it as available to the understanding in some respect; we already respond to this availability. Developing an understanding then entails circling back to make explicit and interpret the interrelationships involved in what is already anticipated. A crucial element of Heidegger's own approach is thus pursuing his inquiry within a "hermeneutic circle", since for him an

[98] SZ, 153/BT, 195.

understanding of being is already anticipated – and in a concealed way made explicit – in *all* our comportments; he works to circle back to bring into view and engage with the pre-understanding of what it means to be in being which underlies Western metaphysics.[99] The nature of his approach – its circularity, as well as its complexity –calls us into the circle with him.

We have touched on further challenges in the Introduction. Even his conceptually oriented work is intended only to offer a "formal indication", rather than a concept per se. We have also indicated that a reason for this is Heidegger's aim is to prepare for the possibility of a shift in our understanding of and relation to being. He suggests that such a shift cannot be made through conscious decision; it is not a matter that can be effected through the exertion of will. This means that it cannot be planned and executed through measured analysis. We will see that for Heidegger a significant element of our relation to and understanding of being pertains to what we might ordinarily describe as "affective" dimensions of our existence – though we use the word cautiously, since it might easily bring to mind contrasts between thought and feeling which Heidegger associates with metaphysical thinking. We have moods and basic dispositions, subtle ways in which we take a stance towards beings *before* we measure, analyse, plan and execute. Such dispositions may make us feel that something is worth measuring, analysing or doing in the first place – or indeed suggest to us the possibility of measuring or analysing as ways of doing.[100] These dimensions are deeply embedded in our language and our practices – or, in terms better suited to Heidegger, in the manner in which being addresses us, appears to us, has been "sent" or "destined" to us. Significant elements of Heidegger's thinking entail relating to these hidden dimensions – bringing them to light to open the possibility for their appropriation or transformation.

[99] See SZ, 152–153/BT, 193–195.
[100] See SZ, 134–140/BT, 172–179.

With these considerations in mind, we will attempt to sketch our guiding concerns with reference to two quotations from a 1955–1956[101] lecture course *Der Satz vom Grund*:[102]

> being hails [*zuspricht*] us and clears and lights itself, and in clearing it furnishes [*einräumt*] the temporal play-space wherein beings can appear.[103]

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> self-withdrawing is the manner that being essentially comes to be, that is, proffers itself as presencing. The withdrawal does not shunt being to the side; rather, self-withdrawing belongs, as self-concealing, in the property of being. Being preserves its propriety in self-revealing insofar as it simultaneously conceals itself as this self-concealing. Self-concealing, the withdrawal, is a manner in which being *qua* being lasts, proffers itself, that is, vouchsafes itself.[104]

The first quotation points towards a way of understanding being; towards the relation of human being to being; and towards the relation of both to beings. Heidegger's concern and approach are immediately framed as at least broadly concerned with phenomenology,[105] which Heidegger defines in *Being and Time* as letting "that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way

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[101] The date of the lecture course places it within Heidegger's so-called "later thinking". Some critics have argued that a radical shift takes place in Heidegger's thought in the period of around the late 1920s or early 1930s – marked, especially, in his 1931 lectures *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet* (translated as *The Essence of Truth*). William J. Richardson famously distinguishes between a "Heidegger I" and "Heidegger II" on the basis of the pronounced differences he traces in Heidegger's later approach (*Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, 22). However, Heidegger himself denied "a change in standpoint" or the "abandoning of the fundamental issue of *Being and Time* ("Ein Vorwort. Brief an Pater William J. Richardson (1962)", 149/"Preface", 27–28). Some interpreters (for example von Herrmann – "The Unity in the Transformation of Martin Heidegger's Thinking"; Parvis Emad – *On the Way to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy*; and Thomas Sheehan – *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift*) have taken Heidegger at his word, and have offered convincing ways of tracing continuities across his so-called "early" and "late" work. Frank Schalow offers a clear account of the continuities between BT and *Beiträge* (also extensively accounted for by von Herrmann) in his "Introduction" to *Heidegger, Translation, and the Task of Thinking: Essays in Honour of Parvis Emad* (see esp. pp. 35–39). We intend to follow the likes of von Herrman, Emad, Schalow and Sheehan, and read a "unity" even in the at times apparently significant transformations in Heidegger's work.

[102] *Der Satz vom Grund* – hereafter SG (translated as *The Principle of Reason* – hereafter PR).

[103] SG, 91/PR, 62 (translation modified).

[104] SG, 104/PR, 70.

[105] His particular phenomenological approach differs substantially, however, from those of for example Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Von Herrmann provides a detailed and systematic comparison between Husserl and Heidegger in the already cited *Hermeneutics and Reflection*.

in which it shows itself from itself".[106] His thinking appears then to be directed towards the manifestness of beings, with beings understood as what *show* (*φαίνει*) themselves. Also suggested here is an understanding of being as temporal-spatial, as "clearing", and as somehow granting the appearance of beings – as disclosing them in that the possibility for the appearance of beings is granted *to humans*. This characterization is thus immediately related to human being, in that the possibility for the appearance of beings is granted *to humans*. This relation is also alluded to in the suggestion that being "hails" us. Such hailing indicates that the relation is in some way expressed through language – *zusprechen* means "speak to" or "address", with an additional sense of "grant[ing]". Heidegger's linguistic register hints at the possible *participation* of the human being in the disclosure and appearance of beings; yet as the patient of the "grant" – as the one who is addressed – the human's position seems distinguished from that of representing consciousness or subjectivity.[107] Implicit is also a demand for *response* from human beings to being's address – the appearance of beings, and (dis)appearance of being, entails a conversation: listening and answering. Thus, Heidegger's concern appears to be framed not only in terms of phenomenology, but also in terms of hermeneutics: a hermeneutic phenomenology, in which the interpreter participates through their interpretation in the self-showing of what shows itself.[108] Thus there seems to be a connection between the address of being which grants (in or through language) and the granting of a space for beings. While for Heidegger this address is *spoken* – (*gesprochen*), we will consider also whether and in what way it may be considered to be *written* – figured in letters. If being does demand a lettered response, or if a reciprocity between being and the human being plays out in literature, what kind of demand does being make, and what kind of response do we figure?

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[106] SZ, 34/BT, 58.

[107] This marks an important distinction between Heidegger's thought and Husserl's phenomenology of consciousness.

[108] Although Heidegger for the most part stops using the word "hermeneutics" in his later writings, his close attention to language in these writings may be understood as developing and transforming, rather than abandoning, what he aims for in his hermeneutic approach. See "Gespräch", 94ff./"Dialogue", 12ff. for a discussion concerning his move away from the term "hermeneutics". See also *Beiträge*, where he insists that "Da-sein never lets itself be demonstrated and described as something extant. It is to be obtained only hermeneutically" (321/*Contributions*, 226). For a convincing accounts of Heidegger's thought as hermeneutic phenomenology, see von Herrmann, "Way and method: hermeneutic phenomenology in thinking the history of being" and Frank Schalow, "How Viable is Dreyfus's Interpretation of Heidegger? Anthropologism, Pragmatism, and Misunderstanding of Texts".

Also significant in the quotation is the suggestion that being clears and lights itself: through granting the appearance of beings, being invisibly shows itself in that appearance. The passage is concerned with the appearance of being itself, and the way in which *that* appearance is what grants the appearance of beings. Heidegger's phenomenology in fact does not concern the self-showing of objects (or *noemata*, in Husserl's terms), but of being. The hermeneutic emphasis on the "address" of being indicates the possibility that its appeal will sound differently in different contexts.[109] Since this self-showing entails "conversation", its appearance – the appearance of being – necessarily shifts on the basis of the singular exchange of address and response. Thus, there is also a concern in the passage with the history of being – with its shifting appearance, and the sense that its furnishing of different play-spaces may let beings appear differently. Anticipating our concern with literature (with the possibility of a written "address") the shifting quality of the reciprocity involved – its singular appeal in each instance – is also potentially significant. Writing of course enables a discursive event – a text, an instance of writing – to be recollected: enables an utterance to extend beyond the context of its composition, and to continue "uttering" after the death of its author. If thought figured in letters returns constantly as the same across shifting appearances of beings – if literature reappears as the same in differently furnished play-spaces – how does this affect the address of being?

The second quotation also points us towards a specific way of understanding being. In this case, emphasis is placed on the "proffering itself" of being suggested in the first quotation specifically *as self-withdrawing*. It suggests a specific direction in which we will have to develop our understanding of being as clearing-lighting and allowing beings to appear: we need to understand why and how the appearance of beings is granted through concealment – as dis-*closure*. This second quotation, in its suggestion that being "preserves its propriety" in concealing itself, raises further questions pertaining to the human relation to being: how do we respond to this concealment? Is our manner of responding to it a comportment which participates in the preservation of its propriety? Is it possible to respond with such a comportment? These questions clearly respond more immediately to the directive of the thesis. However, they cannot properly be brought into view or developed without reference to the concerns of the first quotation; nor

[109] More specifically, as we will see, it sounds differently in different languages, in different words, in different ways of "saying" being.

will they be fully developed in this chapter, as such development requires a detailed engagement with the question of language in Heidegger's thought.

The meaning of being

The quotations suggest something of the intricacy, and indicate some of the problematics, of Heidegger's thinking. Nevertheless, the understanding of being clearly emerges as a central concern. We might then usefully begin by attempting to unpack important considerations pertaining to Heidegger's *Seinsfrage* – the "question of being", purportedly "the only question which has ever moved Heidegger": "what does 'being' mean [*besagt*]?"[110]

The fact that the question concerns not simply what being *is*, but also what it *means*, highlights the abovementioned interinvolvement of being, beings, and human being. We might bear in mind that, at the beginning of his magnum opus *Being and Time*, Heidegger famously speaks along similar lines about the necessity of stating anew "*the question of the meaning [Sinn] of being*".[111] "Being" cannot be understood as an isolated object; to attempt to do so would be to project an understanding of being as substance, entity or entity-like, as representable in discourse, in advance of any attempt at contemplating being. In Heidegger's view, being rather involves the provision of the possibility for relations between entities, contexts, meanings, and so forth to appear and to have bearing; its representation in the isolation of a concept, or its projection as isolated, then seems particularly unsuitable for registering this fundamentally relational manner in which being unfolds. Unfolding in relations also involves temporalization: it is through the anticipation and recollection of meaningful ways of arranging and making explicit such relations that beings draw into sensible appearance. Treating being as present in a concept thus draws it into a concealed appearance – one which disguises or distorts its essential manner of unfolding.

Heidegger suggests that in Western metaphysics and ontology since Plato, being has in fact been understood in the manner of an entity. He tries to convey the emphasis of this tradition, and distinguish his own concern, through careful distinctions with respect to the German word for being – *Sein*. This is a substantive of the verb *sein* ("to be"), and therefore might be considered to

[110] "Seminar in Zähringen 1973", 377 (translated as "Seminar in Zähringen 1973", 67).
[111] SZ, 1/BT, 1 (translation modified).

convey a verbal sense – a sense which points towards the granting of the space for the relational unfolding of beings, their emergence into and disappearance from manifest appearance. In Heidegger's view, Western metaphysics and ontology have largely missed this verbal element; consequently, they have for the most part not studied being – *Sein* – per se, but what he calls being*ness* – *Seiendheit*. This is because the tradition has framed its enquiries into being with a focus on what Heidegger calls *das Seiende*.[112] The latter is yet another word derived from *sein*; it is a substantive formed from the present participle *seiend*, which one might translate as "existent"; *das Seiende* therefore literally means "that which is existent", "that which is in being", or "what is". There is probably no completely satisfactory English equivalent, but what Heidegger suggests is quite aptly conveyed by the word "beings"; although *das Seiende* is singular, Heidegger frequently uses the word to refer collectively to everything that may be considered "in being" (*seiend*).

Metaphysics and ontology do not enquire into "*being* itself" [Sein *selbst*] – be-*ing* with the verbal element – but into "what is *in being* as such" or "*beings* as such" [*das* Seiende *als solches*].[113] Consequently, the tradition's enquiry into being – *Sein* – is limited to the "being *of beings*" [*Sein* des Seienden].[114] Given this orientation towards *das Seiende* – towards beings – the metaphysical understanding of being concerns "what is most in being about beings" [*das Seiendste am Seienden*].[115] For the most part, this metaphysical understanding thereby entails the abstraction of that which "lets"[116] anything be existent [*seiend*] – an abstraction into the common

[112] In the opening of *Being and Time* to which we have referred, Heidegger anticipates his own question concerning the meaning of *Sein* with reference to Plato's question concerning the meaning of *seiend* – of "in being". For a concise discussion of these distinctions and their significance, see Gregory Fried and Richard Polt's translator's introduction to *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. viii-x. Also see Thomas Sheehan *Making Sense* (esp. 3–23; 31–45).
[113] "Was Ist Das Sein Selbst?", 423; my emphasis.
[114] Ibid, 424; my emphasis.
[115] *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 140 – hereafter EM (translated as *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 205 – hereafter IM).
[116] The word "let" perhaps appears somewhat imprecise within this context, where the sense seems rather to be of "conducing" towards entities being existent. However, Heidegger places significant emphasis on the word *lassen* (to allow or let; to cause something to happen; to leave, let remain; to stop or cease; to refrain) with respect to being; as we noted in the Introduction, he interprets *Es gibt* – "there is", the givenness of manifestness – as *Es läßt*. Consequently, translators frequently render *lassen* in this context as "let" or "allow"; we have followed this convention.

determination of "beingness" [*Seiendheit*][117] as what determines "what really is",[118] and provides the "ground of beings" *as* beings.[119]

One answer to the question "what does 'being' mean [*besagt*]?" might then be: *in Western metaphysics*, "being" means "beingness". If we consider that *besagen* more literally means "bespeak" – means "mean" in the sense of what something reveals of itself through telling (*Deine Miene besagt alles* –[120] your face/expression says everything, reveals everything, bespeaks your love, anger, kindness, fear) – then we can see that we are involved here with the question concerning being's *Zusprechen*, its hailing or addressing us in such a way as to light itself and thereby grant a space for the manifesting of beings. We can also see that we are concerned with the self-clearing and self-lighting of being: with its *revealing* itself in some way. Anticipating our concern with literature, we might speculate whether being's *Zusprechen* could also appeal in letters – whether beings might *figure* itself in some way.

The significance of these contentions may be drawn out by considering Heidegger's framing of his concern with the meaning of being in the sense of its *Sinn*. As we indicated in the Introduction, Heidegger maintains that all human comportments express a foregoing understanding of being. When I see a chair, I do not have to work out whether the chair exists or not, or what that existence entails, in order to relate to it in any way (including by seeing it, sitting on it, moving it or bumping into it, and so forth). I already take it as existing, understand its existence in some way. This "taking" is so basic, so fundamental to my engagement with absolutely everything, that I take it for granted. For the most part this "taking for granted" is not itself apparent to me; as we will see, such taking for granted is an aspect of the self-withdrawal of being. Yet without this concealed taking, nothing would or even could make sense – at least in the manner in which "sense" pertains to human being.

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[117] See, for example, *Beiträge*, 425/*Contributions*, 299, where Heidegger suggests that, in metaphysics, being is considered to have "the character of beingness". Heidegger does not claim that the tradition explicitly adopts the term *Seiendheit* to designate what it studies; rather, in this tradition, *Sein* (or whatever other designation it is given) is understood *as Seiendheit*.
[118] EM, 140/IM, 205.
[119] "Grund des Seienden". "Die Onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik", 126 – hereafter OVM (translated as "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics", 59 – hereafter OCM).
[120] Example taken from DWDS: "besagen".

One might approach an understanding of what Heidegger is suggesting by analogy with the background sense we have of local circumstances or conditions. Rather than sitting on it, someone throws a chair high into the air. This does not make sense. This person throws a series of other items into the air too. Standing in a spotlight on a stage, dressed in a clown's outfit, they begin to juggle the items, including the chair. It makes perfect sense after all. The context grants the usually senseless action of hurling a chair into the air a meaning so imminently graspable that I do not need to spend any time puzzling over its significance. The disparity between the chair's usual meaning and the one it has been displaced into in this context may even provide a certain pleasure, as my usual sense of the chair – granted in turn by its relations to its more usual other contexts – is so firmly established that its transgression is exciting. Yet this transgression is not senseless, because it occurs within the context of a circus act which grants the sort of displacement (into a circus performance, and into the air) which the chair is currently undergoing. We might say that the circus and its furnishings, the stage and high ropes, spotlight and clown's outfit, *furnish* the space within which the throwing of the chair takes place, such that this throwing is disclosed in a meaningful way. While we are within this specifically furnished space, all of us in the circus – performers and audience – comport ourselves towards whatever appears according to the *directive* granted by these furnishings: according to the way the furnishing of this space addresses us and discloses the space. When I look at the chair, I also look beyond it to the context within which it appears – the horizon of meaningful relations which make its appearance meaningful.

Sinn – "sense" – is then roughly that "within" which we bear ourselves "towards" beings: "*Sinn* is that within which the understandability [*Verstehen*] of something is 'held' – is maintained or maintains itself".[121] It is the *Woraufhin* of the human being's projection of its possibilities: the "whereupon" or "wherefore" (i.e. "why") – that which indicates the cause, motive or circumstance, or underlying "matter" at hand: that which indicates the sense behind a situation. Heidegger's use of the word *Woraufhin* as an explanatory term for "sense" characteristically relies on the expression of movement and directionality to convey the relational quality of his concerns; in this case, it points to the way in which a particular relational context (space, room,

[121] SZ, 324/BT, 370 (my translation). Macquarrie and Robinson translate the passage in the following way: "meaning is that wherein the understandability of something maintains itself". See also SZ, 151/BT, 192–193.

clearing) is established (furnished) by the interrelationship of all that appears in it, such that it forms a *background* – such that it suggests the sense *behind* a situation. *Wor-* suggests "where", *-auf-* "on" or "onto", and *-hin* a movement away from the agent: *Woraufhin* – projection onto the over-there.

The sense of being, then, would be the relational space furnished for the disclosure of everything that is in being – and the appearance of any beings whatsoever – as well as the directives indicated by the relations within that space to take whatever appears within that space in this or that way. Underlying our preceding analysis of *sein*-words – as well as much of Heidegger's engagement with specific words and "sayings" – is the sense that a significant element of the "furnishing" of this space, of the clearing of the possibility for the appearance of beings, is accomplished through or within language. As Frank Schalow points out, the way in which Heidegger attempts to recall, and address anew, "the question of what we actually mean by the word 'being'",[122] "already harbors a nascent concern for language".[123]

More specifically, what is implied is that the role language plays in the clearing of being and beings, and therefore in the human relation to being and beings, pertains at least in some way to its concrete expressions, rather than only to a more abstract role as a signifying system or means of expression or communication. It would appear to matter *how* we *say* being (or how being bespeaks itself). The word *Sein* is not simply an item in a language "system" which subsists "over and against an independent actuality" from which it, like a "screwed-on" bit of "apparatus, can be unscrewed and replaced again" by some other apparatus.[124] The word "cannot be reduced to any specific ideational content"[125] in the same manner as being itself cannot be reduced to an ideational content. There is "a distinctive 'tonality' endemic to [a word's] expression".[126] And responsiveness to it is not simply a matter of correctly deciphering its message – successfully unpacking the ideational content it bears, but of being receptive to this "pitch" and "inflection"[127]

[122] SZ, 1/BT, 1 (translation modified).
[123] "Attunement and Translation", 294.
[124] "Zur Seinsfrage", 402 – hereafter "Seinsfrage" (translated as "On the Question of Being", 303 – hereafter "Question" (translation modified)).
[125] Schalow, "Attunement and Translation", 294.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

and "following its directive"[128]. As we will see, Heidegger's thinking suggests that part of what this tonality entails is its stretching beyond whatever content it represents, both towards the past of a language tradition within which the word appears, and towards possible unanticipated meanings in the future. A word speaks within the context of a specific "furnishing" of the space within which it appears, and – crucially – in its 'tonality' can contribute significantly to the furnishing of that space.

While Heidegger's concern is invariably with the *tonality* of words, we might also consider whether and in what way it matters how we *write* being. As we will see, Heidegger in fact experiments with ways of *writing* being which in compelling ways resist the reduction of the word to ideational content. He seeks ways to follow the directives of graphic transformation – *inflection* (bending, *inflectere*) rather than tone – towards a transformed relation to being when he scores out the word *Sein*, for example, placing it under erasure. Likewise, when he uses the archaic spelling of "being", *Seyn*, the transformation of the word is silent, making its appeal only in graphic form. This does not suggest a prioritization of the letter – for Heidegger the "silent" nature of the appeal of these words is important. Rather such experiments with the written word indicate that the figured form, as well as the sounded utterance, makes an appeal – and that that appeal in some way entails a reciprocity with being.

The specific 'tonality' – or inflection – of a specific word *for being* might then reflect aspects of our pre-theoretical experience, our pre-philosophical understanding, as well specific ways in which we are attuned to the world: "in the most diverse ways, being speaks everywhere and always, in every language."[129] Paying attention to the prevailing expressions – or figures – of a specific language, and to the interpretations of the understanding of being reflected in that language, can then reveal being's "directive" (or aspects of it): the manner in which being bespeaks itself and clears itself in a specific language, or the manner in which it therefore calls on us to relate to it and to beings. This is a fuller explanation of why we suggested earlier that the question of what being *zusagt* concerns the self-clearing and self-lighting of being. The fuller implication is that if indeed we always bear ourselves within an understanding of being, and if

[128] See, for example, *Parmenides*, 18 (translated as *Parmenides*, 13).
[129] "Der Spruch des Anaximander", 338 (translated as "Anaximander's Saying", 276).

the particular understanding in which we bear ourselves reveals being as beingness, we conduct ourselves in relation to being as *a being*, and disclose beings from within this relation – respond to this directive.

Heidegger's thinking also suggests that a responsiveness to language might allow for the possibility of shifting our attunement, hence allowing being and beings to call us and call on us in new ways. In "in the very foundations of our being language as resonant signification roots us to our earth and transports [*versetzt*] and ties us to our world".[130] This is why Heidegger considers all language in some sense to entail "translation" – *Übersetzung*.[131] In language we are ourselves *übergesetzt* – "placed over", or, in André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz's suggestive translation, "transported".[132] We might think of this "transportation" as occurring between different clearings of being – different ways in which the clearing has been furnished, different ways in which the configuration of the relations within it directs us to relate to being and beings. Through his attention to word meanings, and to the inflections of figures such as *Seyn* and *Sein* under erasure, Heidegger seeks ways of awakening our responsiveness to historical callings of being, but with a view to opening possibilities for future callings and transformations.

Οὐσία

If within Western metaphysics being is understood as beingness, even this distortion or concealment of its essential unfolding may be considered a directive of being. Beingness is a manner in which being "appears" – is disclosed – as concealed. It still appears in some sense – as covered over – and careful attention to that appearance may help to bring being itself into view in a way which attends to its essential unfolding.

Thus, Heidegger devotes significant attention to exploring the resonances (and perhaps inflections, shapes, specific figurations) of what he regards as "foundational words" of Western thought. These are words which he considers to be thoughtful expressions of lived experience, which respond to the appeal of being and attempt to articulate the human relationship to and role

[130] "Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst", 146 – hereafter "Macht" (translated as "The Will to Power as Art", 145 – hereafter "Power").
[131] *Parmenides*, 18/English, 13.
[132] Ibid, 18/12.

in manifestness. Their response has a specific tonality; this tonality has resonated with Western thought for centuries, and largely attuned its understanding of being – attuned it to the understanding of being as beingness. Through a close examination of these words, Heidegger attempts to loosen the sedimented layers of distortion which have accumulated in Western thought, and to reveal a responsiveness to being which underlies it. This process of "destruction" (*Destruktion*) demonstrates the contingent history of contemporary philosophical concepts, and an unawareness on the part of the tradition of what it is that has determined its development in the first place. It also demonstrates the significance of the question of being, as this question is shown to underlie and continue subtly to be expressed even in contemporary philosophy.

However, Heidegger also sees these words as offering a "directive" – a *Weisung*[133] – towards an experience of being as both granting and self-withholding. This is evident, for example, in his reading of the word *ἀλήθεια* in his 1942–1943 lectures on *Parmenides*. The example also illustrates important aspects of Heidegger's approach to "following" such directives. In the passage he begins by examining the "main features" – *Hauptzüge* – of the word.[134] But with characteristic attentiveness to the resonances of words, he composes the passage in a way that draws attention to the etymological connection, usually unnoticed, between *Zug* ("feature"; *Hauptzug* is "main feature") and *ziehen*: "to draw or pull". The word's *Züge* are not precisely "qualities" which lie before us; rather, they seem to be the ways in which the word *draws* our thinking, and therefore us. This drawing is directed by a *Weisung* – a "directive",[135] "order" or "instruction", but more literally a "pointing" or "showing" [*Weisen*]. The *direct*-ive – the pointing, showing, which draws thinking in a specific direction – "leads" [*führt*] us in such a way that we may be "transported" – *übergesetz* – into a manner of thinking attuned to the Greek way of relating to being –[136] to see the chair tossed into the air from the perspective of the audience member at a circus, rather than the tired traveller looking to rest their feet. From within the attunement pointed out by the word and its features, *ἀλήθεια* resonates differently – not as "truth", which would be its dictionary definition, but in the manner "indicated" by the word's "drawing": as "unconcealment". These resonances allow us to hear the word as a response to the

[133] Ibid, 19/13.
[134] Ibid.
[135] This is Schuwer and Rojcewicz's apt translation.
[136] *Parmenides*, 18–19/English, 13.

call of being – the word directs us to the interinvolvement of *λήθη* (forgetfulness) with appearance (*ἀλήθεια*), of absence with presence. Thus, the word makes audible – though indirectly, or indistinctly – snatches of being's call through its responsive articulation of the experience of that call. Through such a recollection of the address of being, the possibility is opened to attend to its call differently.

Heidegger's interpretive appropriation of *ἀλήθεια* is crucial to the development of his thought, and requires closer examination. However, his attempt to follow its directive is best understood in relation to his consideration of another foundational word: *οὐσία*. Heidegger sees this word as having shaped the way in which Western Metaphysics has traditionally approached the "beingness of beings". *Οὐσία* is an abstract noun formed from the present participle of the verb *εἶναι*, which means "to be". It may be considered roughly equivalent to the English word "being", though its abstractive ending *-ία* suggests that "beingness" would perhaps be a more literal translation.[137] However, the word tends rather to be translated as "essence"; "substance"; "substantiality"; and "nature" ("of that which is a member of a kind"); these translations indicate clearly the directionality of its interpretation in Western thought.

As a favoured term for conveying key ontological concepts in ancient Greek philosophy, the word is extremely significant in the history of Western metaphysics. One might suggest that the discipline of philosophy unfolds from the interrogation of the question of the *οὐσία τοῦ ὄντος* – the *οὐσία* of beings.[138] Plato, for example, uses *οὐσία* as a word for "beingness"– for that which all beings have in common;[139] likewise, in Aristotle's famous account of the different ways in which being is "said" to be, *οὐσία* is the "primary sense": it names the "beingness" or quiddity

[137] The word itself "derives from *οὖσα*, the feminine nominative present participle of the verb 'be'". It may be argued that this form has a "more abstractive" sense "than when the participle is used as a noun" (Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 139). The abstractness conveyed in this form may be rendered in English "by adding the ending 'ness' to 'being' as a translation of the participle form" (Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle and the Work of Art: Poiesis in Being*, 23).
[138] For Heidegger, this framing is problematic in that it seeks to understand manifestness in terms of beings. The "leading problem of ancient metaphysics, as formulated by Aristotle, is *τί τὸ ὄν*" – *what are beings?* – and "[w]hat is inquired into is the *ὄν ᾗ ὄν*" – *das Seiende als das Seiende*, *beings as beings*, *ens qua ens*. (*The Essence of Human Freedom*, 54. See also, for example, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta 1-3 On the Essence and Actuality of Force* 21).
[139] As Heidegger points out, for example Heidegger's in *Grundfragen der Philosophie. Ausgewählte "Probleme" der "Logik"*, 67 – hereafter *Logik* (translated as *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"*, 61 – hereafter *Logic*).

which can be qualified in various ways.[140] In its translated forms, notably its Latin renderings as *essentia* and *substantia* (and derived terms in other European languages), it has since served as the conceptual ground for the development of significant aspects of the Western philosophical tradition.

The word *οὐσία* then serves as a prime example of the Western tendency to understand being as a being. Heidegger specifically associates it with abstract, substantive "beingness": he insists that *Seiendheit* is "the only adequate translation for οὐσία".[141] Given its influence, one might suggest that it is not only a preeminent instance of the interpretation of being as substantive beingness, but the inaugural naming of being according to this interpretation.

Yet Heidegger points to the polysemous force of the word. What it "says" or "bespeaks" (*besagt* – "means", "signifies"; we might also in an anticipatory way suggest "figures")[142] is not *only* "beingness". *Οὐσία* "is not an artificial expression which first occurs in philosophy"; "it belongs to the everyday language and speech of the Greeks". In this respect it differs from the English "beingness" and German *Seiendheit* which are its literal translations;[143] the slippage from the verb (*εἶναι*) to substantive (*οὐσία*) probably occurred quite naturally and seamlessly in Plato and

[140] "For some things are said to 'be' (*ὄντα λέγεται*) because they are substances (*οὐσίαι*); others because they are modifications of substance (*οὐσίας*); others because they are a process towards substance (*οὐσίαν*), or destructions or privations or qualities of substance (*οὐσίαν*), or productive or generative of substance (*οὐσίας*) or of terms relating to substance (*οὐσίας*), or negations of certain of these terms or of substance (*οὐσίας*)." [*τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὅτι οὐσίαι, ὄντα λέγεται, τὰ δ' ὅτι πάθη οὐσίας, τὰ δ' ὅτι ὁδὸς εἰς οὐσίαν ἢ φθοραὶ ἢ στερήσεις ἢ ποιότητες ἢ ποιητικὰ ἢ γεννητικὰ οὐσίας ἢ τῶν πρὸς τὴν οὐσίαν λεγομένων, ἢ τούτων τινὸς ἀποφάσεις ἢ οὐσίας: διὸ καὶ τὸ μὴ ὂν εἶναι μὴ ὄν φαμεν.*] (*Metaphysics*, 4.1003b)

"Now of all these senses which 'being' has, the primary sense is clearly the 'what,' which denotes the substance [*οὐσίαν*]… and all other things are said to 'be' because they are either quantities or qualities or affections or some other such thing." [*τοσαυταχῶς δὲ λεγομένου τοῦ ὄντος φανερὸν ὅτι τούτων πρῶτον ὂν τὸ τί ἐστιν, ὅπερ σημαίνει τὴν οὐσίαν… τὰ δ' ἄλλα λέγεται ὄντα τῷ τοῦ οὕτως ὄντος τὰ μὲν ποσότητες εἶναι, τὰ δὲ ποιότητες, τὰ δὲ πάθη, τὰ δὲ ἄλλο τι*] (*Metaphysics*, 7.1028a.)

[141] "Vom Wesen und Begriff der *Φύσις*. Aristotles, Physik B, 1", 260 – hereafter VWBP (translated as "On the Essence and Concept of Φύσις in Aristotle's *Physics* B, 1", 199 – hereafter OECP).

[142] The tonality of the words "mean" and "signify" jar with Heidegger's thought on language. Hence, we will at times rely on the somewhat less idiomatic "say", and the slightly inelegant "bespeak", but offer parenthetical clarification where necessary.

[143] *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit. Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 50 – hereafter *Freiheit* (translated as *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 35–36 – hereafter *Freedom*). As Heidegger points out, the Greek phrase *οὐσία τοῦ ὄντος* means "the beingness of beings [*Seiendheit des Seienden*]". This construction is quite "artificial" both in English (where it would be more natural to say "the being of beings", if we were to use the participle of "to be" rather than terms such as "essence") and in German (where one would similarly be more likely to speak of "Sein des Seienden". In contradistinction to Greek, this formulation is therefore restricted to philosophical usage (ibid, 50/35).

Aristotle's attempts to reflect philosophically on being. The everyday, pre-philosophical meaning of *οὐσία* – what it *also* bespeaks (what it also connotes, and therefore what also resonates in it even when it connotes something else) – is "that which is one's own, one's substance, property",[144] or, as Heidegger puts it, "the beings that belong to one, one's possessions, house and home". It therefore usually names *specific* entities: "the beings over which one has disposal". The reason for this is because "they are fixed and stable, because they are constantly attainable and at hand in the immediate or proximate environment" – so "close at hand" that they are "presented on a plate as it were, constantly presenting themselves." They are "what is closest and in this constant closeness they are present and at hand in a definite sense." Thus the Greeks bespeak the being of beings – beingness, *Seiendheit* – as fixedness and stability, as the attainability of that which is at hand, as "*being-always-present*".[145] What *οὐσία* names, what "is understood by beingness", is "constant presence" [*ständige Anwesenheit*], "presencing constancy" [*anwesende Ständigkeit*].[146]

When Heidegger refers to presence as *constant* – and even emphasizes this constancy by nominalizing it in the chiasmic formulation *ständige Anwesenheit, anwesende Ständigkeit* – he does not interpret it in terms of duration.[147] He reads *ständig* etymologically – that is, as "characterized by standing". What he means by *constant* may be implied in what is expressed etymologically in the English word: *con-stant*, drawn together (*con-*) into a stand (Latin *stans*, equivalent to the German *Stand*). He speaks of constancy as "taking and maintaining a stand" that stands "in itself".[148] The German *Stand*, which is constantly implied in Heidegger's *ständig*, can mean the literal taking and maintaining of a specific position – standing on feet – but also has extended senses pertaining to status, position, condition or situation. *Ständige* and *Ständigkeit* might then suggest being drawn into a position, condition, situation. *Stand* can also designate the place where something might be stood (as in the English "stand" in its positional sense), as well as what stands on such a stand (as when in English "stand" designates, for example, a booth). Heidegger hints at these senses when he invites us to understand *Ständigkeit*

[144] Liddell and Scott, "οὐσία".
[145] *Freiheit*, 51–52/*Freedom*, 36–37.
[146] Ibid, 52/37 (translation modified. The original gives: "constant presence, enduring constancy").
[147] "[W]hat is decisive is not the duration".
[148] EM, 46/IM, 65.

as standing in relation to a boundary – as being drawn into a limit which, by limiting, "defines" and "gives footing and stability".[149] What stands "stands *here*", rests within the boundary of those relations which delimit its stand, allowing it to "stand *forth*".[150] Standing forth entails precisely *Anwesen* – "coming to presence",[151] appearing into the "determining determinedness" of a "self-showing".[152] That such coming to presence itself appears to everyday human experience as an availability comparable to the availability of property – of what is one's own – is conveyed both in the German word *Anwesen*, which usually means "property", and the Greek *οὐσία*. Heidegger's chiasmic expression suggests that *ständige* and *anwesende*, as well as *Ständigkeit* and *Anwesenheit*, the delimitation of a stand and the availability of property, imply one another: "Something comes to presence. It stands in itself and puts itself forth. It is." [153]

Despite our comment that understanding being as *Seiendheit* entails a distortion, Heidegger takes *οὐσία* "as expressing an essential comportment of the human being to the beings of his constant and most proximate environment".[154] As Françoise Dastur points out, "Heidegger does not call into question the privilege given to presence (*Anwesenheit*) in the Western tradition."[155] However, we might consider this privilege as misplaced in that tradition, where it is taken to mean "the same as" being.[156] Arguably, it more properly points towards the *appearance* of beings, or their manifestness: with reference to the first of our guiding quotations, we might suggest that when being hails us and clears and lights itself, and in clearing furnishes the temporal play-space in which beings can appear, we call that appearance "presence". The

[149] VWBP, 269/OECP, 206.
[150] We refer in this sentence both to Hofstadter's and Mitchell's translations of *Herstand* from "Das Ding" (in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 168 and *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, 7 respectively). The former offers "stands forth", the latter "stands here". I have added emphasis to Mitchell's translation. Both arguably illuminate key aspects of what Heidegger communicates. Ultimately, Mitchell's translation is probably better suited to our interpretation, in that it emphasizes the late Heidegger's "topology" of being, though within the present context both versions illuminate important aspects of Heidegger's view of presence. It should also be noted that we are here to a degree conflating two different readings of presence; however, the reference to Heidegger's understanding pertaining to the thing has illustrative value in this context.
[151] EM, 46/IM, 66. Heidegger draws attention to a similarity in the meanings of the Greek *οὐσία* and the German *Anwesen*. The latter is the substantive form of *anwesen*, and originally meant "presence" or "the present", but has the everyday meaning of "property".
[152] *Freiheit*, 71/*Freedom*, 50.
[153] EM, 46/IM, 66 (translation modified).
[154] *Freiheit*, 54/*Freedom*, 38 (translation modified).
[155] "Time, event and presence in the late Heidegger", 408 – hereafter "Time".
[156] "Time and Being", 2.

temporal play-space is that within which beings can *present* themselves; that which the clearing-concealing-granting-bespeaking grants is the possibility of the presence of beings.

Yet we must simultaneously recall the self-withdrawing and concealing dimension of being, and indicate that what Heidegger understands by presence unfolds in a dynamic interplay with absence. The Greek thinking of beingness as constant presence points us towards the temporal dimension of being – towards which the word *Sein* also points. However, it does not convey the understanding that "being is determined as presence by time" – [157] does not ultimately indicate "the event of presence, an event that is simultaneously presence and absence, the self-withdrawing of Being happening on behalf of the apparition of beings"[158] (though, as we will see, other Greek foundational words – including *ἀλήθεια* – perhaps do point more firmly in this direction). Instead, this thinking of constant presence gives "privilege to a definite mode of time, the present (*Gegenwart*)";[159] consequently, it comes to appear "that what *is* in the fullest meaning of the word cannot be temporal, i.e. transitory and perishable, but on the contrary supratemporal, atemporal or eternal."[160] This view "set the ontological tradition onto the path of what we might call a 'metaphysics of substance,' i.e., a metaphysics that understands all beings, including this being that is man, as being already present, as *vorhanden*, this word having not so much the meaning of what is 'objectively present' in the sense of being 'in front' of us, as the meaning of what is 'before' us, 'already present' (*schon anwesend*, *schon da*)."[161]

Thus, the word *οὐσία* gestures in two directions: one towards a pre-theoretical sense of the being of beings as presence – as their availability, their manifestness. This gesture could be considered to bring more clearly into focus the *Seinsfrage*, or to suggest in which direction it should proceed. It leads us to ask: why are there beings instead of nothing? How is it that beings appear to us, appeal to us, demand our responsiveness? How is it that they are disclosed *as in being*, as *beings*? A falling stone relates to the floor by transferring the force of its momentum; in doing so, it makes manifest the floor's hardness, and its own. Yet (as far as we can tell) the stone does

[157] Ibid.
[158] Dastur, "Heidegger and Derrida on play and difference", 15 – hereafter "Play".
[159] Dastur, "Time", 400.
[160] Ibid, 406 (my emphasis).
[161] Ibid, 408.

not make sense of the impact or relate to the floor as meaningful – *as a being*. What is it about the human relation to being that not only manifests the physical characteristics of beings (the hardness of the floor, for example), but also discloses their being in being? *Οὐσία's* first gesture provides a clue towards our question about the participation of the human being in the appearance of beings. Appearance here suggests presence or availability (as well as – we anticipate, though *οὐσία* has perhaps not clearly gestured towards this – simultaneous absence or withdrawal).

The second direction in which *οὐσία* gestures is towards the historical directive of being which attunes the Western philosophical tradition to the present. It suggests clues for understanding this directive in terms of the privileging of the present, and of understanding beings in terms of substance. Thereby it also gestures towards the possibility of counter-directives – attentive to absence and to temporalization – which may transform it.

Property of the everyday

Pursuing the first directive of *οὐσία* – towards an understanding of presencing – offers us a way of approaching Heidegger's famous account of everyday Dasein. This analysis of the structure of everyday human existence attends to the manner in which beings are available to human beings: their *Anwesen* in a delimited stand.

It is important to note at the outset, however, that when we speak about presence, we do not mean sheer, unremitting immediacy. Beings appear to us, are "available" to us, in different modalities. Heidegger famously distinguishes between two, "readiness-to-hand" (*Zuhandenheit*) and "presence-at-hand" (*Vorhandenheit*). We can see the former mode of presence when (in another famous example) someone in a workshop reaches for and uses a hammer to hammer in a nail.[162] Unlike the relation between falling stone and floor, the relation between carpenter and hammer entails *meaningful* presence: the hammer, the hammering, the workshop, all make sense to the carpenter. The hammer appears as *for hammering* – this without the need for the carpenter consciously to consider or analyse its appearance.

[162] SZ, 69/BT, 98.

We can see the latter mode of presence (*Vorhandenheit*) when I inspect the hammer, study its form and construction, and so forth. In this case, its presence does not emerge from its use, but from the "look" it presents to me (broadly speaking). It is not constituted by its usability through its use, but rather disclosed through the assertions I make or propositions I formulate about its qualities, characteristics and properties.

In Heidegger's view the Western philosophical tradition has disproportionately prioritized the latter manner of relating to and disclosing beings – it is well suited to what Dastur calls the "metaphysics of substance" – taking it as the *primary* way in which we disclose them. However, Heidegger suggests that this mode of presence is in a sense derivative. Why this is can be seen by reconsidering the former mode – *Zuhandenheit*.

We suggested that, in its use, the hammer is disclosed as *for hammering*.[163] This *for*, while disclosing the hammer, also in a way points away from it – towards the task, towards the nails, toward construction, towards the table being built, towards the table's use for sitting at and resting things on, and so forth. That is to say, it points to a totality of references or involvements onto which the meaningful appearance of the hammer can be projected, and within which it can emerge.[164] Recalling our earlier discussion of *Sinn*, we might suggest that it points towards possible ways in which what is related in this totality might relate. It points towards the furnishing which lets the hammer make sense.

Thus, the manner of presence of the hammer suggests that the hammer is already disclosed to me in some way before I participate in its presencing in the act of hammering. The possibility of its appearance relies on my being involved in a totality of involvements, and on the possibility of my letting the hammer be involved. Letting something be involved means "becoming affected in some way", and 'to be affected" is possible only in so far as I have in some way been "attuned" [*bestimmt*] in such a way the what I encounter "can *matter to [me]*".[165] Such "attunement"

[163] The "being of the ready-to-hand has in itself the character of *having been assigned or referred*" (SZ, 83–84/BT, 115).
[164] "*With*" any discovered entity "there is an involvement it has *in* something" (SZ, 84/BT, 115).
[165] Ibid, 137/176.

[*Stimmung*] is "*what makes it possible first of all to direct [myself] towards something*".[166] It points to the "affective" dimension of our existence to which we alluded earlier: to the manner in which we are referred – *angewiesen* – [167] to a totality of relations which have significance ("*Bedeutsamkeit*" – here we refer by analogy once again to the "furnishing" of a particular space, for example a circus, for particular relations of meaning). Attunement suggests that, in always already having been *angewiesen* (referred, but also assigned, directed, *disposed*), we have always already "submitted" ourselves to having beings "matter" to us in the first place.[168]

Thus, Heidegger indicates the structures or directional affinities which make the pre-theoretical worlding possible. We always find ourselves within some situation – within a past, a language, a world not of our choosing – into which we have been "thrown" and to which we are disposed. Heidegger calls this situation "facticity",[169] referring to the sheer "fact" of our existence in each case within some contingent historical situation: a specific language, a specific culture, a specific economic situation, and so forth. These facts of my existence differ significantly from, for example, the "factual occurrence of some mineral",[170] in that facticity suggests meaningful involvement in one's situation. The facts of my existence distinguish my situation from everyone else's, making specific possibilities available to me and closing off others. Put another way, my facticity differs from the "*factuality of the factum brutum*" in that I am "*delivered over*" to my situation.[171] If we note that "delivered over" in this context translates *Überantwortet* – literally "answered over" – the sense is conveyed that my facticity places a demand on me: it addresses me, such that my taking up of the possibilities it opens entails a response, an answer. Being delivered over also entails submission to what is beyond one's power to determine or control: I do not choose the circumstances of my entry into existence, but simply find myself already within them. My factical situation is also beyond my comprehension. In Hans-Georg Gadamer's words, facticity is "that which cannot be clarified", and which "resists any attempt to attain transparency or understanding."[172]

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[166] Ibid, 137/176.
[167] Ibid, 87/117; 137/183.
[168] Ibid, 137/177.
[169] For a fuller "genealogy" of the term, see François Raffoul and Eric Sean Nelson's "Introduction" to *Rethinking Facticity* (pp. 2–9).
[170] SZ, 56/BT, 82.
[171] Ibid, 135/174 (original emphasis).
[172] "Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity, Subject and Person", 281.

Heidegger indicates this manner of always finding ourselves involved in the facts of our existence with the term *Befindlichkeit*,[173] "disposedness". That I am disposed means that I am "always already opened to the world";[174] this implies also that I am from the outset and continually constituted by a "past" – by circumstances which lead up to and indeterminately both make up a situation and dispose me to it in specific ways. I find myself, then, "attuned" in some way, referred and directed to a totality of involvements, within which certain potentialities of the hammer appear as available to me in relation to my practical concerns; by hammering I make explicit, lay out, display, and even in a sense *interpret*[175] these potentialities, as well as their relation to the task I am performing, the purpose for which I am performing it, and so forth. Heidegger specifically characterizes this making explicit or interpretation – what he calls *Auslegung* – as the "development of the understanding" – *Verstehen*;[176] in it "the understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it".[177] The development of the understanding is therefore not "the acquiring of information about what is understood; it is rather the working-out of possibilities projected in the understanding."[178]

We might refer back to the characterization of beingness as constant presence. If the delimited standing forth of a being in its beingness entails a *Stand*, then the human comportment towards that beingness might be said to entail *Ver-stehen*: the transition of that beingness into its stand. We express this cautiously, because a reductive understanding of the relation between *Stand* and *Verstehen* might overemphasize the human role in the self-standing appearance of beings – we recall that we are first disposed in such a way that the *Verstehen* of the *Stand* seems possible or worthwhile. We note also that presencing, understood from the perspective of Heidegger's thinking, is not the product of human agency. What the relation between *Stand* and *Verstehen*

[173] Heidegger derives this term from the "common German expression 'Wie befinden Sie sich'" (BT, 172n.) which translates as "How are you?" or "How do you fare?", but more literally means "How do you find yourself?" It therefore suggests something along the lines of "the state in which one may be found" (ibid.). One might, for example, "*findet sich in Verlegenheit*" – be embarrassed, but more literally "find oneself in embarrassment".
[174] Dastur, "Essence", 228.
[175] Heidegger in fact calls this laying out and displaying *Auslegung*, which is usually translated as "interpretation".
[176] SZ, 148/BT, 188
[177] Ibid, 148/188
[178] Ibid, 148/188–189.

usefully brings into view is the interrelationship between meaningful disclosure and human interpretation, as well as the transitional nature (*ver-*) of the drawing into a stand.

With reference to *Vorhandenheit*: it is not derivative because human beings are intrinsically or more originally practical, so that the theoretical gaze is secondary. It is derivative because in order to disclose the hammer as present-at-hand, I have to "*change over*" the "*understanding of Being* by which [my] concernful dealings with entities within-the-world"[179] have already disclosed the hammer. That is to say, it is derivative because the hammer *has already appeared* to me, is already disclosed in the space within which it appears in relation to some 'furnishings' or others. When I disclose the being as *vorhanden*, I cut it off from "that significance which… constitutes environmentality",[180] and project it as lying over against me. However, such cutting off is already one of the many possibilities which are presented through and within the relational totality within which the hammer has already been disclosed. My theoretical gaze is simply a different explicitation[181] of the possibilities which stretch out beyond the hammer – and me.

Whether I use the hammer for hammering, repurpose it for another use, or make assertions about its properties, its presence relates to and is granted to it by factors outside of the hammer itself. We catch sight of an aspect of that absence which is co-implied with presence in the form of the presencing being's relation to the references which constitute its presence. We also see that prioritization which the "metaphysics of substance" affords to the temporal present overlooks significant temporal elements which appear to the conditioning of the present as present. The hammer's appearance in the present arises from and refers to the factical conditions of that appearance. I can reach out, pick up the hammer, and hammer a nail (or inspect the hammer) because I exist in a world in which there are hammers, in which their uses are more or less prescribed and described in restricted ways, in which I may need at some stage to hammer in a nail. As we shall see, these circumstances in a sense remain suspended even in the moment of the apparent "presentness" of the hammer, while the temporal "moment" which draws towards the past is an "absent" presence in that presentness.

[179] Ibid, 361/412 (translation modified).
[180] Ibid, 158/200.
[181] This is Dastur's well-motivated translation of *Auslegung* ("Essence", 229; 238n.23).

Likewise, the hammer's appearance in the present is in part composed of a futural moment. I can only make potentialities available by reaching towards them, by anticipating the hammer's uses, and this only by anticipating and projecting myself towards my own possibilities. I reach for the hammer *in order to*, and this *in order to* refers to the future – the activity to which I will relate the hammer, which itself refers forward towards a broader purpose or motivation (I reach for the hammer in order to hammer in the nail in order to hang the picture on the wall in order to make my study a more pleasing environment in which to work and study, etc.).

These diverse temporal moments which constitute presence are significant elements of what Heidegger aims to bring into view through his consideration of the "temporal" element of the word *Sein*. They are also significant elements of what the metaphysical tradition misses, omits or distorts in its interpretation of the beingness of beings – specifically in the interpretation of *οὐσία* as substance. These temporal moments also allow us to bring more clearly into view the manner in which the human being relates to the clearing-concealing-granting-bespeaking of being. Although we do not yet have the latter fully in sight, we might now lay out the former more definitively; this may also provide further clues for the understanding of being.

Temporality and thrown projection

We have seen that the manner in which we relate meaningfully to beings is by being *extended* in various ways. We extend beyond ourselves into our involvements, and into relational contexts, thereby *attending* to beings. We exist also in a state of being "extended" away from the present. We place ourselves into possibilities as we attend to what is around us. Whatever we encounter pertains to possibilities: possible ways for us to be in the future, possible ways for us to relate to beings. We also encounter whatever we encounter in some pre-given context, and the contingencies of that context limit the possibilities with which we are presented. Yet our attention to possibilities, our intention pertaining to possibilities, and our extension into possibilities are still prior.

By anticipating possibilities, we render beings meaningfully present in specific ways. Heidegger uses the word *Entwurf* in this regard. We translate this as "projection", its direct Latin-English equivalent. "Projection" suggests throwing (*iacio*) ahead or in front of (*pro-*). *Entwerfen* (the

verbal root of *Entwurf*) is similarly composed of the verb *werfen* ("to throw") and the prefix *ent-* (which suggests "away from").[182] We might bear in mind that *Entwurf* also means "sketch", "draft" or "design"; *Entwurf* thus points to the future: the draft or design which indicates how we intend to use our materials, rather than the finished product. But what Heidegger considers most important in the word is the "pro-" [*Ent-*], which indicates that "in projecting [*Entwerfen*], this occurrence of projection *carries* whoever is projecting *out and away from themselves* in a certain way."[183]

Projection carries us away in such a way that we remain with ourselves. We do not entirely "transcend" ourselves or our situation,[184] in the sense of leaving them behind so that they no longer concern us. This is because in projection "what occurs is precisely a peculiar *turning towards themselves [*Zukehrung*] of whoever is projecting*."[185] The projection moves us into the possible – specifically "into the possible in its possibly being made possible, namely into something possibly actual."[186] We might make sense of Heidegger's convoluted phrasing here if we bear in mind that he is speaking phenomenologically, and is concerned with how entities *show themselves from themselves* – with their appearance to us. "Actual" – *wirklich* – refers to meaningful appearance: something actual – *ein Wirkliches* – is something which is "at work" – *im Werk* – which means that has been placed forth into an appearance: is presently available. *Ermöglichen*, making possible in the sense of "actualizing" a possibility, pertains to availability, to placing what is possible into an appearance. *Ermöglichen* does not simply entail the realization of physical capabilities, however, but the manifesting of beings in different modes of presence directed by the projection itself, and therefore the possibility of making possible. Possibility does not here mean *sheer* possibility, the infinite leeway for anything to appear in any way; every "possibility brings its intrinsic *restriction* with it."[187]

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[182] Emad and Maly point out that "one of the functions of the prefix *ent-* is to unfold the action of the verb to which it is attached" as part of their justification for translating *entwerfen* as "to project open". "Translators' Forward", in *Contributions*, xxviii.
[183] GM, 527/FCM, 363. The italicized words translate "*von ihm weg- und fortträgt*".
[184] Heidegger's understanding of Dasein's ek-static temporality actually *does* suggest a transcendental – or more properly a transcendental-horizonal – structure. However, although we refer to this structure, a detailed examination of the degree to which Dasein may or may not be considered transcendent falls outside the scope of this thesis. For a detailed consideration with reference to both *Being and Time* and *Contributions*, see Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger's* Contributions To Philosophy *An Introduction*.
[185] GM, 527/FCM, 363.
[186] Ibid: "in das Mögliche in seinem möglichen Ermöglichen, nämlich: ein mögliches Wirkliches".
[187] Ibid, 528/363.

Significantly, when I encounter entities and engage with the world around me, I do not do so in a series of discrete, disconnected events. We have already indicated that whatever I encounter, I encounter within a meaningful whole, an expanse of interconnected significations and references – an overall field in which things make sense to me. Projection projects towards, and simultaneously *forms*, a meaningful whole – what Heidegger calls "world". Heidegger says projection "ist in sich *ergänzend*"[188] – this means "intrinsically *completing*",[189] but perhaps with the double sense that what is enacted in the verb *ergänzen* is the *effecting* of (*er*-) the whole (*ganz*), *by means of* (*er*-) the whole. It is completing "in the sense of a casting ahead that is the *forming* of an *'as a whole'* into whose realm there is spread out quite a specific dimension of possible actualization."[190]

Thus, whatever we encounter actually comes at us *as though from the future*, since it has been anticipated by a projection. This state of always being extended towards the future, and in a sense existing in, or at least via, the future, is one dimension of what Heidegger understands by temporality. We have already prepared the way for illuminating another in our mention of *Befindlichkeit*. We said that we are always "thrown" – *geworfen* – into some pre-given context which restricts the possibilities available to us. Heidegger calls the state of our "thrownness" *Geworfenheit*. He uses this term to suggest firstly the connectedness between the two forms of extendedness which characterize human being: *Entwurf* and *Geworfenheit*. Both involve "throwing" or "casting" in order to indicate that human existence is not a matter of self-presence – of the self-presence, for example, of a consciousness. The term *Geworfenheit* specifically suggests how we are always "cast" into the possibilities we have available as the basis of our projection. Heidegger's favoured term for the human being is Dasein – "being" (*sein*) "there" (*da*). *Geworfenheit* bespeaks the manner we are "thrown" into the "there" of our "being". Cast into possibilities, we are not constituted "from the ground up" – that is to say, our existence lacks any firm "basis"; we are in a sense "groundless".

[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid, 528/363–364: "im Sinne des vorwerfenden *Bildens* eines '*im Ganzen*', in dessen Bereich ausgebreitet ist eine ganz bestimmte Dimension möglicher Verwirklichung."

"Thrownness" indicates that human being extends in a manner which can to a degree be differentiated from that extension entailed in *Entwurf*. We might understand this second extension as twofold: it is a "from" in that it stretches back to the contingencies which condition the projection into possibility, and a "towards" in the sense that it stretches towards those contingencies with the aim of *Ermöglichen* – of "being at work" within the very "world" from which it projects – rather than for the sake of sheer possibility. Since this extension pertains, in a sense, to the past – to what was already in place before any given individual – it can, by analogy to "futural" projection, be considered in terms we usually associate with time (with past time).[191]

Added to the moments of past (of *Befindlichkeit*) and of future (of *Verstehen*, of the projection of the understanding), there is a third: the present (*Gegenwart*). The present is what we ordinarily understand as the "now" between the future and past. Heidegger sees human beings in their everyday existence as tending towards prioritizing this temporal modality – specifically in what he terms its "derivative" mode of making present.

Despite this everyday appearance that the present is the primary mode of human existence, the preceding discussion should indicate that presencing is a complex temporal "event" stretching across past, present and future – and certainly not reducible to the sheer presence of the present. Rather, beings draw into present availability through "temporalization" – the unified draw of the three equiprimordial temporal dimensions. The structure of temporality is an expanse which extends across these "ekstases": the future, having-been, and the present.[192] The word "ekstasis" suggests being outside oneself, drawn beyond (*ἐκ-*: "out") the boundaries of the present stand (*ἵστᾰ́ναι*: "to stand"). Human existence as Dasein, as being-there, is temporally structured, and draws outside itself – towards the future, back to what has been, and even out among present beings. Heidegger therefore characterizes such existence as *ek*-sistence – as essentially ecstatic, as transcendental.[193] Yet human transcendence does not entail drawing into a suprasensible realm. Carried in the direction of the temporal ekstases, human ek-sistence draws open an expanse – a horizon – within which beings can be meaningfully disclosed. As Parvis Emad and

[191] For a lucid explanation of Dasein's temporal projection, see Sheehan, *Making Sense*, 133–153.
[192] SZ, 329/BT, 377 (translation modified).
[193] See, for example, "Brief", 157/"Letter", 248.

Kenneth Maly point out, projection – *Entwurf* – is more properly "projecting-open".[194] Dasein transcends into an horizon, and is thereby "cleared [*gelichtet*] in itself… in such a way that it *is* itself the clearing".[195] Heidegger's term for "clearing" is *Lichtung*, which means "clearing" as in an open space in a forest, but also hints etymologically at "light" (in earlier writings Heidegger emphasizes this link with light, with Dasein as "illuminating").[196] With this spatial image in mind, we might think of ek-stasis as establishing a distance at which the human being is in itself displaced from itself, as well as from other beings. The clearing is then this space within which beings are disclosed. When beings appear, they appear in or through this clearing – rather than, for example, by first being intuited. The clearing is what makes the human being "open" to relating to beings, and "bright" so that beings may 'appear' in its light.[197]

What we have sketched here is largely the transcendental-horizonal perspective Heidegger develops in his early career, culminating in SZ. By Heidegger's own admission, this account is strongly oriented towards the human being's participation in the presencing of beings; it may easily create the inappropriate impression that this presencing is "a human accomplishment".[198] It also fails satisfactorily to indicate how and why we have suggested so emphatically that language could be considered the human relation to being. In SZ, Heidegger attempts to develop an account of the existential-ontological foundation of language as "discourse" – *Rede*, a German word which has the usual meaning of "talk". He associates discourse with the Greek word *λόγος*, which he understands in SZ as "the fundamental faculty of being able to speak discursively, and accordingly, to speak".[199] Speaking discursively in turn means "*δηλοῦν*, making manifest".[200] It therefore pertains to the self-showing of entities. This ontological foundation of language is then that which allows the articulation in meaningful fashion of the ways in which we are disposed and of our understanding.[201] An aspect of how this articulation functions may be apparent by considering the etymological link between *λόγος* and *λέγειν* – "to gather". If we always encounter beings in a totality of beings, and Dasein's projection is "completing", then *λόγος* as "gathering"

[194] "Translators' Foreward", in Heidegger, *Contributions*, xxix.
[195] SZ, 133/BT, 171. See also SZ 350–351/BT, 401–402.
[196] See SZ, 133/BT, 171.
[197] See SZ, 350–351/BT, 401–402.
[198] "Le Thor 1969", 335/40.
[199] GM, 441/FCM, 305.
[200] SZ, 32/56 (translation modified).
[201] SZ, 162/BT, 206.

may be understood as the drawing of beings into a whole. Thanks to discourse, I not only feel disposed to using a hammer to hammer in a nail and am able to reach towards that possibility and make it explicit, I am also able to *say* what it is about.

Later in his career, Heidegger elaborates his understanding of language within the context of his transformation of the structures of projecting-open and thrownness outlined above.[202] As Schalow explains, from the transformed perspective projection "is no longer conceived as opening up the factical possibilities of Dasein", and "'thrownness' is no longer thought of as 'thrownness' into that facticity."[203] Instead, projecting-open "appears as the act of opening up a historical clearing" – historically disposed *by being* – "into which the thinker who enacts the projecting is 'thrown'".[204] What Dasein "projects open" is, in Thomas Kalary's words, what is "thrown-forth to it from out of the truth of being."[205] What is entailed by the "truth of being", and the manner in which being historically disposes human being – or *is itself* historically disposed, addresses human beings in a specific disposition – hold the clues to the increased importance Heidegger affords to language. It is within language – within the pitch, inflection and tonality of a historical, spoken language – rather than simply within the structure of discursivity that being gives its directive, disposes us, addresses us, demands responsiveness. However, to better appreciate how and why this is, it is necessary first to return to Heidegger's attempt to follow the directive of foundational Greek words. For it is their tonality which attunes Heidegger's understanding of the "truth of being", and his thought on language.

From *φύσις* to *ἀλήθεια*

We have traced how *οὐσία* indicates that "[f]or the Greeks, 'being' fundamentally means presence",[206] but need now to orient our discussion towards what presence entails for the Greeks. Heidegger finds hints in this direction in another Greek word for being, which expresses more explicitly the temporal dimension of being audible in *οὐσία*. The word in question is *φύσις*,

[202] We follow here Parvis Emad's interpretation that Heidegger *retains* and *transforms* these structures in his "later" thought, rather than discarding them. This demonstrates a Heidegger's thought which argues against distinguishing, as Richardson does, between "Heidegger I" and "Heidegger II". See *On the Way to Heidegger's* Contributions to Philosophy, esp. pp. 3–16 and 200–201. See also Schalow, "Introduction", 37.
[203] "Introduction", 37.
[204] Ibid.
[205] "Heidegger's Thinking of Difference and the God-Question", 123.
[206] EM, 46/IM, 66 (translation modified).

which is conventionally translated as "nature", and "signifies growth". Heidegger claims, however, that it named "being" itself: that which lets beings come to be, rather than the "beingness" of *οὐσία*. *Φύσις* says "emerging", "arising", "self-opening", not as "a quantitative increase, nor as 'development,' nor even as the succession of a 'becoming'",[207] but as *coming-into-appearance*. It says "arising" in the sense of "rising into the open",[208] into manifestness. It says stepping forth into an appearance, hence "placing into and thereby enacting" a limit such that a being may stand as the being that it is.[209]

Considered from the perspective of *φύσις* – from the perspective of the interpretation of Greek thinking as attuned to the understanding of being as *arising*, and as therefore oriented towards engaging with beings as what step forth into (and step away out of) appearance – we might understand *οὐσία* as "saying" something very different from what it has been interpreted as saying in the Western metaphysical tradition. It does not name "essence" as the property which makes a being the being that it is, or that which is universal to all beings of its kind; nor does it name "substance" as that which underlies a being and bears its various properties. With reference to the "unsaid" of its attunement to the experience of being as *φύσις*, *οὐσία* instead names emergence into emergence.[210]

Thus, the Greek relation to being as constant presence might be interpreted as not involving a relation to modern perspectives on *sheer* presence – the presence of the present as complete in and of itself, with no reference to an absence of any kind. The Greek experience is one of *coming to* presence. The understanding of presence in terms of limit suggests that this *coming to* entails being drawn into a relation with what is not itself present in what presences – with another presence, the other in the form of a boundary or limit. For the Greeks, "the limit, being itself brought forth, first brings to appearance what presences"[211] – allows what presences to take on its "appearance" [*Aussehen*], its *εἶδος*. "Standing-forth" into or "standing-here" in a stand entails standing in relation to other positions, conditions or places, to which the standing refers; this

[207] "Wie wenn am Feiertage", 56 (translated as "As When On a Holiday", 79).
[208] Ibid.
[209] EM, 46/IM, 66 (translation modified).
[210] See, for example, *Logik*, 97/*Logic*, 86.
[211] UK, 71. Translation taken from Brett Davis, "Horizon and Open Region", p. 237.

reference, and the interrelationship between stand and reference, contribute to the composition of the stand. We recall the fortunate prefix *con-* in the English word which suggests being gathered together: *con-stant* as being *drawn* into a stand, *com-posed*. Such gathering or drawing suggests movement or change, rather than eternal uniform sameness. If constancy suggests stability – a manner of being at rest (at rest within a specific determinedness) – this sort of stability must itself be determined by the possibility of a change to which the rest refers (perhaps through resistance, perhaps through anticipation), and which it is resisting in its restfulness.

Heidegger associates this drawing together or gathering what lies before one with the Greek word *λόγος*. What is of particular significance is that Heidegger associates *λόγος* both with drawing together what lies before one into a *meaningful* appearance, and with the gathering together of the multiplicity of everything that is in being into a whole. We indicated earlier that no being is encountered in isolation, grasped outside of any reference point, and then integrated into human understanding. This means that we do not encounter the world as collection of entities:[212] "objects" are not "at first present as bare realities, as objects in some sort of natural state", "in the course of our experience" receiving "the garb of a value-character so that they do not have to run around naked."[213] Rather, whatever we encounter is always encountered in relation to the "world around us",[214] to the world as "furnished" – *as a meaningful whole*.

With reference to the standing forth of the being into its *Ständigkeit*, the *λόγος*, in its gathering, is what allows the taking together of some relations which together form the limits of the self-standing being, and taking apart others.[215] The possibility of standing-in-itself and of limit is grounded in relationality. Through its gathering and taking-together-and-apart, *λόγος* sorts through the relations and grants the appearance of the self-standing presence, which then in a sense appears by addressing itself to the *λόγος*.

[212] See GM, 404/FCM, 279.
[213] *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research*, 69.
[214] *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 61.
[215] The reference here is to Aritotle's *σύνθεσις* (synthesis, "relating") and *διαίρεσις* (diaeresis, "taking apart") – see GM, 455ff/FCM, 314ff.

While it may be enlightening to read *οὐσία* in relation to *φύσις* and *λόγος*, the ways these words name being may be better understood in the light of another significant Greek word: *ἀλήθεια*. It is perhaps *ἀλήθεια* which most decidedly points Heidegger's thinking towards what he considers the "unthought"[216] of Greek thinking – the truth of being.

The standard meaning of the word *ἀλήθεια* is "truth". However, Heidegger draws on the literal[217] sense apparent in the word for significant clues to understanding being and the human relation to it. The word combines the stem *λήθη* (or a closely related word) with the "*α* privativum"[218] – the Greek prefix *α-* in its grammatical function as indicating a word meaning the opposite to the meaning expressed in the stem. *Λήθη* usually means "forgetfulness", "forgetting" or "oblivion", though we might more easily approach the way Heidegger understands it (bearing in mind that his reading arguably entails a transformation of the way we understand forgetfulness) if we provisionally think of it as suggesting "to be concealed" or "to escape notice".[219] Thus *ἀλήθεια* suggests *ἀ-λήθη*: the withdrawal of the modality of concealment: "something… which was not seen at all"[220] is no longer concealed, and is now capable of being noticed.

The connections between *οὐσία*, *φύσις* and *ἀλήθεια* can readily be made apparent. If a being's *οὐσία* is its con-stantly presenting itself as determinable (to the *λόγος*), then we might now redescribe *οὐσία* as "the unconcealedness of the being":[221] the being's *not* escaping notice grants the possibility for every presentation of it as present, every determination of it, every manner in which it is available to us. And we might understand the being's "coming forth and emerging" into presence – *φύσις* – as a coming forth from concealment into unconcealedness.[222] "'Α*λήθεια* – revealing into unconcealment – is the essence of *φύσις*, of emergence".[223]

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[216] See, for example "Heraclit", p. 261, in *Seminare*: "Ich mache einen Vorschlag: das Ungedachte ist die *ἀλήθεια*."
[217] *wörtlich* – for example *Parmenides*, 18/12.
[218] *Parmenides*, 20/14. The "*α* privativum" is the alpha-privative, the Greek prefix *α-* in its grammatical function as indicating a word meaning opposite to the meaning expressed in the stem.
[219] Ibid, 61/42. "Unnoticed" actually translates the word *λανθάνω*, which belongs to the family of *λήθ*-words in Greek, and which Heidegger discusses to extend our understanding of *λήθη*.
[220] *Logik*, 98/*Logic*, 83.
[221] Ibid, 97/*Logic*, 86.
[222] "Whence? From concealment. Whither? Into unconcealedness". *Logik*, 96/*Logic*, 86.
[223] *Heraklit*, 173 (translated as *Heraclitus: The Inception of Occidental Thinking and Logic; Heraclitus's Doctrine of the Logos*, 130).

We might at this stage register three significant features of *ἀλήθεια* – it is these three *Hauptzüge* to which we alluded at the beginning of the chapter when discussing the way in which Heidegger attempts to follow the directives of foundational words in order to be transported by them in the direction of a different attunement. The three key indications *ἀλήθεια*[224] offers us at this stage are: firstly, the *λήθ*-stem points us towards concealedness – draws us into trying to understand the appearance of beings in their manifestness (and therefore being and truth) "within the realm of experience" of concealedness or concealing.[225] Or, we might suggest that we are in fact drawn to a single "realm [*Bereich*] of the 'concealed-unconcealed'",[226] a *Be-reich* which grants both concealment and unconcealment their "reach" (*reichen* is "to reach").

Secondly, the alpha-privative "indicates… something like a suspension [*Aufhebung*] or cancellation [*Beseitigung*] of concealment".[227] It suggests that presence entails some sort of tension between unconcealment and concealment. We might bring this tension into view if we consider the alpha-privative as suggesting taking away or withholding concealment: a being does not simply lie independently in its being and truth – its presence emerges, or it emerges into presence, through the removal or banning of concealment. There is an active, ongoing interaction between unconcealedness and concealment: "In the essential unfolding of truth as un-concealedness, some sort of conflict [*Streit*] with concealedness and concealment holds sway."[228]

Thirdly, *ἀλήθεια* therefore indicates that unconcealment is in some sense in each case *obtained*. It emphasizes that constant presence is presence in motion – bringing to appearance that which evaded notice before, or maintaining in appearance that which could slip out of notice. More concretely, it suggests that all our engagement with beings, insofar as they do not escape our notice – insofar as they are *noticeable*, and we are able to relate to them in any way at all – entails a "taking out from concealment"[229] of one form or another. The question therefore arises:

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[224] Here we are not following Heidegger in a precise manner, as he actually describes the *Hauptzüge* of *ἀλήθεια* as gathered into a "fourfold" (*Parmenides*, 19/13). However, within the context of our present discussion, focusing on the three features we are highlighting will arguably be more illuminative.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid, 20/14.
[228] Ibid. Translation modified. We have translated *Wesen* as "essential unfolding" because we have not yet done the preparatory work for understanding it as "essence" in a way which would not suggest beingness.
[229] *Logik*, 97/*Logic*, 86.

what does this taking out of concealment entail? We might then also suggest that this particular indication of the word *ἀλήθεια* points towards a possible *relation* between unconcealment and the human being to whom present beings appear in their unconcealment; this consideration in turn also invites us to consider the manner of the human being's relatedness, and responsiveness, to concealment and concealedness.

On the way to absence

In order further to elaborate the concealing element of the "truth" of being, it is necessary to trace more carefully its displacement into the characterization of beingness which has directed Western thought – specifically by looking at key elements of Plato and Aristotle's reception and reformulation of the understanding of being implied by *οὐσία*, *φύσις*, *λόγος*, *ἀλήθεια*. Broadly speaking, Heidegger suggests that, in their specific ways of interpreting presence (and despite their thought emerging from an underlying sense of *οὐσία* in relation to *φύσις* and *ἀλήθεια*), these philosophers opened the possibility for a very different interpretation of presence from the one Heidegger attributes especially to archaic Greek thinking. Their interpretation has been taken up in Western metaphysics, and underlies Western thought. Heidegger considers them largely to have overlooked, or at least to have left unaddressed, the temporal dimension of being, as well as the interrelationship between appearance and concealment necessary for the disclosure of beings as in being.[230]

In the absence of a careful consideration of the relation between the *ἀ-* and the *λήθη*, the Socratics tend to interpret constant presence as what remains unchanged throughout the various transformations – the replacement of one appearance by another – undergone throughout the presentation of the present. What remains unchanged in this way is thought to *underlie* all changes,[231] all movement, in such a way that it is what grants a being its being. From this

[230] See, for example, "Le Thor 1969, 337/ 42", where Heidegger claims that "When Plato determines the ἰδέα as ὄντως ὄν, he establishes in a decisive way the being of beings as presencing presence [anwesende Anwesenheit]", and suggests that in this "determination of the meaning of being by presence, however, there is a temporal moment that lies concealed." This temporal moment is suggested by the understanding of being as *φύσις*, especially in relation to *ἀλήθεια*.
[231] *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 43.

perspective, *οὐσία* can become "interpreted as *substantia*, substance, as what lies underneath and maintains itself permanently."[232]

For Plato, the kind of remaining which characterizes constant presence pertains to what in his view lets a being be "seen" in its appearance *so that it may appear to us in the first place*.[233] The Ancient Greek word for the appearance, for the "'look' in which something comes to presence as unconcealed" is *εἶδος*.[234] With reference to our preceding discussion, the *εἶδος* is that within which the presencing being "presents itself to us, re-presents itself and as such stands before us".[235] For Heidegger, this understanding of presencing in terms of sightability is fundamental to the Greek experience of being. Being is phenomenality in the sense of the appearance [*Aussehen*] the being gives out or presents.

Heidegger indicates how Plato is concerned with "that which shows itself" in this "visible form (*εἶδος*)": he calls this the *ἰδέα*.[236] The *ἰδέα* is what we have "in view in advance, though without considering it explicitly, when we name and experience whatever we encounter as what it is" – for example, a table.[237] The view that the *ἰδέα* offers is *τὸ τί εἶναι* – "what something is". In all the different tables I encounter, "what is constant" (what is constantly present, what presents itself as available in the manner of property) "is *what* they are": tables; "conversely, *what* they *are*", tables – "in all their variety and change" – "is the constant".[238] Consequently, presencing entails "specifically the coming to presence of *what a being is* in any given instance," and the "proper essence of being consists in whatness.[239] From this perspective, the understanding of being as arising into and declining from appearance (*φύσις*), is reinterpreted as the "whatness" which shines in an appearance to make it visible. If beingness is understood as the closeness at hand of a being, that closeness now becomes characterized as "the *seeing* [*ἰδεῖν*] of the 'visible form' [*ἰδέα*]".[240] From this perspective, *ἀλήθεια* – truth – does not appear as "a fundamental trait

[232] Dastur, "Time", 407.
[233] See, for example, "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit", 130–132 – hereafter "Lehre" (translated as "Plato's Doctrine of Truth", esp. pp. 172-173 – hereafter "Doctrine").
[234] *Parmenides*, 184/124.
[235] EM, 138/IM, 201.
[236] Ibid.
[237] *Logik*, 61/*Logic*, 56. My emphasis. Heidegger here uses the example of houses rather than tables.
[238] Ibid.
[239] "Lehre", 131/"Doctrine", 173 (my emphasis).
[240] Ibid, 136/176, (my emphasis).

of beings themselves" – their mode of being as unconcealed.[241] Instead, it becomes the correctness of the seeing, and "a characteristic of human comportment towards beings".[242] Such "correct seeing" "*conforms to* something already true".[243]

This transformation of truth into correctness allows for the transformation of the understanding of the nature of *λόγος*, until it becomes associated with logical "assertion" as "the locus of truth in the sense of correctness."[244] The relation of *λόγος* to truth becomes one of correspondence to "something already true".[245]Aristotle's thinking of course is influential in shaping the Western understanding of logic. His thinking also anticipates, and perhaps to a degree sets in motion, transformations in the understanding of being through his interpretation of *φύσις* (taken up in the Western understanding of "nature"); his understanding of being as *ἐνέργεια* (which leads to the later understanding of being as "actuality"); and his view of the relation between *ὕλη* and *μορφή* (taken up and extended in various ways in Western distinctions between matter and form, sensible and intelligible, etc.).[246]

What is of particular interest to us is Aristotle's thinking on *κίνησις* – movement – in its relation to *φύσις*. This is in part because it allows for a sharpening of our understanding of the being-in-motion of being suggested by *φύσις*. More significantly, however, this account provides extremely useful indications for understanding the concealing/withdrawing dimensions of being – indications left largely unexplored by Aristotle himself, but pursued at length by Heidegger.

Aristotle considers *φύσις* to be the *ἀρχή κινήσεως*: the "origin and ordering" of movement.[247] We might trace his insights by considering the distinction he makes between two kinds of beings: those which are determined by *φύσις*, and have their origin and ordering (their *ἀρχή*) in themselves[248] (what we might call "natural beings"), and those which are determined by the

[241] Ibid, 136/177.
[242] Ibid, 137/177.
[243] *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*, 119 – hereafter WDW (translated as *The Essence of Truth*, 86 – hereafter ET).
[244] EM 142/IM, 207.
[245] WDW, 119/ET, 86.
[246] The between *ὕλη* and *μορφή* were fundamental for Husserl's phenomenology, which served as a basis and challenge for Heidegger's innovation.
[247] VWBP, 247/OECP, 189–190.
[248] Ibid, 248/198.

know-how (*τέχνη*) of a maker, and whose origin and ordering are determined by that maker[249] (what we might call "created beings").

Heidegger uses the example of the being of a house to illustrate the latter. The house "has its origin and ordering… in the constructor's intention to build".[250] This intention is apparent in a pronounced way in the example of a house specifically, since it has the concrete form of "the architect's blueprint";[251] this blueprint, "in Greek terms", is "the house's *appearance as envisaged beforehand*".[252] It is "literally the *ἰδέα*",[253] the "what-it-is" of the house grasped antecedently. We might suggest that the architect not only envisaged beforehand the shape of the house, the layout of the rooms, and so forth. She also had in view the capacity or potentiality (*δύναμις*) of the stone to be cut and shaped into bricks (a power to undergo change), and to bear the weight of the walls and provide shelter (a power to resist change); of the wood to be assembled into doors and window frames; of the artisans and builders involved to employ tools – each with their own capabilities and limitations – in ways which would draw out and realize the capacities of the materials. All that the architect had in view – the suitability of the materials, their specific configuration into a particular construction, the relation of this particular manner of construction to other constructions, the relation of the materials and construction to the environment, and so forth – is made explicit (*ἐνέργεια*)[254] in the constructed house (*ἔργον*),[255] brought forth in it, unconcealed. This is to say that the *εἶδος* or *ἰδέα* – what the house *is* – has been brought forth in the constructed house, and through this bringing forth, what the stone is and what the wood is have also been brought forth. With this having-been-brought-forth, various powers of stone and wood and 'houseness' have been set to work in particular ways and continue to be at work in that the stone holds up the house and the house provides shelter. Other powers – for example the stone's power to resist being shaped into bricks; the wood's appropriateness for being part of a tree – have had to be overcome, redirected, or 'put away'. The 'movements' of

[249] Ibid, 259/197.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid. (translation modified).
[254] *ἐνέργεια* suggests "the presencing, standing there in unconcealment, of what is set forth, set back and set up". "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins", 368 – hereafter MGS (translated as "Metaphysics as History of Being", 5 – hereafter MHB; translation modified.)
[255] The "work": "that which is placed forth into the unconcealment of its appearance [*Aussehen*], and thus whiles [*verweilen*] as what stands" (MGS, 368/MHB, 5; translation modified).

stone, wood, blueprints in the specific 'direction' "of the production of the house"[256]– not their change of position through space, but the bringing forth from the power of their capacities into explicitation of certain configurations of what they are appropriate for (and putting away of others) – have reached an 'end' (τέλος). This does not mean that the house is not still in movement; the stone continues to exert the force necessary to hold up the house; its suitability or potentiality continues to be at work. Rather it means that capabilities have been gathered into a "completed boundary",[257] the boundary towards which the architect has directed the movement of materials, artisans, etc. This is a boundary beyond which they no longer have to move to achieve the envisaged actualization of their potential; it is also a boundary which delimits which capacities have been set to work and brought forth, which have been resisted and put away. The unformed mass of the stone has been worked into a brick which has been worked into a house; it does not need to be worked any more in order for its suitability for the construction of a house to be brought forth – that suitability is fully at work in the completed house (*ἐντελέχεια*).[258] Thus the house and materials have come into the *rest* of a *stable* (delimited into a boundary) *presence* in which each shows itself as "what it is" (*εἶδος*, *ἰδέα*) in accordance with the prior view of the architect.

If we move our attention from the example of a house to that of a plant, we see that in the latter case there is no constructor who has beforehand drawn up the plans for its design, taking into consideration the suitability of green leaves for drawing energy from the sun, roots for drawing nutrients from the soil, and so forth.[259] Nor is there therefore any *τέλος* – any end to the *movement* of the plant's stepping forth as plant. The plant is therefore constantly in a state of "*not yet* [having] brought" its *δύναμις* "to its end"[260] – to the fulfilment of being gathered in its end, of having-itself-in-its-end. To put it more strongly, the plant continuously goes back into itself,[261] withdraws into further possibilities, more not-yets. It is continuously reaching – is

[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid.
[258] "[T]he emerging appropriateness (*δύναμις*) of the appropriate (*δυνάμει*) gathers itself up and 'has' itself (ἔχει) as in its end (τέλος)" (VWBP, 286/OECP, 218).
[259] Of course there are ways in which it *is* in fact possible to construe living beings as in some sense "constructed" or designed – ranging from the Christian view of natural life as *ens creatum* to Darwinism. See Willam McNeill, *Time of Life: Heidegger and the Ethos*, 27–31.
[260] VWBP, 285/OECP, 218.
[261] See *In-sich-zurück-gehen* – VWDP, 289, 254/OECP 221, 228.

always "out toward" – but never reaches. Yet in the plant there nevertheless occurs "standing-in-the-work" – a presencing, a "realization" of a "finite appearance",[262] a placing forth into unconcealment of the energy of the sun, of the plant itself in the movement of its constant changing from one appearance to another. The "execution" of its capabilities is "not its disappearance", but its "carrying out" [*Hinausführen*]. Thus, there is being-at-work, but this without an end: *ἐνέργεια ἀτελής*.

Instead of moving towards and end, the plant's growth is a "*being-on-the-way*" – an *Unterwegssein*. It is aimed only at a "way" – a *Weg* – rather than a destination. Within this context, Artistotle takes *φύσις* to be determined by *ὁδός*: "way".[263] While we might think of a way as "lying between a starting point and a goal", Heidegger cautions against considering the "'way-ness' of a way" from this perspective.[264] Without reference to a final destination, a way "leads [*führt*] (we might pick up here on the resonance with *Hinausführen* – translated as "carrying out", but with the more usual meaning of "leading or going out beyond", beyond an established boundary) through a region or reach *[Bereich]*, opens itself and opens up the reach [*Bereich*]."[265] *Reichen* means "to reach" in the sense of stretching, but also in the sense of having a reach – a spatial extension within which things are available or to hand. It also means to reach out in order to pass, serve or give someone something. Finally, it means to suffice, to be enough.[266] *Bereichen*[267] means to set a reaching in motion – to 'be-reach'; *Bereich* thus suggests a region which unfolds essentially in reaching, stretching, having in reach, making do, but also giving over or granting; we therefore translate it as "reach" in the sense of an expanse. The mode of being of a *φύσις*-being then seems to suggest the understanding of *φύσις*, of being, as the "opening" of a *Bereich*, of a reach for reaching – for the reaching, perhaps, of the from-out-of-which of a being-out-toward[268] which belongs to potentiality. Such reaching gives a being over into unconcealment; therefore also the being at hand of beings appears in the self-sufficiency of their limited presencing.

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[262] VWBP, 287/OECP, 219.
[263] Ibid, 291/222.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid. (my translation).
[266] "reichen", *Etymologishces Wörterbuch von Wolfgang Pfeiffer*.
[267] This is an archaic German word.
[268] See *Aristoteles: Metaphysik Θ 1–3*, 114 – hereafter AM (translated as *Aristotle's* Metaphysics Θ 1-3: *On The Essence And Actuality Of Force*, 97).

Thus Heidegger's concern shifts later in his career towards "place-being" – towards the "topology of being.[269] Truth, understood as what lets a being emerge into its presencing, is understood not as [idea] – and the human relation to truth not as correspondence. Instead, it is understood "as locality [*Örtlichkeit*] of being", and our relation to the appearance of beings is "explained by 'location of being'[*Ortschaft*]".[270] It is in this direction of thinking that our preliminary comments at the start of the chapter – comments concerning "clearing" and "furnishing", and the preparation of a space within which beings can appear to us – were aimed. Considered in this way, we can understand how on a local level, the "reach" of interrelated possibilities establishes a specific "reach", in which beings are placed within our "reach" as available in some way. We are then "held" (*gehaltet*) within a totality of relations (*Verhältnisse*) within which beings are able to appear, within which we are able to comport (*verhalten*) ourselves towards beings. On a global level, Heidegger moves towards understanding the very possibility of such local clearing or regioning – place in a narrow sense (the realm of the circus) – in similarly spatial terms: towards understanding the open-region (*Gegnet*) "which surrounds the limited or restricted openness of human horizons – both holding them within itself and withholding itself from them".[271] However, to progress towards this understanding, we must clear the way by more carefully considering the implications of his reading of Aristotle's [phusis]-interpretation.

Being-on-the-way (for example of the plant) suggests transition: a "way is … the same as the process of passage from something to something else."[272] Heidegger's German also establishes a connection with the adverb *weg*, meaning "away". In this light, we might further read the German word for movement, *Bewegung*, as suggesting the way (*Weg*) a-way (*weg*) from one appearance to another. Being-on-the-way indicates opening: establishing the reach for, and reaching out towards, further possibilities and their transitions, and reaching out to hand them

[269] "Le Thor 1969, 335/ 41.
[270] Ibid, 41.
[271] Bret W. Davis (translator's note) in Heidegger, "*Ἀγχιβασίη*", 74n.
[272] VWBP, 292/OECP, 222.

over. As on the way, it suggests self-placing not into an end, but into a further self-placing;[273] thus its placing forth is also a withdrawal of sorts.

What is of crucial significance, then, is that being-on-the-way entails not only presencing, but also what we might term an *absencing*. What this means is that the non-appearance, for example of the plant, is *itself placed into appearance*. It is not simply that something does not come to presence – that it remains absent or disappears into absence. It is more as though the *φύσις*-being, in making itself available (in its beingness as *οὐσία*) by presenting itself in its appearance (what it is, *εἶδος*, *ἰδέα*), *simultaneously* – in that it is on the way – appears in some sense as a-way. It withholds itself even as it steps forth, withholds itself *in* its stepping forth – also gestures towards its non-appearance, its non-presence such that "something like" an appearance *of the non-appearance itself* also comes into view (*εἶδος*).

In order to clarify what is entailed by the presencing of absence, Heidegger gives the example of returning to where I had parked my bicycle, only to find that it is no longer there: the bicycle is missing, yes, but over and above that, its *goneness* is itself present. For the passersby in the street, who see only the empty rail to which my bicycle was tied, the bicycle is simply not present. Its absence does not strike them, cannot strike them, since its absence does not appear to them. Its absence does appear to me – is itself unconcealed in such a way that that absence is manifest. The bicycle appears to me *as missing*;[274] its absence reaches towards me, draws me into the reach of its disappearance such that I reach into it and respond to it by searching frantically or calling the police or simply crying. This kind of absencing, what Aristotle calls *στέρησις* is thus "not simply absentness [*Abwesenheit*]", but "a *presencing* [*Anwesung*]" of the kind "in which the *absencing* [*Abwesung*]"[275] "unfolds in its essence [*anwest*]:"[276] the *missing* bicycle – the non-present bicycle.

This absencing is then not simply the absence of presencing, or a supplement to presencing. Presencing – or at least the presencing of *φύσις*-beings: *φύσις* itself, as Aristotle understands it –

[273] Ibid, 292/223.
[274] VWBP, 296/OECP, 226.
[275] Ibid, 296–297/226–227.
[276] Ibid, 297/227 (my translation).

is *twofold*: presencing-absencing.[277] Aristotle limits these insights only to one kind of being – the "natural" or growing being; he also ultimately assigns a certain priority to the static moment (the moment which seems to offer the greater stability, the firmer stand) of the appearance – of the delimited *εἶδος* as what it is. The account of the self-placing of the *φύσις*-being into its own appearance is arguably a way for him to preserve that priority, in which *ἐνέργεια* is more *οὐσία* than *δύναμις* – and, crucially, *φύσις* is only one kind of *οὐσία*, of being*ness*.[278]

Yet Aristotle's account of movement – or Heidegger's reading of this account – brings into view possible ways of understanding *being* (not beingness) as *φύσις* through the perspective it offers on arising withdrawing (as well as as *ἀλήθεια*), through its gesturing towards the concealed source of the presencing of natural beings: their absencing. This reading has prepared us finally to attempt to engage with the presencing-absencing of being – with reference specifically to *ἀλήθεια* – and thereby to draw together the driving concerns of this chapter.

'Αλήθειαα, the nothing, the abyssal ground

'Αλήθεια says unconcealment – truth as the suspension of concealment, the stepping forth of beings into presence. It says the unconcealedness of beings – truth as a clearing, as a site where this suspension can actually happen: a site for the "happening" of the struggle between concealment and revealment,[279] the "lighted realm in which every being stands for us and from which it withdraws".[280] Thus it says a clearing prior to the unconcealment of any specific being. It says "the open", without which "beings could be neither concealed nor unconcealed."[281] Perhaps it also says the clearing of the human being as the site of openness: "ek-stasis is nothing other than the relation of Dasein to *ἀλήθεια*, in which all temporality

[277] Ibid.
[278] See ibid, 299/228. Also see "Le Thor 1969", 338/42–43, where Heidegger seems to suggest that Aristotle's thinking covers over the "temporal moment" in the Greek understanding of being as "presencing presence" (i.e. the "temporal determination" of being as "presencing"). When Aristotle specifically addresses the question of time in *Physics IV*, he "thinks time in departure from the Greek interpretation of being". He "poses the question: what is time? – and in this way actually asks: what is extant [*seiend*] in time?" In such a question, a "temporal predetermination is operative"; the question is "surreptitiously governed by the ontological presupposition of the beinghood of time", and is "concentrated upon what *presences*" rather than presencing.
[279] See "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes", 37–38 – hereafter UK (translated as "The Origin of the Work of Art", 28 – hereafter OWA).
[280] *UK*, 39/OWA, 29 (translation modified).
[281] *Parmenides*, 237/159.

arises."[282] Thus, if we consider being to be what grants beings their manifestness – or indeed the granting of manifestness itself – it says *being* itself, bespeaks it perhaps: the open, "which is how being itself comes to presence".[283] *Αλήθεια* indicates the "possible presencing of presencing itself."[284]

But Heidegger suggests that "the unconcealed does not come to presence indeterminately, as if the veil of concealment had been lifted."[285] The *λήθη* is not cancelled out by the unveiling, but remains in a tension with it. For Heidegger, the continuing "presence" of the concealment of *ἀλήθεια* is in fact so significant, that he suggests that we think of it not as *Unverborgenheit* ("unconcealment" – *bergen* means to shelter, secure or hide) but as *Entbergen*: "disclosure". The prefix *ent-* can indicate removal, or the conversion of something to its opposite – thus *Entbergen* says "dis-closure" (*Ent*-bergen); but *ent-* can also indicate the beginning of an action – thus *Entbergen* says "en-closure" (*Ent*-bergen).[286] *Αλήθεια* says unconcealment, unconcealedness, clearing, the open, the presencing of presence, being itself – but says these *as* enclosure, as veiling, as concealment, as present absence.

Heidegger's reading of Aristotle indicates a way for us to approach the understanding of the presence of absence. More than this: his reading suggests that the way in which "moving" beings appear to us is *on the basis* of the presencing of absence. Whenever an animal, a plant, or another human being appears to us *as* "incomplete" and unable to be completed – as never at an end, as constantly changing and capable of change – they appear to us on the basis of a certain kind of absence. Heidegger's reading of *φύσις* suggests that *all* beings are at least in some sense in movement, and therefore absencing-presencing rather than simply or only presencing. Or rather, it suggests that the appearance of beings *as in being*, and therefore their disclosedness, entails the interplay of presence and absence. Hence Heidegger reads the Heraclitus fragment *φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ* as saying "Self-concealment is the innermost essence of the movement of appearing"; or, put slightly differently, "Emergence has as its accompanying necessity

[282] "Le Thor 1969", 338/43.
[283] *Parmenides*, 237/159.
[284] "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking", 445.
[285] *Parmenides*, 197/132.
[286] *Parmenides*, 198/133.

concealment."[287] Although Aristotle does not follow through on this line of thinking, "*φύσις* points to *ἀλήθεια* itself."[288]

Yet in another sense, we more accurately do *not* see the absence of the presence of the table, plant or cat: the appearance of their disappearance is veiled – en-closed by their dis-closure. In our everyday engagement with beings, we see them for the most part only as though they were present. The absence of presence which grants their appearance withholds itself from appearance. Nevertheless, the appearance of beings is granted (*es gibt*), and even if we do not *see* presencing-absencing, we might say that we are *attuned* by it. That is to say, we always find ourselves disposed to the withholding which grants presence; the evidence for this is that we disclose beings as in being.

In one of his many engagements with the *λήθη*, Heidegger speaks of the experience of anxiety. It is "uncanny" (literally *unheimlich* – un-homely). In the face of it, "all things and we sink into indifference".[289] All things recede, make way, withdraw. Yet through their withdrawal – *Wegrücken* – beings "turn towards us"[290] in a manner comparable to the way I am confronted by the absence of my stolen bicycle:

> Dieses Wegrücken des Seienden im Ganzen, das uns in der Angst umdrängt, bedrängt uns. Es bleibt kein Halt. Es bleibt nur und kommt über uns – im Entgleiten des Seienden – dieses "kein".
>
> This withdrawal of beings in a whole, which crowds around us in anxiety, harasses us. No hold remains. All that remains – and what comes over us in this slipping away of beings – is this "no".[291]

[287] "Le Thor 1969", 343/English, 46. Heidegger provides alternative translations, with different emphases, in other contexts.
[288] Ibid, 344/46.
[289] "Was ist die Metaphysik", 111 – hereafter WIDM (translated as "What Is Metaphysics?", 88 – hereafter WIM).
[290] Ibid, 112/88.
[291] Ibid, 112 (my translation).

The absence in this case is that of "beings in a whole" – "Seiende im Ganzen". This phrase, a frequent refrain in Heidegger's work, is ordinarily – and more idiomatically – translated as "beings as a whole", or "being in totality".[292] Yet for Heidegger, what characterizes the withdrawal which confronts us in anxiety is its refusal of the meaningful belonging together of beings (the *furnished* room): of the *Verhältnis* (relationship) which grants a *Halt* (a hold). It is not only, as David Farrell Krell's translation compellingly conveys, that "[w]e get no hold on things" [*Es bleibt kein Halt*].[293] In other contexts Heidegger indicates that he understands *halt*-words in relation to *hüten* (to watch, guard, tend), drawing on the Middle High German sense of *halt* as *Aufenthalt*: "abode".[294] *Es bleibt kein Halt* then also states there is no hold in the sense of a support, in the sense of shelter, in the sense, even, of a protecting "container" [*Be-hältnis*].[295] What withdraws is not "an aggregate or collection of beings whose unity might be given through some sort of intuition about what they all have in common" – as is perhaps implied when we speak of "beings *as* a whole".[296] It is, rather, in Emad and Kalary's words, the "situatedness of beings within a pregiven whole": beings *in* a whole.[297]

Anxiety "manifests the nothing";[298] or, rather, the "nothing unveils itself in anxiety".[299] Yet it does not unveil itself "as a being".[300] It appears – to the extent that we can call its manifestness an "appearance" – only in relation to beings in a whole: "the nothing is encountered at one [*in eins*] with beings in a whole".[301] Heidegger elaborates: "beings in a whole become superfluous"[302] – *hinfällig*: "obsolete", "invalid", "fragile", literally "characterized by falling (*fallen* means "to fall"; *fällig* is the adjectival form) away from here to there (*hin*-). The nothing "makes itself known with beings and in beings as a slipping away of the 'in a whole'":[303] it appears as the absence – or the refusal – of situatedness, of the belonging together of beings. Anxiety – which, we recall, is *unheimlich* (literally "unhomely") – reveals the absence of

[292] David Farrell Krell's translation of the cited passage in *Pathmarks* gives "beings as a whole" (WIM, 88).
[293] WIDM, 112/WIM, 88.
[294] See Etymologisches Wörterbuch, "halten".
[295] GDD, 168–169/BPT, 158.
[296] Schalow, "Introduction", 33.
[297] "Translators' Foreword", in Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, xxxiv.
[298] Ibid, 112/88 (translation modified).
[299] Ibid, 113/89.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Ibid. (translation modified).
[302] Ibid, 113/90 (translation modified).
[303] Ibid. (translation modified).

belonging, shows us not at home with beings. Yet simultaneously, it shows being at home – situatedness, belonging, beings in a whole: it shows it as a need, a lack. Thus, the *in-the-whole* is also revealed through the unveiling of the nothing; its appearance is also not that of a being: it appears instead as an urgent and demanding absence.

Heidegger therefore considers the appearance of the nothing an essential appearance, a grounding appearance: "only on the ground of the original manifestness of the nothing can human Dasein approach and penetrate beings."[304] We might understand what this "grounding" entails if we bear in mind that in German *Grund* can mean "bottom", "basis", "foundation" or "fundament", as well as "deepest essence" – and by extension also "reason" or "cause".[305] "Ground" suggests what determines beings, specifically by allowing them to be constituted – in some way acting as the *basis* for their constitution. It suggests that which justifies in that it establishes or founds[306] – the "more deeply lying and at the same time supportive realm [*Bereich*]."[307] We recall that what makes it possible for human beings first to direct ourselves towards beings (to approach and penetrate them) is our always already having been referred to a totality of relations (we are *bestimmt* – "determined", but more literally "attuned" – and have a *Stimmung* – "mood", "disposition", but more literally "attunement"). Beings appear to us in a whole, within and with reference to a world. This reference then in a sense establishes our manner of relating to beings: establishes or founds [*begründet*] it in the manner of a "supportive realm"[308] – or, with reference to the understanding of the human being as *Dasein*, the "there" or *Da* of our being-in. When we attend to beings, we also attend "to the world that determines [*bestimmt*] us – an attending in which we at the same time attend to ourselves."[309] Our attending to beings therefore always entails a form of "rendering" – of "responding" to the determination of world by paying attention to that which determines us, in a sense offering meaningful

[304] Ibid, 114–115/91.
[305] "Grund", *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*.
[306] See, for example, *Grundbegriffe* (translated as *Basic Concepts*): "Whatever justifies [*be-gründet*] everything and gives the reason [*Grund*, understood in a narrower sense] for everything is itself the ground [*Grund* in a broader sense]" (2/2, translation modified); and "Here, ground is the inclusion that gathers out of itself and into itself, a gathering that grants the Open where all beings are. *'Ground' means being itself and this is the inception* (88/74). On the other hand, when thought only in terms of justification or giving reason, rather than in terms of inception, *Begründung* might easily be understood to suggest "*perfectio*" – the "completeness of a foundation" (SG, 198/PR, 121).
[307] SG, 144/PR, 96.
[308] Ibid, 144/96.
[309] Ibid, 57/37.

determinations in return.[310] We attend to beings in a whole, and thus participate in "rendering" that whole – in maintaining its meaningfulness and undergirding that meaningfulness with meaningful acts which refer to and help constitute it (and constitute it as foundational), even as we are ourselves sheltered within it.

Such rendering occurs whether or not we consciously take up and explore questions concerning our being. We recall the suggestion that our engagement with beings (both what we might usually consider practical activities and more "theoretical" acts such as cognizing or making assertions) involves "explicitation" of available meanings; we recall also that our projection of world is "intrinsically completing". By comparison[311] – as Heidegger suggests within the context of a meditation on a poem by Angelus Silesius – a rose does not (as far as it is possible for us to determine) expressly "take into consideration" that which "determines", disposes or attunes [*bestimmt*] it – "that is to say, that which establishes or founds [*begründet*] it". It therefore does not "expressly take itself into consideration" either.[312] The rose blooms without referring itself to its world or determinations, without laying out or making explicit the meaning of blooming, and thus without rendering meanings or laying the ground for its meaningfulness either.

Another way of putting this is to say that the reasons for the rose's blooming, or its grounds, do not appeal to the rose, lay no claim on it, make no demands [*Anspruch*] on it for a grounding response in return;[313] that which determines the rose does not address [*zuspricht*] it. By contrast, we as human beings are always addressed by the manner in which our world is furnished. We have always been "thrown" into a specific "there". We are also always confronted by our finitude within that "there". The appearance of the nothing in anxiety describes what Heidegger considers an essential aspect of human existence – our relation to the possibility that no possibilities remain: that there are no comportments, that there is no hold. For human beings, this possibility – of the impossibility of our existence – is our *utmost* possibility, towards which we

[310] We are here loosely basing our discussion on SG, 57/PR, 37
[311] A more extensive comparison is of course provided in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, where Heidegger attempts to convey an understanding of what is entailed in the human relation to world by means of a speculative comparison between that relation and those maintained between animal and world, and stone and world.
[312] SG, 56/PR, 37. Translation modified.
[313] Ibid, 58/38: "Der Grund, aus dem die Rose blüht, hat für die Rose nicht den *Anspruchscharacter*, der *von* ihr *für* sie die Zustellung des Grundes verlangt."

are always moving within our finite existence as mortals. In a manner comparable to the nothing's disclosure of the "whole", the inevitability of our death discloses our existence in each case – discloses *my* existence to me – as a "whole". The end of my existence – its limit, its [telos] – is my not being.[314] I am owned by this possibility – it is the fundamental demand of my being, of my having any possibilities, in the first place. It is in response to this demand that I draw upon and draw together the possibilities of my factical situation, relate them to me as though I were a "whole". The "mineness" of my existence is thus structured by being-towards-death.[315]

Because we attend to beings in a whole, and because I also experience my own existence as a kind of "totality" (as mine) – because beings appear to us as though they and we were meaningfully gathered in a whole – they appear as though they were determined [*bestimmt*] in some way – as though they were founded or grounded [*begründet*], situated. In fact, they *are* determined, insofar as we are always within a "there", insofar as it is only within some sort of determination that beings appear to us; and insofar as they are determined, "beings themselves are always founded and grounded beings".[316]

Yet – and this is a central insight – they are grounded not on the firm foundation of an absolute first cause, which can "in a sufficient [*zureichende*] way" provide an "adequate [*ausreichende*]" – and that means "*complete*" [*vollständige*] – "account" of whatever is grounded.[317] They do not offer a foundation which "can in every regard and for everyone – and that means fully –" bring what is grounded "to stand *in the entirety of its stance*."[318] What anxiety reveals is this foundational – that is, grounding – groundlessness of beings. This "ground" of the nothing is not an absolute ground – a first cause, or a highest entity (whether God or Nature or Logic) which grants epistemic justification for any and all assertions, meanings, and so forth, acting as a central concept to which they all refer.[319] We recall that in anxiety, both the nothing and the "in the whole" (the belongingness of beings) are revealed in a modality *other* than that of beingess,

[314] SZ, 241–246/BT, 285–290.
[315] Cf. SZ, 249–252/BT, 293–296.
[316] SG, 163/PR, 109.
[317] Ibid, 175/120.
[318] Ibid, 175/120. My emphasis.
[319] What Derrida refers to as a "transcendental signified". See especially Derrida's discussion (in *Of Grammatology*) of the manner in which Heidegger simultaneously effaces and keeps legible the presence of the transcendental signified.

presence-to-hand, or readiness-to-hand – are revealed as other than a being; they appear instead in relation with one another as withdrawal and lack, need or demand.

The grounding of the nothing is then "not nothing, but rather an outstanding and originary manner of letting *be* unfulfilled, of letting *be* empty – thus an outstanding manner of opening."[320] Like the missing bicycle, it is a present absence – ground as the "staying-away [*Weg-bleiben*] of ground" or "refusal of ground".[321] John Sallis provides useful clarification, suggesting that this ground withdraws "from what will be the site of the 'there'", and thereby leaves it "empty, without ground".[322] Heidegger names this refusal of ground *Ab-grund*, hyphenating the German word for "abyss" to draw out the sense that it involves the "refusal" [*Verweigerung*][323] or "staying away of ground".[324] *Ab-grund* is not simply an abyss into which one might "fall";[325] its void makes an appeal:[326] it "denies [*versagt*] to the grounding anything present at hand, or an appeal to or ossifying in such presence".[327] Yet precisely by leaving the site empty and groundless, it "opens up the site". The denial of a complete, permanent, immediate availability then becomes a demand *for* a grounding – the need for beings in the whole, disclosed in or as the staying away of ground; simultaneously, it also imparts *to* the grounding, "as its own, the necessity of decision".[328] It is a gifting refusal,[329] which calls for a response.

Thus, we begin to see how Heidegger transforms (while nevertheless retaining) the understanding of Dasein's projecting-open and thrownness.[330] The account of *Ab-grund* suggests powerfully how our ek-stasis, our projecting-open, should be understood as *responsive*. We are

[320] *Beiträge*, 379/*Contributions*, 265, translation modified. Emad and Maly's rendering of *Eröffnung* as "enopening" better reflects Heidegger's meaning, but we have modified it to "opening" for the sake of clarity within the specific context of our discussion.
[321] Ibid. We have here used the alternative translation of *Versagen* as "refusal" rather than "not-granting".
[322] Sallis "The negativity of time-space", 30.
[323] *Besinnung*, 312 (translated as *Mindfulness*, 278).
[324] Schalow, "Introduction", 26.
[325] Kenneth Maly, "Translating Heidegger's Works into English: The History and the Possibility", 137.
[326] The word is therefore difficult to translate into English. It is frequently rendered as *Ab-ground* to convey the drawing away (*ab-*) or withholding of ground. Alternatively, it is given as "abyssal ground". Ivo de Gennaro offers the "off-ground" as a creative and illuminating alternative (*The Weirdness of Being Heidegger's Unheard Answer to the* Seinsfrage, 52).
[327] *Die Geschichte des* Seyns, 98 – hereafter *Geschichte* (translated as *The History of Beyng*, 83 – hereafter *History*; translation modified).
[328] Ibid, 98/83 (translation modified).
[329] See *Besinnung*, 312/*Mindfulness*, 278.
[330] See Schalow, "Introduction", 37.

not the creators of our own world, shapers of our destiny. Even though we are actively involved in meaning – mean all the time, everywhere – our meaning-making is an answer to a demand placed on us by the denial of ground. We are "thrown" *into* the clearing, opened by withdrawal, rather than throwing open this clearing ourselves; thus thrown, we are called upon to *hold open* the clearing.[331] Thus Heidegger can claim that the human being is the "ek-sisting counterthrow [*Gegenwurf*] of being". [332] Our own projection is counter [*gegen*] – initiated by and responsive to – being's throw.

It is *on the basis* of our thrownness into a clearing, and the demand which issues from the withholding of ground, that we are prompted to refer whatever we encounter in such ways that the intermingling and drawing together of references come to constitute a supportive realm for our meaningful existence.[333] Grounding is therefore in a sense self-grounding; without the support of complete, adequate grounds, it is also therefore historical and finite. The grounding of the nothing and ab-ground thus reveal the origin of manifestness and possibility of phenomenality as nothing present – either in the sense of "here" (proximate, available), or in the sense of "now" (though perhaps it is a present in the sense of something given or granted). Nothing is unveiled: not as a being, but as the withdrawal of the meaningful belonging of beings; yet this belonging is itself not a being and is disclosed in relation to the nothing as that which the nothing denies. Thus, the nothing recollects through its refusal what *is* not a grounded unity, but is rather the *anticipation* of such a unity. This unity may itself be considered as anticipating – and being anticipated by – its own refusal: it draws into a grounded unity only on the basis of such anticipation. Neither the nothing nor the in-a-whole of beings is "present"; each is constituted through interrelationships of anticipation (drawing towards the future) and recollection (drawing towards the past).

It becomes clear why for Heidegger being can never be considered a supreme "presence" (God, reason, substance) over against present beings. It may be the case that in letting beings appear,

[331] See, for example, *Die Metaphysik des deutschen Idealismus*, 41: "Ent-wurf besagt: Er-öffnung und Offenhalten des Offenen, Lichten der Lichtung".
[332] "Brief", 342/"Letter", 173.
[333] Richard Polt provides enlightening clarification: "withdrawing or giving way, be-ing gives us a way to be there and to find a proper relation to beings." By "withholding itself from us, be-ing allows us to extend beyond that which is given – given entities and even the given sense of their being" (*Emergency*, 141).

being itself "appears" in some sense – "in the manner of transition to beings".[334] Yet this does not mean that being has in some way already existed separately from beings. Being appears in letting beings appear: in gifting (granting the *es gibt* or "there is") refusal. Being's appearance is a withholding without an agent which withholds – is simply withholding. Being – that which grants beings their manifestness – might then be understood as the constant *carrying out* [*Austrag*][335] of the radical difference between being and beings: between what is in being, and its granting, which is nothing like a being. In the carrying out of this difference, "not only does being ground beings as their ground, but beings in their turn ground, cause being in their way."[336] Heidegger characteristically lets the word *Austrag* (translated by Joan Stambaugh as "perdurance") resonate ambiguously, though suggestively, in this context of his account of the eventuation of difference. Etymologically, the word suggests "carrying" (*tragen*) "out" (*aus*-). The verb *austragen* has senses of carrying and delivering (for example a letter or parcel – a gift, perhaps) and of bearing or carrying a child to term. It also means "to decide" in the sense of bringing to an outcome a dispute or conflict, and therefore connotes the struggle itself through which an outcome could result. Thus, *Austrag* can mean issue, disputation, struggle or contest; it can mean bringing to an end or outcome;[337] it can also mean arbitration and product or outcome. Heidegger's understanding of being as gifting suggests that he also intends resonances of "delivery", perhaps even of carrying a child to term. *Austrag* suggests the "disputation" between being and beings, in the sense that their difference is put at stake and up for decision; yet it also suggests the very occasioning of their difference – the bringing to bear and delivery of that difference, through which beings can be delivered (granted, gifted, brought into being) as in being. Through this "carrying out" of difference, difference unfolds – unfolds as the carrying out of difference. As Dastur puts it, "being itself is thought on the basis of difference".[338]

Thinking being itself is of course the matter of Heidegger's philosophy; in his view, the experience of being itself grounds human existence. Through his elucidations of the

[334] OVM, 132/OCM, 64.
[335] Ibid, 133/65 (my translation).
[336] Ibid, 136–138/68-69 (translation modified). Mitchell draws important connections between Heidegger's account of ab-ground, his understanding of difference, and the notion of "earth" which develops in his later philosophy. See *The Fourfold*, 75–79.
[337] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's German Dictionary opens with a Latin equivalent along these lines: "*Perductio ad finem, exitus, transactio, litis sententia*" (*Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, "austrag").
[338] "Time", 415.

interrelationship between presence and absence, withdrawal and coming to presence, he attempts to reveal how human facticity points, in Marylou Sena's words, to the human being's "encounter with the ontological condition" of "its own being" and the being of beings "in terms of its engagement with them."[339] We might suggest that his thought attempts to treat thematically the background sense of being indicated by our facticity – to move our background understanding to a more explicit and concrete understanding. However, although such thematization does occur in the form of the formal indications he develops, it is perhaps more accurate to say that his thinking entails a *response* to the demand of the nothing and the promise of unity. His disclosure of the gifting refusal of being itself entails a thoughtful experience of ab-ground and *Ausgtrag*. Importantly, his hermeneutic-phenomenological descriptions themselves also therefore *issue* the demand of being by bespeaking it in its demanding character.

For this reason, Heidegger continues throughout his career to seek ways of "saying" being in a manner which echoes and anticipates gifting refusal, and which places manifestness at stake in such a way as to place a burden of responsibility – the burden of responding to the staying away of ground and the promise of ground. That is to say, he seeks to say "being" in ways which disclose and occasion the reciprocity between being and beings that grants the manifestness of beings. Particularly worthy of attention in relation to our concern are his experiments with the graphic forms of words to which we have alluded. Anticipating Derrida's differance, he looks for ways of saying – or rather of *writing* – being which draw attention to its non-substantive, dynamic, and self-refusing quality – for example when he "crosses out" the word "Sein".[340] Anticipating our engagement with the literary in Chapter 3, we might remark on how the *written word* here *figures* a demand issued to thinking and by thinking. It calls for (and inflects the reader towards) an anticipatory comportment: a "thoughtful look ahead", a "denkende Vorblick".[341] The (dis)arrangement of the letters disturbs the ready representation of "being": the letters name being under erasure, in a manner which is neither communicated when the word is spoken, nor can be read in a straightforward way. The way the letters are figured entails a

[339] Sena, "A Purview of Being: The Ontological Structure of World, Reference (*Verweisung*) and Indication (*Indikation*)", 84.
[340] See "Seinsfrage", 410ff/"Question", 310ff.
[341] "Seinsfrage", 410/"Question", 310.

refusal, a keeping away (*abwehren*),[342] "preventing" our rushing to the concept – our anticipating being as representable, as presence. The figure reinscribes refusal, and thereby also perhaps calls for a kind of creative appropriation. Heidegger likewise retrieves the archaic spelling of *Sein* as *Seyn* – a difference which withholds itself in speech, and is only noticeable in writing (though it remains puzzling and demanding to a reading too, refusing even as it shows) – as a gesture towards being's self-withholding demand. As Emad and Kalary suggest within the context of their translation of *Seyn* as "be-ing", the transformation in the way the word is written anticipates – and calls for, perhaps even calls forth – a transformation in thinking: a shift from "a thinking *about*" being, to a reciprocity with being.[343] Writing then seems a potential site for a reciprocity with be-ing.

Our comments here regarding a thoughtful and responsive relation to be-ing within and through language anticipate Chapters 2 and 3. We will explore more fully in these chapters how language is the site within which the address of be-ing, although "silent", nevertheless calls out to us, and within which we are therefore called to responsiveness. What is important to our present discussion is Sena's point regarding the factical encounter with the ontological condition. Heidegger is not concerned with an abstract transcendental Being, but with the appeal of be-ing heard in our relation with beings – the appeal which makes that relation possible in the first place. Being is *of beings* – as the notion of *Austrag* indicates. The unfolding of difference places the ongoing demand to understand the being of beings as at stake in some way – to respond to the absence of a totalizing ground. Thus, even when we are not, for example, confronted by the nothing in a state of anxiety, our attuned relation to beings in a whole itself relates or refers to the ab-ground which demands the drawing together of a grounded situatedness. The self-withdrawal of be-ing is what grounds all our grounding; it grants the possibility of the presence of beings which occupies us in our daily engagements with entities (where beings may simply seem available). As human beings, we therefore exist in a close relation with this extra-ordinary [*Nicht-Geheure*] revealing-concealing self-withdrawal – with "the uncanny" [*das Un-*

[342] Ibid.
[343] "Translator's Foreword", in *Mindfulness*, xxxix. More precisely, what we call "reciprocity" is being "enowned by being".

geheure].[344] Yet the refusing character of be-ing means that in our everyday existence – in the realm of the ordinary [*Geheure*] – this relation is covered over by the present availability of beings (as though their presence were our property: *Anwesen*, *οὐσία*). Heidegger considers the obfuscation of the denial of ground to have become increasingly pronounced in Western history, as our ways of speaking about and relating to beings disclosed them as increasingly available – through technology and in discourse.

Aspects of responsiveness

Thus, we follow a final indication offered in Heidegger's recollection of Greek words to examine how he seeks in these words traces of an everyday Greek experience grounded in a relation to gifting-refusal, or *ἀλήθεια*. We recall Heidegger's view that the Greeks understood being as phenomenality, and this as sightability: a being manifests on the basis of the "look" – *εἶδος* – it presents.[345] In this connection, he claims that in Greek, what is called looking is *θεάω*.[346] He distinguishes what is meant by this unattested word, however, from what is commonly understood by looking in Western philosophy (at least since Descartes) – directing the visual sense, as well as paying attention, examining or conceptualizing. This sense is in fact conveyed by the middle voice form of *θεάω – θεάομαι*: I gaze at; I behold; I contemplate.[347] If the reflexive means to direct the gaze, then the primary sense of looking must be "the looking in which the one who looks shows himself, appears, and 'is there.'"[348] For the Greeks "looking", "even human looking, is originally experienced not as the grasping of something, but the self-showing" – as when we say 'that chair looks comfortable', for example – "in view of which there first becomes possible a looking that grasps something."[349]

[344] Heidegger plays on *geheuer*, a word which probably meant "friendly", "gentle", "pleasant", but which is generally used only in negative expressions: *nicht geheuer*, which means "uncanny", "spooky", "sinister"; and the word *Ungeheuer* – "large, ugly, horrible monster", and, more colloquially, something (for example a building) which is massive and misshapen ("geheuer" and "Ungeheuer", DWDS).
[345] See William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory*, esp. 305–319. McNeill provides a compelling account of the look of being, its demand for responsiveness, and its connection with myth and the gods.
[346] "'Blicken' heißt griechisch θεάω." As Heidegger points out, the word is unattested in this form; only its medial form *θεάομαι* ("I gaze at, spectate"; but also "I contemplate") is known (*Parmenides*, 152/103).
[347] LSJ: "θεάομαι".
[348] *Parmenides*, 152/103.
[349] Ibid.

The force of this emphasis is that it discloses looking in the sense of looking at, examining and conceptualizing as an *answering* look – as responsive, as countering the aspect presented by a be-ing. The look of *θεάω* – the self-showing, the aspect – is now understood as the look that is active and directed (Heidegger here plays on the directional prefix *an-* in *Anblick*, which ordinarily means "view" or "look" in the sense of what is sighted). The aspect is "issued" to the human being – "addresses" and "solicits" her.[350] Its aspect calls for or invites a countering look to take it up and receive it (a "looking on": *Er-blicken*). The aspect *expects* a look. We might here productively recall the obsolete verbal form of the word "aspect"[351] – which includes the senses "to have an aspect", "to behold" or "face", "to survey" or "watch", and "to look for" or "expect" – and claim: the aspect aspects. A being, a chair for example, anticipates my relation to it, my disclosive comportment. The chair looks at me so I might see it or examine it. It aspects my sitting on it, as well as my walking past it – or indeed my throwing it into the air, revealing my interaction with it as perplexing transgression or an exciting performance. When I disclose it, I counter its look, and in doing so I present my own aspect. When I answer the chair's aspect as susceptible to inspection, to being grasped in a concept, I am disclosed as one who inspects and grasps; when I sit on it, I am disclosed as one who sits. My disclosive comportment reveals my own position in the furnished room – in the living room, or in the circus. Crucially, though, I disclose myself specifically *as counter*, not in the sense of a subject standing over against objects, but as responsive *counterpart*. I disclose myself as solicited by the look of beings – their look *as in being*, as in a whole which itself only draws forth in response to the promise of the refusal of a whole – and as capable of responsively returning that look. That human look which catches sight of something, which the human being "performs" (or even "accomplishes" [*vollzieht*] "in relation [*bezug*] with the appearing aspect" is "already an answer to the original aspect which raises the human being into its essence:"[352] the aspect of be-ing.

[350] Ibid, 158/107 (my translation).
[351] Our interpretation of Heidegger's *Blicken* through the English word "aspect", elaborated in what follows, suggests another possible dimension of Husserl's influence on Heidegger. For Husserl, a material object always presents a specific "aspect" or "adumbration" (*Abschattung*). Heidegger of course understands appearance in terms of being-in-the-world, rather than objecthood. In a sense, he reinterprets Husserl's adumbration in the light of the that latter's categorial intuition, suggesting that the totality of "in-being" reveals an aspect of "being-in" in every aspect presented by beings.
[352] Ibid. (my translation).

Heidegger offers here a counter to the modern interpretation of human being as subjectivity, within which the "grasping" or conceptualizing look is "decisively" considered the "act of the subject" – offers a counter from within a deep source of Western thought. At the source, in Greek experience, looking does indeed distinguish human being. Yet what distinguishes the human is that she is "looked upon"[353] – that she is aspected, expected, drawn into the encounter in which she counters the aspect offered with a "grasping look", with "perception".[354] This view challenges the understanding of the human being is an "Ego and subject" who looks "out of himself" at "objects", and "represents himself as looking". The human look might now be experienced in terms of "letting-be-encountered" as a mutual aspecting – showing, sighting and expecting. The "look of the encountering person" is "that in which someone awaits the other as counter" – and thereby "appears to the other, and is."[355]

We recall that this "look" – the aspect of the human being – is determined by its encounter with be-ing: is an "answer" to the "original" aspect of radical alterity. We recall also that in Greek experience being is understood as sightability – *εἶδος*, the appearance offered to perception. What lets beings appear is that they "show the look" of being – rising into appearance from concealment and towards concealment, emergence anticipated and recollected by withdrawal: *ἀλήθεια*. The human being is thus "looked upon" [*An-geblickte*] by being: offered the inapparent aspect of a demanding refusal; as the looked-upon, she is "received and taken up into a relation with being" and "led to perception."[356] "Relation with being" here translates *Bezug des Seins* which, within the context of Heidegger's frequent play on the resonances of words related to *ziehen* (to pull, drag or draw) suggests this relation as the occasioning of a "draw" (*Zug*): the draw of withdrawal, which pulls the human being into the open of manifestness, into unconcealment: *ἀλήθεια*. Whether I sit in a chair, or look at a chair and examine it, I look at it in a furnished room – circus or living room. Heidegger's central insight is that that furnished room itself only appears as furnished in response to the denial (*Versagen*, *Verweigerung*) of be-ing which calls for relations to draw together the whole within which an appearance might draw into presence. The "in" of the furnished room – in the circus, in the living room – is already *in*

[353] Ibid, 159–160/108.
[354] Ibid, 159–160/108.
[355] Ibid, 152–153/103.
[356] Ibid, 160/108.

unconcealment. What "looks into" unconcealment – what aspects unconcealment, what anticipates it and reveals beings as "in unconcealment" – is the "look" of be-ing: that aspect unveiled in anxiety, the interaction between refusal and the "in-the-whole". Manifestness entails a reciprocal en-counter (the occasioning of a countering response) in which the human being aspects gifting refusal – expects it and beholds it, and is disclosed in her aspect as one who answers be-ing by projecting open the "there" and disclosing beings in an aspect of be-ing.

Truth as *ἀλήθεια* – as unconcealedness, disclosedness – thus entails a co-respondence sharply distinguishable from the correspondence entailed by the "correct seeing" associated with Plato and the metaphysical tradition. The latter is oriented towards presence and the present: being is independent, permanent presence; thinking is re-presenting what is already present: making it present to the (independently present) self. Truth as *ἀλήθεια*, determined by a relation to appearance and withdrawal, is oriented to what is *not* there in its acknowledgement of what is available. It is oriented to recollecting – recalling the aspect in an aspect – and to expecting, to waiting. When Heidegger speaks of "awaiting the other as counter", he employs a neologism: *entgegenwarten*,[357] which plays on – and offers a transformed understanding of – the German word for the present: *Gegenwart*. *Entgegen-* suggests both movement towards and the occasioning of a "countering" – of the en-counter. The root *warten* means to wait, but also to be on the look-out for – the word originally meant "to look out for", "observe", but also "look after" or "care for" (it is a cognate of the English "ward"). It is etymologically connected with *wahren*: to watch over, protect, guard, keep safe, take care of, preserve. Looking – in the reciprocity of aspecting – is also waiting: holding back, expecting. In Heidegger's transformed understanding – or his recollection of the Greek experience in anticipation of a transformed understanding – *Wahrheit*, "truth", is the anticipation, occasioning and preservation of this hesitant reciprocity which grants manifestness. For Heidegger it is truth in this sense which calls for thinking, and calls forth thinking. Thinking is the thinking *of be-ing*, and only on this basis can become the apprehension of a being's sightability in a representation. Thinking of be-ing is not representing presence, but aspecting: looking, showing, waiting, concernful letting. The relation to be-ing calls for *Verhaltenheit* – restraint, holding back to await the other as counter within the *Halt* of a *Verhältnis*.

[357] Ibid, 152–153/103.

Yet thinking is also a thinking of beings. While the aspect of the utterly uncanny is what grants beings their look (as beings), be-ing is precisely inapparent in that it is self-withholding. I am able to perceive beings only because they bear the traces of be-ing, but likewise can only encounter the aspect of be-ing through traces of its refusal or withdrawal.[358] *Austrag* suggests a kind of crossing over between be-ing and beings, between refusal and granting, in which be-ing is disclosed through the appearance of beings, and beings are able to appear in the whole drawn forth in response to be-ing's self-refusal. For Heidegger, this crossing over indicates a necessity for a human relation with the uncanny *as uncanny* – as is occasioned, for example, in anxiety.

Such a relation is at stake in his consideration of we might ordinarily call divinity. Once again following the directive of Greek words, he examines the word for "uncanny": *δαιμόνῐον*. It is more literally translated as "demonic" – pertaining to *δαίμων*, "demon" in the sense of divinity or spirit. He connects these words with *δαίω* – "to light up". *Δαίω* – shining – is phenomenality; the *δαίμων* is the uncanny – is granting refusal – "shining into" the ordinary to grant beings their look. It is be-ing aspected as the uncanny gifting of the appearance of beings. Along similar lines, Heidegger points out that the noun "look", *θέα* (related to *θεάω*), is a homophone of *θεά*, "goddess". He suggests that this connection indicates an experience of the gods as aspects of be-ing, in the sense that they present the invisible "look" (address, call) of the uncanny in the realm of the ordinary. The god provides a "figure" (*Gestalt*) through which the uncanny might look at the human being (present, aspect the look of the uncanny), and the human being be called upon to gather that look and counter it in a disclosing look (through her *Gegenwartende* look: her present-ing look, her countering-waiting look).

This figuration of the god is crucial to our concerns. For Heidegger, it is through language that the god is aspected – not just given a figure, but anticipated in a figure and recollected in a figure. By naming the god we draw into a relation with the uncanny, but a relation in which the uncanny still withholds itself.[359] Our reciprocity with the uncanny is drawn forth through figuration, and through this figuration, we anticipate beings in a specific way too. Heidegger

[358] See for example ibid, 158/107.
[359] For example, ibid, 165/112.

refers to this figuration as the word, as myth, as saying, as poetizing; we will consider whether it might also be called literature.

It is also significant that Heidegger's account emphasizes reciprocity, and suggests the human being as called into (or inflected towards, bent towards, drawn into) her being through responsiveness. The human herself occasions the crossing over of the uncanny and the ordinary – disclosing the former from within the latter. As we will suggest, she perhaps *figures* that crossing in language. The "distinctiveness" of the human being is that she is "addressed" (*angesprochen*) by be-ing itself. Addressed in such a way, the uncanny – the god – "appears" "in her looking at", and in her "offering her look"; that is, the uncanny appears in her very "self-showing as human being".[360] This self-showing, as we will see, is occasioned in language.

Heidegger's concern here is not theological – as we have indicated, he does not understand be-ing as a divinity. His concern is rather historical (*geschichtlich*), in his transformed sense of the word. What is crucial is that the disclosure of the uncanny grants an aspect to the "whole" in which beings appear – arranges in some way the possible ways in which the room may be furnished. This is not simply to say that the appearance of a divinity ascribes certain values to certain forms of behaviour, social arrangement, and so forth – though this is also the case. Manifestness itself – the manner in which beings are in a background way anticipated as in being, and the manner in which their being in being is recollected in our responsive comportments – is disposed in a particular way. Heidegger's aim is once again to distinguish between the relation of human subjectivity to a world of objects, or existence posited as nature (a relation to beings *as* a whole, perhaps) and the kind of responsivity and demand he considers to be placed on the human being in relation to a groundless order of significance beyond her power to understand and control (beings in the whole, disclosed in relation to withdrawal).

His thinking on the divinities indicates how as human beings we do not project open the clearing as an act of will – manifestness is not a human accomplishment. Gods and demons, as specific aspects of be-ing – as figures of ways in which we might anticipate, recollect, and draw beings into presence – "attune every disposition". What they "attune" in this manner is not simply

[360] Ibid, 154–155/104 (my translation).

psychic states; they attune what Heidegger calls the "silent voice" of be-ing. We have referred in preceding discussions to the address of being and the call of being, and argued that this demand calls us into our various comportments and relation with beings. The attunement of the divinities may be considered as articulating the address of be-ing; it is a fundamental attunement, determining the "essence of the human being" in her "relation" to be-ing.[361]

History and en-owning

We have indicated that the manner in which this address is vocalized, or written, as well as the way the divinities may be considered as attuning our relation to beings, are crucial elements of Heidegger's understanding of what is entailed by language. We will therefore pick up and develop our elucidation of this concern in subsequent chapters. Within the context of the present discussion, we might indicate what is at stake concerning the emergence of the ordinary through the groundless grounding demanded by be-ing by considering it from another perspective: that of Heidegger's understanding of what is entailed by history.

Through responsive grounding, a clearing of beings takes place – a room becomes furnished. Heidegger points out that the German verb *schicken* originally meant "preparing, ordering, bringing each thing to where it belongs; therefore, also *einräumen* and *einweisen*". He connects this meaning to the word *beschicken*, in the dated sense of "caring for a place and keeping it in order".[362] It is with such meanings in mind that he develops his understanding of *Geschichte* – "history" – not primarily as a series of happenings (*geschehen* means "to happen"), but in terms of "sending" (*schicken*, a word distantly connected with *geschehen*). In Heidegger's view, *ἀλήθεια* – the "event of presencing"[363] – proffers itself or sends itself to us (*schickt sich zu*) in various ways, which contour different historical epochs by determining the ways in which we may aspect beings, and ourselves. "*Ἀλήθεια* is the dispensation of being [*Geschick des Seins*], as which dispensation the fullness of the history of being [*Seinsgeschichte*] is joined in its epochs."[364] Beings as a whole appear as at stake in different ways, as drawn together in different ways, as *in being* in different way. We might draw again on the analogy of the furnished room,

[361] Ibid, 157/106 (my translation).
[362] SG, 91 (my translation). See "beschicken" in DWDS for the definition on which we have drawn.
[363] "Die Gefahr", 50 (translated as "The Danger", 48).
[364] Ibid, 49/47.

and say that the totality of beings appears as differently furnished; yet it is important to emphasize that what distinguishes different epochs of history in Heidegger's view are not different customs, beliefs, cultural values, and so forth, but the presencing of beings as such. Heidegger's emphasis is once again on dispelling the sense of history as human activity, or a human accomplishment – the sense that humans shape their destiny, and can effect the transition into a new epoch. *Geschick*, translated above as "dispensation", ordinarily means "destiny". Heidegger indicates that the specific way in which we are, within our particular factical situation, called upon to relate to beings and to disclose ourselves comes at us like fate. Our "thrownness" means that our relationship to beings is not our own in the sense of a possession. Rather, we are "en-owned" by be-ing – appropriated to a clearing, into the event of presencing in a specific dispensation.

"Enowning" is one way of translating Heidegger's notoriously perplexing word for the reciprocity between be-ing and human being, *Ereignis*. It is also frequently rendered as "event of appropriation". That it is considered an "event" usefully suggests the dynamic quality of be-ing – the manner in which Heidegger conceives it as the unfolding of the difference between be-ing and beings.[365] That it entails "appropriation" indicates the manner in which this process of differentiation entails reciprocity. Be-ing unfolds through its granting refusal, and as its difference from beings. Be-ing "needs" beings. It also needs the look of one who is able to see its granting concealment, to catch a glimpse of its withdrawal. Thus, it also "needs" human beings – calls on human beings to respond to ungrounded differencing. Likewise, we have suggested that human being itself entails, or unfolds as, a responsiveness to be-ing. We are in a sense "owned over" (*übereignet*) to be-ing: we aspect be-ing by aspecting beings – anticipating, occasioning and preserving the presencing of beings granted through its self-refusal. Such guardianship of is perhaps what is "ownmost" to our being. "En-owning" therefore points also to the manner in which human beings are called upon to project or hold open the clearing – called upon groundlessly to ground what is at stake within the reach we inhabit. We are called on to appropriate – to draw to ourselves and explicitate – the possibilities which are available within the thrown clearing, and through our ontological projection, open the way to further possibilities. We are also called upon to be appropriated by beings in their being – to await them responsively.

[365] See Dastur, "Time", 415.

"What the name *Ereignis* names" is "propriation as the reaching [*Reichen*] and sending [*Schicken*] which clears and preserves [*lichtend verwahrenden*]."[366]

However, it is crucial to Heidegger's thinking that en-owning also be considered dis-owning – *Enteignis*. The call to appropriate and be appropriated is issued by withdrawal. Withdrawal, the denial of ground – and the denial of any complete appropriation – as well as the differencing constantly carried out between be-ing and beings is what calls forth en-ownment. It is only through the disturbance of my particular relation to beings "destined" to me – through the disclosure of *my* everyday as withdrawn, refusing, groundless – that I am called upon to attend responsively to the possibilities made available in my factical situation, and "await the other as counter". Dastur therefore suggests that for Heidegger, the "most original phenomenon" is not en-owning but dis-owning. This is "precisely because *Ereignis* does not have the structure of a subject, because it can only be thought as a sending and as an extending and opening up, i.e. as a giving which gives only its very givenness and as such holds itself back and withdraws."[367]

"En-owning" is thus perhaps another way of naming what calls for thinking and what calls forth thinking. Perhaps it names the reciprocity itself between be-ing and thinking: that reciprocity whereby each "comes into its own" through a relation of simultaneous dis-ownment and refusal. Of particular importance to our study, however, is not only what a consideration of en-ownment reveals about responsiveness, but also the fact that Heidegger considers the mutual (dis)appropriative coming-into-their-own involved in en-ownment as taking place in and through language. It is within language that be-ing addresses us, and we respond.

The forgottenness of be-ing

Before we progress to developing this insight, it is necessary to remark that "en-owning" points as much to the historical possibility of a reciprocity between thinking and be-ing as to a general way in which human understanding is structured. En-owning does not seem to indicate what "happens" every time we think. Bearing in mind the importance Heidegger places on possibility, and on ek-stasis and the interaction between recollection, anticipation and presencing, we might

[366] "Zeit und Sein", 26.
[367] "Time", 419.

rather consider en-ownment to be the promise of a reciprocity. Or perhaps, in the light of Heidegger's engagement with Greek thinking, we might consider it the recollection of a promise. We might also then consider it a demand: to attempt to understand thinking as an en-owning and dis-owning reciprocity with the refusal of fully grounded presence is to place a demand. It is to call for the attempt to relate responsively to the enigmatic way in which presencing unfolds. It is to call for a certain reticence, for restraint; it is a call to anticipate and preserve as much as occasion the disclosive possibilities offered to us in our situatedness.

To call the reciprocity between be-ing and the human being "en-owning" – as well as to call truth *Wahrheit* in the sense of *Wahrnis* in the sense of *ἀλήθεια*,[368] to call the human being Da-sein, and so forth – is also itself an act of responsiveness to the destiny of a particular historical situation. In Heidegger's view, the dispensation of be-ing in late modernity is one which calls for a responsive relation to refusal – calls for restraint, guardianship, awaiting the other. It calls for responsiveness in a concealed way, however, from out of the covering over of our relation to be-ing. This is because Western history has unfolded as a history of the "forgottenness of being" [*Seinsvergessenheit*] – a neglect of be-ing.

He argues that in late modernity – in the era characterized by what he calls "machination" (in which beings appear primarily in terms of their utility) and technology – this forgottenness has become so pronounced that he terms it the "abandonment of being" (*Seinsverlassenheit*).[369] It is important to note that this abandonment, and the accompanying forgottenness, is *of be-ing*. That is to say, it is not something effected by human beings. We do, however, disclose beings in their beingness as a response to this dispensation of be-ing, and thereby aspect it as forgotten, and participate in its forgottenness. Our reciprocity with be-ing within this dispensation is therefore nothing like en-owning.

This history of forgottenness unfolds from the interpretation of being offered in Archaic and Classical Greek philosophy, where, in Heidegger's view, the uncanniness of be-ing prompted the Greeks to grapple with questions concerning its puzzling alterity. He calls this moment – in

[368] See, for example, "Die Gefahr", 48/"The Danger", 46.
[369] See, for example, *Beiträge*, 110–123/*Contributions*, 77–83.

which the be-ing's granting refusal prompted a response which gathered into a far-reaching manner of understanding the being of beings as at stake – the "first beginning". The "destiny" of being delivered to the Greeks was – in Heidegger's view – the understanding of emergence into presence as *φύσις* and truth as *ἀλήθεια*. Be-ing begins to draw into forgottenness, however, through its dispensation of being as beingness – *οὐσία*, as *ἰδέα* – and of truth as correspondence.[370]

In modernity, the *Stand* of constant presence becomes projected as the *Gegenstand* of the object and truth is understood as the certainty of a representation. The uncanniness of ab-ground withdraws further from appearance, as what grounds beings comes to be understood as the complex of causes which result in their emerged standing within their *τέλος*. Thus, the appearance of beings takes on the appearance of being *fully grounded*, and the call of be-ing to appropriate responsively while being appropriated is deafened by the immediacy of an apparently self-sustaining ground – causality.

Finally, in the technological age (to which we perhaps still belong), *Stand* becomes *Bestand* – standing reserve.[371] The dispensation of be-ing – the way in which it reveals itself – is *Ge-stell*, "positionality" or "enframing". Being disposes us to disclose entities as constantly available;[372] as immediate[373] and as orderable.[374] As Heidegger searches in Greek philosophy for fundamental words which resonate with the experience of be-ing which instantiates metaphysics, he looks especially to Friedrich Nietzsche for ways of articulating the fundamental attunement of what he considers to be the completion of metaphysics in this epoch of being.[375] Heidegger finds in Nietzsche's "will to power" the final word on the beingness of entities – on what is entailed by *οὐσία* – and the hint that the reciprocal disposition to this aspect of beingness is "willing". "Willing and knowing belong together";[376] or, as the Scholar reflects in the Heidegger's

[370] See *Besinnung*, 109ff./*Mindfulness*, 91ff.
[371] "Das Ge-stell", 25–26 (translated as "Positionality", 24–25).
[372] *Fourfold*, 38.
[373] Ibid, 41.
[374] Ibid, 47.
[375] Heidegger interprets Nietzsche's inversion of Platonism as itself metaphysical, since for Heidegger will names the beingness of beings. Yet Heidegger also considers Nietzsche as responding in compelling and potentially significant ways to the address of be-ing, and finds in Nietzsche's though indications towards a possible turn in the relation to be-ing.
[376] "Die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen und der Wille zur Macht", 7 – hereafter EW.

"discourse on thinking" "*Ἀγχιβασίη*", "Thinking is willing, and willing is thinking."[377] By "willing", Heidegger does not a human "faculty";[378] rather, as Bret W. Davis argues, he seems to mean a fundamental disposition[379] – the reciprocity between be-ing, beings and human being is attuned. It suggests, then, a specific aspect of be-ing which calls on us to disclose ourselves and relate to beings; it suggests a way we already find beings as available *before* we interpret their contextual appearance in its specificity. Will is the furnishing of the whole in late modernity.[380]

We might approach an understanding of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche by considering more carefully how specifically being is aspected or sighted in relation to will. Heidegger interprets Nietzsche's "valuation of all values" in this regard. Value, Heidegger claims, is equivalent to *εἶδος*. It is the sightability of beings – "the point of sight of a seeing that has its eye on something", or the point of sight for something "that counts on [*auf etwas rechnet*] something and thereby has to deal with [*mit anderem rechnen*] something else."[381] The specific quality of the seeing [*Sehen*] associated with value may be contrasted with the en-counter with be-ing we described earlier in the chapter. The seeing of value entails positing (expecting, aspecting, disclosing, figuring) its own seeing as a "having-seen", and what is seen as already sighted. Rather than awaiting the aspect of what it en-counters, such seeing re-presents what it is taken as already present – present in the sense of counting, mattering, having value. "Value is value provided it is valid" – provided that *es gilt*, that it is applicable, effective, that it counts.[382]

If "value" is sightability, Heidegger's next step is to consider more carefully the "fundamental character" the seeing – of "representation" as it is interpreted in modernity. Since Leibniz, Heidegger claims, representation – seeing, returning the look of a being's sightability in the aspect of beingness – has the "fundamental character of striving". Representing speaks to "the urge to make an appearance, the urge that enjoins a thing to arise [*Aufkommen*] (appear) and so

[377] *Ἀγχιβασίη*, 106/ 68. The cited quotation also appears in a shortened version of the conversation which appears in *Gelassenheit*. We have alluded here to the translation of this shortened text, "Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking".
[378] Ibid, 78/49.
[379] Bret W. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit*, 6 – hereafter HW.
[380] See EW, 7.
[381] "Nietzsche's Wort 'Gott ist tot'", 227–228 – hereafter NW (translated as "Nietzsche's Word: 'God Is Dead'", 170).
[382] Ibid, 228/170.

determines its occurrence [*Vorkommen*]."[383] That is to say, *φύσις* is itself interpreted as representing: "all beings are representing beings", striving towards appearance.[384]

Sightability then is value – beings are manifestly available in that they can be seen as counting or mattering. Seeing is striving to make an appearance. Looking – broadly speaking: relating to the manifestness of beings – thus becomes looking out for the "conditions" for "preservation" and "increase". It becomes looking out for ways to make things count towards an appearance – towards an appearance which will in turn count in some way towards another appearance, and so on. An appearance may "count" in this way by means of increasing, extending its appearance, or by preserving the increase that has already been secured (itself necessary for further increase).[385] Heidegger reads Nietzche's claim that being is becoming in this light: that which determines beings is "the transition from something to something", striving towards appearance.[386] What determines value is this movement towards becoming, what Nietzsche (in Heidegger's reading) understands also by "life": the striving towards emergence, towards increase, towards self-preservation and self-enhancement. This is what Heidegger understands by will to power.

That this will might be understood as structuring life itself reflects that it is not simply a human comportment. It is rather, as we have indicated, a fundamental determination of the being of beings – a fundamental way in which being is disposed, and the reciprocity between be-ing, beings and human being plays out. The striving quality of will, and its determination of all in being in relation to this striving, means that will is not the will of an individual person or entity. Will, rather, a way be-ing addresses us: "will is in itself command."[387] What will commands is more will. Will is the striving for itself that wills. As Heidegger puts it:

> Will strives for what it wills not just as for something that it does not yet have. Will already has what it wills. For will wills its willing. Its will is what it has willed. Will wills itself. It exceeds itself. In this way will as will wills above and

[383] Ibid, 228/171.
[384] Ibid.
[385] E.g. ibid, 229/171.
[386] Ibid, 230/172.
[387] Ibid, 234/175.

> beyond itself, and therefore at the same time it must bring itself beneath and behind itself.[388]

This passage reveals why Heidegger claims that within the understanding of beingness as will to power, the way existence is structured is as what Nietzsche calls "eternal recurrence of the same".[389] That to say, eternal recurrence names the *temporal* meaning of the will to power. We recall that Heidegger understands temporality in terms of the temporal structure of ek-stasis – a draw away from the present towards the future; a draw away from the present towards the past; and a present draw towards what is present. This temporal structure therefore entails continuous exposure to absence and alterity (the no-longer, the not-yet, the other). The ek-stases of will all draw continuously towards will: will anticipates itself, recollects itself, and moves from itself to itself. Will recurs eternally as the same – as will.

We might understand Heidegger's critique of technicity and what he calls "machination" – *Machenschaft* – the disclosure of beings in terms of their instrumental use. Technology answers be-ings address as will by relating to beings in the aspect of value in the sense of counting towards preservation and increase. Technology discloses beings in their masterability, their susceptibility to be made to count towards increase, preservation and further willing. It is through technology – or perhaps also in response to technology, as we are disclosed by it in our reciprocal relation to it – that we "position" beings as orderable and available. Their orderability and availability ensure further ordering and availability, and so forth. According to the temporal structure of eternal return, this ordering also draws beings towards immediacy – the immediacy of being always available, always able to be arranged towards further striving, always anticipating and recalling more willing. For Heidegger, technology thus entails exerting will over entities – technology is mastery. It entails a pronounced refusal of the call to await beings, and encounter them in their singularity and alterity. It reduces their appearance to a single dimension: presence.

[388] Ibid, 234/175.
[389] See, for example, EW, 318/ER, 98.

It is clear why the aspect of be-ing as will to power (which is in turn an aspect of beingness) might be considered as covering over the withdrawal of be-ing. The temporal structure of eternal recurrence draws always towards the same, and the same always as immediacy, orderability and availability. It leaves room neither for withdrawal nor for the differencing which plays out as the difference between be-ing and beings. All that is in being appears as utterly explicable and capable of being put to some use; even if no explanation or use presently serves, scientific and technological innovation promises one on the horizon – already "views" one through the regard of valuation. The relational reach within which beings come to presence in the manner of being-on-the-way consequently collapses. As human beings, we are no longer prompted to "await the other as counter"; rather, we are invited to grasp and take everything as our own. Yet it is important to emphasize again that this situation is not simply of our making. It is a "sending" of be-ing: in our era, the aspect which be-ing shows us is the will to power, as the positioning of *Ge-stell* from will and towards will; in this aspect, be-ing aspects beings as counting towards preservation and increase, as *Bestand*. And since we cannot avoid responding to the call of be-ing – even if we are deaf to it – we respond to the degree that we disclose *ourselves* in the same way. We respond by willing, by disclosing beings as orderable, present and available, and even disclose ourselves as resources to be utilized (towards willing more willing), as standing reserve.

While this state of affairs is the target of much criticism from Heidegger, he also considers it to hold a hidden promise. The withdrawal of be-ing is so pronounced in the era of *Bestand* that its forgottenness itself perhaps comes into view. Our denial of be-ing's call to preserve withdrawal and receive beings within a reach perhaps becomes so pronounced that this denial may strike us (as the absence of their bicycle strikes its owner – though perhaps on a somewhat larger scale). Likewise – since we are not so much the originators of this denial as appropriated and appropriating participants in it – be-ing's withdrawal in our age may become so profound that we become called to respond to *it*, and thus to seek different ways of understanding what is at stake in our existence.

Thus, Heidegger seeks ways to attend to this withdrawal – to do so in a manner which might compel us to be struck by the withdrawal of ground, and to respond to the urging of this withdrawal so that we participate in the grounding of our reach. His hope is to find ways of

responding to be-ing which draw their groundless grounding from a sense that what is at stake in existence is precisely the appropriative relationship between be-ing, beings and human being. We might suggest then that he hopes to find a way *forward* towards our origin: not to retrieve the ancient ways of relating to being found in Greek philosophy, but to shape a new way of relating which attends to that which called the Greeks to develop philosophy in the first place, but which nevertheless appeared in their philosophy only in the form of a kind of forgottenness. Since it would arise from *attending to* the forgottenness of be-ing in the history of Western thinking, this "other beginning" would then look back to anticipate a different relation to beings.

For Heidegger, it is arguably within language that this anticipation is to play out, and in which the possibility of a new dispensation of be-ing resides. This is because language is the key site within which human beings respond to – or are capable of responding to – be-ing's withdrawal. Such is also the case, we will argue in Chapter 2, concerning our response to the forgottenness of be-ing. Specifically, literature might be considered as occasioning a reciprocity between be-ing's self-showing as beingness – as presentness, as representability, as availability. Simultaneously, literature offers the possibility – to be explored in Chapter 3 – of occasioning a reciprocity with be-ing's self-witholding, and its demand to ground beings and preserve their appearance in *ἀλήθεια*.

Chapter 2: Writing being

If we are addressed by be-ing, and thereby disposed by it to relate to the possibilities of our existence in specific ways, then it is in language that this address sounds forth. Language is how we aspect be-ing: anticipate the manner in which beings are available; recall possibilities for relating to them in their possible modalities of availability; and make explicit those possibilities. It is also how we disclose be-ing by disclosing ourselves – by countering the aspect be-ing which calls us into responsively attending to presencing in relation with absencing.

In Chapter 1, we explored some of the central claims and approaches of Heidegger's philosophy to prepare the way for an interpretation initially of what is called language, and eventually of what is called literature, along these lines. We seek an interpretation, that is, which both understands and attempts to relate to language – and to language as literature – as the human relation to be-ing, or as the site of our reciprocity gifting refusal. We will now work towards elucidating this reciprocity, with a view to considering how it is – or is not – occasioned in what is called literature.

As was the case with our examination of Heidegger's broader concerns, this elucidation will require a degree of circling. We will begin our approach by sketching the role language plays in his account of the ontological structure of human existence. We will then elaborate on the metaphysical position with respect to language. It is from within this position that the concept of "language" as we know it has emerged: the attempt to describe and define language, to analyse it as a system, as a means of communication or expression, may itself be considered metaphysical (a thinking of our acts of speaking, writing, gesturing, etc. from a perspective which interprets be-ing as a being). This will position us simultaneously to consider the position with respect to language which characterizes late modernity, or the epoch of technicity, and to examine "literature" as the occasioning of the reciprocity between be-ing as will to power and human being as willing.

We will attend to metaphysical and technological positions with respect to language, then, not to trace a history of concepts, but with a view to tracing the reciprocity between language and the

historical dispensations of be-ing revealed in metaphysics. We seek to attend to the ways in which a specific understanding of be-ing – being as beingness, and eventually beingness as will – position us in relation to beings; simultaneously, we seek to consider how specific ways of anticipating language as a means to relate to beings position us in our relation to be-ing. In this way, our examination of the broadly metaphysical position with respect to language will simultaneously offer grounds for a critique of this position – of the kind of reciprocity with be-ing entailed in it – and provide indications as to how language might be understood as the reciprocity between be-ing and human being in the first place. With respect to the central concern of the thesis, we will consider how what is called literature may mark the metaphysical position in a pronounced form – how the "completion" of the metaphysical position with respect to language is called for and called forth, promised and recalled, in literature.

To begin with, we will circle back on central insights from Chapter 1, but this time with the relation between be-ing and language in view. We recall that for Heidegger, the question of being is in key respects phenomenological. Asking about being means asking how it is that beings appear as manifest or in being. We have seen how this means that such a question concerns the *presence* – or rather presencing – of beings: how is it that beings appear available to us, how is it that were are able to relate to them?

We hinted in Chapter 1 that a central element of the Greek response to this question – the response which gave Western metaphysics its orientation – suggested that beings presence within a relation to *λόγος*. They address themselves in some way to *λόγος*, which somehow gathers them in their being. Western accounts of both being and of language emerge as elaborations on this insight. The word has multiple meanings, which hint towards a reciprocity between language and thinking, as well, perhaps, between these and being. In many usages, it denotes what is said: "speech"; "verbal expression or utterance"; "talk"; "discussion"; "thing spoken of", "subject-matter"; "saying". It can also connote forms of utterance we might often associate with thinking: "explanation", "statement of a theory", "argument", "definition". It also means "thinking" itself, and has related senses such as "reasoning", "reason", "ground", "thesis". An association with being is detectable in meanings such as "divine order" and "law exhibited in the world-

process".[390] In Greek there is no word for "language", but *λόγος* is perhaps the closest Greek word to expressing "what we understand by language".[391] Perhaps more significantly, *λόγος* directs us to possibilities both for understanding the metaphysical position with respect to language, and for understanding language in a very different way from the usual metaphysical account – at least when it is sounded through Heidegger's thinking. An engagement with the *λόγος* thus serves as a starting point for our discussion.

Circling back: the view to *λόγος* as discourse

How, then, do beings appear? How is this book on the table in front of me manifest to me as a book?[392] The answer which sets the trajectory of Western thought is that it presents itself in its look, the appearance – *εἶδος*, interpreted by Plato as *ἰδέα*. Paradoxically, the being is available to me as a being – that is to say, present in the sense of *οὐσία*, as though its presence were constant – precisely in its *not* being immediately present. Plato interprets this paradox by understanding being (*ὄν*) as *εἶδος* (what is sighted): the "character" of "pure presence" is "to show itself".[393] In a sense I look past the book in front of me to see its sightability: visible form. Plato's interpretation is taken up in subsequent metaphysics, in transcendentalism and in idealism.[394] The logic of this interpretation *also* plays out, however, in "materialisms" based on the Aristotelian understanding of *ἐνέργεια*.[395] Heidegger's insight is that despite significant conceptual differences and variety in subsequent Western metaphysics, this same logic, in which being is understood in terms of "fundamental being" (whether understood as idea, the Absolute, Logic, Reason, God, or Nature) is maintained. We have considered also how sightability is interpreted as value, and fundamental being as will to power in late modernity.

In Heidegger's view, Plato's interpretation, as well as Aristotle's, in fact gesture in a different direction (even if neither thinker ultimately pursued their thinking in that direction) – towards perceptibility understood as *ἀλήθεια* – dis-closure. This name points to the simultaneous

[390] LSJ, "λόγος".
[391] GM, 441/FCM, 305.
[392] Here we are drawing from Heidegger's example and discussion in the 1969 seminar at Le Thor ("Le Thor 1969", 332/39).
[393] "Seminar in Le Thor 1968", 312 (translated as "Seminar in Le Thor 1968", 26).
[394] "The prevailing interpretation is to claim that Plato restricts reality to the Ideas above" (ibid.).
[395] Ibid.

emergence and withholding, revealment and concealment, which Greek metaphysics interpreted as the visibility of the look. Dis-closure, however, suggests the presencing non-presence of the book in a manner which does not imply a transcendental realm of true being beyond the material entity; nor does it suggest the confinement of the entity's being to the causal structure of its standing in its end; nor does it even suggest striving towards appearance. The book is drawn into presence – into presence as a being – through lack; the "beyond" which draws forth its beingness is not so much transcendental as abyssal. The book does not present itself in or as *sheer* presence; it withholds itself in a temporal-spatial *reach* through which it is *given* in relation to other entities and possibilities (rather than simply "being present"). The privation at play here (which leads Aristotle to interpret *ἐνέργεια* as primary over *δύναμις* with respect to *οὐσία*) "breaks out" in "difference" – not the difference between two entities, nor between entities and an entity-like transcendental presence (between this book and book-essence, for example), but the "differencing" which plays out as groundless appropriation.

The central matter which we have thus far largely skirted over is that *ἀλήθεια* is understood in terms of *λόγος*. The self-showing of beings must in some way be apprehended and taken up into thought – *νοεῖν* (*vernehmen* and *aufnehmen* are two of Heidegger's preferred German terms). *Λόγος* suggests the manner in which self-showing is gathered into a stand to be taken up in this way. 'Αλήθεια "is visible as λόγος".[396] *Λόγος*, Heidegger claims, ultimately does not mean reason, language or speaking, but "Anwesen lassen": to allow presencing, or – in Mitchell and Raffoul's translation, which emphasizes Heidegger's association of *es gibt* (there is) with *es läßt*: "*to let* presencing [*Anwesen* lassen]".[397] *Λόγος* means reason, language and speaking only *as* "letting" in this way: enabling presencing. In some way the presencing of the book unfolds within the horizon of my *addressing* [*zusprechen*] it.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger understands this "addressing" on the basis of an interpretation of *λόγος* as speaking discursively, equating it with "*δηλοῦν*", "making manifest".[398] By understanding *λόγος* as discourse (*Rede*), Heidegger is able to anticipate ways of conceiving of language "from" be-ing – that is in a direction determined by be-ing, rather than one determined

[396] "Le Thor 1969", 332/39.
[397] Ibid.
[398] SZ, 32/BT, 36.

by human subjectivity. Language does not simply entail making assertions; it *articulates* our disposedness[399] (*Befindlichkeit* – the "past" element of Dasein's temporal constitution: its always already being opened to the world) with our understanding (*Verstehen* – the "futural" element of Dasein's constitution, through which Dasein projects itself into possibilities for being). It articulates our moods and dispositions with the concrete explicitations of the realm of meanings within which we find ourselves.[400] In *Being and Time*, Heidegger therefore considers discourse to be an existential too – the third of the "essential moments" of Dasein's disclosedness.[401] Rather than something presently given, then, or even given as a "tool" which we can take up (to communicate, for example), it is "the existential-ontological foundation of language",[402] which makes possible those "worldly" "expressions" which we can "come across as ready-to-hand".[403]

We may understand discursive articulation conceived in this way as determined by being because the integrated structure of disposedness, understanding and discourse itself refers to the understanding of being, and is determined by it. This reference to the understanding of being might itself be understood as the specific manner in which the articulation of the other elements of the ontological structure are in fact articulated. That which is articulated is in each case "sense" or "meaning" [*Sinn*, in *Being and Time*] – that within which we "bear ourselves towards…", the relational space within which it is possible for beings to appear to us, and the relation to be-ing's refusal which draws open this space. If the "whole" within which we exist is constituted by references and relationships, we might conceive of the *λόγος* as entailing our *relating* or *referring*: our making explicit and showing possible ways for available references to

[399] "Disposedness" may be distinguished from "disposition", in that the former is the fundamental existential (ontological structure) – i.e. the existential mode of being-disposed – rather than a particular (ontic) mood or disposition.
[400] See SZ, 161ff./BT, 203ff. Discourse is here understood in terms of both *Gliederung* and *Artikulation* – both of which suggest "articulation".
[401] See for example SZ, 296/BT, 342: "Das dritte Wesensmoment der Erschlossenheit ist die *Rede*." In received Heidegger scholarship, *Rede* is considered one of three constituent moments of a trivalent structure of ek-sistence – the other being *Befindlichkeit* and *Verstehen*. However, Thomas Sheehan makes a compelling argument for understanding the structure of ek-sistence as *bivalent* and instead consisting of *Befindlichkeit* and *Verstehen*. *Rede* is the third "moment" in that it holds together the structure – a view consistent with Heidegger's interpretation of *Rede* as meaning "articulation". *Rede* is therefore equated with ek-sistence itself, for example when Heidegger says: "Only in terms of the temporality of discourse – that is, of Dasein in general – can we clarify how 'signification' 'arises' and make the possibility of concept-formation ontologically intelligible" (SZ, 349/BT, 401). See Sheehan, *Paradigm Shift*, esp. pp. 148–153 and 297–299.
[402] SZ, 160–161/BT, 201.
[403] "Die Hinausgesprochenheit der Rede ist die Sprache. Diese Wortganzheit, als in welcher die Rede ein eigenes 'weltliches' sein hat, wird so als innerweltlich Seiendes wie ein Zuhandenes vorfindlich." SZ, 161/BT, 204.

interrelate. Importantly, in Heidegger's view such relating in each instance also refers to the referential totality itself, simultaneously articulating the whole *as* a totality, rather than an agglomeration of separate impulses. Bearing in mind that this totality itself only appears in anticipation of and as a recollection of its own refusal (in relation to the nothing), this also means that such relating refers to withdrawal. This relation, however, is more readily apparent when we consider singular, manifest instances of language, rather than the structure of discourse; we will defer a close examination of it to discussions of language in this modality in Chapter 3.

What is relevant to the present discussion is that this referential articulation ensures that beings can always show up *as* something, because that *to which* their references relate has been given: beings appear as in being. This is not to say, as in the correspondence theory of truth, that the totality is a pregiven present unity – a transcendental signified. Nor is the referring which takes place signification, although it is perhaps only in Heidegger's later reconsiderations of *λόγος* that this becomes clear. The totality, "world", is articulated *as though* it were a totality, but there is the implication that it may be constantly rearticulated, reconstituted, as the references which structure it are recalibrated.[404] It is only within the articulated totality, however, that individual references "show up", are made visible – *δηλοῦν*.

Language thus appears as a "running back and forth" between relationships and connections.[405] This to-and-fro forms a sense of interconnectedness of the relationships as well as their divisions. Significantly, there is therefore a "circuitousness" (*Umwegigkeit*) "which belongs to the essence of human understanding", which "requires the indirection [*Umweg*] of a reference to a universal by means of which and according to which the particulars" are able to be grasped. For Heidegger, "discursiveness" – this circuitousness – is a clear "index of finitude":[406] of the limitations of human existence (or ek-sistence) which draw it beyond self and the immediacy of the present, towards an encounter with the other. It is a reminder of the possibility of no possibility towards which human existence is ultimately directed. Although, as we will see,

[404] However, as Dastur points out, "world" in early Heidegger is mostly understood in terms of "environment (*Umwelt*)" – that is, "the daily world, which consists in nothing else than its ontological structure of meaningfulness". "Heidegger's Freiburg Version of the Origin of the Work of Art", 129".
[405] Sheehan points out this etymological sense in which discourse, *discurrere*, suggests "running back and forth". *Making Sense*, 21.
[406] *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, 29/ *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 20–21.

language has frequently been seen to reflect "a higher capability in human beings",[407] for Heidegger it is the site where we are "most vulnerable to the frailties of [our] thrownness".[408] The ways of showing meaningful relations and articulating the meaningful totality of my existence available to me arise from the situation of my existence, which I did not choose. I am thrown into a specific language, which I share with others; my "self-understanding intersects with the other",[409] and must be negotiated with the other in the language which is not essentially mine.[410] My self-understanding and understanding of world thus demand my attentiveness and responsiveness to the other. As we will see, Heidegger in fact prioritizes *listening* as essentially determinative of language.

We might suggest then that discourse answers or responds to the absence of sheer presence; it points towards an "abyss" (in Schalow's words) "from which the challenge of wrenching forth 'meaning' begins."[411] It appears to respond to the absence of any sheer presence – any point at which the discursive running back and forth would come to a halt – by referring connections and divisions together *as though* there were a totality which could hold together and grant individual meanings. In anticipation of this "as though", and recollecting its possibility, it projects a world of significance. It projects it, however, *with reference to* the absence of ground, which is likewise anticipated and recollected in the projection. It calls, then, for an en-counter – which means it urges us attentively to await the other as counterpart.

Thus, discursivity already suggests that we "address" beings *as a response* – as the counterpart to a prior address. This reciprocity was already evident in our discussion concerning the aspect of be-ing as enabling a being (for example, the book) to solicit us with its look, and as calling for our countering – or encountering – aspect: the aspect which discloses. Expressed differently, we might say that the silent address of be-ing (silent, in a manner equivalent to the invisibility of its aspect) enables the book to address me [*zuspricht*] – to urge me to answer with a responsive disclosure. Through such a disclosure, I select between and show possible interrelationships,

[407] Schalow, *The Incarnality of Being: The Earth, Animals, and the Body in Heidegger's Thought*, 94 – hereafter *Incarnality*
[408] Schalow, "Language and the Social Roots of Conscience: Heidegger's Less Traveled Path", 144.
[409] Ibid, 145.
[410] Cf. Derrida, *Monolinguilism of the Other or, The Prosthesis of Origin*.
[411] *Incarnality*, 94.

connections or configurations within the whole – the whole revealed by be-ing's aspect. I draw together and make explicit possible ways of relating to the entity within the reach of its availability to me.

Heidegger's analysis of discursivity also indicates, however, that the average, everyday manner in which human beings interpret and understand largely covers over the relation to the abyss which grants manifestness. In response to the capability of language for showing beings in their being – for dis-closing them "in a whole", in a relational bearing – the human being calls upon language to draw the being of whatever is encountered into the appearance of a ready discursive availability. In turn, the human being – capable of attending to the other as counterpart in disclosure – responds to the availability of articulated interpretations and understandings in discourse by seizing on and repeating available expressions. Since "the way in which things have been expressed" articulates a specific interpretation of the meaning of being and human being – articulates the manner in which a specific reach has been drawn together – seizing on and repeating available expressions "preserves" a specific "understanding of the disclosed world".[412] In such easily available expressions, what is shown appears as present with a high degree of immediacy; in a sense the appearance of presence is drawn so close that it covers over the withdrawal of be-ing and the withholding of ground. Consequently, by granting the appearance of immediate presence, everyday language draws us into the present. The demand placed on everyday language then appears to be sustaining and preserving this sense of the immediacy of beings (in terms of both presence and the temporal present); the demand made by everyday language appears to be a demand that we engage with beings as present and knowable. Within this relation to language, what is ownmost to language appears to be the conveyance of meaning, and language is considered as unfolding in its essence to the extent that it expresses or conveys meaning. That towards which language is understood to unfold is the fullness of meaning – its presence and availability.

The metaphysical perspective reconsidered with respect to *λόγος*

The manner of relating to language that determines and is expressed in everyday human activity is arguably given philosophical expression – and in some ways intensified – in metaphysics.

[412] SZ, 167-168/BT, 211.

Metaphysics conceives our relation to beings – and the horizon within which we address them – as occurring within a present actuality in which independent entities are already constituted.[413] The manner in which a being shows itself – or addresses us – is as "worked" (in terms of *ἐνέργεια* understood as *actus*) by causal relations. It is worked in the sense of standing in its own end *without* (in the absence of, but also standing outside of) the dynamic reach of being-on-the-way – this in the sense of having been accomplished as a result of the workings (*actio*) of a cause.[414]

The demand placed on human thinking by the unconcealment of beings as independent, permanent presence, is "correct seeing". Such a demand is already articulated – and responded to – by Plato, who interprets dis-closure in terms of visibility and construes the relation to the entity's stepping forth into appearance precisely as "correct seeing". The relation of *λόγος* to truth – the reciprocity between the human being and *ἀλήθεια* – is accomplished when the *λόγος* "*conforms to* something already true".[415] Co-respondence to be-ing – returning its aspect – is correspondence. Such correct seeing is associated in subsequent metaphysics with the human being, and regarded as a special faculty the human possesses.

Heidegger finds traces of this view already expressed in the Greek understanding of the human as *ζῷον λόγον ἔχον* – the living being with *λόγος*.[416] In Aristotle, there is the association of this capacity with a specific manner of relating to beings (or to the being of beings): although he discusses *λόγος* in terms we might translate as "speech", "talking", or "discourse" (or even "language", from a modern perspective), he prioritizes the *λόγος ἀποφαντικός*: the categorical or declaratory saying – the assertion. Through this kind of *λόγος*, a correspondence is established between the visibility of the entity's substantive being and the human thinking of that being. In order to establish such a correspondence, assertions represent something as something; the assertion is true when this *as* has been correctly judged, establishing conformity. What sets

[413] See Dastur, "Essence", 226–227. See also Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding. Zu Kants Lehre von den transzendentalen Grundsätzen*, 141.
[414] "Wissenschaft und Besinnung", 46–47.
[415] WDW, 119/ET, 86.
[416] See, for example, *Heraklit*, 25/*Heraclitus*, 20.

humans apart from other beings is the capacity to make assertive judgements, and truth is the correctness of such a judgement.

Framed in terms of the en-counter with be-ing, we might say that the understanding of being as substantive presence anticipates a relation to that presence. It promises such a relation, or calls for it, in that the possibility of such a relation is made manifest through this understanding. Likewise, *ἀλήθεια* aspected as visibility calls for an answering disclosure of that visibility. A specific kind of responsive co-relation – a specific way of discursively countering be-ing's aspect – is called for and called forth: one which is able to show the visibility of an entity's substantive being. Language is called forth as a means of establishing correspondence between visibility and thinking; it answers with an assertion. Simultaneously, the human being is herself aspected (expected, revealed) in a specific way by the possibility of disclosing substantive presence. Be-ing's aspect of sightability addresses her as one capable of showing beings in their sightability. She is anticipated and disclosed in a specific relation to being and beings. She is called upon to relate to entities and to being through language in a specific way, and to relate *to* language in a specific way. This relation to language also interprets her thinking in its reciprocity to being in a definite manner.

The modern relation to language further intensifies the everyday and metaphysical tendency towards hearing the demand which calls forth language as a demand for presence in the present; the modern human being responds by likewise drawing towards (both in an active and passive sense) presence and the present. This intensification is perhaps already anticipated in the Latin translation of *λόγος* as *ratio* (reason). The human becomes "*animal rationale*, the rational living being".[417] In modernity, the relation between the being's self-showing and the human's apprehension of what is shown is determined as measurement: reason (ratio) "renders the account" and "provides the calculation" for the "truth of judgement".[418] Apprehending (*Vernehmung*, *νοεῖν*) becomes determined as *Vernunft* (reason) and as *Verstand*

[417] *Heraklit*, 25/*Heraclitus*, 20. As Heidegger notes, *animal* is also frequently translated simply as animal, notably by Nietzsche (ibid, 164). See also "Die Sprache im Gedicht", 41–42 – hereafter DSIG (translated as "Language in the Poem", 166–167 – hereafter LIPT).
[418] SG, 173/PR, 119: "gibt die Rechenschaft". Lilly's translation gives only "renders the account"; we have supplemented this translation to emphasize the *rechnen* – calculation – implied in *Rechenschaft*.

(understanding).[419] We might note the sense here that understanding brings [*ver*-] to a stand [*Stand*] – that the independent stand of the being appears as though brought forth through human action. Understanding is itself determined as "the representing that makes judgements."[420] "Representing" – *Vorstellen* – is a crucial word in Heidegger's analysis (which we have touched upon in discussions concerning will). It suggests the manner in which the determination of be-ing as beingness draws thinking into *presenting* being *as present* – as present to the thinking being itself (interpreted as subject). We might understand such representation according in terms of the reciprocal structure of the address of be-ing: in response to (or in anticipation of) the beingness of beings, thinking makes visible (discloses, represents) what is posited as an already constituted presence (sightability, substance, causal structure) – re-presents it. The running back and forth of discursivity is the movement by which presence is relayed.

Thinking then appears to be positioned as *apart* from beings, such that they can be re-presented in their being,[421] for example through assertions, or, in Kant's influential account, as "constituted by the categories of the understanding".[422] Yet this apartness paradoxically lacks distance, as beings are always encountered as present to a self-present subject. Heidegger even interprets Descartes's "I think" as properly saying "I represent something as something" – i.e. I "place [*stelle*] something as something in front [*vor*] of myself".[423] Beings are construed – or we are positioned in relation to language and to being – as "standing over against [*entgegensteht*]" our "comprehending and asserting".[424] The mutuality of the encounter between human being and entity is transformed into a kind of opposition: the present being appears in the aspect of a *Gegenstand* – "that which 'stands (*stand*) over against (*gegen*) us'".[425] With the being of beings posited [*gestellt*] as "objectness" [*Gegenständigkeit*], the being becomes an object *for a subject*:[426] for the human being herself disclosed as (or disclosing herself as) an independent presence. The "object of thinking is that which the thinking subject represents to itself."[427]

[419] EM, 147/IM, 215.
[420] Ibid.
[421] See EM, 147/IM, 215.
[422] Daniela Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy: an introduction*, 60 – hereafter HCTP.
[423] SG, 113/PR, 77.
[424] EM, 147/IM, 215.
[425] Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology: A Reading of Heidegger*, 85.
[426] See SG, 113/PR, 77; "Le Thor 1968", 320/31.
[427] Neu, Daniela. "On the Relation Between Being and Humans in Heidegger's Letter on Humanism and in his Contributions to Philosophy", 190.

With being posited in this way, thinking also "sets itself against *being* in such a way that *being* is re-presented [*vor-gestellt*] to thinking, and consequently stands against thinking like an ob-ject [*Gegen-stand*]."[428] Heidegger calls the Latin word *repraesentatio* "the best interpretation" of this "positing": the "*Re*-" "refers back to the *ego cogitato*" – refers "'back to me'. The 'I' lets something stand before it, which also means that this something has become an object."[429] Truth is now the certainty granted through representation.[430] This structure through which presence "refers back" to the subject is perhaps hinted at in the word "subject" itself. The word translates *ὑποκείμενον* – that which "lies under". It is also the root of "substance", and likewise means "that which is preserved through all the changes of properties and thus through the transformation of the thing".[431] It is what grounds the appearance of an entity, which in Greek thought was considered as belonging to the entity itself.[432] Yet a shift of what *ὑποκείμενον* entails is made possible when the view of being as beingness promises a relation to manifest appearance grounded on an "unshakeable ground" – one which "rests in itself", and is "unconditioned".[433] The answering look it demands is one which attends to the immediacy, independence and permanence of presence; this means that the human being is called upon to disclose herself as a subject – as present to herself, given over to herself, as one who re-presents the present and thus grounds presence as unconditioned.[434] This particular reciprocity between be-ing, beings and human being is occasioned by language aspected as representation.

Although representation responds to an aspect of be-ing – answers to the presentability of substantive presence – its manner of responsiveness in a sense obliterates the mutuality of the encounter both with be-ing and with beings. We might trace this obliteration to the circumvention or covering over of the refusal of be-ing in the representing encounter. Since be-ing is understood as presence, and the being of the entity understood as present (or capable of being presented) to the corresponding assertion (or understanding), there is no need to await (or

[428] EM, 89/IM, 128 (my emphasis; translation modified).
[429] "Le Thor 1968", 320/31.
[430] See "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" – hereafter ZW (translated as "The Age of the World Picture" – hereafter AWP).
[431] *Freiheit*, 66/*Freedom*, 46.
[432] ZW, 106/AWP, 81.
[433] Ibid.
[434] Ibid, 107–108/82–83.

be on the look out for, or preserve) the look of the other. The projection of entity as object paradoxically entails the collapse of distance. Since presence has already been constituted and is already available, there is no need to await (or be on the look out for, or preserve) the look of the other as counterpart: a more direct route to the manifestness of the being is available in the form of the re-presentation which grasps what is present and relays it – returns it as present – to the self.[435]

Representing language

Representational positioning is a key element of the metaphysical understanding of language. It informs the manner in which we seek the possibility of any thinking experience with language. It determines the nature of the approach we need to take in order to effectuate "thinking", and thereby grasp what language is. It expects our thinking in a specific aspect. We draw on language in order to say anything about language; we have already been drawn into "using" language in certain ways, and this determines our manner of engagement. Thus, we see once again the need to bring our framing perspective into focus through a consideration of how language has been determined historically, thereby seeking the possibility of a turn in our thinking of language from being to be-ing.

How, then, does representational metaphysics suggest we "think" language, or approach a thinking experience with it? How does it expect us to "think" literature, or to experience literature? If beings are what is present, and being is presence, then language – since it "appears in being" as itself "in being"[436] (appears as a being among other beings) – "belongs to what is present".[437] As in being (as *a* being), its self-showing must entail its revealing its *ἐντελέχεια* (completion, standing-in-its-end, *ἐνέργεια*), and this self-showing should be interpreted as determinative causal structure. Language must be *vorhanden* in the sense of already present, "already constituted".[438] As such, language "lies over and against an independent actuality",[439]

[435] Cf. *Parmenides*, esp. 152–153/103.
[436] *Zum Wesen der Sprache und Zur Frage nach der Kunst*, 92 – hereafter ZWDS (my translation). The translated clause is "kommt innerhalb des Seienden als Seiendes vor"; I have translated *Seiendes* as "in being" rather than "a being" to maintain what I interpret to be the force of the passage. See also ZWDS, 121.
[437] "Weg", 245/"Way", 115.
[438] "Essence", 226–227.
[439] "Zur Seinsfrage", 401–402/"Question", 303 (translation modified).

with "the thing … on one side, and the word … on the other."[440] "Linguistic expression" is "added to phenomena after they have appeared."[441] Literature must be an instance of language – language appearing in a specific modality, perhaps, or valued in some way.

Language and literature are, then, objects; to grasp their "being", we must represent them to ourselves as subjects. Focusing on language as our starting point, probable ways of representing it include gathering "reliable information concerning the nature of language."[442] Like anything else in being, it is "determinable with regard to [its] differentiated inherent what-ness and [its] unified way of being-real – in contrast to non-being or merely possible-being."[443] The "essential question" – the question concerning the essence [*Wesen*] of language – which emerges is "What is language?", by which is meant "Of what does language consist?"[444] To understand it is to describe those qualities or characteristics which already underlie and determine it, distinguishing it from all else in being. Such a description would include an account of the functions of language – its *δύναμις* understood in terms of the *ἐνέργεια* it effectuates.

Aristotle's treatment of *λόγος* orients the Western understanding of language in this direction. In *De Interpretatione*[445] he says that "λόγος δέ ἐστι φωνὴ σημαντική": *λόγος* is meaningful (*σημαντική*) utterance (*φωνή*) – vocal sound that means something. Although we recall that *λόγος* is not directly equivalent to the word "language" (or *Sprache* in German), the distinctions made here concerning *λόγος* are taken up in, and to a significant degree direct and even determine, what in Western thought comes to be understood as "language". This understanding tends (whether explicitly or implicitly) to take up the distinction made in Aristotle between the sound [*Laut*] of the word and its meaning or significance [*Bedeutung*]. The sound, "as what is given to the senses, is what is closest, and actual."[446] Significance is "attached to it and loaded onto it, so

[440] WS, 170/NL, 66.
[441] "Weg", 257/"Way", 126 (translation modified).
[442] WS, 174/NL, 70; see also 160/58.
[443] Here we have quoted von Herrmann, "Flower", 29, though within this context he is reflecting on the metaphysical determination of the human being rather than of language. For Heidegger's discussion in this context of the traditional understanding of being in terms of *essentia* (what-it-is) and *existentia* (that-it-is), see WS, 175/NL, 71–72.
[444] ZWDS, 119 (my translation).
[445] The Greek title is *Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας*; however, the Latin version is most commonly used.
[446] ZWDS, 119 (my translation).

that the word becomes the sound-structure of a meaning-bearer."[447] Language appears as a "human construction", a "tool"[448] for expression – for the transposition of a meaning into a sensible form: *Verlautbarung* (literally that which emerges through the occasioning (*ver-*) of audibility (*laut-bar*)) ; *Versinnlichung* (what is rendered as capable of being meaningfully perceived or experienced)*; Äußerung* (utterance – or recalling the English word's etymon, *outer-ance*; ex-pression).[449]

Whether such transposition is considered to involve the loading of already available meanings into sensory form, or the accumulation of meaning within already available utterances, the logic remains the same:[450] the "sensible body of the sound" is distinguished from the "supersensible spirit of the word meaning."[451] The "phonetic and the pronunciation are the physical, and the meaning is the non-sensory – that is, the metaphysical." The sound – the *Laut* – is the sensory form of a *Verlautbarung*; it is the "outer", the ex-pression, of the utterance. This ex-pression need not even be a sound; the structure outlined above can be elaborated to include other "sensible bodies" – notably the letter, *littera*, the "signs of sounds".[452] We might note here, anticipating our engagement with Derrida, that the letter is here referred to in a manner which suggests that it is a second-order sign – the sign of a sign.[453] Derrida famously demonstrates that the "secondarity" evinced by writing as "'[s]ignifier of the signifier' describes" the very "movement of language".[454] Although our aim is not precisely to trace the movement of language in signification, Derrida's remark pertains to the understanding of language, and relation to language, which emerges within the representational thinking which we have outlined above. We will elucidate, and draw on, further insights of Derrida's when we engage more closely with language in the aspect of writing.

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[447] Ibid (my translation).
[448] Ibid, 136–137 (my translation).
[449] See, for example, "Die Sprache", 11–12 (translated as "Language", 190), where Heidegger discussions the view that language is "an activity of man" and entails "expression". See also, for example, ZWDS, 75; 131; 142.
[450] See ZWDS, 142.
[451] ZWDS, 51. "Spiritual" here translates *Geistige. Geistig* can mean "spiritual", "mental" or "intellectual". All three of these meanings are potentially relevant and point in different ways to different – though connected – impulses of metaphysical thought. There is little room in this thesis for an exhaustive analysis of these distinctions, though we will draw on the resonances of all three words in subsequent discussions. My choice of the word "spiritual" in the present context is largely stylistic, and not intended to convey anything supernatural.
[452] WS, 192/NL, 97.
[453] See *Of Grammatology*, 7 – hereafter OG.
[454] Ibid.

For the moment, we mark only that within the logic of metaphysics, the phoneme or enunciation (*Laut*) and the letter (*Buchstab*) occupy structurally similar positions within representational language – the position of the sensory-physical distinguished from the non-sensory mental, spiritual or metaphysical, to which it refers.[455] We might add to Heidegger's *Verlautbarung*, *Versinnlichung* and *Äußerung* the word "figure": it suggests "form" – the "distinctive shape" of something, its "appearance" (even "conspicuous appearance"); but it also suggests the "*represented* form" – thus the "image" or "likeness", the "representation *of* something". Since "figure" can also mean "written character", it has the further advantage of suggesting the *written* element of language we would like to emphasize.

Within metaphysical thought, the distinction between the sensible and intelligible elements of language reflects a distinction understood as central to human existence. The human being, too, is composed of the bodily and the spiritual. We have already hinted at this in the preceding discussion of the view that the human being is "*ζῷον λόγον ἔχον*, *animal rationale*, the rational living being"[456]. The human – also in being, also a being, and thus also determinable by its whatness –[457] has present characteristics which grant it its essence; it, too, can be represented as an object to universalizing subjectivity. The human has a physical body through which it belongs "to the realm of the sensible", which it "shares with all other, nonhuman living beings";[458] it also "has"[459] *ratio*, a capacity for reasoning, through which it "belongs to the realm of the spiritual", and is thus distinguished from "nonhuman living beings."[460] The human is the unity of body and mind as language is the unity of utterance and meaning; this correspondence extends into the manner in which we relate to language. In von Herrmann's words, "We grasp the vocal utterance as a phenomenon of the human body which, together with the body as a whole, belongs to the realm of sensibility. What gets expressed in vocal utterances (the *content* of language, its

[455] See, for example, ZWDS 106: "Aber der Laut und der Stab (Zeichen), Buch-stab, litera. / Das Lauten."
[456] *Heraklit*, 25/*Heraclitus*, 20. As Heidegger notes, *animal* is also frequently translated simply as animal, notably by Nietzsche (*ibid.*; 164). See also DSIG, 40–42/LITP, 166–167).
[457] See, for example, ZWDS 144. Here we are once again guided by von Herrmann, "Flower", 29.
[458] von Herrmann, "The Flower of the Mouth", 29.
[459] Language (*λόγος*, *ratio*) is considered metaphysically as the "essential, distinguishing possession of the human being". ZWDS 50. The human being is the *vorhandene vernunftbegabte Tier* (ZWDS 136).
[460] von Herrmann, "Flower", 29.

sense and meaning) we take as the spiritual part of language."[461] The body, attuned to the perception [*Vernehmen*] of acoustic sounds,[462] senses, while the mind, attuned to the understanding [*Vernehmen*] of beings,[463] makes sense of what is perceived – makes it intelligible, brings to it reason [*Vernunft*].

What is brought to reason is, we recall, meaning: *Bedeutung*. In Heidegger's analysis, the etymology of the word is suggestive. *Bedeuten* ("to mean"), has the root *deuten*, which means both to interpret and to point or indicate;[464] the English "indicate" shares a distant root (via the Latin *dicere*) with the latter sense: to show, point out. *Dicere* (the root of words such as "diction", and probably the German *dichten*), in turn, means "to say, talk, declare, tell, call", although its distant etymology also suggests pointing. All these words evoke connections between saying and showing; within metaphysical thinking, these connections are interpreted with respect to the positing of the subject-object relationship which positions a world of objects over against the subject. Pointing or showing means representing.

Language thus appears as a representational structure, in which presences are variously referred to one another – in a to and fro movement, a process of signification. This appearance of language as a structure of signification is what Heidegger refers to when he calls letters the "signs of sounds": "the letters are signs of sounds, the sounds are signs of mental experiences, and these are the signs of things."[465] The German for "sign" is *Zeichen* – another word which etymologically suggests pointing or showing: it is derived from *zeigen* ("to point, show").[466] Heidegger plays on these words and their derivatives both to provide an account of the basic orientation of metaphysics towards understanding language as signification, and to gesture towards the possibility of other understandings. He suggests that metaphysics interprets the "showing" or "pointing" through which language relates the human (the present living being

[461] Ibid.
[462] See, for example, ZWDS 60: "akustisches Vernehmen von Lauten".
[463] See, for example, ibid,169: "Vernehmen des Seienden in seinem Sein"; metaphysically, the *Sein* within which and as which beings are thus understood is *Seiendheit*.
[464] DWDS "deuten". The latter sense usually takes the preposition *auf*.
[465] WS, 192/NL, 97. Heidegger acknowledges the oversimplification of his reading of Aristotle here; likewise, we provide only a crude and gestural discussion. The aim here is to mark the manner in which a certain understanding of being directs the understanding of language in a specific direction, rather than to give a nuanced and comprehensive account of Aristotle's understanding of *λόγος*. Such an account lies beyond the scope of this thesis.
[466] "Weg", US 245/"Way", 115; *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*: "Zeichen".

who has the capacity to speak, to reason) to the world (the present collection of present beings which lie before and over against the human) as *bezeichnen*, which Peter Herz aptly translates as "designation".[467] For Heidegger, *Be-zeichnen* (de-signation) suggests "mak[ing] discernible by providing signs – by equipping them".[468] As de-signation, the pointing, showing or signing at work in language entails "presently given sign-things"[469] directing the representing subject from one sign [*Zeichen*] to another. The sign "is a sign of…",[470] an object which "stands for" another object – takes its place as lieu-tenant or proxy.[471] It therefore appears to be a cipher,[472] empty of any significance of its own; its purpose is functional – to direct unambiguously towards that presence which it is meant to signal, a presence which is itself constituted through representation.

In these and other similar discussions, Heidegger seems to have in mind the thinking which informs "nominalistic conception[s] of language for which words are merely names and language a mere lexicon".[473] He also perhaps has in mind views of language as signifying system,[474] though Derrida's work illustrates particularly well how dynamic and nuanced the structuralist position made available in Saussure's thinking is. We may in fact remark on significant similarities between Heidegger's critique of the metaphysical determination of language and Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, which is of course in important ways oriented by (as well as levelled at) the structuralist account of language as signifying system. Derrida for example speaks of how the "history of metaphysics… impose[s] upon semiological science in its entirety" a "fundamental quest for a 'transcendental signified'" and a concept independent of language".[475] Like Heidegger, he seems to interpret "history" in this

[467] "Weg", 245/"Way", 115, and *passim*. Heidegger himself connects *bezeichnen* with the Latin *notare*, *insignare* and *designare* – ZWDS, 80.
[468] ZWDS, 80: "Zeichnen - mit einem Zeichen versehen, ausstatten, dadurch kenntlich machen". *Zeichnen* ordinarily means "to draw", but its original meaning "to mark with a sign, to produce through marks" is reflected in derivatives such as *bezeichnen*.
[469] ZWDS, 79: "vorhandenen Zeichendinge"; our translation follows Dastur's interpretation of how to render Heidegger's use of the adjective *vorhanden* (see "Essence", esp. p. 230). For a discussion of *Bezeichnen* understood in this way, see also "Weg", 245/"Way", 115.
[470] ZWDS, 79 – "Zeichen für…".
[471] ZWDS, 87 – "'*für*' etwas! ('*Stellvertreten*')." (Original emphasis.)
[472] Ibid.
[473] Dastur, "Essence", 226. Dastur notes that "commentators of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*" are also critical of this kind of nominalism, which they call the "Augustinian image of language".
[474] See, for example, ZWDS 72, 120, 128, 137, where he associates linguistics and the philosophy of language with metaphysics.
[475] "Semiology and Grammatology", 20.

context as an address or demand which disposes us in a particular way: the "quest" for an independent concept is not "imposed from without by something like 'philosophy', but rather by everything that links our language, our culture, our 'system of thought' to the history and system of metaphysics".[476]

There are perhaps strong parallels between the thinkers not only in terms of Heidegger's critical interpretation of metaphysical language which we are outlining here, but also in terms of his claims that human beings are "referred" [*angewiesen*], and that meaningfulness is constituted within a totality of significance [*Bedeutsamkeit*]. The structure of continuous designating which Heidegger describes could perhaps be redescribed in Derrida's words, as the "movement of the *sign-function* linking a content to an expression".[477] In Heidegger's analysis, where there is no essential representational difference between *Laut* and *Stab* – where sound and mark are both figures of a representation – this movement could well be considered the movement of all language. For Derrida, of course, the distinction between speech and writing is central, and we will eventually attempt to argue the merits of his emphasis on this distinction from a position oriented by Heidegger's thought.

Within the present discussion, what is of interest is that in Heidegger, as in Derrida, the "movement" of designation, or of the sign-function, would best be understood in terms of difference – difference unfolding both as spacing and as temporalizing. That be-ing happens historically would seem to suggest that the movement of signification never terminates in a "transcendental signified" – never finds an ultimate grounding reference which secures meaning as though from the outside; it must always be determined from an historically situated referentiality without "escape".[478] We might well understand the abyssal self-refusal of be-ing in Derrida's terms: as "*play*" – as "limitlessness of play".[479]

[476] Ibid.
[477] OG, 50.
[478] Dastur makes an argument along these lines in "Play" – see esp. pp. 5-6 and 8-9. Our argument is significantly guided by her insights in this context.
[479] OG, 50.

But if meaning for Heidegger plays out in a totality of significance, the referring or pointing (*Deuten*, *Zeigen*, *Weisen*) which constitutes its play does *not* for him entail signification (or designation – *Zeichnen*, *Bezeichnen*). Or rather, it *does* entail this, but only within the historical sending of being in which being has been determined as beingness, and the human relation to being has consequently played out as representation. From the perspective of Heidegger's thinking, the statement in *Of Grammatology* that "From the moment that there is meaning there are nothing but signs. We *think only in signs*"[480] rings true in many respects. In one respect it rings true only *as long as* meaning [*Bedeutung*] entails the objectification of what is meant through representing.[481] It rings true as long as we relate to language in its aspect as a present-at-hand representing system, as a ready-to-hand tool used for representing. It rings true, that is, as long as language is understood to unfold essentially from meaning and for the sake of meaning. It rings true while we consider language a human activity – perhaps even while we think of it principally as activity – and relate to it in terms of its availability and its functionality. The movement of the sign-*function* – the movement of difference – may well "condition all linguistic systems",[482] but Heidegger is not concerned with linguistic systems or with language as a system. Thus, his discussions concerning language [*Sprache*] inevitably shift to contemplations of speaking [*Sprechen*], saying [*Sagen*], and words [*Worten*]; significantly for our argument, they also turn to myth [*Sage*] and poetry [*Dichtung*]. We read these shifts not as privileging the voice over writing,[483] or as a concealed reaching for full presence (though such readings can certainly find much support in Heidegger's works, and provide rich insight). Nor do such shifts indicate a differentiation between linguistic structures and speech acts,[484] and a privileging of the latter; nor even do they reach towards an originary speaking, a manner in which human beings related to language *before* metaphysics, a language which was closer to the essence of the human being.

[480] Ibid.
[481] See ZWDS, 72, where Heidegger speaks of the view that *Bedeutung* in each case "die Vergegenständlichung des Gemeinten im meinenden Vorstellen bildet."
[482] OG, 60.
[483] Or at least not primarily in these terms.
[484] As in Saussure's famous distinction between *langue* (the language system) and *parole* (the individual linguistic expressions which the system enables).

Heidegger's focus on *Sprache*, *Sprechen*, *Sagen*, *Sage* and *Dichtung* suggest, instead, another direction in which the claim that "From the moment that there is meaning there are nothing but signs. We *think only in signs*" rings true with respect to Heidegger's thinking: one which leads into the territory of his engagement with poetry, especially the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin. On a number of occasions, he contemplates a line from Hölderlin's *Mnemosyne* which reads "Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos " – "We are a sign that is not read", and in a 1942 lecture course on "The Ister", he reflects "on the essence of the poet as sign".[485] However, "sign" must here be understood not in terms of meaning (*Bedeutung*), but as *deutungslos* – unread, uninterpreted. Rather than representing, rather than referring or designating presence, the sign "points [*deutet auf*] into the withdrawal".[486] Thus it "makes manifest, yet in such a way that it simultaneously conceals",[487] and "*stays without interpretation*."[488]

That the play of references within the totality of significance should play out as *signification* is as a result of a specific positioning of that totality – a specific furnishing of being. That specific furnishing includes an underlying understanding of what is entailed by the "pointing" of the "sign" – that division between sensible and intelligible which reflects the interpretation of being as presence. Heidegger's concern with the word and with speaking, saying, and poetizing is the site of a search for ways of meditating on language from within language[489] – from within what is already given in language, from within the reach granted by a particular language at a particular time. Though it is also one which shakes the foundation of that "within" – notably by seeking ways of disclosing language which do not rely on and repeat the division between material signifier and sensible content. Heidegger seeks a site open to ways of meditating which have not been determined beforehand by the representational positioning of metaphysical thinking.

But "beforehand" does not refer to a historical moment in the past. It may be that there has in the history of metaphysics never yet been a different furnishing which could prepare a way to think

[485] *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister"*. We have here quoted (232) William McNeill's excellent summary of Heidegger's key engagements with Hölderlin: "The Hölderlin Lectures", 223–235.
[486] WHD, 11/WCT, 10.
[487] *Ister*, 202/165.
[488] WHD, 11/WCT, 10; my emphasis.
[489] This is of course Derrida's preoccupation too, though from a different perspective.

our relation to being non-metaphysically. However, when we say "from the moment that there is meaning" we do not indicate a point of origin which could be understood as final (as pointing to a foundational determination of the human being or of being).[490] If we seek to think language non-metaphysically, then we must do so from a position where metaphysics is *before* us – ahead of us, still reaching towards us from a future which has not twisted free of the manner in which it demands that we respond to being. Metaphysics aspects us, figures us. This indicates a necessity to anticipate the "beforehand", to seek a way of reaching towards it, rather than effecting it. The moment when there begins to be meaning still continuously begins – or remains to come; "*as long as* meaning entails objectification" does not indicate a duration with a beginning and an end, but an *Aufenthalt* – a sojourn – within a specific clearing of beings. The possibility of a different beginning lies *ahead* of us within the historical sending of being we have received, rather than behind us like a buried and forgotten artefact.

The promise of writing

It is therefore necessary, if we are to seek the possibility of thinking language non-metaphysically in terms of literature, first to address the position of language with respect to literature within the landscape of the "end" – or "completion" – of metaphysics. When metaphysical language appears in literature, or as literature, what demands does it place on us as speaking – or writing and reading – beings? In what way does language in this position itself entail a response to the demands made by the specific "sending" or "destiny" of be-ing which clears the space for its appearance as literature? How does be-ing aspect literature, and literature aspect be-ing and beings? What disclosive possibilities are opened by literature, and how are we called upon or positioned to respond to these possibilities?

We have anticipated possible directions in which to pursue these questions by tracing how from within a specific relation to be-ing, language grants the possibility for the subject to re-present both itself and beings in an idealized, discursive form which is apparently fully grounded in reason. It grants the human being the possibility of a self-interpretation which seems stable and permanent, on the basis of which she is able to relate to the stable and permanent presence of

[490] Derrida considers differance as originary in a "non-full, non-simple" sense, or in the modality of "as if".

beings in the form of their objectivity. She answers by disclosing herself as subject, and beings as objects.

We have perhaps also anticipated possible directions in which to pursue our questions through our consideration of Heidegger's interpretation of the will to power and eternal return of the same in Chapter 1. In late modernity, representation appears in terms of a striving to appearance. Objectivity appears as *Bestand* – as standing reserve – as "enduring existence immediate disposal to the will". Literature – in the basic sense of what is drawn together into letters – might be considered to figure (to aspect, to occasion) the reciprocity between be-ing (as will to power), human being (as subject) and beings (as standing reserve).

We might begin exploring this possibility along a byway into Derrida's engagement with Husserl – specifically his introduction to the latter's essay "The Origin of Geometry".[491] Derrida does not directly address Heidegger here – though as we have remarked, there are significant affinities between the two, in part emerging as a result of the considerable influence Husserl has on their thought. Yet IOG suggests ways in which we might understand writing – and literature – as anticipating and disclosing the manifestness of beings, and our relation to it, which will shed light on the late modern reciprocity between language, human being and being. Specifically, Derrida explores in *Introduction to "The Origin of Geometry"* how in Husserl's essay writing is seen to enable the constitution of ideal objectivity. As the preceding discussion indicated, Heidegger's critique of metaphysical language is significantly levelled at the manner in which the language of representation positions us to relate to beings in terms of their projected objectivity. The representation of beings as disposable also appears to be a modification of their representation as objects. Thus Derrida's reading of Husserl offers insight into ways in which writing – and writing gathered into literature – might anticipate and recollect beings in their availability, immediacy and orderability.

Language enables the representation of the sightability of a being outside of the constituting relations of its contextual appearance. It enables the projection of beings as objects over against a subject. Writing, Derrida explains with reference to his reading of Husserl, promises the

[491] *Introduction to "The Origin of Geometry"* – hereafter IOG.

perdurance of such a disclosure of objectivity – a "continuing to be" and "*persisting factual existence*".[492] The written disclosure of a being's objectivity is able to persist beyond the context of its composition. If we consider this basic insight in terms of Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche, we can see how the letter promises the return of an utterance as the same. It discloses that possibility – literalizes it, we might say – in the graphic figure which not only remains in place on the page, but is also able to be replicated, to return as the same elsewhere. The writing promises language – promises discourse, promises representation – its preservation and extension. Writing figures a striving to appearance. In writing, language can be made to count towards making and securing more appearances; by figuring this possibility, writing draws towards this possibility – draws towards literature.

Derrida offers further insight, which we may relate to our preceding discussion of the metaphysical division of the sign into sensible and intelligible elements. He explains how the "possibility" of "being incarnated into a graphic sign" is paradoxically necessary for the "internal completion" of "Objectivity".[493] Writing, by providing a body for an utterance which may outlive the utterer, *discloses the possibility* of a universal, transcendental understanding not reliant on the "*actually present* evidence for a real subject" or on a "determined community".[494] It shows, even more clearly than the verbal utterance,[495] the possibility of a fully grounded disclosure of the sightability of a being independent of a relation to be-ing's refusal. Writing gives not only a specific material written work a permanency which far outstrips the presence of the living voice; a written work can also be copied, rewritten. Writing points to the possibility of an ideality which – since it is removed from relational bearings – may be translated too. By being freed from both context and individual subject, it may also draw more towards ideality – to becoming an "Objectivity" counter (in terms we draw from Heidegger) not to an individual subject but to a "transcendental subjectivity".[496] Writing promises the "virtualization" of presence – the constitution of the ideal object, outside of factical contingencies – as an "intersubjective object". [497]

[492] IOG, 87.
[493] IOG, 89.
[494] IOG, 87.
[495] Though, as Derrida's thinking suggests, all language, including verbal utterance, is structured in the same way.
[496] IOG, 87.
[497] Dastur, PM, 189.

Again we might mark, with reference to Heidegger, how such virtualization promises preservation and extension. It may be suggestive to consider "virtualized" presence, over against a transcendental subjectivity, in the light of the temporal structure of eternal return (itself a modification of ek-stasis). The virtualization of objectivity offers the stable presence of an "already is", which can nevertheless be extended, yet always returned to. It offers the ek-stasis of an individual human being a stable directionality in which to "transcend" always into the same and as the same. By becoming intersubjective, the object also extends its validity – increasing ways in which the representation of the object may count, may be taken up as useful, become available.

Significantly, the graphic body indicates an additional kind of permanence: a kind of ideality of its graphic form. The letter's comprehensibility relies on "a certain identity which is imposed and recognized each time in the empirical fact of language"[498] (we will return to this insight, developed in Derrida's notion of iterability, in Chapter 3). In order for writing to be intelligible, I must be able to recognize a specific letter as the same letter across contexts – to anticipate that it will be taken up as the same in someone else's reading, and to recollect it as the same in mine. The "body" of the letter is not a strictly material body – its materiality already refers to the possibility of its repetition, and reappearance as the same in a "different" body (rewritten or reread elsewhere). Thus, there is in the sign an "intended and approximate ideal identity" without which "no sensible language would be possible or intelligible as language".[499] Derrida adds without this (intended and approximate) ideality of the sign, we would not be able to "intend higher idealities" either.[500] This is a decisive point: it suggests the manner in which, to reframe his insight in the light of Heidegger's thinking, writing discloses the possibility of "higher idealities": it grants the aspect of be-ing in the form of an ideality, which can be intended and approximated, and reached towards through representation.

Derrida also traces other possibilities disclosed by writing – possibilities which we will argue draw towards an abyssal relation to language. What is relevant for the present discussion,

[498] IOG, 89n.
[499] IOG, 89n.
[500] Ibid.

however, is how the apparent permanence of the letter (both its material durability and its anticipated ideality), through and within its division from the apparent permanence of the "sensible" presence it represents, discloses the possibility of a permanent, stable presence to which an individual representation might correlate, and always return as the same. It grants a view of being as discursive representability – a view already glimpsed in metaphysics, but perhaps more concretely pictured in the vast discursive reach stretched forth by literature as a body of written works.

The scene of literature

This reach is significant, because it is not simply writing, but the emergence of literature as a discursive field which, we argue with reference to Heidegger's thinking, attunes the late modern human relation to being in a specific way. The notion of "literature" is not in fact central concern of Heidegger's; however, we may infer allusions to "literature" in the sense of written works collectively in much of his criticism of the pronounced instrumentalization of language in late modernity. "Literature" in those senses defined in the OED as "familiarity with letters", the "knowledge acquired from reading", "literary culture", as well as "learning" and "scholarship",[501] certainly seems implicated in comments he makes in "The Letter on Humanism". Here he describes how through a process of instrumentalization, the openness of beings (*Offenheit des Seienden* – manifestness, the being of beings) is interpreted in relation to the language-wielding self-present subject as a reach of immediate and permanent accessibility to beings – an intersubjective field which Heidegger calls *Öffentlichkeit*.[502] This word conventionally means "public" or "publicness", though Heidegger seems to emphasize the connection between *Öffentlichkeit* and *Offenheit*. His usage indicates that the former is a specific explicitation of the latter, and a modality in which it manifests. Within the reciprocity between language, thinking and be-ing Heidegger is describing – which is occasioned in literature – the manifestness of beings, *ἀλήθεια*, is disclosed as permanent accessibility. Within the reach of this "public realm",[503] language is called upon to convey its accessibility in representations; what is "ownmost" to language appears to be the "uniform accessibility of everything to everyone".[504]

[501] OED, "Literature".
[502] See "Brief", 149/"Letter", 242.
[503] This is Frank A. Capuzzi's translation of *Offenheit*.
[504] "Brief", 149/:"Letter", 242.

His specific remarks on *Literatur* likewise reflect his interpretation of it as language in its most intensively metaphysical form – language as securing and extending representations, and representability itself, towards the increased accessibility and disposability of everything in being. He understands *Literatur* primarily in terms of "objectness [*Gegenständlichketi*]".[505] It forms part of the "objectification [*Vergegenständlichung*] of all fields and areas [*Bereiche*]" achieved through the modern metaphysical positioning of being – though as we will see, this objectification also entails the positing of and all that is objectified in terms of their use value (broadly speaking – use might include simply securing or increasing the scope of the discursive field). Heidegger calls this objectification *wissenschafftflich*, which is usually translated as "scientific", or more broadly "scholarly" or academic. For him the word has a broader and more literal meaning, though. It suggests the manner in which "knowing" (*Wissen*) is represented in late modernity: "what is unknown [*das Unbekannte*] in the region is connected, by being led back in various modes and various distances, to something known [*ein Bekanntes*] and already understood".[506] Within the context of technicity, knowing is reciprocal with willing. The endeavour of thinking – scholarship understood as *Wissenschaft* – entails this systematic projection of all beings onto what is known, viewed in the light of their availability and disposability. The preceding discussion will have made apparent why for Heidegger, "literature" is connected to this interpretation of thinking: as knowing, as willing, as representing and measuring the value of objects to the subject. It is the literalization of the possibility of discursive representability; it simultaneously promises and delivers objective representations – disclosures of the "value" of beings – on a large scale. Unsurprisingly, literature is therefore also connected to the way in which world – the meaningful totality of our existence, determined with respect to be-ing –itself becomes a representation (becomes "pictured"),[507] as it aspects be-ing as discursive representability.

[505] WHD, 140, my translation. Gray's well-considered translation is "object-materiality" (WCT, 135), but we have used "objectness" for the sake of consistency with the preceding discussion.
[506] *Beiträge*, 146/*Contributions*, 114; Mitchell's translation in *The Fourfold*, p. 125
[507] See ZDW/AWP.

When he characterizes literature as "what has been literally [*buchstäblich*] written down, and copied",[508] the significance of the *littera*, *Buchstab* or "literary" pertains to this representational situation (the figure of writing as the appearance which represents, the image *of*...). This significance in fact stretches in two directions, pertaining to the two senses of the word "literature" with which this thesis is broadly concerned: writing "of the kind valued for quality or form",[509] and "written works considered collectively" or "knowledge acquired from reading or studying books".[510] Yet these two dimensions of what he calls "literature" seem intertwined, each pertaining to a dimension of the modern metaphysical situation. We will therefore examine each, as well as their interrelationship, as a means of developing our account of the relation to language called for or called forth by "literature" in its promise of discursive representability.

Literary terms

The trajectory of Heidegger's thinking with regard to literature as body of writing, or indeed the knowledge or scholarship associated with such a body, may be understood in relation to the distinction he makes between words (*Worten*) and terms (*Wörter*). This distinction has particular force in German, where both are plurals of *Wort* (word). Heidegger associates "words" with disclosure. We will engage in more detail with the understanding of language to which Heidegger's account of "words" belongs; for the moment, it suffices to say that words participate in the presencing of beings in such a way as to "preserve" the independence and singularity of their self-showing[511] and await – guard for – their appearance. Words arise from and are attuned by the "abyss of the clearing of be-ing";[512] they bear a relation to otherness.

Terms, on the other hand, aspect what we have called discursive representability. They aim at leading whatever they reveal back to the known, and eliminating ambiguity, uncertainty and alterity. They are attuned by the understanding of beings through assertions and propositions formulated about the qualities, characteristics and properties of beings; they are such formulations gathered into a suprasensible content or meaning, placed into a sensible form.

[508] WHD, 139/WCT, 134.
[509] OED, "literary".
[510] OED, "literature".
[511] See, for example, *Parmenides* 112/76.
[512] ZWDS, 136.

Heidegger wryly suggests that they are "like buckets" into and "out of which we can scoop sense."[513] Through the careful delimitation, delineation and systematic distribution of meaning into terms, everything takes on the appearance of knowability. We might suggest that while words work by reaching – presencing *and* non-presencing (presencing in a manner which involves both presence and absence, extending temporally beyond the immediate presence of the appearance) – terms work through measured narrowing. However, undue emphasis should not be placed on the "workings" of words, as this could suggest that words "produce" meanings. For Heidegger, a crucial element of their distinction from terms concerns the relation they bear to the presencing of beings. Terms isolate the "meanings" of beings from the contexts in which their presencing *already* occurs – occurs *relationally* – [514] and ascribe these meanings a kind of permanence. Terms "free" beings from the singular regional reach of their self-showing and cut them off from the disturbing alterity of the abyssal granting of their presence. Moreover, they themselves appear as though they are "free" of context and undisturbed by alterity, and thus present "reality" as a field of stable, permanent and universally applicable correlations, graspable by the knowing subject. Whatever is encountered is capable of having its sense analysed and demarcated in a term (scooped into a sense-bucket) and positioned in a clearly defined (and definable) relationship with other terms (the sense-bucket contains a manageably delimited meaning-content, which can be easily transported and utilized without wasteful spillage). Terms therefore clearly facilitate the extending, as well as the stabilizing or securing, of a field of discursive representations, which promises constant presence and return.

We recall the suggestion that discursivity points into the abyss of our finite existence as human beings. It indicates a demand that we develop our self-understanding in a language not of our own making, that we therefore negotiate that self-understanding with other speakers and their manner of disclosing. It also indicates the circuitousness of understanding – the refusal of an immediate, full presence. The transformation of language to terminology covers over the demands which underly discursivity by presenting the appearance of an already constituted and readily accessible understanding. Words are emptied of their tonality, their inflection, their singular appeal. They are stripped of the inefficiency of their ambiguity – the surplus or

[513] WHD, 133/WCT, 129.
[514] Mitchell's convincing interpretations of Heidegger's thought strongly emphasize relationality along these lines. See *The Fourfold*, and *Heidegger Among the Sculptors: Body, Space and the Art of Dwelling*.

inadequacy of their semantic range levelled off. They are mastered, returned as the same. Thus, instead of having to struggle to find the right words – or the right combination of words – I find them already available to me. Rather than having to confront the possibility of misunderstanding or disagreement, I can draw on a repository of common, clear, unambiguous terms, expressions, and even more extensive ways of disclosing the world. Rather than having to be troubled over my not knowing, I am able to draw on the literature on a topic to get in the know; even more significantly, before I even engage with that literature, I am comforted in the sense that I can *come to know* – that my lack of understanding can be overcome because understanding is *already available* in the persisting presence of the literature. Rather than having to be attentive to the language available to me – to anticipate anew the resonances and inflections of words, to reconsider their possibilities in my situation and appropriate them to that situation (which also implies the necessity for a receptivity to that situation – I can simply pick up and repeat a ready-made expression. Within the context of early twenty-first century digital and mass media technology, we may experience the draw away from the abyssal demands of language, towards a readily available and easily accessible language, in a particularly pronounced way. The vast discursive realm of social media and mass media provides a near infinite repository of already available ways of saying things and things to say, for example, while editing software and spelling and grammar checkers offer relief from the struggle of finding the right expression.

Of course these technologies are far removed from Heidegger's world. He seems to consider the stability, permanence, generality, orderability and universal reach of discursive representability to be epitomized by the technology of the typewritten text. The specific embodied figure of this type of text seems to position us in a specific way with respect to discourse, to manifestness – to attune our relation to what we read. It literalizes the draw to discursive representability and availability. We earlier remarked that he considers signs as pointing into withdrawal – making manifest in such a way that they simultaneously conceal. He interprets the typewritten letter as erasing the slippages involved in signing, and creating the impression of immediate and complete reference, without any excess. "The letters [*Buchstaben*] become *gesetzt*":[515] they are set into type (one meaning of *gesetzt*), becoming emblems. They are fixed into position (*gesetzt*) in a

[515] *Parmenides* 126/85. Schuwer and Rojewicz aptly translate *gestetzt* as "type"; we have left if untranslated for the sake of the explanatory course of our argument.

manner which ensures stable reproducibility (*gesetzt* also has the meaning of "settled in place", and thus "measured"). They therefore become "*Gesetzte*" – laws, rules, prescribed connections between meanings,[516] which present themselves as *rechtlich*: legal or lawful in the sense of pertaining to what is "right" [*recht*].[517] Simultaneously, by presenting an unobtrusively uniform and unchanging appearance, these letters give the sense that the process of representation is straightforward, and that their unobtrusive signaling makes present in an unmediated way the truth of the intelligible meanings to which they refer. The ideality promised by the figured body of the letter is thus figured even more clearly by the typed letter. The latter thus also draws more insistently into a reach of discursive representability.

For Heidegger, the appearance of the word as information-carrier reaches its culminating point in the form of the "rolling press",[518] which ensures the automatic and uniform reproducibility of stable, emblematic, terminological references, as well as their widespread distribution and easy availability. In nearly any field, representations which make the elements of that field knowable are readily available, and fields of human interest are themselves categorized and demarcated in such ways as to facilitate understanding. *Knowability* permeates the entire realm of human thinking and activity in such a way that all existence seems representable – becomes re-presentable as present, orderable, available.[519] All existence is anticipated and recollected in a domain of discursive representability. A literature on any subject in any field can always be consulted to make known whatever seems unknowable, or produced to bring whatever escapes understanding into the realm of the knowable.[520]

It serves to emphasize again that for Heidegger, this knowability answers to the will to power. It is knowability for the sake of making things count in some way, ordering to put to use, or to secure understanding for the sake of extending it to make things count in some way, and so forth. Thus, Heidegger also speaks – perhaps presciently, from the perspective of the world of

[516] Here we have drawn from the definitions in DWDS "Gestetz".
[517] For Heidegger's discussion of the transformation of the Greek *ὀρθός* into the Latin *rectum*, and ultimately both the English and German terms, see *Parmenides* 119ff./81ff.
[518] *Parmenides* 126/85.
[519] Here we are alluding to Heidegger's suggestion that in modernity the totality of beings becomes a "picture" represented by human beings understood in terms of subjectivity. See ZW/AWP.
[520] The manner in which writing makes knowability immediately available has perhaps reached an even more pronounced phase in the era of digital communication technology.

advanced digital technology – of the late modern understanding of language as information. He claims that "in the spirit of the reign of all-determining technology", information becomes the "highest form of language". This is because of "its clarity, and the security and speed in the exchange of reports and assignments".[521] As information, language is called upon and used as what George Kovacs calls a "system of univocal, universal, predefined, prefixed signs, indicators".[522]

But the demand placed on language positions the human being in a specific way too – or rather, the reciprocity between human being, language, and being, plays out in such a way that the human being is also addressed in a specific manner by language as information, and addresses beings in a particular manner in language as information. Heidegger provides a series of quotations from Norbert Wiener, "one of the founders of cybernetics", to demonstrate how the demand for language to be information occasions a "corresponding conception of the human's being and of human life". Wiener states: "To see the whole world and to give commands to the whole world is almost the same thing as to be everywhere." "[To] live effectively means to live with adequate information." "Learning is in its essence a form of feedback, in which the pattern of behavior is modified by past experience." "Feedback is a very general characteristic of forms of behavior." "[F]eedback is the control of a system by reinserting into the system the results of its performance."[523] The co-respondence between human being and being as will to power which plays out through language as information calls the human being to disclose the world in a way which masters it – which orders all of existence into a realm of visibility, instantaneous feedback, improved performance, and extension of control. The relation of the human being to her finitude is rendered invisible. The relational structure of her existence – its constitution as being-with (as constituted through its relations with other human beings) and being-in (as constituted through its relations within the world) – is redirected towards a mastery of all outside of the self so that it may be returned as the same to the self. Her ek-stasis is likewise transformed to return constantly to the same.

[521] TLTL, n.p.
[522] "Heidegger's Insight into the History of Language", 129.
[523] Cited in TLTL, n.p.

Literary art

For Heidegger, literature in the sense of artistic writing not only fails to escape this universal positioning of everything towards disposability, but also contributes to its unfolding. He associates artistic literature with a "literature industry" –[524] with the production and widespread distribution of readily accessible representations, which extend the field of discursive representability. The literature industry works firstly to produce representations in the first sense of "literature", through the establishment of "literary historical" science (science as Wissen*schaft*) and "criticism".[525] These kinds of writing stake out the realm of literature as a domain of knowledge, accessible – and masterable – through the production of literatures in the first sense. But perhaps more significantly, the literature industry also effects its contribution to the discursive realm of orderability, accessibility and immediacy through its production of literature *as art* – literature understood aesthetically rather than scientifically. To understand how this is, we draw on Heidegger's comments not only on literature, but on art more broadly.

Aesthetics would at first appear to offer resistance to the mimetic model according to which art tends to be understood in metaphysics. Mimetic theory understands art in terms of representation. *Μίμησις* means "simulation", and art, poetry and literature are understood in this light: as imitating or referring to what is more in being or more truthfully in being. As John Sallis points out, the mimetic interpretation reflects both the metaphysical understanding of truth as correspondence and the metaphysical distinction between sensible and intelligible: based in the determination of "the essence of truth" as "adequation to the idea", mimesis considers art "the sensible representation of the idea".[526]

The aesthetic determination of art interprets the role of the "sensible", and therefore the working of the artwork, very differently. As John Sallis explains:

[524] WHD, 139/WCT, 134.
[525] Ibid.
[526] John Sallis, *Transfigurements: on the true sense of art*, 172. Sallis provides an instructive account of Heidegger's critical engagement with Hegel concerning art and truth. Heidegger may be considered to agree with Hegel on the sense that art pertains to truth, though his understanding of truth differs radically from Hegel's. Sallis also relates both Hegel and Heidegger to Nietzsche. Since Heidegger's thinking on art develops in significant ways from his engagement with both these thinkers, Sallis's account provides valuable insight into Heidegger's thinking on art (see Chapter 8: "The Promise of Art", pp. 152-187).

> Rather than venturing to show that the artwork in its very sensibleness serves to present the intelligible, aesthetics retreats to the sensibleness and determines the artwork by way of reference to its way of affecting sense [*αἴσθησις*]. According to the aesthetic conception, what is distinctive about an artwork is that it affects the senses in such a way as to evoke a certain feeling of pleasure or enjoyment. For aesthetics it is this feeling that attests to the beauty of the work….[527]

From the perspective of aesthetics, literary works seem in many respects to offer the very opposite of calculability and reduction to "type". The words of which a literary work are composed are nothing like "terms". They are not called upon primarily to convey information. They are not intended to refer outside themselves to an intelligible "content". They are not ordered to reveal a truth, or convey one to it. They are not called upon to represent.

Yet in Heidegger's view, aesthetics recalibrates the metaphysical representational structure, rather than twisting free of it.[528] This is because what is evoked by aesthetics is what he calls "lived experience" (*Erlebnis*),[529] which may be contrasted with another manner of experiencing, *Erfahrung*.[530] *Erfahren*, which also means "getting to know" or "finding out", suggests "venturing out"[531] – *fahren* means "to go" in a variety of senses.[532] *Fahren* is related to the Greek *πέρα* ("beyond"), *πέρας* (limit, boundary) and *περάω* ("drive through), as well as the Latin root of the word "experience": *periri* ("to go through").[533] *Erfahrung* then indicates the experience in which the human being goes beyond itself, a movement suggested by the ek-static structure of human existence. A movement beyond self is also perhaps demanded by the human awareness of and relation to its own mortality, and the radical alterity implied in the mortal's final possibility: death – the possibility of not being. It is thus also a movement called for by the distance (*Ferne*) of be-ing from the human being – the remoteness of be-ing's withdrawal, the open reach within which we are called upon to await the other as counterpart. The movement "beyond oneself"

[527] *Transfigurements*, 160.
[528] See for example "Macht", 205–206/"Power, 201".
[529] See Vallega-Neu, HCTP, 59–61.
[530] See, for example, *Beiträge*, 129–135/Contributions, 91–94.
[531] "Andenken", 118/"Remembrance", 141.
[532] Usually in a vehicle or conveyance of some sort. It is related to the English "fare", as well as the Greek *περᾶν*
[533] This verb is in fact unattested; the attested root is the verb *experiri*.

entailed in *Erfahrung* is paradoxically also one of homecoming, as the relation between being and human being also occurs as a kind of nearness (*Nähe*): be-ing is close as that which grants the closeness of beings (their availability in whatever modality, their presence).[534] Distance and nearness, absencing and presencing, are held in tension in *Erfahrung*, which we may therefore understanding as a manner of *letting* beings be: of awaiting them and being on the lookout for them, of responsively attending to their relational reaching, and of participating in the reaching of the reach (of the contextual thickening[535] of relations which constitutes a reach) – all the while maintaining a relation to what is out of reach.[536]

In Heidegger's view, the interpretation of the significance of the literary work in terms of the sensory and the affective – the work's evoking pleasure or excitement, joy, pain or puzzlement – concerns a very different kind of experiencing: one which derives from and maintains the interpretation of the human being as *animal rationale*, and is closely related to machination and the human being's self-disclosure in the aspect of the will to power. The aesthetic perspective refers to and prioritizes the 'animal' or 'living' element of the human, and therefore is concerned with the human as living being rather than as mortal. This prioritization invites us to understand beings in relation to their manner of affecting us, and simultaneously to interpret ourselves in terms of our "lived experience" (*Erlebnis*). The underlying teleology of the metaphysical understanding of being is maintained in this way of conceiving experience: the beingness of beings still appears as "result":[537] *ἐνέργεια* interpreted as *actus*.[538] Yet the completed action of the *actus* is not an idea or concept, but is rather "to be experienced".[539]

For example, the "aesthetic intensification" achieved through the "heightened affect" of a work's "beauty" refers to a "'technical' potential" in the affective, bodily realm: the "potential for the

[534] See, for example, "Das Ding"/"The Thing".
[535] Andrew J. Mitchell makes compelling use of the word "thickened" to translate *verdichtet* in relation to Heidegger's thinking on poetry (*Dichtung*, *Dichten*), poets (*Dichter*), and poems (*Gedichten*). See, for example, *The Fourfold*, 125, 136, 249, 307, and *Heidegger Among the Sculptors: Body, Space and the Art of Dwelling*, 65.
[536] See Mitchell's convincing account of relational presencing in *The Fourfold* (esp. 247–249).
[537] *Beiträge* 47/33. Heidegger discusses the relationship between machination and lived-experience, rather than art, in the passages we cite here. However, they provide useful insight into Heidegger's critique of modern aesthetics.
[538] The structure which Heidegger sketches in the relevant section of *Beiträge* (130/*Contributions*, 90–91) in fact links *τέχνη*, *ποίησις* and *ἰδέα* within the understanding of *οὐσία*; however, since we treated *ἐνέργεια* in detail in Chapter 1, reference to it is perhaps more illustrative in the present context.
[539] *Beiträge* 47/*Contributions*, 33.

enhancement of lived experience".[540] The 'realization' of the work – what the artwork or literary work places forth or produces in its stepping forth into its end – is then *that which is experienced*. Simultaneously, the representational structure which relates the objects of experience back to us reinforces our self-interpretation as subjects. Lived experience becomes truth, that is, it becomes the ground for the manifestness of beings. "What "can count as 'a being'" appears to be "only what man is able to bring to and before himself" "into the sphere of live-experienced" – that is, *as* experienced.[541]

Heidegger thus interprets the aesthetic in terms of valuation, representation, striving, and the will to will. Even though aesthetic experience is affective rather than referential, it still entails representation in the sense that it brings to appearance in a way which counts. A valuation of language which gives affect primacy over cognition fails to escape the logic of willing. This sort of reprioritization or inversion of values simply positions the experience or "achievement" of affect in place of a cognitive grasp as the *telos* of language or of the utterance or sign – as what is ordered, mastered, secured, extended. In such a relation, we remain aimed in the direction of a *telos*; we rush ahead, and call upon the utterance to rush ahead too: towards completion – towards the "workings" of language on the subject. Language is put to work, put to use; it is disclosed as an instrument for making something (a feeling, an experience) present and available to a subject, and we are disclosed as the subjects who master it and put it to use.

Moreover, literature as *valued* writing means precisely writing as "an object for human estimation."[542] Interpreted in this way, the aesthetic relation to the literary "object" seems to suggest little room for alterity: all aspects of the encounter between work and subject are integrated into subjectivity. The structure of representation in the epoch of technicity discloses that which is reached towards as orderable in such a way that it can be returned to the same as the same. The lived experience is like an accessory: something the subject can take up and discard as it pleases. Such experience requires no going beyond oneself: the distance between human being and being closes into the producible, reproducible, and experienced beingness of

[540] Radloff, "Preliminary Notes on Divine Images in the Light of Being-Historical Thinking", 151. Radloff's compelling discussion pertains to visual art rather than literature.
[541] *Beiträge*, 129/*Contributions*, 90.
[542] "Brief", 179/"Letter", 265.

beings; even what is most other in a work becomes what in its otherness "works" on the subject who encounters it. Responsiveness here appears to be a kind of responsiveness to self – a response to the world in terms of the production of subjectivity. And the appearance of literature within a "literature industry" means the constant availability of experiences and opportunities for valuation, and thus for self-production.

The reduction of the letter to "type" – to representation represented as pure presencing – is relevant here too, though in the instance of literature as *belles lettres*, it is perhaps "experience" rather than "knowing" which is reduced in this way. The uniform typewritten text – mass-produced, mass-distributed – promises the immediate and unmediated availability of ever-diversifying ways for the subject to be 'worked' upon; thus Heidegger speaks disparagingly of literature in terms of its appeal to "widely diverging interests".[543] There appears to be no distance between me and the experience, no need for the mediating disturbance of the withdrawal of being to draw me into a relation to beings. I need simply reach to the bookshelf and open a book to be conducted into an effecting of a work's workings on my self.

Without the demand placed by an experience of the refusal of be-ing, which Heidegger associates with a different kind of artwork (which we will look at more closely in Chapter 3), there is no urgency. There is no appeal to the singular human being in their singularity to make a decision concerning the way in which the being of beings is at stake. Heidegger speaks in one instance of poetry as having been "banished… into literature."[544] The "writer disposes what is poetized in advance, and only into the written." The written itself is "delivered over to the bare reading of the scattered reader". The poem is "only read by readers. It no longer sings."[545] Heidegger's concern seems to be that in literature, the poem is positioned – or becomes anticipated, and is disclosed – as an ideal objectivity, or itself made to promise its own objectivity; it is positioned over against not only a subject, but a transcendental intersubjectivity. It is positioned to be explainable – called to account by being disclosed as counting. It no longer sings in the sense that its specific tonality is muted: it is drawn outside of the relations of a world – relations within which it may resonate in a specific way. Elsewhere Heidegger explains that

[543] WHD, 139/WCT, 134.
[544] "Erbetene Vorbemerkung zu einer Dichterlesung auf Bühlerhöhe am 24. Februar 1951", 470.
[545] Ibid, 470–471.

"machination" is "[t]that which is let loose into its own shackles". These "shackles" are the "pattern of general explainability, by which everything draws nearer to everything else equally and becomes completely alien to itself."[546] These "shackles" are then the removal of human being and beings from the constitutive relations of world into the "relation of non-relationality."[547]

What is called literature?

Thus, one destiny of literature – one *Geschick*, one sending, one situation or positioning – is decreed by the aspect of being as forgottenness of be-ing, of the refusal which accompanies and grants granting. Language is called up by the will to power, called into literature – called into the service of representing beings as orderable, available, and immediately present to a re-presentation. In literature, the human being is called upon to utilize language to master and preserve presence[548] by reproducing and further extending the field of the uniform and permanent availability of meanings. By relating to language as information-carrier or experience-bearer, she is called upon constantly to repeat and reproduce – to make present, again and again – the understanding of being as constant presence, as the availability of beings to human ordering and for human utilization.

This mode of responsiveness to language – and to being – is perhaps even more pronounced the digital era, in which technology provides a near infinite capacity for the replication and distribution of utterances and the potential for their near-universal and near-instant accessibility. It could be argued that search engines, social media, grammar tools, and more recently large language models and AI chatbots, present the culminated appearance of the "uniform accessibility of everything to everyone". The intensified projection of existence as availability and disposability issues a heightened demand on language to manifest as information, and on the human being to draw on language for "its clarity, and the security and speed in the exchange of reports and assignments".[549] While our focus is on literature rather than the digital realm, we

[546] *Beiträge*, 132/*Contributions*, 92.
[547] Ibid.
[548] Here we draw on Derrida's engagement with Husserl to articulate Heidegger's key insights. Derrida speaks of "the preservation or mastery of presence in repetition" (*Speech and Phenomena*, 8).
[549] TLTL, n.p.

might bear in mind the manner in which we are called upon to comport ourselves within the digital sphere as illustrating in a pronounced way the relation to language and being Heidegger tries to draw to our notice in his discussions of literature and language in modernity. Likewise, we might bear in mind the possibilities offered and demands made by, for example, Google and ChatGP as counter to the kind of comportment towards language and being Heidegger seeks to adopt.

While Heidegger acknowledges – and even emphasizes – that the role language plays in human existence involves drawing beings into presence, his thinking ultimately suggests that language's appropriative reach does not draw primarily from a demand to sustain a sense of the immediacy either of self-presence or of beings. Or, more precisely, as we will elucidate more carefully in Chapter 3, this thinking suggests that the demand to figure self and beings as present itself issues forth as a response to the fundamental groundlessness of being – the self-withholding of be-ing and the always present possibility of the unavailability of beings; to the extent that we draw into presence, we do so ek-statically, having been "thrown" by self-withholding be-ing. The "completion of metaphysics" may be understood as the demand – issued forth from the directive to manifest beings and preserve them in unconcealment (thus from be-ing itself, in one particular "destiny" or "sending" of itself) – to effect the complete withdrawal of this possibility of unavailability: to disclose all existence as absolute availability. This completion is "effected" through each disclosure of the *possibility* of total availability – through each utterance or activity which *projects its meaning onto that possibility*. This is the structure of the eternal return of the same – the manner in which the will to power is in each case occasioned. The "completion" of metaphysics is not the achievement of the delimitation, description and measurement of every entity in existence, nor the delivery of all accumulated knowledge to any given person or persons. It is the insistent drawing of all human comportments towards the possibility of that increased availability, ordering and immediacy, and the adoption by the human being of a specific relation to language and being which likewise reaches towards the same end.

What Heidegger calls "literature" entails the reproduction and circulation on a massive scale not only of the substantive "content" of individual collections of utterances, or of the specific affective "workings" on a subject produced in individual works; more significantly, it entails the

reproduction of the aforementioned projection of sense onto the possibility of sheer availability, as well as of the draw of human comportment towards the present. This projection is perhaps even more pronounced in the present-day experience of uniform accessibility in the digital realm: even when my terms yield no satisfactory results in a search engine, or a chatbot fails to provide the answer I require, my very reaching for the overwhelming breadth of knowledge readily accessible through search engine and chatbot in advance "orders" [*bestellen*] beings as uniformly and instantaneously available, as ready to count in some way; my reaching interprets the openness of beings as a reach of present knowability and orderability, and calls for the "delivery" [*zustellen*] of beings in this form.[550] Even where understanding is withheld – where its appearance is not instantaneous – I am positioned in relation to language and to being in such a manner that present knowledge or "life experience" appears merely to be deferred until a more suitable prompt has been offered, more precise search terms have been framed, better-directed links have been established, or more extensive data has been collected and deposited into the public information bank. I expect beings in a specific way; I aspect them as accessible. Nothing appears out of reach. This uncanny distance – the unavailability of nothing – covers over the self-withholding of be-ing in a pronounced way, with the result that I am no longer called upon to draw beyond myself and beyond the present. There is no demand for ek-static recollective projection, since all of being, and all beings, are already within reach. There is no call to await the other as counterpart. Finer and finer distinctions concerning the properties of a wider and wider array of entities can be made; likewise, opportunities are opened for more and more ways for the subject to disclose its self-presence and "identity" in terms of choices about taste, style and interest. Yet the intimacy of difference[551] – the carrying out of the difference between be-ing and beings, between refusal and granting – goes unnoticed. There is no need which urges a grounding decision – a decision concerning the being of beings. I am called on time and again to reach only for what is in reach – to dwell in the reach towards total availability. The directive issued by being appears simply to entail presenting present availability: to utilize language for re-presenting whatever is unknown or has not yet been experienced in a manner which makes it, too, permanently, uniformly and instantaneously available. Likewise, there is a directive to

[550] Cf. Heidegger's reflections on machine technology in *Leitgedanken zur Entstehung der Metaphysik, der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaft und der modernen Technik*, 361.
[551] We will engage with this intimacy of difference as it pertains to language – and poetry specifically – in more detail in Chapter 3.

disclose myself as present, and to constantly make myself available to participate in the preservation of the field of availability.

The promise of the literary figure

Yet literature may have another destiny as well – that destiny reflected in Attridge's exploration of the singularity of literature and the demand it places on us to relate to the other. This destiny may be related to a different promise of writing – one which Derrida's famous engagement with the anxieties of the Western tradition concerning writing as a supplement to the presence of the spoken word, as signalling absence. Or we might say that this destiny is related to writing's refusal of presence – that this destiny may be one of a promising refusal.

Heidegger also attends to a different destiny of language – or a different origin of language – through his meditations on and engagements with poetry. He suggests, however, that when poetry is figured in literature – is "banished" there – it is expected and disclosed in a way which prevents it from appearing *as* poetry: it no longer sings. Yet it may be that language responds to the abyssal call of be-ing from within literature, as it does in poetry – that in writing it may inflect, and even "sing" silently, as our brief consideration of Heidegger's experiments with crossing out and rewriting *Sein* (as *Seyn*) have suggested. What literature *besagt*, what is revealed by saying "literature", by expecting language *as* literature and *in* literature, is perhaps not only representation, but something else besides – something which may draw us beyond representation, not into a fully present idea or feeling, but into a responsive relation to the absence and withdrawal which grants presence.

In what way does literature "say" this, "bespeak" something else besides representation? We might suggest firstly that literature does not so much say or speak something other, but writes it. The site of language's appearance in literature is the letter – *littera*. Within the reach of metaphysics – which is also the region in which literature appears – the letter is the figure of a sound. The letter draws a sound into a figure or represents the phonic visually. It also draws the sound into a figure in the sense of *pulling* it, displacing it, gathering and (re)positioning it – from one sense to another, from one region to another. Within this reach – of the letter, and of metaphysics – the sound is of course *also* the figure of a representation: it is the drawing of the

intelligible into a discernable form, its drawing out into an utterance. The literary figure is thus called into an ambiguous appearance, the complications of which it is not our intention to stake out at this stage. We are currently only seeking a site for our discussion, rather than clear definitions. We mark only that there is a figuration of the figure – a doubling, which may also be understood as a division. As division (remarked on in detail by Derrida), it suggests the delay or contamination of the workings of an 'originally' phonic language.[552] As doubling (the operation Heidegger focuses on in his discussion of "literature"), it suggests the immediate and universal accessibility of the represented presentation to the subject.

The figure of the letter in literature – in the sense of "literature" in another destiny, drawing not towards re-presenting objectivity, but towards alterity – perhaps also marks a doubling or division in the intelligible element of the representation. Literature does not conventionally simply report on the world. It works, in Hamlet's words, "tropically" –[553] through turns and detours, images and displacements. One idea is drawn into the figure of another, is figured by another – the player figured as Gonzalo is figured as King Hamlet. In our example, the figures mentioned are also figured by actors, though frequently when we encounter *Hamlet* as 'literature', their role is only figured in writing on the page. We provide a complex and ambiguous example to demonstrate that the doubling of the literary figure can also entail a doubling back – a return to another realm, or a drawing across or between multiple realms. Less complicated, though equally significant, doublings are perhaps also implied when the force of the intelligible element of the literary representation is understood as working on the affective – which, in the understanding of the human as rational animal is taken to concern the living, bodily dimension of existence. The kind of troubling which results when the physical figure figures a mental figure which figures a physical response is perhaps already detectable in Plato.

Once again, our intention at this stage is not to categorize and "make sense" of, or even significantly trace these doublings. We are concerned with positioning literature as a site in which language may "speak", may address us in particular ways. Within that site which we

[552] See, for example, OG, 33–35, where Derrida discusses the manner in which writing appears to be a "contamination" of "language in the purity of its concept". See also "Plato's Pharmacy", esp. pp. 91–93, where Thoth, the god of writing, "supplements and supplants" "father, sun, life, speech, origin".
[553] *Hamlet* 3.2.216.

might call “literature”, language appears as drawn into figures. It also appears as draw*ing*: language in the realm of literature draws us – draws us by means of figures to another place. The event which draws the site of literature into itself is the drawing of figures. This, we provisionally claim as the site of literature: literature figures.

Thought from the perspective of representation and definition, this may simply be another way of saying that literature represents, that it signifies – works through signs. This is indeed a way in which literature might be understood, and perhaps has been understood. However, since we are concerned with the positioning of language, the suggestion that literature figures might itself figure – might draw us into a position from which to relate to the figuring of language not primarily as representation.

With this figure in place, and a site in which to attend to the call – or the figuring – of language in literature cleared, we may now progress to pursuing that other destiny of literature. This will entail a return to a thinking of the the λόγος with which we began the chapter. This time, we will attempt to trace ways in which Heidegger shifts the perspective from which to consider *λόγος* in its relation to being, and works to displace our understanding, so that we might consider language as response and responsiveness to be-ing. This shift, we anticipate, will bring us into the reach of the literary figure.

Chapter 3: Being written

Return to *Λόγος*

We have seen how the metaphysical interpretation of *λόγος* unfolds as an understanding of language in terms of representation. Heidegger also seeks in the word traces of a pre-philosophical experience of language which may hint towards alternative ways in which to understand language as the reciprocity between be-ing and human being. In doing so, he also seeks alternative ways for us to position ourselves in relation to language – ways of attending to language differently and responding differently to its demands.

We examined in Chapter 2 one of the ways in which Heidegger reinterprets *λόγος*: as discourse. This interpretation arguably anticipates a more significant shift in perspective from the metaphysical position: towards the sense that the clearing of world as the region in which a totality of references is granted its reach is held in tension with concealment – granted in response to the abyssal withholding of ground. This orientation is perhaps lacking in works such *Being and Time*, where the existential analysis of *Rede* – discourse – is developed. Heidegger himself acknowledges that his earlier work could be read as overly emphasizing the role of Dasein in the clearing of being. Such emphasis suggests too strongly that the projection of the "there", and language, be understood as "human performance".[554] Simultaneously, the division in *Being and Time* between *Rede* as "existential language" and *Sprache* as "the way in which discourse gets expressed"[555] may be thought to imply a division not unlike Saussure's between *langue* and *parole*. This division, with its prioritization of existential structure, arguably fails to attend to the reach Heidegger comes to attribute to the "saying" and "poetizing" of language in its singular unfolding.

Yet as the preceding discussion shows, there are already strong hints in the direction of Heidegger's valorization of poetizing (*Dichten*), even if they remain largely "unthought" in works such as *Being and Time*. There is already a suggestion, in the understanding of *Rede* that language entails a process by which a nebulous "thickening" of references into a meaningful

[554] "Le Thor 1969", 73/41.
[555] SZ 161/204

form occurs.[556] In German, *dicht* means "thick" or "dense", and *dichten* thus also means "to make dense or impermeable". Although there is no actual etymological connection between the two senses of the word *dichten*, Heidegger plays on the way in which they nevertheless resonate. He finds and explores this resonance, for example, in Hölderlin's poem "Heimkunft / An die Verwandten", where in the opening lines, the cloud cover over an Alpine valley is said to be "Freudiges dichtend".[557] The playfully ambiguous phrase interprets the shifting figures in the sky produced by the cloud's "thickening" (*dichten* in one sense) as suggesting that the cloud is engaged in creative activity: "Composing poems full of joy" (*dichten* in the other).[558] We might propose that Heidegger's interpretation of discursivity indicates that language plays out as a similar kind of compositional thickening into "readable" figures.

Departing briefly from Heidegger's interpretations to anticipate our own, we might also see forming here the hints of a figure – a figure of language as figure and as figuring. For the figure is the shown aspect, and there is the sense that world – that which is formed in the drawing together of meaning so that meaning may be drawn together – is formed, is figured, as figuring language (language, composing a world full of joy). A figure is also the drawing together of marks – the densification of *litterae*, their drawing and being held together in a unity which is not a concrete mass of presence, but something akin to a cloud.

Yet there is a risk in prematurely emphasizing the "figuring" element of language. Such emphasis could all too easily relay us back to the subject, suggesting that humans are "world-forming" in the sense of creative agents who shape their reality, or that the nebulous playful densification entailed in world-forming is the playing out and playing forth of will. It also risks analyzing language into sensible and intelligible elements – thereby adopting the metaphysical position, and aspecting language as representation. Before we can attend to the possibility that language is the figuring of being, we have to go further along the way along which Heidegger attempts to reposition our thinking with respect to be-ing in such a way as to avoid a metaphysical interpretation of language.

[556] In Dasein's everyday existence, however, it comes across language as perhaps largely already "thickened", and takes up the already composed meanings without attending to their relation to the possibility of not being.
[557] l.2, cited in "Heimkunft/An die Verwandten", 10 (translated as "Homecoming/To Kindred Ones", 25).
[558] The translation cited in the standard English translation (p. 25).

Towards saying the gathering reach

Heidegger progresses along this way by interrogating more deeply what is taken for granted in the understanding of *λόγος* as discourse. The referential complex of discourse both articulates and is articulated. There is never the sense in Heidegger's interpretation that reference is the reference of isolated, disparate elements in a system. Instead, all references are foregathered – foregathered, as we will see, in their reference to the whole and to the refusal of grounded presence which discloses the whole. Heidegger therefore interprets *λόγος* as gathering. This interpretation is suggested by the etymological root of *λόγος*: *λέγειν* – to gather, to collect, to select.[559] This root is connected to the Lating *legere*, and the German *lesen*: "to read". Heidegger also draws attention to another meaning of *lesen* – "to harvest". *Lesen* is also "to read" – to harvest letters in a reading. These resonances together suggest the understanding of *λέγειν* as "to gather".[560] To gather means "to bring various dispersed things together into a unity"[561]. It involves "laying one thing next to another" and "bringing them together as one".[562] This also means *selecting* among things, which entails comparing or contrasting with one another each of the things laid out, and in each case making a decision – selecting, therefore, "with a view toward something."[563] Heidegger's example is enlightening: "a coin collection that one has gathered is not just a heap that has somehow been thrown together".[564] The collector selects coins, which she encounters as in some sense dispersed, keeping some, discarding others, considering each with a view to her collection. In being gathered, the dispersed coins are brought *forth* [*bei*bringen[565]] and delivered *over* [*zu*stellen[566]] – or rather, their *unity* as a collection is brought forth and delivered over while the "view towards" which they are selected is itself brought into view. This may seem to suggest that *λέγειν* entails the agency of a subject – that it is an act of will. This is not the case. In the example, coins have already appeared – have already come forward in some way. The same could be said of collections, and even coin collections.

[559] Heidegger in fact also connects *λόγος* to *λέγειν* in *Being and Time*. However, as Macquarrie and Robinson point out, his reading of *λέγειν* in this context brings his understanding of *λόγος* almost in line with what is usually indicated in the Latin *ratio* (SZ, 34/BT, 58 n.1)
[560] *Heraklit*, 266–267/*Heraclitus*, 203–204.
[561] OECP: 213.
[562] EM, 95/IM, 137.
[563] AM, 142/121.
[564] EM, 95/IM, 137.
[565] VWBP, 279/OECP, 213.
[566] Ibid.

Coins and collections and the unity of coins and collections are already available – they "lie before" us, not in the sense of an object placed before a subject, but in the sense that they are already in some situation in which they are "lying" (Heidegger speaks of "die Lage, in der etwas liegt").[567] They are in a whole.

Language, then, gathers and lets lie before. One way in which we might interpret this "gathering" and "letting lie before" is in terms of meaning: elements of meaning, already available to us thanks to the loose, contextual and dynamic unity offered by a specific language at a specific time, are brought together and made available. Gathering would then amount to releasing what is already available into the play of that availability.[568] This is an interpretation consistent with Heidegger's account of the interpretive acts of the understanding as "explicitation", as well as with his understanding of the human being as historical (*Geschichtlich*). A world of meanings has always already been "sent" prior to the meaningful actions of any individual person, granting the possibility for meaningful action in the first place. Such an interpretation – which arguably brings us once again into the neighbourhood of Saussure's thinking – holds much potential insight into the manner in which meaningfulness is structured. However, it would turn our focus onto meaning as the determinative element of language, which is likely once again to position us to consider language a tool for making meaning – and therefore a system of signs, a means of representing. Such positioning would probably relay the gathering back to the human being as subject, as an extant being who has the capacity to use extant language to lay out the grounds and exhibit the reasons for all with which it engages. Meanings are undoubtedly what is at work in gathering and letting lie before; yet for Heidegger, the relation to what is *not* at work is not only important, but crucial: what is at work is only at work *in tension* with the possibility of its not being, as well as with concrete ways in which it is *not* at work. Yet it is not simply a matter of finding a more comprehensive account of language as a meaning-structuring system – an account which would take into consideration the interplay of being and becoming in the system and acknowledge the play of differences (and absences) which play out in the constant referential interplay at work within it. It is rather a matter of catching a glimpse of the manner in which the possibility for decision – the decision which is implied and taken for granted in any gathering –

[567] WHD, 203/WCT, 200.
[568] See WHD, 203–204/WCT, 200–201.

is demanded by the withdrawal of be-ing, and granted by the radical alterity of the possibility of not being (the possibility of not gathering into a whole, of not showing anything and of nothing showing up) which is articulated within every act of meaning. It is a matter of attempting to think language not from meaning but from ab-ground, and of understanding the differential play which grounds the selection at work in gathering not merely as the referential play between arbitrary signs, but as the play of differencing initiated by the radical otherness of be-ing from beings. Or more precisely, it is a matter of thinking differencing itself as the occasioning or playing out of the radical difference between be-ing and beings, and of language as therefore unfolding through a relation to unrepresentable otherness.

In a far-reaching and comprehensive account of language, understood with reference to *λόγος*, which he provides in his later career,[569] Heidegger leads us by measures in the direction of such a thinking. He does so by means of a series of meditations on different resonances of the word *λόγος*. Each meditation engages – at times overtly, at times obliquely – with elements of the metaphysical understanding of *λόγος*; each, however, effects a turn in the perspective from which we view the central insights of the metaphysical interpretation.

Thus, along the lines of our own discussion, he begins by translating *λόγος* as *Rede*, but uses the word in a manner more in line with everyday use, where it means "talk" or "speech" (as opposed to the manner in which he treats it in *Being and Time*, where its translation as "discourse" is for the most part called for). This leads him to consider *Rede*, and the verb *reden* (to talk), in the light of *λέγειν*, gathering. Recalling other contexts where he interprets *ratio* as "rendering the account" for the "truth of judgement",[570] he reads *Rede*, too, in terms of a "demand" for "an account" – for bringing forth "what lies before."[571] Yet what *ratio* renders is causes, and "lying before" is on the one hand interpreted to mean "lying under" as present determinative "substance", and on the other hand projected as "lying over against" the subject, who must

[569] The 1957 lecture course "Grundsätze des Denkens" ("Basic Principles of Thinking").
[570] E.g., SG, 173/PR, 119: "gibt die Rechenschaft".
[571] GDD, 160/BPT, 151. Heidegger suggests this with reference to German idiomatic usage, such as in the expression "einen zur Rede stellen". He might similarly have suggested "ein Wörtchen mit einem zu reden haben", which means something along the lines of "calling someone to account" – to reprimand someone, "have a little word" with them, or, as Andrew Mitchell puts it in his superb rendering of an idiomatic passage, to "give them a talking to".

provide a complete rational account of that which underlies the object. The manner in which *ratio* renders is through the separation and isolation of every element of the event of presencing from the singular drawing together which constitutes its event, and then reassembling these elements into a representation. Language, too, is isolated as the objective means of representing, and is therefore interpreted as working (effecting representation) through signs – as a process of signification.

The "account" which is rendered in "bringing before" [*vorbringen*],[572] by contrast, suggests a responsiveness to the relational quality of a being's presencing – a responsiveness attuned to preserving the regional drawing together of relations which constitute that presencing. Bringing before is thus "bringing *collectively* to appearance" [*versammeld zum Vorschein bringen*],[573] rendering in the sense of "giving back". There is no subject at the centre of this gathering, and no subject effectuates it; instead, the human is "confronted" or "called to account", as is suggested by the idiomatic phrase *zur Rede stellen* which Heidegger uses here: placed under the obligation of some other which cannot simply be integrated into subjectivity. Literally, *zur Rede stellen* means to "put to the talk", and, within the context of Heidegger's insistence that being addresses us, and that language speaks, we might interpret him as inviting us in this context to understand language not as that which we use to render an account, but rather as that which calls us to account.

Heidegger performs a similar turn with respect to metaphysical attempts to understand the essence of language in terms of its objective qualities or characteristics, which – as we have seen – invariably rely on a distinction between sensible and intelligible. This brings him once again into the ambit of an aesthetics which understands beauty with respect to affect – to effects on the senses and emotions. He examines a phrase from the *Odyssey*, which he calls the "most beautiful testament" – *das schönste Zeugnis* – of *λόγος*'s meaning as bringing collectively to appearance.[574] Homer's beautiful testimony concerns the entrancing quality of Calypso's words to Odysseus: her "*μαλακοὶ καὶ αἰμύλιοι λόγοι* – "mild and captivating speech [*sanfte und*

[572] Ibid,161/153
[573] Ibid, my emphasis.
[574] Ibid, 160/151.

berükkende Reden]".[575] By means of elaborate play on several words related to *ziehen* ("to pull, draw, drag") and *Zug* ("trait" or "feature", but also "draw", "pull"; "draught"; "traction"; "train"; "drag") – as well as several other words which suggests movement – Heidegger indicates that the enchanting "trait" (*Zug*) of Calypso's speech is not a sensory quality. The trait is, rather, a "pull" or "draw" (*Zug*): the gathering of relations, connections and references, which her speech draws [*anzieht*] to itself."[576] The trait is thus not an intrinsic quality, but a gathering of traces of otherness (other drawings, other gatherings). The trait-bearing word is not simply the product – the *actus* – of the draw, but a drawing in which what is not is maintained in a suspension with what is. The draw is the drawing of a reach.

The emphasis placed on drawing suggests that *λέγειν* – bringing into appearance – should not be understood in terms of depicting, signalling or representing, so much as movement: being-on-the-way. Bringing collectively to appearance entails the drawing together of references to form a reach. We might bear in mind, however, that Calypso, whose name means "she that conceals",[577] speaks words of oblivion, rather than of pure shining radiance. She speaks to "bewitch" [*θέλγει*] Odysseus and "*cause him to forget*" Ithaca: *ἐπιλήσεται*[578]– to cover him over (*ἐπι-*) with forgetfulness (*λήθη*). Her mild and captivating words are words of concealment as well as appearance.

We might also consider that forgetting, thought in terms of *ἀλήθεια* – of disclosure and letting presence – does not merely entail something "slipping" from Odysseus, for example, a particular memory of Ithaca's fading into the concealment of forgetfulness. One who forgets is also crucially "concealed from [themselves] in relation [*Bezug*] to something which would otherwise be unconcealed to [them]."[579] Likewise, memory is not simply a past event gathered into a representation, and thereby made present. When we remember, this means that we *still relate* to what is past, and this relation continues to connect what is past to us; the manifestness of the past

[575] Ibid. The slightly archaic spelling of *berükkende* presumably comes from the translation Heidegger uses.
[576] Ibid.
[577] LSJ, "Κᾰλῠψώ".
[578] An inflected form of *ἐπιλανθάνομαι*, one of a number of related words which Heidegger associates with *λήθη*. They share a common root which probably would have meant "to be concealed".
[579] *Parmenides*, 36/24.

is ongoing, and thus also oncoming: it concerns us (*geht uns an*)[580] and so its relation to us is a coming towards us.[581] Memory thinks ahead. Thus, Calypso's words draw at Odysseus' very being. They draw him towards forgetting the manner in which he anticipates all he encounters, in which he projects himself towards beings and relates meaningfully to them. These words draw him towards forgetting the manner in which all beings address him *as* someone from Ithaca, *as* king, husband, father. They draw him towards covering himself over *as* Odysseus in such a manner that all beings will appear to him in a different set of relations – in a different light. They withhold him from home, and from all that is familiar. Calypso makes a claim on him by positioning (drawing, displacing) him in such a way that the world would make a different claim on him from before, and he would respond with a different rendering of all he encounters in it.

Thus, we see how *λέγειν* suggests not only the drawing of a reach, but the drawing of the human being *into* a reach – into a relational manner of bearing herself in relation to beings by bringing them collectively to appearance. There is not the play of relations on the one hand, and the human being who composes them into specific arrangements on the other. The relations play out in the whole and as the whole, within which the human being is herself held. Yet the draw of Calypso's words is not a simple interplay of references; their draw lies in that they address Odysseus in the finitude of his existence, confronting him with the possibility of no longer being Odysseus. Calypso addresses Odysseus as mortal, her words working not only to cause him to forget but also "so that he is tired of life."[582] The relations which constitute Odysseus' world are put up for decision as his own being is put up for decision – and the necessity for decision is disclosed through withholding and the threat of withdrawing from appearance into concealment. Calypso herself speaks not from within the realm of the everyday, with the voice of a mortal, but from an other place – the place of not being at home, *unheimlich* – with the voice of a nymph, of an uncanny aspect of be-ing. The draw of her words is that they address Odysseus in his singularity as a finite human being whose existence is up for decision. Addressing him in this way, her words disclose the possibility of forgottenness, and thereby disclose, through its refusal, the possibility of home, of belonging, of significance. We might suggest therefore that they resonate, speaking to Odysseus' fundamental attunement, appealing to him to resonate

[580] "Andenken bedenkt, was uns angeht." WHD, 161.
[581] "Andenken", 83–84/"Remembrance", 108–109.
[582] *Odyssey* 1.2.

differently in every relation with every being. The draw of Calypso's words must lie, then, in this resonance – in their tonality – which itself draws from the possibility of withdrawal from appearance, and in relation to the finitude of the singular appeal.

We might then draw together the central threads of Heidegger's discussion of *λόγος* to argue that it offers a way of understanding language not in terms of representation or communication, nor even of discourse in a straightforward sense, but in terms of movement and relation, of positioning and place. Within the context of Heidegger's topological thinking, language appears as reach: as the drawing and holding together of a relational region of possible appearances of beings, as well as the explicitation of these possibilities – their appropriation into individual acts of meaning. These individual acts may be considered to "show" beings in their being, and thus also in some sense to reveal the specific regional drawing-together of relations through which the act of showing takes place. We show each other our communal understandings in our linguistic acts, position one another with respect to our shared meanings. We therefore also show our own relation to a regional drawing together in our acts of "saying" – of showing, of explicitation. We reveal ourselves and our positioning within the "place" which is language – within a relational reach – in our disclosive acts of language. We reveal ourselves to the other person's own disclosive showing. [583] When we use language in our everyday lives to express ourselves or communicate, to make assertions or write poetry, we do so only on account of being "placed" in language; as placed in this way, our own linguistic acts are themselves responsive acts of placing. Language is the place of our everyday existence. Rather than "having" language or "bearing" it (as *ζῷον λόγον ἔχον*), we are born by language and within it.

Yet Heidegger's discussions of *λόγος* also undermine a straightforward understanding of language simply as a differentiating process which aggregates references into more or less stable regions of meaningfulness. Language appears not only as reach, but also as out of reach – drawing or threatening to draw out of reach. Reach appears only in relation to refusal, as the whole appears only in relation to the nothing. *Λόγος* relates to withdrawal, and to the present absence which demands that references be drawn together and distinguished in the first place. *Λόγος* relates to finitude and mortality. Heidegger implies that an everyday, a place, a belonging

[583] See, for example, *Parmenides*, 152–153/103.

in language are only possible on account of the possibility of their refusal – implies that discourse arises from and maintains a relation to the uncanny. He suggests that we are only brought *into* our belonging in response to refusal. *Λόγος* indicates that language draws in response to a denial – the denial of be-ing, which is not simply nothing, but the calling out of nothing so that we hear its empty silence.

Addressing the aspect of be-ing

To better appreciate how this responsiveness is structured, it is necessary more explicitly to relate these insights concerning the relational drawing and showing of *λόγος* to our considerations in Chapter 1 of that which grants the possibility of showing – to *ἀλήθεια* and to the aspect of be-ing. Simply put, *λόγος* addresses beings in their availability. In Heidegger's interpretation of Greek thinking, it shows beings in their "look": in the appearance into which they have been pre-gathered as capable of being drawn into relations and shown. In Chapter 2 we expressed the structure of the "look" which gathers into appearance as looking past a being into that which grants it its "view" – its look, its appearance. Thus, for Plato, we look past a being to see its *ἰδέα*, and through a *λόγος* address – show – the being in delimited stable presence of its sightability. Heidegger's interpretation suggests that in metaphysical thought, the *λόγος* addresses or shows beings in the "look" of their substantive presence. Such looking brings into view the "look" of their "workings", allowing them to be addressed in terms of rising into appearance as effectuation, in terms of the causal structuring of movement towards *ἐνέργεια*, standing in the work. This view in turn offers the look of the workings of beings as *put to work* – those workings as "counting" towards further appearances.

For Heidegger, each of these ways of looking past is structured by our looking past beings into *ἀλήθεια*. This means we look past beings into their foregathering in the whole, which is not itself in being or being-like. This foregathering appears only in relation to the refusal of beings: the withholding of a meaningful relation to them, the withholding of their immediate presence (the nothing which is unveiled in anxiety). Thus, we look past beings not only into their foregathering, but also into their withdrawal or refusal. These moments – of the unveiling of refusal and the appearance of a whole – are equiprimordial. Neither precedes the other; rather each anticipates and recollects the other, and they "appear" – offer a way of being addressed in a

λόγος – only in virtue of their differencing. We look towards and away from refusal, so that we can look towards and away from the whole. The look of rising into appearance, the look which finds its ultimate realization in the will to power and eternal return of the same – in the rising into appearance towards further rising into appearance – is granted through a reciprocity with the look of disappearance.

We recall also that my gathering look, even my grasping look, is a countering look, a responding look. It counters the aspect of be-ing – the "look" of gifting-refusing which calls for the answering look of apprehending, of disclosure. We may now attempt to express this in terms of *λόγος*. A *λόγος*, a word or saying, a gathering-drawing-showing, is a response – an answer. It entails the responsive countering of the possibility of drawing and showing beings within relations, with reference to grounds which determine their relatability – a possibility which arises as a demand issued by the refusal of the unmediated presence of beings. We might understand "looking past" beings also as listening for the manner in which they address us – for what calls us into *λόγος*, into gathering, drawing, showing, speaking: for what *hights* thinking.

We might thereby appreciate why Heidegger considers language as essentially determined by listening, hearkening. The human being speaks only insofar as she *answers*: "*ent-spricht*".[584] The word *entsprechen* more commonly means "to correspond" in the sense of conforming with, or being in accordance with; it means comply, be adequate to, suit. Heidegger's use, however, indicates that reciprocity between be-ing's granting the manifestness of beings and the human being's countering disclosure which we discussed in Chapter 1. He uses it not to suggest "correspondence" in the sense of the adequation between truth understood as correctness, and a correct seeing (though we might understand the latter as a co-respondence through which the reciprocity between the appearance of being as substantive presence and an answering language which represents plays out). He uses it rather to suggest *co-respondence*. He emphasizes the *ent-* of the countering – of reciprocity. He also emphasizes the *spoken* character of this co-respondence, determined, as we have suggested, by listening.

[584] SG, 143; "Die Sprache", 29ff. (translated as "Language", 206ff.).

Λόγος (language, speaking) thus co-responds to the possibility of appearance granted by gifting refusal. The way it "answers" is by showing, in the manner of drawing something into relations – positioning what appears with respect to a whole, which means with respect to the refusal of unmediated presence. This means showing what appears *as* meaningful within a field of possible connections and interrelationships. With reference to Hölderlin's joyfully poetizing clouds, we might suggest once again that this manner of discursive showing (in the modified sense of gathering-showing-drawing) entails a "thickening" – a *dichten* – of possible relations. But this also means the exclusion or backgrounding of other relations, and it means showing each relation and their relatedness in an aspect – turned, positioned, gathered, addressed in a specific way. Consequently, the showing draws from and into limitation: it does not afford the whole view, but affords a view precisely by being turned, position, inflected. The appearance is therefore itself attuned by the relational context. Significantly, the appearance also itself *attunes* that context, through the manner in which it resonates in it. Language aspects: it anticipates a possible relatedness, and it shows a possible relatedness.

Whatever words I speak or write thus have a specific tonality – a *Stimmung*. We might recall that for Heidegger, one of the essential structures of human existence is our disposedness: the way we are always "attuned" to beings in some respect, and always find ourselves within a specific attunement. The tonality of the word is thus crucial. It reflects a specific situatedness – for example, through a certain word having a history of usages, specific connotations, etc. It also disposes or attunes our situatedness – as we have attempted to convey through our attentiveness to the way the etymologies and resonances of specific words dispose us to understanding the nature of manifestness, language and human being in specific ways. The tonality of a word co-responds to a specific claim already made in a specific language; tonality aspects that language and the contextual relations of significance within which that language is spoken (to which it co-responds).

Words co-respond, then, to the aspect of be-ing – to the refusal which grants the possibility that beings may appear as significant. They answer the demand made by the abyssal withholding of ground to ground the appearance of beings in some way. Thus, Heidegger speaks of the "essential word" [*das wesentliche Wort*], the word as it unfolds in its essential possibilities, as

addressing the very possibility of something about which to speak. The word unfolds essentially in response to the possibility of bringing something to a stand through showing; this possibility, as we have seen, is co-determined by the possibility of not showing, not appearing, of impermanence, forgetfulness and withdrawal.[585]

Poetry and the essential word

Heidegger treats this possibility in his discussion of Stefan George's "A Word" in "The Nature of Language". George's poem narrates the speaker's failure to bring home a wondrous "treasure" because its name is refused him, and his "prize" consequently vanishes. The speaker thus realizes that "Where the word breaks off, no thing may be."[586] This moment not only disturbs the assumption that "word and thing are two separate entities",[587] but also confronts us with the possibility of the word's non-appearance, and thus of non-appearance itself. The poem brings to appearance the withholding of appearance. It draws together, draws forth and shows non-appearance; it draws attention to and draws aside the veil of the ordinary, behind which uncanny be-ing lies concealed. Yet it unveils only a veil. It draws us into and holds us within a relation to withholding – without resolution and without release.

The manner in which Heidegger turns – and we have turned – to poetry in search of the experience of the simultaneous refusal of the word and its necessity for the appearance of anything as in being (as drawn into meaning-bearing relations) is significant. We have traced the reciprocity between the understanding of being as beingness, our relation to language as a tool for representing, our disclosure of beings in specific modalities (as objects, as available, orderable, useful), and our self-disclosure as subjects. Since language entails co-respondence to be-ing, Heidegger searches for ways of relating to language or being positioned by or within language which might respond to the simultaneous promise of bringing to appearance and failure to appear which he sees as conditioning language in the first place. He attempts both to bring into view the structure of our relation to be-ing, and by bringing it into view, occasioning – or

[585] See "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung", 43 – hereafter HWD (translated as "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry", 60–61 – hereafter HEP).
[586] Cited in NL, 60.
[587] Emad, "Heidegger's stance on Hölderlin in *Beiträge*", 374.

anticipating the possible occasioning of – a responsive relation in language to the gifting refusal of be-ing.

It is frequently in poetry that he seeks such a language of co-respondence to be-ing. A crucial reason for this is that poetry offers the potential of a relation to language which does not demand or expect that language be put to work. As we saw in Chapter 2, in everyday communication, and especially in metaphysical representation, language is disclosed as an instrument for making something present and available to a subject, and we are disclosed as the subjects who master it and put it to use. In poetry (*Dichtung*) and poetizing (*Dichten*), there is the possibility of encountering language without calling on it to be use-ful – without directing it towards the fullness of some end. Poetry does not emerge from a clearly delineated series of efficient causes which work (*wirken*) the poem (*Gedicht*) towards an outcome (*Wirkung*, *ἐντελέχεια*, *ἐνεργείᾳ*).[588] Poetizing therefore differs from the kind of activity which "intervenes *unmediated* in what is actual [*das Wirkliche*] to transform it"[589]. The words of the poem do not reach towards actualization – towards immediate self-presentation – in the manner information does. Poetizing is *wirkungslos*: "without effect", in the sense that it never achieves the state of effectuation – never fully draws its potentialities into the limit of *actus est* –[590] as well as in the sense that it does not draw forth in anticipation of such an end.

This is vital because it disposes us to relate to language – to the language of the poem – in the modality of possibility rather than actuality. We might understand much of Heidegger's thinking on language on the basis of this disposition. The claims he makes about poetizing, especially Hölderlin's poetizing, do not concern present-at-hand qualities of poetic language which are automatically "actualized" when we read a poem or when we compose poetry. The poetic relation to language and to being is not achieved as an act of will. It is in fact paramount – considering the prevailing determination of being as will to power – that such a relation surrenders subjectivity and agency in its relation to language: wills non-willing.[591] Inasmuch as it is ineffectual, as it is worked towards no end, poetry could position us to relate to language in

[588] HWD, 33/HEP, 52 (my translation).
[589] Ibid. (my translation and emphasis).
[590] Ibid.
[591] "*Ἀγχιβασίη*", 51/33.

such a way that a tension between possibility and actuality is maintained: that we comport ourselves towards the openness of the poetry, rather than towards its closure in the arrival of its end. It *does not*, do so, in the sense of drawing this potential into a fully achieved actuality, but *could*.

There is then the possibility in poetry that in the absence of an end towards which to work, an outcome through which to achieve uncomplicated self-presence, language is disclosed as unavailable. I no longer relate to language as "a material at [my] disposal".[592] It fails to draw a stable, unified, permanent "reach" (region, *Bereich*) of significations which could support the poem in an independent, delimited "stand". What is poetized (*gedichtet*) in the poem (*Gedicht*) remains out of reach; a decision on the poem – on its manifestness, its meaning, the manner in which it is constituted – remains out-standing.[593]

Paradoxically, this unavailability of language – and of meaning, of beings, of presence and availability – is itself disclosed and in a sense made available in poetry. While poetry is not entirely meaningless, and does unfold towards the possibility that words draw beings into present availability, it simultaneously refuses to present either words or beings as fully available. It is in this sense then that poetry may be considered the "essential word", and that Heidegger can claim that "language itself is poetry in the essential sense."[594] The essential word unfolds from the promise of appearance in relation to the refusal of appearance. Poetry offers a relation in language to gifting refusal – to that which calls for and calls forth language in the first place.

In poetry, then, I may be confronted with the refusal of language, but not in the form of sheer meaninglessness, in contradistinction to the immediate availability of a full understanding. That a decision on the poem is out-standing means that it draws out of reach in relation to the possibility of a "stand": the possibility of being drawn into reach, into a reach within which it may draw forth into appearance.[595] The experience is akin to what Heidegger describes concerning a missing bicycle: its absence differs substantially from that of a bicycle that never was, a bicycle I

[592] HWD, 43 HEP, 60.
[593] For example "Wie wenn am Feiertage", 51/"As When On A Holiday, 74.
[594] UK, 62/OWA, 46.
[595] See HWD, 39/HEP, 57.

never had. The missing bicycle troubles me: it discloses absence in relation to presence. Likewise, in that it simultaneously shows and veils, and shows *that it is veiling*, poetry discloses the frustration and refusal of the very possibility towards which language draws forth – the possibility of drawing beings into reach (presence, availability) by drawing them into a reach (a bearing, a world, a context of significance).

Poetry may therefore dislodge me from my familiar relation with language – in which I am an agent who utilizes language towards specific ends. It may likewise trouble the very familiarity of the familiar. The words of a familiar language – of a language through which I relate to beings as familiar, draw them into familiarity – is disturbed. As I reach for meaning, as I experience meaning being withheld, as I experience the threat of its slipping away, I am transported in such a way as no longer to be at home in language. I am disowned of language, through which I reach out to beings, and through understanding them, make them my own. This experience of the disturbance and displacement of language co-responds to the experience Heidegger associates with anxiety. Without the word, no thing may be; thus as poetry refuses the word, beings fall way, and the familiar relations within which we encounter them appear groundless. An abyssal distance stretches between us and beings; we are positioned in the proximity of nothing.

Yet as is the case in anxiety, the refusal of the language's ready "arrival" into meaningful expression – its refusal to count towards the immediate delivery and present availability of a communication – may also place a demand. That is to say, in the face of the withholding of clear meaning, the very possibility of bringing something to a stand through showing is also brought into view, in the form both of its refusal and its anticipation. This possibility calls for my attentiveness to the words I encounter. I am drawn to seeking ways of countering the meaningful possibilities offered by the words, by showing them within particular relationships – by seeking an arrangement of their involvement and interaction which will make sense, will bring something into appearance. I am called upon to ground the appearance of the words I encounter.

This means that the "axis of meaning" of the poem shifts from "ideational content" to the "character of its enactment"[596]. Meaning unfolds dynamically[597] – ek-statically. I anticipate a meaningful arrangement and draw towards it – draw words and figures together meaningfully with a view towards this anticipated sense. Yet I must also draw back. I must listen anew to the resonances and inflections of the words. Having been disowned of my mastery over language, I must submit to the specific possibilities and limitations of specific words. I must seek to recollect ways in which they have been and could be anticipated. Throughout the interpretive process, I must circle back and anticipate the meaningful arrangement again as each new insight opens different interpretive possibilities; the enactment of meaning is "on-going".[598] The absences in the poem remain in tension with what is present; the possibility of non-arrival remains.

Yet through my participation in the dynamic unfolding of meaning, my sense of being disowned by language is drawn into tension with a sense of ownership. As I "re-appropriate the specific boundaries"[599] governing the poem and the language in which it is written, I participate in shaping those boundaries. My en-counter with the poem becomes a reciprocal event. I am responsible for attending to and preserving the delimited presence of the poem, and of the specific words and figures which shape it. Having been disowned of language, I am now "en-owned": given over to the meaningful possibilities of the meaning-event of the poem. But being "owned" in this way, I am also able to take ownership of these meaningful possibilities – of the poem itself and the language in which I encounter the poem. Dis-owning and en-owning me in this way, the poem appeals to me not in my positioning within language as a subjectivity – a subjectivity in a realm of intersubjectivity – but in my finitude. By withholding decision, it places my relation to language and to meaning up for decision. This means that it may put my very self-interpretation up for decision too – call into uncertainty what it means for something to be, or for me to relate to it as in being. It calls me to decision. This means it also positions me to respond not as a subject, representing an object, but as a finite human being – a being whose existence is conditioned by my relation to its finitude. The decision it calls me to is a "free"

[596] See Schalow, "Kant, Heidegger and the Performative Character of Language in the First *Critique*", 176.
[597] Ibid, 177.
[598] Ibid.
[599] Ibid, 176.

decision, in that it has not and "cannot be calculated and derived" from what is present.[600] It cannot be based in certainty, or made certain. It cannot be made to count in an absolute sense; it cannot be brought to account. The meaning which emerges is a gift – not a payment rendered, not an exchange of like for like, not a return on investment.[601] It is excessive, superfluous; but it is also inadequate, deficient. It is groundless.

To respond

In this light, we might venture an articulation of what we have been anticipating with the words "respond", "responsive" and "responsiveness". We might attempt to name, though not define, a possible position of responsiveness in relation to the aspect of be-ing. To respond means to say in return. It suggests a rendering, a reciprocity, a back-and-forth. In accordance with this give and take, "respond" can also mean a reciprocating action: the work carried out to render a cause, or the adjustments in condition retuned to a force, a stimulus. Reciprocity is also determinative of an additional meaning: to correspond to, to suit: the response returns in such a way that a correlation is established or maintained. To respond is to answer a call – for example to answer a charge, to appear when one's name is called in a summons. The Latin root – *respondere*[602] – which reflects all these English senses, interprets such answering appearance in terms of appearance more generally: *respondeo* can mean "I appear", "I am present". Yet the Latin word can also suggest anticipation and expectation, rather than simple presence: *respondere* is also to promise, or to offer something in return. *Respondere* is therefore a decidedly temporal word: it means to yield – to make present as a return for what was offered in anticipation; to fulfil the promise, "sent" out "before";[603] to correlate past effort with hoped-for returns in a present reward.

The root word *spondere* – to promise, to vow, to pledge oneself – recommends this kind of temporally complex interpretation of "respond". If a response makes present, grants an appearance, it does so as the return of something anticipated, something sent ahead, promised. We might suggest then that the response recollects the promise in its rendering, and thus calls it

[600] HWD, 41/HEP, 59.
[601] See HWD, 41/HEP, 59.
[602] All Latin definitions are based on the entry "respondeo", Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*.
[603] *Pro-mittere*.

forth. The word suggests that the response is attuned to the promise; it hints even that the response promises too: that the *re-* indicates that a promise is made again. The response remains anticipatory, attuned to a reciprocity between anticipation, recollection and appearance. If we understand responsiveness in a manner directed by this hint, it means something very different from the capacity to react to stimulus – the adjustment of present workings to a present force. Responsiveness – in our interpretation – draws forth in relation to what is not yet available, not yet fulfilled; it draws forth in relation to the possibility that what is rendered *not* be adequate – the possibility of unfulfillment, broken promise, disappearance, loss.

A trace of this meaning is discernible in the word's distant etymological connection with the Greek *σπένδω* – "I pour a drink-offering"; "I libate". As an offering, the libation reaches out towards something not already present.[604] It is promissory in the sense that this reaching reaches ahead, reaches *towards* what is out of reach. Even in a commemorative libation, what is commemorated does not lie in the past but *comes towards* the commemorator in their remembrance.[605] A libation is also a sacrifice. No return is promised; instead, what is already present is surrendered, discarded. A libation is a wastage. It does not make good use of what has been yielded from toil; it is a refusal of return. Of course it may be poured in the hope of some deity's favour, but it remains a poor investment. Poured away, the libation fails to fulfill what is promised and anticipated in the drink. It *refuses* the drink's straightforward appearance and immediate availability – refuses its promise of refreshment, flavour, the quenching of thirst. It discloses the failure of the drink's appearance, the unavailability of that appearance. Such a disclosure perhaps recalls other ways in which the drink might fail to appear – the possibilities of non-appearance anticipated in the preparation of the drink and its production: the harvest might not yield; the toil may be wasted; the vintage lost. The spillage responds to such possibilities, answering their promise; it renders loss with loss, and re-calls the promise of loss. In the face of the possibility of non-appearance, a distance opens between work and accomplishment, effort and return, action and reaction, stimulus and "response" in the scientific sense of the word. A distance opens – or an already open distance is revealed, or an anticipated distance returns – between the self-showing of the drink and our relating to and experiencing its appearance.

[604] See Heidegger's discussion of libation: "Das Ding", 11ff./"The Thing", 10ff. See also Mitchell, "What Is Called Drinking? Heidegger, Wine and Loss", 5–6.
[605] Compare Heidegger's thinking on *Andenken* (e.g. WHD, 161; "Andenken", 80–151/"Remembrance, 106–173).

Suspended in this gap, we are called to account – called on to account in some way for the gaps we witness between anticipation, appearance and return. We are called on to pledge ourselves to some way of calling the drink, the harvest, the labour – all around us, and our place within it – into appearance which can relate them to their disappearance, their waste. Since the drink, the being, remains distant, has not already arrived, we are called upon to await its arrival – to attend carefully to the drink's self-showing and anticipate possible ways of drawing it into relations which may allow and sustain its appearance. We are called upon to do so in response to a promise – the promise of arrival, appearance, presence – which only discernably sounds forth as it is broken. We are therefore called upon to break our pledge to draw the drink into availability by surrendering its availability – pouring it away. We respond already in anticipation of what never arrives, never returns with a promise.

Echoing silence

It is with this manner of responsiveness in mind that we return to Heidegger's consideration of the essential unfolding of the word. We also bear in mind, however, the aspect of be-ing – Heidegger's reorientation of the fundamental way in which the human being is positioned with respect to disclosure: anticipated by the appearance-granting aspect of be-ing; as looked upon patient, rather than looking agent; as invited, called up, called forth into the en-counter.

The essential word unfolds as the countering of the aspect of be-ing specifically with respect to the look of revealing-concealing it offers – responds to the aspect of differencing. We make this distinction since we have argued that the reciprocity between be-ing and human being plays out in language even when, as in the forgottenness of be-ing, the abyssal withholding of ground is covered over. The language of representation in late modernity, we have suggested, counters the look or aspects the aspect of the will to power.

The essential word unfolds then through attentiveness to differencing (refusal in relation to grant; withholding of ground in relation to demand for grounding) – through "listening" to (*Hören*) differencing. Such listening "draws from the command" [*Geheiß*] of differencing "what it brings out as sounding word [*lautende Wort*]".[606] The essential word echoes the silence of that uncanny

[606] "Die Sprache", 29ff./"Language", 206ff.

differencing which grants the possibility of appearance. It gives voice to this silence – re-calls its call. It draws the inexpressible into an expression – draws what does not sound and cannot sound into the audibility of a *Laut*. It draws the aspect of be-ing into a figure. This figure, however, does not refer to a superabundant external presence; it does not "carry" or "bear" the meaning of beings (carry it, as a sense-bucket might). It figures in the manner of covering over; it encloses, shelters. The uncanny withdraws into the perceivable form. The figure shows – makes manifest; yet it also holds back, shows that it is not showing.[607]

In Chapter 2 we marked the interrelationships between the interpretation of being as presence, truth as correctness or correlation, and language as signification and as representation. We marked also how within this relationship, the distinction between sensible and intelligible emerges to explain the structure of signification. Heidegger's turn in perspective regarding the relation between being, human being and language occasions (and is occasioned by) a reinterpretation of the role of meaning and of signification, and what is entailed by them. In the essential unfolding of language – that is, language as it is anticipated and recollected in a responsive relation to be-ing – the delimitation and stabilization of meaning are not the deciding factors. It is not the case that "an expression indicates [*bedeutet*] an object with the help of a 'meaning' [*Bedeutung*] which has flown in from somewhere";[608] rather, "be-ing in-dicates [*be-deutet*]" "beings as such" [*das Seiende als solches*]: indicates them as *in being*, and thus shows them in a regard which demands the drawing forth and drawing together of relations to which this "as" is able to refer.[609] Be-ing points out beings and shows them, but in a manner which simultaneously draws attention to its own withdrawal, its own absence as that which shows.[610] Be-ing and beings are thus drawn into a relation of difference – the relation of differencing, of *Austrag* – in which each points out the other, points towards itself and some other. In this way, beings are drawn into the possibility of pointing outside themselves, of relating, and are given over to meaning. But the be-ing which "grants" the possibility of meaningfulness "is not something" (God, a first principle, an a priori structure) prior to beings, but the "between"

[607] Cf. *Parmenides*, 154–155.
[608] ZWDS, 122.
[609] ZWDS, 122.
[610] ZWDS, 121.

[*Inzwischen*] within which differencing plays forth.[611] In this space, be-ing draws forth from utter self-withholding by showing beings, and the self-showing of beings withdraws from any possibility of immediacy into relations in which they may draw into meaningful appearance.

In response to the aspect of be-ing, meaning unfolds from an essential ambiguity – from the simultaneous indication of relations drawn together into an appearance and of be-ing's self-concealment. A similar transformation of what might be understood by "showing" (*Zeigen*) may already be apparent. Showing gathers and lets appear the self-showing of a being; but since this self-showing is drawn forth in the wake of be-ing's self-withholding, showing also entails concealment. In showing, revealing and concealing are held in tension – not only because the presence of the being appears as a complex interplay of traces, but also because these traces play and can only play within the "between" of differencing.[612] Showing shows the being; it shows the relational context within which the being has been drawn forth into specific values with specific significance; it therefore also shows the manner in which the being relates beyond itself. Such showing thus grants the being a singular presencing, sheltered within the draw of a unique relational gathering. But this in the whole is not something – is not a present-at-hand set of relations. It is only *in relation* – in relation to refusal, withdrawal. Thus, refusal is *also* invisibly "shown" in showing. Showing therefore puts arrival on hold. It awaits and looks out for the other. Like a prayer, it leaves open the possibility of non-arrival. It draws into presence without guarantee of return – leaves open to decision whether and how a being might matter.

Within representational thinking, the sign is a sign of…, an object which stands for another object; or else it performs a function within a signifying system. Either way, its sign-quality may therefore be measured in terms of the efficiency and precision with which it refers, or functions to structure the system of which it is a part; it stands in its *τέλος* when what it signals becomes presented. Its *actus* is the presentation of the present. By contrast, Heidegger places importance on the manner in which, although it "denotes and refers" – and thereby "lets something appear" – the sign also holds back, and even "conceals".[613] He elaborates as follows:

[611] ZWDS, 25.
[612] We will address some of the parallels between Heidegger's account and Derrida's differance later in the chapter.
[613] *Parmenides* 47/32 (translation modified).

> A "sign" is that which, in appearing and pointing out, thereby lets something else appear – though in such a way that it does not relegate it to the manifest (where the sign itself appears), but precisely holds it back, i.e., veils. The self-appearance and self-disclosure, which also veils something by holding it back, is precisely what showing is.[614]

As we have seen, "showing" is precisely what is entailed by language. Thus we are returned to a conception of language as signification; however, signifying does not now involve reference to presence, but showing in a manner which simultaneously "points into the withdrawal".[615] This manner of pointing is of course precisely what brings the possibility of meaningfulness into play through be-ing's concealed showing – not because such pointing establishes a bypass to presence, but because it draws and holds open the "between" within which differencing plays out. The sign is not simply an appendage of presence; signing, pointing into the withdrawal, holds the clearing-concealing of be-ing in tension so that beings may appear. Language signifies because it is the reach of a responsiveness to be-ing – because it draws in order to preserve the clearing-concealing relation.

Heidegger likewise disturbs the traditional metaphysical sensible-intelligible division, and radically reconsiders what we might call its "elements". Simply suggesting that he recalibrates these elements is misleading, however; he attempts to think what are traditionally conceived of as sensible and intelligible not as analysable elements but in terms of an essential interrelatedness, which simultaneously also involves the continuous unfolding of difference in a manner comparable to the withholding of the nothing and the drawing together of the whole. As is the case with the nothing and the whole, he attempts to avoid disclosing what we ordinarily understand as sensible and intelligible in terms of presence – attempts to avoid anticipating them in this modality.

Thus, for example, in his famous essay on the work of art,[616] he calls "earth" what we might initially associate with the "sensible" element in the traditional metaphysical sensible-intelligible

[614] *Parmenides* 54/37.
[615] WHD, 11/WCT, 10.
[616] UK/OWA.

division. He calls it essentially self-withholding. He considers the example of stone, taken in isolation: the heaviness of stone, though it "weighs down on us", nevertheless "denies us any penetration into it."[617] It denies a grounding determination for its appearance. This groundlessness demands that the stone be related outside itself – related to other beings; moreover, it demands that the stone be related in some way which *bears* such a relation. In tension with earth is world, in the position which we might expect to be occupied by the intelligible. World, like the "whole" which appears in a differencing relation with the nothing, entails the gathering of relationships into a context of significance or a meaningful unity within which beings – for example stone – may appear as in being. World grants things "their lingering and their hastening, their distance and proximity, their breadth and their limits."[618]

When the stone appears in a work of art – a Greek temple, in Heidegger's example – its stoniness is brought to bear. Its mass becomes meaningful in the relational realm which the temple stakes out. Yet world is itself only called forth in its granting – drawn into world in response to the prior demand of withholding. Moreover, even as world reveals and brings to nearness, earth continues to withdraw and hold itself at a distance: world allows earth to draw into appearance *as* self-withholding, allows it to aspect its concealment.[619] The sensuous appearance (the stone of the temple) is drawn into a dynamic relation of difference with the realm of relational meanings which grants it its meaningful presence, without cancelling out that difference (earth continues to withhold – is revealed as withholding). Important also is the way world – the realm of relational meanings – itself bears a relation to absence. It only appears with respect to this holding together: it has no independent "presence". The artwork brings earth and world into a dynamic tension by figuring that tension – figuring it into a form where the differencing between the two elements constantly takes place.

Heidegger offers a similar account in a discussion of a poem by Trakl ("Language") – here speaking not of the distinction between earth and world, but between thing and world. Yet his thinking of the thinging of the thing may be considered in many ways to develop from and

[617] UK, 35/OWA, 24.
[618] UK, 34/OWA, 23.
[619] See Mitchell, *The Fourfold*, 73.

nuance his understanding of earth in OWA.[620] The same differential play is apparent, in which that which appears appears in a mode of availability not of presence, but of differencing. This differencing is comparable to the differencing of nothing and whole, as well as the *Austrag* – the "carrying out" of difference between being and beings. It is in this relation of difference that both that which withdraws or withholds itself (nothing, being, earth, thing) and that which draws into relations (the whole, beings, world) appears. As we have indicated, these are not "elements"; nor are they directly equivalent – being is not the same as earth or thing. What is significant is that in each case, through differencing interplay manifestness emerges.

In OWA this differencing is "put into work" [*ins-Werk-setzen*] in the work of art and called "truth" – the truth of be-ing, *ἀλήθεια*. The differencing between earth and world draws open a realm of gifting refusal, of *ἀλήθεια*, in which beings are disclosed as present. Significantly for our concern with literature, in "Language" differencing is called forth in the word. This differencing appears in poetry – in poetry as it names beings in their be-ing. Here Heidegger refers to differencing as *Διαφορά* – moving hither and thither, "dif-ference".[621] He also calls it by the same name he gives the differencing between being and beings: *durchtragender Austrag* – translated as "carrying out that carries through".[622]

Significant in both "Origin" and "Language" is the how this difference becomes figured and plays out in a disclosive appropriation[623] – which is also an expropriation. In the language of Trakl's poem – in its "calling that names things" – the thing is called to world, drawn into a relational positioning. Simultaneously, world is called to thing, the "place of arrival" is itself called forth as a reach in which the thing is able to relate. Called forth in this way, world grants things the possibility of their presencing, and things bear the relational reach of world as its groundless ground.

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[620] See Mitchell, *The Fourfold*, 73. See also Heidegger's footnote in "Origin" to the statement: "*The work lets earth be an earth*": "meaning? cf. 'The Thing': the fourfold". Mitchell cites and discusses this note (73).
[621] "Difference" is a probably the standard translation of the word, although Liddell and Scott in fact give "moving hither and thither" first. The word is analysable as *δια-* ("through, between") and *φέρω* ("to bring, carry").
[622] "Die Sprache", 25/"Language", 200.
[623] "Disclosingly appropriates" is Hofstadter's revealing translation of *ereignet* in the context of this discussion (US 25/200).

Gods, demons and the holy

The manner in which a word "calls" beings into a relational bearing by naming them is crucial to Heidegger's thinking on language. As the preceding discussion should indicate, this calling is not simply assigning significance to something already independently present. Naming – in this sense of drawing thing and world into a co-disclosing relation of difference – does not "merely com[e] about when something already previously known is furnished with a name".[624] Of course as we have indicated in earlier discussions, concerning the relations we adopt to language as tool for communication or expression, we are frequently positioned in relation to language such that this play of differencing is covered over. Heidegger demonstrates this also through his distinction between word and term. The kind of naming which concerns Heidegger here is a naming which answers the silence of be-ing's self-withholding grant.

In this essential unfolding of language, the word lets the uncanny appear. Language offers a sounding word [*lautende Wort*] to echo and voice the command of be-ing. It is because language calls uncanny differencing into a word – discloses the aspect of be-ing in a way which allows it to appear invisibly, appear without manifesting as a being – that Heidegger associates language with gods or divinities. We recall from Chapter 1 that Heidegger interprets the demonic as the uncanny shining into beings to grant them their visibility; likewise, he speaks of the god as the aspect of be-ing sighted in the everyday – in our relation to what is in being. He claims that the human being is distinguished in that her manner of looking – the way in which she discloses herself – she receives the look of the uncanny. He therefore understands the essential word as the "naming of being",[625] which means as naming the gods.[626] A name, Heidegger suggests, draws something into relations – calls it to world. Simultaneously, it calls forth a place of arrival for what is called forth – calls forth a reach in which what is called forth can relate.[627] The naming of a god therefore sets up a figure of the uncanny within the ordinary ambit of human looking,[628] so that in the aspect of be-ing we are called into a responsive relation with beings.

[624] HWD, 41/HEP, 59 (translation modified).
[625] *Parmenides*, 165.
[626] For example, HWD, 40/HEP, 57.
[627] See, for example, "Die Sprache", 35/"Language", 200.
[628] *Parmenides*, 155/104. See also OWA, 20.

In the Trakl essay, Heidegger describes how in the word, thing is called to world and world to thing; they are brought into a relation of differencing, in which neither is reduced to objecthood. Naming a god likewise entails setting into play differencing in the word. It entails responding to the differencing of gifting-refusal in such a way as to call it into a figure (or *lautende Wort*) and to prepare a place for its arrival. Crucially, preparing a place for the arrival of the uncanny – of the manifestness of beings – means being called into a decision concerning how the being of beings are at stake: a decision concerning our fundamental attunement, concerning our relation to beings. When "the gods are named, the essence of things comes to expression, so that things can first shine forth."[629]

Words which name the gods are "primeval" and "original" (*anfänglich; ursprünglich*) – not in the sense that they re-present a primeval presence, but that they anticipate some way in which existence is at stake. They draw on possible ways of relating meaningfully to beings, aspected in the resonances and inflections of existing words and expressions; and they project new possibilities for understanding by rearranging the available possibilities. Since what is projected is groundless – cannot be fully accounted for – it may put into question how the relations which draw together the whole are themselves at stake. Words which name the gods are primeval and original in that they attune our situatedness. They are likewise "founding" (*stiften*): they bring about or bring to a stand (*stiftet*) revealing-concealing in some way. Although the fundamental words Heidegger examines are not divine names, his engagement with them demonstrates what he claims concerning the *essential* word, and the naming of the gods. Naming being *φύσις* or *οὐσία* or actuality, naming truth *ἀλήθεια* or correctness, has each disposed – and perhaps continues to dispose – thinking in specific ways.

We might appreciate what is at stake in the naming of the gods with reference to my experience of poetic language. Poetry's withholding demand dislodges me from my everyday relation to language – disowns me of my familiar dwelling within it; simultaneously it re-calls my into ownership of my language by calling on me to participate in the event of meaning. It calls upon me in my singularity and finitude; it puts at stake my self-interpretation by putting at stake my relation to meaning – puts into question what it means for something to be, or not to be. Thus, it

[629] HWD, 41/HEP, 59 (translation modified).

draws me into a dynamic relation with language and meaning. It temporalizes, and draws me into a reciprocal temporalization. It is this sort of disowning and en-owning relation to language which Heidegger seems to understand as unfolding on a larger scale – on the scale of history – in the naming of the gods. The name of the uncanny – of that which grants the manifestness of beings – occasions a decision concerning what it means for things to be. It draws us into a specific relation with beings; it potentially configures the very manner in which we temporalize – the manner in which we anticipate, recollect, and relate to present beings.

It is also important that for Heidegger such naming is not a supreme creative act of an individual – it is not a heroic willing. It is a confrontation with limitation, and negotiated in *Gespräch* – in conversation. Again in a manner comparable to my negotiating meaning in a poem, the name of a god is something which is responsively received, rather than assigned. It emerges within a specific language, and from within a specific factical position in relation to language[630] – in relation to a tradition, and to "what has been".[631]

As with my relation to the poem, the naming is also groundless. The name does not correlate with a situation that is eternally, unconditionally and universally "true", correct; it is not calculated, not derived from something present at hand. A god is named in response to the urgency of the withholding of ground – of the fundamental groundlessness of beings. As with my decision concerning the meaning of the poem, the decision concerning the name of a god is therefore "free". It is uncertain, and cannot be made to count absolutely. Brought forth into a word, being is figured in a way that does not fully ground it, which does not draw it into unmediated presence. Its appearance does not guarantee a return – does not secure the infinite growth of further appearances. It is grounded in a way that draws away, fades away, draws towards disappearance.

Yet such naming places everything at stake – disposes a community to relating to beings in a certain way. It calls a community into a relation with what matters as mattering. But it offers no guarantee, is uncertain. It is this absence of guarantee that is itself crucial, and which Heidegger

[630] See HWD, 40–41/HEP, 58–59.
[631] *What Is Philosophy*, 34–35.

associates with freedom. This uncertainty is what calls for and calls into decision – what exposes the way in which beings are in being as a need, an urgency. This freedom is the call to make a decision, to ground groundlessly, *as thrown*, rather than as a subject. It means *responding* to thrownness – *respondeo*, praying for a return, giving without return, receiving without return. The naming of the holy discloses our relation to beings as something both disturbing and worthy of reverence. Such naming disposes, then, in a manner in which a relation to the uncanniness of the uncanny is maintained. It names a relation to that which exceeds the ordinary to grant the ordinary. The naming of the holy occasions a reciprocity in language between the human being, beings, and the gifting bestowal which grants the appearance of beings in a way which preserves this gifting *as* gift, rather than disclosing it as an exchange. That is to say, it preserves a relation to refusal, to the possibility of non-arrival.

We have examined how language aspects the reciprocity between be-ing and human being – how it anticipates that reciprocity by responding to the aspect of be-ing; how it recollects that reciprocity through the manner in which it discloses; how it calls the human being into a specific manner of disclosing herself. This is the manner in which language unfolds essentially; this reciprocity makes possible that positioning within language where the subject represents objects. Yet in the naming of the holy a reciprocity with be-ing *as* granting refusal is itself anticipated, recollected and disclosed. The disclosure of differencing in the holy name is potentially unsettling, and exposes us to the groundless demand for ground. The exposure to this demand potentially calls upon the individual human being in its singularity, and upon individual human communities in their factical and linguistic situatedness, to draw into an ek-static relation with beings. Thus, for Heidegger the "essential" word is myth, *Sage*.[632] Saying, *Sagen*, derives from and pertains to the possibility of an exposure to the aspect of be-ing.

Dichten

For Heidegger, poetry offers a positioning with respect to language which promises the possibility of such essential saying; his reading of Hölderlin leads him to understand poetry as the naming of the holy – the aspect of be-ing. We have already provided some indication why this is through our consideration of the way in which the poem's refusing demand draws me into

[632] See, for example, GDD,170–171/BPP, 160–161.

a dynamic relation with the possibilities – and limitations – of meaning. Within the context of the forgottenness of being, poetry offers the hope of fundamental shift in our basic disposition towards language and beings: a reawakening of our sense that what it means to be is worthy of question, and a dynamic and responsive relation to beings through language.

Heidegger sees the work of art more generally as a similarly promising site for a reciprocity with gifting refusal. If we relate to the work not as the effectuation of a representation, but as the figuration of meaningful possibilities towards no end,[633] it is capable of *grounding* truth. This is as a consequence of that interaction between earth and world in a work that we referred to before. By disclosing the differencing relation between earth and world in a way which does not reduce them to presence at hand, the work participates expropriatively and appropriatively in the carrying out of dif-ference. Such participation entails both a withholding of ground, which places the being of beings at stake and demands a grounding response, *and* a response to this very withholding of ground: a response which then itself grounds so that there may be ground. Part of the reason the being of beings is put at stake in this way is through the work's self-disclosure as singular. It draws attention to its contingency, its limit and finitude. It draws into appearance in a manner which does not secure the possibility of ever-extending appearances. It shows appearance as mattering, but in a manner which defies calculation and does not guarantee that this mattering will perpetuate, extend, be repeated across multiple contexts. The work of art then demands a decision regarding the being of beings by drawing the withholding of ground into a figure – a name, a word, a poem, a temple – and simultaneously preserving the dif-ference it appropriates. It preserves dif-ference in that it is "not able to place itself directly into the truth of be-ing"; the "original self-withdrawal of be-ing also withdraws *from*"[634] the figure in which dif-ference is carried out.

Thus, the work of art places differencing into a "figure",[635] in the same way that the language draws differencing into the word. This figure, significantly, is understood as abyssal: it is a "rift" – or rather a "fundamental rift". It is the figuration of the abyssal withholding of ground – of ab-ground – which simultaneously calls forth ground in the form of a demand. It figures a site which

[633] See UK, 27/OWA, 20.
[634] Neu, "Poeietic Saying", 75. We have changed the spelling of beyng to be-ing for the sake of consistency.
[635] UK, 51/OWA, 38.

hopes for the god's arrival and self-withholding. It responds to the possibility of arrival in the manner of a libation or prayer – anticipates it, though without the guarantee of return.

In OWA, Heidegger speaks of "truth's setting-itself-to-work" in art;[636] yet we should not interpret this as suggesting "setting to work" in the form of effectuation or actualization. We suggested earlier that Heidegger seeks in poetry a relation to language in the modality of possibility rather than actuality. He is therefore not concerned with what is "at work" in poetry – with description or analysis. This is not to say that he does not employ description and analysis. Rather, it is to say that even his description and analysis are aimed at disclosing, and through disclosing participating in and recalling, the dynamic call and response between be-ing and human being which he considers as playing out in language. His engagements with poetry play out in much the same way as does his interrogation into thinking which we traced in the introduction. He attempts to show ways in which poetry might figure gifting refusal – figure unconcealment, *ἀλήθεια*, truth. He attempts to show how poetry might disclose the availability of beings in a way which points simultaneously to their self-seclusion – how it might disclose earth or things without reducing them to objects. He attempts to show how poetry might dislodge us from our being at home in language and among beings, and thereby call upon us to become owned by and take ownership of our language, of the possibilities for our self-expression and for our interaction with others. He attempts to show, then, how poetry might call us into an ek-stasis attuned to restraint – to holding back, to non-arrival, rather than eternal return.

Yet, in showing how poetry might aspect be-ing, and call for our responsive returning of that aspect, he also responds to the possibility of that call by anticipating it. In anticipating it, he echoes its call. He draws into the possibility of a dynamic participation in the unconcealment of beings by participating in it in a way which shows it as unsettling and worthy of reverence. Thereby he *also* calls out to the reader – the singular reader as mortal human rather than as subject – to draw into the dynamic relation anticipated in a poetizing relation to language. He echoes the echo of be-ing's address, which may resound – does not, but may – in poetry. His own engagement with poetry itself dislodges, itself exposes groundlessness, itself thereby exposes the reader to the demand to ground groundlessly. His own engagement with poetry, by

[636] UK, 59/OWA, 44.

anticipating the possibility that the holy may be named in poetry, expects, draws towards, and calls for a naming of the holy.[637]

Heidegger reads with the intent of becoming "heedful of the poetic".[638] He attempts to listen to the promise of the poetic, and to counter that promise with a heedful disclosure which recalls poetry's injunction to listen. Expressed differently, he attempts to engage with poetry in such a way which, by disclosing its potential to unfold in the manner of essential word or the naming of the gods, *lets* it dislodge, *lets* it refuse, *lets* it demand, *lets* it temporalize, *lets* it call upon the reader in her singularity, her mortality. He insists in his readings on attending only to "what is poetized" (*das Gedichtete*) in "the poem" (*das Gedicht*), but understands what is poetized not to be a "content", but the possibility of a relation to presencing-absencing.

His performative approach is therefore one aimed at responsiveness, and his engagement is therefore with poetry which he considers to demand responsiveness. He finds such demands particularly in Hölderlin's poetry. Heidegger sees his poetry as attuned to – and therefore as disposing towards – an attunement of (*Verhaltenheit*): "forbearance" as the abstention from bearing, or the experience of bearing one's removal from bearing. Hölderlin's poetry offers Heidegger multiple dimensions of refusal to explore – for example, the ambiguity of the language; the incompleteness of some of the poems; a problematic critical history; the poems' treatment of perpetual displacement combined with a nostalgic yearning to belong. As out of reach, Hölderlin's poetizing remains still to come. It appears in the modality of non-arrival, of anticipation. It draws us likewise into a kind of temporal relation to it of expectancy, rather than representation.

Crucially, Heidegger also understands Hölderlin's poetry as itself as concerned with a heedfulness to the poetic. For Heidegger, Hölderlin poetizes poetizing – anticipates, discloses and attends to a heedfulness to the address of be-ing. He considers Hölderlin's poetry therefore to be "attuned by its poetic bearing to poetize the essential unfolding of poetry"[639] – of poetry *as*

[637] See Feldman's consideration of Heidegger's performative approach to reading Hölderlin in "Heidegger and the hypostasis of the performative" (esp. 161ff).
[638] "… dichterisch wohnet der Mensch…", 207 (translated as "Poetically Man Dwells", 226).
[639] "Wie wenn am Feiertage…" 50/51 (my trans.)

the essential unfolding of language itself in the manner described above. He sees Hölderlin as himself seeking to anticipate what is called poetry: what calls for poetry, what calls forth poetry. He sees Hölderlin as attempting to recollect the promise of the aspect of be-ing in poetry and as poetry. He sees Hölderlin as thereby in a sense calling forth or calling for poetry – drawing us into the possibility of a poetic relation. He sees Hölderlin perhaps as *naming* poetry: calling it forth *as* out of reach; calling forth a possible site for its arrival; preparing that site as a figure of differencing, of revealing-concealing.

Hölderlin names poetry as naming: poetry is the naming of the holy. For Heidegger, this means that poetry holds the possibility of dislodging us from that familiar relation to language in which we use it to draw beings into immediate availability and orderability. It holds the potential to call us into ownership of our being, and draw us into a manner of temporalizing different from eternal return. It has the potential to expose a need and demand a decision on what it means to be.

Naming poetry

However, of particular significance to our concern with what is called literature is how Heidegger himself "names" poetry language in the essential sense – how he anticipates it, calls it forth in a specific attunement, prepares a place for its arrival. This very naming should itself be understood in terms of the relation it names. It does not define that relation – does not stand outside of it to delimit it.[640] It does not describe something already existent: a specific writing process or style of writing, a specific "use" of language. Naming, in Heidegger's sense, does not take the human relation to language as a "present" entity or set of circumstances, whose presence can be referred to and reconstituted in another set of circumstances: re-presented. The name does not mark the achievement or completion of an act of understanding – the attainment of a conceptual grasp; nor does it retrieve or reconstruct an ideal primeval understanding which has been lost or degraded, restoring its availability. It does not make language or poetry, or the human relation to language, transparent, bring them into a universal reach; it does not make them immediately and permanently accessible. However, it does draw them into *a* reach, into contingent and occluding availability. The name "*Dichten*" does not convey an already

[640] See "Die Sprache", 18ff./"Language", 196ff.

established decision on poetry, on language, on being – does not declare: "this or that text is a poem – is truly a poem, is the best poem". Instead, it shows by drawing a veil; it calls for reaching, for responsiveness; it poetizes.

Heidegger's naming draws towards the possibility that something be brought to appearance. It may be understood as a call, an invitation – an expression of hope, even – rather than an assertion. The name calls out to that which is out of reach – calls to it *as* out of reach in the manner of poetizing. Calling language poetry may draw attention to specific ways of conceptualizing what language entails, but equally it disturbs our familiar views on language and displaces us from our everyday ways of interacting with it. Such dislodging does not, however, simply clear the way for a sharper, more encompassing conceptualization to constitute a new "familiar". Naming language poetry does not provide a satisfactory answer to questions such as "What is language?" or "What is poetry?". It does not settle or resolve the problematics concerning our relation to being in the way that calling spiny extensions of a plant's epidermis "prickles" to distinguish them from modified leaves or branches might "settle"[641] whether or not roses have thorns. Heidegger's poetic naming grants language an uncanny appearance. It offers rich possibilities for reflection on language; but perhaps more significantly it shows that a decision on our relation to language and to being remains outstanding. Heidegger's thinking interprets this lack of decision as a need – as a call for decision. This need calls for language, calls forth language; thus, Heidegger's naming of language as poetry preserves the out-standing nature of language *as* need; it discloses this need poetically. That a decision on our relation to language and being is still outstanding does not mean that such a decision will be made at some future date (a chronological point at which the decision will be "present"), and the problem subsequently left behind for better or worse (at which point it will have passed, and be in the past); it means that we always draw towards such a decision, as well as drawing from it.

Heidegger's naming – not merely the specific "terms" he uses for language, but his broader engagement with poetry towards an experience with the ownmost of language – is then *Geschichtlich*, "historical". This does not mean that it traces the history of usages of the word *Dichtung* and its cognates to uncover their core or base sense or to recover their original

[641] This, of course, only conceptually speaking, within the context of biological classification.

meanings from etymological roots. Of course, we have alluded to ways in which Heidegger's approach *does* encourage – or even demand – attentiveness to the resonances and expressive possibilities of the words of a specific language: words such as *Dichtung*, *dichten*, and *dicht*. Yet this is not a straightforwardly productive critical movement which works towards discovering or developing a more precise concept or establishing an orthodox practice. It is not simply a process whereby past meanings are appropriated into present availability, woven into the rich weave of the present to further texture it; nor is it a process whereby we correlate present meanings with past ones – whereby we thus become appropriated to a tradition. To name language *Dichten* or *Dichtung*, to say as Heidegger does that our dwelling as human beings is *dichterisch*, is to call language and its relation to the human being to appearance contingently – to poetize that relation. The appearance draws forth from, but also draws away into, specific bearings – the resonances of German and other Indo-European languages; a complex Western poetic tradition – in ways which inhibit the neutralization of their facticity, or the draw towards ideal objectivity.[642] Such naming intercepts the projection of the significance of these names onto a conceptual field of discursive availability – prevents our anticipating the disclosure performed by these names as pure concept rather than relationally engaged figure. Yet this very refusal of the possibility that facticity be overcome – the demand that the name be *figured*, be drawn within a specific reach and in relation to it – means that the complete constitution of the meanings of these names remains out of reach.

We might rather suggest that Heidegger's poetic naming is historical with respect to his attentiveness to the manner in which particular words sound. This attentiveness emerges from a concern with the dispensation of be-ing – its manner of "sending" itself as "destiny" (*Geschick*). His names attempt, from within a specific historical situation, to recollect, re-mark, reinscribe that which attunes the unfolding of that situation – that to which it unfolds as a response: *ἀ-λήθεια*, dis-closure, dif-ference, the address of be-ing. To say *Dichtung* or *Dichten* is to speak from within a specific manner of drawing beings into a whole – to anticipate and draw them into presence in specific ways, to relate to their absence in specific ways. Likewise, to compose a *Gedicht*, or read what has been *gedichtet*, to participate in *Dichten* and comport to language as *Dichtung*, all entail drawing on specific possibilities concerning the relation between human

[642] See Dastur's interpretation of Derrida's engagement with Husserl (PM, 188).

being, being and language; and drawing on them means anticipating them, drawing towards them.

The same is, of course, true for calling language meaningful utterance or a signifying system, or for relating to it as information and using it to communicate data. We have traced how these latter ways of relating to language call on it – and are called on by it – to relate in a particular way to the interplay of presencing and absencing: one which draws so insistently towards the possibility of presence (availability, appearance) that presencing-absencing (dis-closure, *ἀ-λήθεια*, rising-falling) itself withdraws. *Ἀ-λήθεια*, the reciprocity of concealment and unconcealment which grants the possibility of presencing, "falls back into concealment in favour of what presences as such."[643] The address of be-ing sounds forth as its own oblivion – the dispensation of be-ing is its forgetfulness. The demand to ground beings is displaced into the appearance of their prior permanent groundedness. Language responds to this displaced demand – the demand to refer all presence to this permanent ground – by representing. Language thus calls on us and we on it to cover over the abyssal self-withholding of be-ing with the appearance of permanent, fully grounded presence – to direct ourselves and language "towards the complete availability of everything that is and can be."[644] Language (communication systems, information or data relay) draws forth in anticipation of the narrowing of distance, the obliteration of unavailability.

It is worth emphasizing that it is into this situation that Heidegger attempts to reinscribe the address of be-ing. He names language poetry *in response* to the naming of language as representation, communication, information. The names *Dichten* and *Dichtung* call to appearance unproductively in response to the efficiency with which terms make meaning available. They waste words, pouring them as a libation. The failure of these names, and of Heidegger's poetizing meditations on language, to conceptualize – their *inadequacy* to the concept – itself discloses the non-appearance of language. Their *unfulfillment* "rings out" as silence. They call obtusely, in response to the clarion discernability of information. They relate the expressive possibilities of language – the possibilities which terminology and information

[643] "Die Gefahr", 49–50 (translated as "The Danger", 47).
[644] SG, 52/PR, 34. The subject in this quotation is actually modernity, rather than language as it is disposed in modernity.

anticipate and towards which they draw – to silence; they recall language as a response to the "ringing of stillness". They reinscribe language as a relation to absence in the way they mark, and re-mark, unavailability or non-availability: they show, and show the gaps, latencies, absences of their own showing.

Dichten and *Dichtung* show concealment, thereby uncovering what is covered over by the appearance of language as sheer availability. They draw the veil of presence, but do not reveal some higher-order, superabundant presence behind it. This drawing recalls presence as a veil – recalls its relation to absence. Such drawing recalls the manner in which the appearance – the legible, the figurable – anticipates and recollects dis-appearance in order to draw forth. Heidegger's approach, then – his poetic naming, along with his engagements with poetry and meditations on language – re-calls the late modern relation to language as itself anticipating and recollecting the self-withholding of be-ing. That is to say, rather than sidestepping or obliterating this relation, or speaking against it from outside it, his approach discloses it as a veiled response to the address of be-ing. In this way we might suggest that he anticipates and attempts to draw towards the possibility that the positioning of beings as uniformly and permanently available, accomplished through the relation to language as representation, may itself appear as *withholding* the appearance of beings. That is to say, he attempts to aspect (disclose, in manner of responsive expectancy or anticipation) that the forgetfulness of being, that disposition in which all necessity for decision is covered over by supreme accessibility, itself appears as lack, as need. Heidegger's naming and poetizing, taken as responsive to the late modern relation to language, then anticipate and draw towards the temporalization of that relation – towards the recollection of that relation as ek-static.[645]

In this sense Heidegger's names call, invite, or even express hope: they do not represent, but recollect the non-arrival of what is to come. They call on us not to make present to ourselves, but to wait. They do not declare what is, but show that what is and how it is remains at stake, drawing us towards decision rather than repetition.

[645] Here we may once again mark affinities between Heidegger and Derrida. We will comment on them in more detail later in the chapter.

Towards an anticipation of literature

Our own approach to the question "What is called literature?" likewise asks not with the purpose of defining or describing literature, but of anticipating it. We are likewise concerned with calling out to and calling for literature, rather than making it present. We too hope that – by asking the question, and by anticipating the possibility that the essential unfolding of language be named "literature" – we might be called into the need for a decision, and for a responsive comportment towards beings and their manner of being manifest to us.

We examined in Chapter 2 how writing discloses the possibility of preservation, return and extension – of a draw towards discursive objectivity. Literature greatly extends the scope of that promise. It allows us to anticipate beings as immediately available and orderable through their discursive representability. Yet this promise, this anticipation, entails a reciprocity, a responsiveness. Literature showing beings in their discursive representability means our disclosing them in this way – anticipating their availability in this modality in literature. We now hope to offer a turn in perspective on what is called for and promised by the letter, by writing and by literature. Thereby we hope to anticipate each differently, and draw towards the possibility that literature might respond to the aspect of be-ing.

Figuring nothing

The site of the mutual bearing of earth and thing is the between. This is the place where language is called upon to call forth presence in a way which recalls absence – where it calls forth presence as a response to absence; where it holds the presence it calls forth in a relation to absence; where it holds itself back, too, in a restrained gesture at its own revealing-concealing. We have remarked on how Heidegger at times calls language which responds from this position "saying", "naming" or "poetry". However, we have also at times spoken of this between as a figure or figuring. While we would like to avoid any suggestion that we mean here the figure of a representation, attempting to bear ourselves in a manner disposed towards the withdrawal of be-ing instead, "figure" may in fact serve as an appropriate name for the self-withholding, revealing-concealing bearing of difference with which we have been concerned.

For the figure shows while concealing and shows that it is concealing. The figure calls forth an appearance, yet not in a manner which surrenders it to pure presentation; it holds it in suspension, in a relation with absence and concealment. It also maintains a distance from what it brings forth, and makes its distancing apparent. Earlier we spoke of the letter as a figure of a sound, of the sound as a figure of the word, the word as the figure of a meaning, the trope as the figure of an idea or experience. In each case, the figure is a figure of…: a stand-in for the presentation of presence. In a thinking disposed to the withdrawal of be-ing, we might reconsider the figure instead as a site of difference, with the emphasis not on what is presented (or not presented) on either side of this "of…", but on the *between* of the differing itself. Derrida perhaps offers such a thinking in relation to writing, to which we will attend shortly.

Considered in terms of representation, the figure perhaps appears as what bears a presentation; we might think of the "carrying across", *μεταφέρειν*, of the metaphor as an example. From our alternative perspective, we might reconsider this bearing instead as differencing or the carrying out of dif-ference. We might then consider its movement not as bearing across – with the implicit sense that there is an origin and a destination: the *τέλος* of an image, the *actus* of a device – but rather as a relation. Through this relation, each participant appears only on account of the other, through its differencing with the other.

Here we do not intend to redefine the figure or figuring. We in fact intentionally avoid precise definition, because the point is not to have certainty concerning what a figure is when we confront or are confronted with one. We are concerned, rather, with positioning our discussion in such a way as to allow a responsiveness to be-ing. The ambiguity of the figure is already remarked on by Quintilian, who commented that a figure means *both* "any form in which a thought is expressed" *and* "a rational change in meaning or language from the ordinary and simple form".[646] Reflecting on the very ambiguity of the figure, without resolving it into identity, may perhaps bring us closer to a responsive positioning. Such reflection may displace us precisely if and inasmuch as it holds at bay any final deciding ground for that positioning.

[646] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* IX, i.x.354.

We also withhold definition here because we wish to avoid any sense that the difference carried out in the figure is the present quality or characteristic of a specific manner of language usage, that it is a matter of style, imagery, literary or rhetorical device. Quintilian's second sense of "figure", which leans in the direction of this kind of understanding, may well offer many examples of language in which differencing is carried out. The shift from ordinary and simple language usage may certainly suggest the possibility of being drawn from the everyday dwelling in terminology and communication towards a realm of responsiveness to be-ing. We have in fact relied on this sense of the figure – or at least implied it – in our remarks concerning the figure as dif-ference.

Yet too much focus on the second sense may make us lose sight of the uncanniness of the first: that a thought should find expression in the first place. Our phrasing here – drawn from Quintilian – perhaps suggests too strongly metaphysical distinctions between thought and expression, intelligible and sensible. But Quintilian's remark marks an important site for a thinking of the figure. Thinking is what is called for by be-ing, is called forth by be-ing. If we understand "saying" in the sense we have outlined in this chapter – meaning by it not vocalization, but drawing-showing – thinking may even be considered the saying of be-ing. This would suggest the senses implied both by the subjective and objective genitive: that be-ing speaks, and what it says is thinking; and that what thinking speaks is be-ing. A thinking which seeks to be responsive to be-ing may be considered as positioned within the reach of poetry – within poetry's proximity or "neighbourhood" (the German word *Nachbarschaft* suggests a state of dwelling in "nearness" [*Nähe*]). Heidegger's thinking suggests that such proximity to the self-withholding of be-ing paradoxically entails a distance from explanatory grasp (its "farness" – *Ferne*).[647]

Both poetry and thinking entail responsiveness to be-ing; both poetry and thinking answer be-ing. What, from this perspective, does the *expression of a thought in a form* entail? In Chapter 2 we suggested "figure" as a possible word for the "outer" element of distinctions based in metaphysical representational thinking: expression, utterance, vocalization, letter. Heidegger

[647] Heidegger treats this "neighbourhood" extensively in several works. See, for example, WS, 163ff./NL, 69ff. for and extensive treatment with reference to "reach" [*Bereich*].

frequently uses the word *Lautung* for this element, though he characteristically repositions our thinking so that simply considering it an "element" of the process of representation or signification becomes impossible. The phonic associations of the word allow him to integrate it into vocabulary which includes some significant words with which we have engaged: *Stimme* (voice), *Stimmung* (attunement, mood), *bestimmen* (determine, dispose, destine), as well as *Stille* – "silence". Thus, we marked how he considers the word as voicing silence. Likewise, in a reflection on language, he suggests that the *Lautung* "is the essential consequence of silence, and its 'voice'".[648] If we consider the figure not primarily as language shifted from its ordinary meaning; and if we simultaneously attempt to think Quintilian's two senses in their unity we might suggest, along similar lines, that *the figure is the essential consequence of withdrawal, and its drawing*. Our saying this would not cancel out the "carrying out" of difference that we have suggested takes place in the figure; rather, it would draw out the manner in which the responsive reaching-showing of thinking is already a manner of responsiveness to be-ing and is itself essentially ambiguous. This ambiguity is not muddle or confusion, but the relation to *ἀλήθεια* – to the self-withholding of be-ing, to the carrying out of dif-ference. Thinking, as responsiveness to be-ing, might then be considered the figuring of be-ing: the drawing of be-ing – not only in the sense that we figure be-ing in thinking, but also in the sense that we are figured by be-ing.

Our figuring of *Lautung* as figure is perhaps already prompted by Heidegger's own language. He goes on, in the passage just cited, to call "silence" the "between" of the carrying out of the dif-ference,[649] and names it *Riß* –[650] "rift". We have remarked on his usage of the same word in OWA. It suggests the abyssal quality of the between – its withholding of ground. It also suggests the unity in division between earth and world: a rift is a drawing apart, a gap tearing open; but this tear draws up a boundary and draws either side into a relation of difference – draws each into some bearing on the other. The rift carries out difference. The rift's rupture, its *opening*, may also indicate the clearing of beings, again with reference to the groundless quality of the human being's thrown projection.

[648] ZWDS, 153.
[649] ZWDS, 153. In this context, Heidegger speaks – in the vocabulary of his earlier (1930s) thinking in this direction – of "strife" rather than "carrying out". He shifts away from this more combative vocabulary later in his career.
[650] Although the spelling of the word was changed to *Riss* in the late-nineties reform of German spelling, we have retained Heidegger's spelling to maintain consistency with his published texts.

But *Riß* further means "drawing", "sketch". *Reißen* is "to tear", but it is also "to draw".[651] The root word probably meant "to scratch" or "etch"; it is also the etymological root of "write". Heidegger himself draws on these connections in "Language": the "rending" [*Reißen*] of the rift, "as a separation that gathers, is at the same time that drawing which, like the pen-drawing of a plan or sketch [*Vorriß und Aufriß*], draws together what is held apart in separation."[652]

Further reworking Heidegger's thinking concerning the *Laut*, we might then say: to draw is to make a scratch or a mark which divides a surface. The mark responds to the emptiness of the surface and interrupts it. It tears through the emptiness and emerges as its rupture. The drawing is the privation of the emptiness.[653] The drawn mark – this privation, whatever form it may take ("any form in which a thought is expressed") – figures the nothing. The figure is, however, not the lack of emptiness – not the disappearance of the nothing – but its rupture.[654] It is a response to the nothing, appropriating it and being appropriated by it. As expropriated to the nothing, the figure shelters it. It is constantly drawn back towards the emptiness through its difference from it. The nothing draws the figure.

The drawing, the rift, the mark, the figure is language in its responsiveness to be-ing. In "Way", Heidegger himself calls the "unity of the being of language" *Aufriß,*[655] a word which usually means "design" or "sketch" but is derived from *aufreissen*: to "force open" or "tear open", to "tear apart". He draws on both of these senses, hyphenating *Auf-Riß* when placing the emphasis on the rupturing movement. *Auf-Riß*, the drawing rupture, "is the whole of the traits" which structures language: the drawing together of its *Züge*, its "draws". This drawing is in fact here called a "drawing" in the sense of a picture or sign: *Zeichnung*, that which is drawn forth through *Zeichnen*. We recall Heidegger's rethinking of *Zeichnen*, which understands it not as "signifying", but as showing which conceals and shows that it is concealing. The drawing draws

[651] The latter meaning is outdated, however.
[652] "Die Sprache", 27/"Language", 202.
[653] Here we have followed Heidegger closely, but reworked his phonic-based language into language based on drawing. The passage concerned goes as follows: "Laut, bricht die Stille, aber bricht eben die Stille und west nur als ein Bruch und Ab-bruch dieser. Lautung eine Privation dieser Stille" (ZWDS, 132).
[654] Again we follow and rework Heidegger: "Das 'Laute' als Lautung nicht Fehlen der Stille, sondern ihr Bruch" (ZWDS, 153).
[655] "Weg", 251/"Way", 121.

up, draws into a figure, but also draws away; the drawing draws into a figure, but by rupturing, tearing open the surface on which it draws. The rupture draws the drawings into "the open"; the drawing orders the rifts into a "structure" [*Gefüge*]. *Aufriß*, the rupturing drawing, draws together into a "showing" [*Zeigen*] "in which are joined the speakers and their speaking: what is spoken and what is unspoken in all that is given" – in all that is *Zugesprochen*, addressed, granted in the address.[656]

We might, in anticipation, call the drawing of marks which ruptures, but which also call for a gathering – for *Lesen*, reading – "literature". We might likewise consider that what calls for a mark – *littera* – to be etched into a surface is the emptiness which withholds all marks or figures. What draws marks into their relational thickening – into poetizing joyfully – is the difference between what is figured and the blank surface, which still echoes the demand of the emptiness to which the figure is a response. The mark, the figure, in its relation to nothingness thus calls for a reading: a gathering of relations which may show the figure as something, which is not nothing, but perhaps the trace of nothing.

Derrida

It was with reference to Derrida that we were able to bring into view how writing invites our expectation of the permanent and immediate availability of presence. But Derrida also – more famously – traces in the history of metaphysics an anxiety pertaining to writing. Writing, when considered the sign of speech, may appear *less* rather than more immediate than speaking. This sense may be exacerbated by the distancing writing allows from the immediate intentions of the speaker: when I write something down, what I have written becomes open to being taken up in different contexts, where it may be reinterpreted. It can be taken up in this way even after I die; in a way, the manner in which writing extends beyond my reach becomes suggestive of the finitude of this reach and of my mortality.

This is perhaps especially well illustrated in the case of a kind of writing which is specifically tied to the personhood and identity of an individual: the signature. The signature is supposed to represent a specific person in their absence. In order to function, it has to be unique to that

[656] "Weg", 252/"Way", 121 (translation modified).

person: it must be singular, must draw attention to its difference from all other figures, references, discourse. When one signs, this also marks a singular event: the particular occasion of the signature's inscription tends to be tied to a specific date, a specific place, a specific binding context. Yet to function as signature, it must also be legible – which is not to say that the letters drawn should be recognizable as those letters (many signatures are in fact marked by illegibility in this respect). It should be legible in the sense that it should be able to be gathered (*Lesen*, *legere*) into a context of relations other than the one in which it was originally drawn.[657] The writing of the signature is not, in fact, a one-time-only event, but anticipates its being drawn again: I do not come up with a new unique signature every time I sign, but reproduce a singular form. In a sense it only becomes a signature when it is repeated – when the copy can be compared with the original to confirm my identity. Thus, this singular figure is drawn towards the future; its presence is anticipatory, and determined in relation to what it is not – or at least is not in the sense of a complete, self-identical presence. Likewise, as we have suggested, it anticipates being gathered into a reading. The signature has force in its being recognized and registered by some other person; in many contexts this "reading" is formalized through a countersignature which validates the signature, but this only makes explicit the implicit demand in every signature for some *counter* (a demand which suggests that even when I myself sign in a different context, I am also in a sense signing as counter, since the drawing-showing within the reach of my second signing will be different). The fact that we sign in anticipation of our not being present to confirm our identity in person indicates the necessity of this relation to the other as counter; the signature marks the finitude of our self-presence and the self-presence of our meanings; in this respect, perhaps it signals our mortality (my signature will remain legible, and open to countersignature, even beyond my death).

Derrida's term for what is so clearly marked in the signature is "iterability": the capacity for a mark – not only a signature – to be repeated beyond the context of its original inscription. He forms the word "iterable" from the Latin *iter* – "once again" – but also relates it to "*itara*, *other* in Sanskrit".[658] The example of the signature perhaps illustrates quite clearly how "once again" suggests "other", in the various ways in which the signature gathers its presence from non-

[657] For Derrida's discussion, see "Signature Event Context", 328–329 (hereafter SEC).
[658] SEC, 315.

presence – both temporal and spatial. We might remark on a significant overlap in this regard with the sense we developed from our reading of Heidegger that the drawing together of relations through which an appearance draws forth must in a sense differ *from itself* – it must be projected into a reach, where it is drawn, temporally and spatially beyond itself. Likewise, Derrida's understanding of iterability suggests that the mark draws forth through the projection of its future 'redrawing' (or in Derrida's terms, "reinscription") – whether this redrawing is a physical repetition of the mark (I sign again, in another context) or a gathering and showing of the mark within different relations (it is 'countersigned'). Like Heidegger's problematization of the interpretation of being on the basis of *τέλος*, Derrida's notion of iterability undermines the sense that a chronological sequence of causes constitutes the presence of the mark: the relation to "once again" and "other" suggests the priority not of the immediate present, but of the anticipated future which grants the mark the very possibility of its being a mark.[659]

While Derrida is concerned with demonstrating that this constitutive self-difference and anticipatory projection is what conditions *all* language, it is of interest to us that he finds writing to be the site where iterability (with the emphasis both on "once again" and on "other") is most apparent. He offers a powerful counter to the appearance that writing draws what it writes into immediate presence (even if that 'immediacy' is understood as the transcendental ideality, the *ἰδέα*, represented in the writing). Perhaps a significant element of the force of his work in this regard derives specifically from his engagement with the tension between the metaphysical hope that writing may be transcendental language and the metaphysical anxiety concerning its iterability. A consideration of language within the "between" of these two extremes – writing as idealized thought, and writing as non-self-identical, always derivative, always away beyond itself – arguably allows Derrida to trouble the same metaphysical assumptions concerning language which Heidegger targets, though from a different perspective.

Derrida's thinking also provides indications towards understanding how writing might be understood as a region where language is called on both to show and to withhold. He draws attention to an abyssal quality in writing – though it is important to note that it is central to Derrida's argument that *all* language is conditioned and unfolds in the same way as writing does.

[659] Derrida therefore places great emphasis on the temporal mode of the future anterior.

When he speaks of a "mark", this suggests any insertion into language – any "figure" in the sense we suggested (any "utterance" in the broadest sense). Our emphasis on the *written* mark, the *littera*, is therefore different from Derrida's; we are not concerned with unveiling the assumptions which underlie the "metaphysics of presence", but with the conspicuousness of the veil.

In writing, then, it is fairly obvious to see how iterability would be a "structural characteristic of every mark".[660] We touched upon the fundamental insight that to signify, "a certain self-identity" of the (written) mark "must permit its recognition and repetition".[661] Moreover, writing (or a sign, mark or a figure) can always be cited: "put between quotation marks", and therefore "break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion".[662] Writing's iterability is not a reflection of a stable independently present correspondence between the mark and what it represents (or what it means, or even simply of the bearing it has within a relational world); nor is its repeatability even a reflection of a stable, fully present identity derived, for example, from its recognizable form. Its iterability rather suggests that it is given within a context. It is not that "the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that "there are only contexts without any centre of absolute anchoring."[663]

A (written) mark has bearing only within a context; the mark's citability suggests, however, that even when positioned within a context which gives it bearing – even when its context allows it to function as what we conventionally call a sign –[664] it continues to differ from itself (or, in terms more suited to our preceding discussions, it remains a site of the carrying out of dif-ference). This is because even when it becomes a sign, the mark *remains* a mark – it continues to lack "sufficient presence that would refer only to itself", and maintains itself in the possibility of being drawn in(to) another context.[665] This "remainder" of the mark is "irreducible" to the organizing force of any specific bearing, even of that context within which it is originally

[660] SEC, 323.
[661] SEC, 319.
[662] SEC, 320.
[663] SEC, 320.
[664] It is with reference to the metaphysical vocabulary of the sign that Derrida tends to develop his discussion, though invariably to collapse the fundamental assumptions which support the metaphysical thinking within which that vocabulary gathers its conventional force.
[665] "*Différance*", 9.

drawn.[666] This remainder draws in every figure; it is the "trace" of absence as the drawing "trait" of the mark. We might restate this in the terms of our engagement with Heidegger to demonstrate the proximity of Derrida's thinking to our preceding discussions. A written mark is earthy – we might understand it both in terms of sensuous appearance and in terms of self-withholding; it withholds its own bearing and calls for integration into a relational reach. A mark with bearing – conventionally a sign – points not only to a "meaning", but also to its own groundlessness, as earth continues to withhold and conceal itself (it cannot have bearing on its own) even as it is brought into appearance in its relation to world. Simultaneously, world is borne by earth, which can ground and bear only in relation to world; thus world, even as it draws earth forth into the realm of unconcealment, is drawn in a relation with concealment, from which it draws forth.

We might say then that the written mark is drawn into the anticipation of its grounding or anchoring – of its reading, its being drawn into relations which will give it its bearing; yet in some sense it also *remains* in a state of anticipation. Since this anticipation itself relates to what we may structurally consider the "origin"[667] of the mark – its iterability, the self-division which grants it the possibility of having bearing – the mark's drawing is temporally stretched into horizons of both past and future.[668]

This strongly temporal element is emphasized in Derrida's famous neologism "differance", which indicates on the one hand the manner in which a mark has no immediate self-presence, but has bearing only on the basis of its differential play with other marks – can only "come forth in a chain of differential references".[669] In this sense it indicates "the 'active' movement of the

[666] See SEC, 329–330; "Limited Inc a b c…", 52. See also, for example, "At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am", 144: "But no cut *is* there, no utterance is ever cut from all context, the context is never annulled without remainder."
[667] We mean "origin" here in Derrida's sense as "non-full, non-simple": "originary" here does not indicate the constitution of a moment of full, simple presence. Instead, we refer to Derrida's understanding of a "non-originary" origin which, at its origin, is already an "irreducibly nonsimple… synthesis of marks, or traces of retentions and protentions" ("*Différance*", 13).
[668] "*Différance*", 13.
[669] OG, 159. In this context, Derrida develops arguments concerning this play of relational difference through a critical engagement with the structural linguistics of Saussure and frames his interpretation in Saussure's vocabulary. Saussure famously marks the arbitrariness of the relation between signifier and signified, pointing out the relational quality of the sign in general. Derrida demonstrates the impossibility of maintaining any "rigorous distinction" between signifier and signified, since the meaningfulness of the signified is not "simply present for thought, independent of a relationship with language" ("Semiology and Grammatology", 19). The referencing and

production of the difference", the "dynamic" quality of its carrying out – as opposed to the standing in a *τέλος* of a present and self-identical meaning.[670] But this very "dynamic" quality suggests "temporization":[671] the "infinite postponing of presence".[672] It indicates the manner in which the simultaneously anticipatory and recollective differentiation between any drawing together of relations (whether drawing, mark, figure or sign) and their bearing (not "meaning" in the sense of a stable anchoring or ground) opens the possibility of a redrawing – and indicates how this opening is itself the space into which the drawing draws itself, there not having been an "original" configuration which could have granted bearing in the first place.

Anticipating the literary work

Derrida thus points to a different way of anticipating writing. Writing draws into presence as the explicitation of potential bearings within a reach of relational involvements – a reach itself drawn forth through expropriation and appropriation. That is to say, the figuration of "sense" unfolds essentially through the recollection of difference towards gathering into presencing – but a gathering which recollects absencing. Writing can only draw "towards" presencing – can only "make sense" – by drawing towards what is still outstanding and to come; its presence is anticipatory, and determined in relation to what it is not – or at least is not in the sense of a complete, self-identical presence. It anticipates its own countering, its being gathered into a reading: rather than independently bearing self-sufficient meaning, it must be projected into a context – into a reach – where it is drawn, temporally and spatially, beyond itself. At the same time, the reach is drawn in anticipation of grounding the figure. The written figure, in order to figure (to form thought, to let thought form; to draw a reach and draw into a reach) must then differ *from itself*; or, we might rather say, the written figure figures in anticipation of its self-difference and recollects this self-difference in its figuration. Likewise, the reach reaches on the

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referenced signified "functions as a signifier" within the "play of signifying references that constitute language" (OG, 7). The necessity for other signifieds to make meaningful any signified – the necessity for any signified therefore to refer outside itself to be meaningful – means that it lacks the "sufficient presence that would refer only to itself" ("*Différance*", 9).

[670] Here we have quoted Dastur's elucidating wording ("Play", 17); she is herself referencing and citing "*Différance*", 9.

[671] See "*Différance*", 13. See in this regard also "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy", especially p. 247, where Derrida speaks about the manner in which "univocity" is regarded as the "*telos*" of language in the metaphysical conception. As we discussed in Chapter 1, the understanding of being in terms of *τέλος* emphasizes the temporal present at the expense of a consideration of temporality or temporization.

[672] Dastur "Play", 18.

basis of the absence of its self-sufficiency – reaches towards the ground it may grant the figure. In this aspect, writing may be considered to figure the aspect of be-ing in the sense of marking unavailability even as it grants availability; disclosed in this way, writing may invite – or even demand – an ek-static positioning as responsive countering.

Marking this promise of writing – that what is written is the other to come – allows us to anticipate what is called literature as calling in a manner substantially different from the address Heidegger hears in it. Yet as we have seen, the discursive field of literature – the vast gathering of writing which seems to draw everything into the immediate availability of discursive representability – perhaps covers over this promise.

The possibility of a different en-counter with literature – a different way of anticipating it, and therefore perhaps of responding to its potential to aspect be-ing – is perhaps offered by the literary artwork. As Heidegger's comments on in OWA suggest, a work of art displays its singularity in ways which call upon us to respond to its disclosure of dif-ference. When we relate to writing as art – expect it and respond to it as art – there is the possibility that it may draw attention to its own singularity and createdness in a manner which would disturb its present availability.

It is possible for the letters, words, or figures which draw together the work to *fail* to come to rest in a *τέλος*, thereby "disappearing into usefulness". These figures may then instead continuously to draw attention to their concealing-revealing appearance – draw *entropically* towards a turn rather than *actively* towards actualization (i.e. in a manner determined by *ἐνέργεια*). Such writing may then grant an inapparent appearance to be-ing in the manner we have suggested is promised by writing, by figuration, by a relation to language conditioned within a literary reach. Such writing may then also draw us towards a literary reach: invite us to "reach" towards appearance, presence and sense in a manner which anticipates, recollects, and safeguards disappearance and unavailability – to draw beings into reach in a way which allows them the room to show themselves in their conditioned, relational appearance; to await the appearance of the other as counterpart.

We might argue that in fact Heidegger's own engagement with poetry reflects just such a reception of literature. While he claims that poetry is banished into literature, where it no longer sings, he reads Hölderlin in a manner attentive to its tonality – to the tonality of the ringing of silence. Perhaps then it becomes a matter of calling literature – of calling it forth through a responsive call to appear as the essential unfolding of language. If the figure of the letter may draw a rift – an abyssal mark which traces the aspect of be-ing, and figures dif-ference – then calling (on) literature in this way may itself be a response. Such a call would perhaps be a matter of responsiveness – the kind of responsiveness Heidegger discusses in OWA. Here he indicates that submitting to the demand issued by the work means being drawn into the wake of the withdrawal at work in it – being "transported into the openness of beings",[673] drawn into ek-static projection.[674] To be displaced in this way, Heidegger suggests, means "to transform all familiar relations to world and earth… in order to dwell within the truth that is happening in the work."[675] This means also taking up a disposition of "restraint" – *Verhaltenheit*: a disposition which does not seek to resolve the differencing play at work and submits to the uncanniness of the revealing-concealing at work. It means "letting the work be a work" – what Heidegger calls "preservation".[676]

What is called literature

While such an approach bears much promise, it may obscure a hidden promise which distinguishes literature from poetry. This is a promise which resonates in what is called literature – in the name "literature" which names two responses to the aspect of be-ing. Literature names – figures, draws forth in response to a sighting of be-ing – written discourse generally speaking. It also names literary art, figures letters in such a way that we might be called upon to relate to them responsively – to pour them as libation.

We might anticipate the ambiguity of this name as itself disturbing – as itself figuring an abyss. Heidegger's critique of literature does not simply present a problematic position which we must overcome – overcome, perhaps, by demonstrating what literature *really* is or ought to be. In

[673] UK, 54/OWA, 40.
[674] UK, 54/OWA, 41.
[675] UK, 54/OWA, 40.
[676] Ibid.

order to attend to the promise of the literary, it is perhaps necessary simultaneously to keep in view the refusal of this promise: to disclose the manner in which even literary art is positioned within late modernity to draw into availability. Although the figure in the literary artwork *may* fail to disappear into usefulness, within being's disposition as *Ge-stell* (as "positionality"), it is perhaps more readily positioned to appear as useful – as *οὐσία*, *Anwesen*, available property, properly our own. We may perhaps count upon it to convey feeling or experience. We may expect it to "work" on a subject who reads it. We may value it for the pleasure it brings – it may offer us the return of appreciation, enlightenment. We may even count on it at times to disturb us. Its appearance may be secured and extended through its being collected, critiqued, analysed, taught – not to mention traded as commodity. Moreover, the literary artwork is almost invariably drawn into a virtual discursive space within which its singularity and facticity manifest as qualities or characteristics of a literary object. Such qualities appear as elements of the affective "workings" of the work, capable of being appropriated by a reader towards an experience of a particular life-world or of being variously accounted for through a critical reception of the work's contextual bearings. The singularity, facticity and self-refusal of the work are themselves positioned to return as the same, to be "delivered over" to the reader in permanent availability.

We have emphasized the self-refusal of the literary work's promise to figure be-ing because we interpret this refusal is *part* of its promise. The promise is not the actualization of a specific way of relating to language; it is the possibility of a positioning with respect to what is to come *as out-standing*, *as unavailable*, yet as promising in that it allows us to draw towards availability. For this reason, we might *equally* anticipate that promise in the realm of literature as writing in general – in its promise to draw into immediate universal accessibility.

If be-ing is that which figures, and what it figures (in modernity) is discursive availability in the form of "literature", we might, along the lines of Heidegger's meditations on technology, consider the displacement of revealing-concealing into the oblivion of constant availability as the *self-refusal* of be-ing's essential unfolding. In that case, we might anticipate the possibility that through the very extension of literature's reach – through the virtualization of sense, through the positioning of everything *as though* permanently and uniformly accessible within discursivity – this reach will disclose itself as out of reach, as a demand or invitation or promise to attend to

and disclose beings in their *passing*, *conditioned*, *relational*, *fractured* and *disturbing* availability. That is to say, we might anticipate in "literature" as the modern relation to language the "possibility of a turn" comparable to that which Heidegger suggests may be "concealed" in the "essence" of the dispensation of be-ing as sheer availability (as "positionality", *Ge-stell*).[677] In this regard, we might interpret the positioning of the modern human being to utilize discourse for drawing insistently towards presence and the present not simply as a "fall" from an originally intact poetizing ek-stasis into a derivative and inferior mode of discursive existence, but as the *preview* of a possible positioning with respect to language, be-ing and beings. This would be a "preview" not in the sense of the present image of a future condition, but of a responsive and anticipatory aspect: a "view" of be-ing which itself *expects* – watches for, anticipates, promises, shows the possibility of, and therefore disposes towards – a transformed perspective.

To figure what is called literature as the essential unfolding of language thus perhaps necessitates the disclosure of the self-refusal or non-arrival of "literature" simultaneously as written works collectively and as literary art. The refusal in the former dimension of literature may be made apparent through consideration of the draw towards unavailability which in the first place anticipates and calls upon writing to figure discursive availability; in the latter dimension, the refusal may be revealed through consideration of the resolution of dif-ference into difference – the repositioning of displacement and withdrawal into a form of availability. The figure we intend here, however, is not of a unified conception of "literature", which settles all differences evoked in the word. The intended figure is rather a rift, which draws together but maintains as distinct – maintains in tension – two demands placed upon language and two demands made by language. The intended figure is then not an entity – a word-image, a description, a representation. The figure is a drawing: the draft of the withdrawal into an abyss of the grounds upon which to call anything at all "literature", since literature appears as no thing. To figure what is called literature in this way is to draw towards dif-ference – not to effect it, but to watch for a position from which to attend to withdrawal; to relate to self-withholding; to be disturbed by the absence of ground; to be called into necessity; to be called upon to decide. To figure in this way is then to *be* figured, to be positioned to relate to withdrawal, to anticipate the draw into ek-stasis.

[677] "Die Kehre", 71 (translated as "The Turn", 67).

Towards a literary en-counter

Yet this would suggest the necessity not only of figuring language as essentially literature – in a manner likened to Heidegger's naming language poetry – but also of tracing the figuration of what is figured in a literary work in a manner likened to Heidegger's attending to "what is poetized" (*das Gedichtete*) in poetry (or in "the poem", *das Gedicht*). That is to say, it remains to let the figure figure, to let the writing write – to attend to figured writing as though that writing were figured by be-ing, as though it sheltered be-ing's address. It remains to attend to literature perhaps as a positioning which draws towards the hyper-availability of work-being through the discursive constitution of that being. We have suggested, however, that the ambiguity of the manner in which literature draws – towards covering over the self-withholding of be-ing and towards responsively figuring it as revealing-concealing – itself anticipates the possibility that the manner in which literature works towards obscuring unavailability in the availability of an end might disclose the self-revealing concealing of be-ing. It remains, then, to let the figure figure and the writing write in tension with the "work" of literature: in tension, that is, with the drawing of the work towards actualization, effectuation, accessibility, presence, reach; and in tension with the anticipation of that gathering as the possibility of constant return and permanent availability.

Chapter 4: Event Urizen

Preludium

The prophetic works of William Blake suggest possibilities for attending to – marking, re-marking – the figuration of the literary comparable to those for heeding the poetic Heidegger finds in Hölderlin. Many of these possibilities in fact correspond closely to those offered by Hölderlin – possibilities broadly pertaining to literary figuration as we have likened it to poetizing; others are specific to our concern with figures, letters, writing, discursivity – with the figuration of the literary.

Of central importance is that Blake's work may be considered in multiple ways to draw "out of reach" – into multiple dimensions of unavailability. It appears undecided: withholds ground, demands decision. Although his poetry may at times appear deceptively simple, the interpretive difficulties it poses have been widely acknowledged. The influential Northrop Frye's suggestion that Blake's poetry evades "commonplace understanding"[678] arguably continues to reflect received scholarly views, as does David Fuller's famous remark that the "experience of reading Blake is often one of disorientation and puzzlement – at first perhaps always, and always sometimes."[679] Saree Makdisi's contention that Blake's books have "high entropy" – that "there are many ways that each book's constituent elements can be arranged and re-arranged without subverting the overall structure of the book" –[680] aptly suggests precisely the kind of resistance to working towards actualization in a *telos* which Heidegger attributes to Hölderlin's poetizing. Makdisi's remark resonates powerfully with our characterization of the essential unfolding of language as drawing disturbingly[681] towards a turn (*τρόπος*). Heidegger's comment concerning Hölderlin's *Andenken* might count equally for any number of Blake's works: "One does not first need to forcibly 'search for mysteries' in this poem in order to be instructed about the fact that it is not "readily understandable."[682] Withholding ready understandability, Blake, like Hölderlin

[678] *Fearful Symmetry*, 11.
[679] *Blake's heroic argument*, 89. Fuller attributes at least some of this difficulty to "how Blake uses language" (ibid.), though his insistence that Blake avoids ambiguity in favour of clear expression (287n.2) is one we will contend. We acknowledge, however, that Blake himself in *The Four Zoas* calls "Ambiguous words blasphemous" (E336, l. 26).
[680] *Reading William Blake*, 8.
[681] In the manner of intensified (*dis*-) turning (*turba* etymologically suggests swirling, turning).
[682] HHA, 25/HHR, 21.

positions us to wait. Nelson Hilton's insights in this regard are apposite: "Blake's printing, his expansive meter, his punctuation, and his syntax ensure that his line will not be grasped at once"; these "conditions", Hilton contends, "force the reader back"[683] – attune or position the reader to wait, to relate to the absence of immediate bearing.

Blake's poetry then, like Hölderlin's, may be considered to be attuned to a poetic bearing; one might argue that it is likewise disposed to the essential unfolding of poetry. His poetry itself concerns poetry – traces, through the poetizing, what is called poetry, what calls forth poetry, what demands poetry. We might suggest that Blake attends to the movement of language in poetizing, that he poetizes responsively. This is not simply to suggest that he undertakes a metapoetic exploration of the nature of poetry in his work. The kind of responsiveness we attribute to his poetry is responsiveness in the sense we developed in the foregoing discussions: a sense which includes attentiveness to the withdrawal of be-ing, to the relation between that withdrawal and language, to that relation as constitutive of historicity,[684] and to that relation as the site of human temporalization and ex-sistence.

While scholars such as Frye, and those who have been influenced by his approach, examine these concerns in markedly different language – and, as Heidegger's thinking on language suggests, therefore also anticipate and relate to these concerns differently – one may readily find hints in Blake's work, and scholarship on it, of the kind of responsive attentiveness to language which Heidegger intends in poetizing: an attentiveness which concerns our very existence. For example, Frye interprets what Blake intends with the word "imagination"[685] in connection with "Poetic Genius" in a way strongly suggestive of what we have called the aspect of be-ing.[686] "Genius" here most immediately suggests character, aptitude, inclination or disposition;[687] Blake's asserts in "All Religions are One" that "the forms of all things are derived from their Genius".[688] For Blake, Poetic Genius "is the true Man"[689]: the essential character of the human

[683] *Literal Imagination: Blake's Vision of Words*, 4 – hereafter *Literal*.
[684] Blake considered his own work as historically significant, regarding himself as a prophet and social reformer.
[685] This is a word Blake himself regarded as important, and which was also central to Romantic consciousness.
[686] *Symmetry*, 19–27 and *passim*.
[687] Sense II and its sub-senses in the OED.
[688] "All Religions are One", E1.
[689] "All Religions are One", E1.

being is poetic, a position which resonates with many of Heidegger's declarations concerning poetry. Frye does not pay much attention to Blake's statements concerning. Nevertheless, his reading indicates significant connections with Heidegger. In Frye's view, Blake considers imagination as denoting "man as an acting and perceiving being"[690] – considers, therefore, the human being as essentially unfolding by disclosing what is in being in some aspect or another ("image" with reference to Blake's "imagination", or "look" with reference to Heidegger's *Blick* and related words). Such disclosure seems in some ways to relate to a fundamental *unavailability* of what is in being: "[t]here is no 'general nature'"[691] – no universal basis upon which beings may appear as immediately and unconditionally self-present. Disclosive "imagination" therefore entails drawing what is disclosed into relations: "[t]o be perceived… means to be imagined, to be related to an individual's pattern of experience". We might interpret Blake as naming (figuring, imaging, aspecting) *λόγος* (gathering-drawing-showing-positioning) as a kind of "imaginative ordering", to be distinguished from its interpretation as *ratio*, "ratiocination", "reason".[692] There is the further implication that the human being is herself disclosed, and thereby constituted (or "imaged") through her imaginative ordering of what is in being into relations – is disclosed and constituted *as* "perceiving", *as* "former" or "imaginer". To be related through disclosure to a pattern of experience is "to become a part" of the discloser's "character",[693] to contribute to her self-figuration. While such a reading perhaps does not evade metaphysical distinctions, it suggests possibilities for disturbing them, and evidences Blake's work as motivated by the anticipation of a positioning in language within which to grapple with distinctions fundamental to the modern disposition: distinctions such as the "attempt to separate the subject and the object";[694] the division between mind and body, intellect and emotion,[695] and even a frequently only implicit separation between "voluntary and involuntary".[696]

We might take note of and develop hints of an even greater proximity between Blake and Heidegger in Nelson Hilton's *Literal Imagination: Blake's Vision of Words*, although it should

[690] *Fearful Symmetry* 19.
[691] Ibid.
[692] See for example *Symmetry*, 22.
[693] *Symmetry*, 19.
[694] Ibid, 18.
[695] For example, *Symmetry*, 20.
[696] *Symmetry*, 22.

be emphasized that Hilton's perspective is not self-consciously oriented by Heidegger's thinking, and only seldom refers directly to it. Crucially, Hilton attends more carefully than Frye to potential resonances in Blake's naming or figuring of what grants human existence its unique aspect as "Poetic Genius" – of poetizing that which grants the manifestness of beings *as* poetic, *as* genius, *as* these in relation. Of particular significance to our study is the implication in Hilton's reading that for Blake imaginative ordering is not simply "poetic" in that it is creative, in that it fabricates; it is also poetic in that it takes place *in words*.[697] Equally significantly – here perhaps differentiating Blake from Heidegger – Hilton shows how Blake figures imaginative ordering specifically *in writing, in letters*: Blake's is a "literal imagination". Hilton's reading suggests that Blake's writing concerns written figures – it "literalizes" its concern with literal figures, figuring questions concerning what is called writing, what calls it into a figure, what demands the figuration of the letter.

Strong parallels with Heidegger remain, however, for example in Blake's insistence in a discussion pertaining to the expression of "Imagination" that "Ideas cannot be Given but in their minutely Appropriate Words".[698] As Hilton points out, this suggests that words grant beings their phenomenal appearance:[699] without the word, no thing may be. Words are "engendering"[700] phenomenologically speaking[701] (we might recall that "genius" is derived from *gignere* – "to beget"): they give rise to the appearance of beings, nominate them to and address them in their *φύσις*.

Significantly, this means that the phenomenal appearance of beings will always be determined by specific possibilities for expression available in a particular language. Words are not "arbitrary" – are not, in the words of John Locke, of whom Blake is frequently critical, "signs of our ideas only".[702] We do not wield language as a tool; it is not under our "authority", subject to our

[697] See *Literal*, 2–3. Hilton does not specifically discuss "poetry" or *ποίησις* – once again we are reframing Hilton's insight to integrate it into our discussion.
[698] "Public Address", E576. Hilton cites this quotation too (*Literal*, 3). Hilton also cites *Milton, A Poem*: "Mark well my words" (2.25, E96).
[699] "[W]hat appears is a *phainomenon* or showing-forth of words, a *logosophany* (*Literal*, 9).
[700] *Literal*, 234.
[701] In Heidegger's sense of phenomenology.
[702] *Literal*, 9.

subjectivity.[703] We *encounter* it. It precedes us, anticipates us, awaits us, expects us, aspects us. Hilton indicates how Blake's writing disturbs our positioning in relation to language as system for referring independent meanings, and positions us instead to engage with language in a way that evidences our factical embeddedness in it: "[s]eeing and hearing the word is meeting it alive in a force-field of sound, etymology, graphic shape, contemporary applications, and varied associations."[704] Blake's poetry evinces relational drawing – shows language as drawing relationally; and demands that we participate in its drawing. His poetry invites us to perceive the word "deliberately", and thereby to let it "assert itself" – perhaps requires this of us. Such self-assertion involves the resonating of the "associations and etymology" of the word – the disclosure of possibilities for imaginative ordering which have accumulated (and, we might say, been anticipated) within a specific language, "[r]atified and amended by generations of imagination."[705] Hilton makes explicit the parallels between Blake's and Heidegger's views concerning our positioning within language: "[f]or Blake, as for Heidegger, 'language is the House of Being'".[706]

Hilton's reading also enables us to consider Blake as anticipating Heidegger's claim that "language speaks".[707] Concerning our responsive positioning with respect to language, Hilton states: "the word continually extends a covenant to inform us of its universe of signification."[708] Hilton's "covenant" suggests not only how generations of imagination "come together" (*con-venire*), drawing into a field of possible orderings (clearing and preparing a dwelling space, in Heidegger's idiom); it suggests also a "promise" extended in and by the field of language, to which the imaginative ordering (poetizing, figuring) accomplished in any individual disclosure of beings must be a response. What Blake names poetically with "imagination", we might conclude, is not the activity of a subject; "Poetic Genius" does not refer to the mental capacity of any individual. Imagination *as* Poetic Genius *as* eventuated in words seems rather to suggest the very eventuation of words as drawing-gathering-showing – as the drawing-gathering-showing

[703] See *Literal*, 8: "Blake annihilates his (and thus his reader's) 'authority'; he will not be a selfhood talking to itself or to other selfhoods".
[704] Ibid, 7.
[705] Ibid.
[706] Ibid, 10.
[707] "Die Sprache", 10/"Language", 189.
[708] *Literal*, 7.

through which beings are manifested as in being. Imagination suggests, perhaps, the "genius" of the human being as drawn by be-ing into poetizing – into attending to beings by imaginatively ordering them in words, and thereby granting "aspects" to be-ing itself.

What is significant here, however, is not only that similarities may be drawn between Blake's and Heidegger's views on poetry, phenomenality, and human existence. It is also significant that Hilton shows Blake as adopting the kind of positioning in relation to language that Heidegger calls an attunement to poetic bearing. And attuned in this way, Blake's poetry itself attends to the essential unfolding of poetry, or of language as poetry. In Hilton's words, Blake's work "is an exploration of what it is possible to say, of how directly the Poetic Genius can speak and how directly the Poetic Genius/Imagination… can speak through a language that is itself his creation".[709] We might resituate this assertion within Heidegger's thinking, bearing in mind the resonances with Blake we have highlighted, and attend to this exploration of what it is possible to say as concerned rather with what grants the possibility of saying. For Hilton's close engagement with Blake's words in their "force-field" of sound, etymology, graphic shape, contemporary applications, and varied associations strongly suggests in these words a tension between what it is possible to say and the possibility of saying's impossibility: silence. Heidegger arguably values Hölderlin in view of the latter's attentiveness to the possibilities for disclosing the gifting refusal of be-ing in German in a manner which preserves the relation between appearance and concealment, and which anticipates an ek-static positioning in relation to language and be-ings. Hilton's reading of Blake, although perhaps not by design, suggests strong possibilities for considering Blake as likewise attending to the possibilities offered by the English language.

Such possibilities emerge and are figured in multiple dimensions of resistance offered in Blake's work. Notably, it offers resistance to an immediate grasp in the specific form of the works' "material" manifestness – in the manner in which "earth" is set into the work. This is especially the case with Blake's illuminated books, which offer both words and illustrations as potential sites for the carrying out of difference, leaving unresolved the question as to how to ground the words and images in their relation to one another. W.J.T. Mitchell famously calls Blake's a

[709] Ibid, 9.

"composite art"; words and images appear together in a manner which invites us to anticipate their unity. Yet what we encounter is "*not* an indissoluble unity" – it is not immediately apparent "in what precise sense the poems 'need' their illuminations, and vice versa. The matter is further complicated by the frequent troubling of clear distinctions between the verbal and "graphic" elements of the books. Blake painstakingly draws each letter, positions each punctuation mark, in ways that draw attention to their singular appearance – very much in contrast with what Heidegger finds so problematic about typed script – and calls on them to speak "visually". V. A. De Luca provides an example from *Jerusalem*[710] where the "referential function" of the words seems to "withdraw" altogether, and "the text becomes iconic". Blake presents a cramped, tightly packed block of words, most of which are names; the words seem to "say" little, but image a "wall of words".[711] Likewise, the rich and puzzling symbolism of the illuminations seems to compel one to "read" their significance, even though there appears to be no direct correspondence between them and what is figured in the writing. The illuminated books thus present "an interaction between two vigorously independent modes of expression."[712] We might consider this "interaction" as "strife", and the absence of a directive concerning their unity a "rift" which joins them in disunity. Their composite "form" might then be considered a potential site for the carrying out of dif-ference. In this regard, the specifically *written* figuration of Blake's poetry – its response to be-ing as a rifting of emptiness, rather than an echo of silence (or perhaps in addition to echoing silence) – may also be considered significant. However, it remains crucial to avoid considering this dif-ference one-dimensionally as "formal". The rift between word and picture draws open as the withholding of ground; words and images draw out of reach in the absence of a clearly delineated *telos* into which the work can compose itself as fully self-present and available. We might emphasize once again in this regard that it is not simply the case that the words and pictures fail to "match" – to represent an apparently unified message. In fact, they frequently *do* interact in highly suggestive ways which intimate possibilities for their drawing together into meaningful unity. Also, as we have noted, Blake's words and pictures break the limitations we might ordinarily associate with their medium. De Luca's "wall of words" is all but invisible in a typeface copy of *Jerusalem*; the words are irreducible to a "content". Arguably, the relation between all the elements of Blake's illuminated books is

[710] E160–161.
[711] De Luca, "A Wall of Words: The Sublime as Text", in *Unnam'd Forms*, 218.
[712] *Blake's Composite Art*, 3 – hereafter *Composite*.

likewise irreducible. The disunity of Blake's composite art may therefore be considered to concern the anticipation of unity – of availability – as much as it concerns the "presence" of unavailability. Consequently, this disunity offers a potential site for the disclosure of the ordinarily inapparent demand to decide on the being of beings, as well as of the need – arising from the absence of a grounds for decision – which imparts this demand. This suggests the necessity of engaging at least to some degree with the interaction – or the anticipation of an inter-*action* – between words and pictures in our consideration of the figuration of the literary. It suggests perhaps also a necessity of at times "reading the image".[713] Such an approach is perhaps supported by Heidegger's insistence that all art is "poetic" and may be further justified by an interpretation of Blake's thought as itself suggesting the possibility that anything is capable of "bearing significant marks",[714] and accordingly of being read. However, this approach will aim to avoid simply collapsing all distinction between words and images; our aim is not to suggest that "every graphic image in Blake's illuminations has its seed or root in the poetry".[715] Such a collapse of distinctions runs the risk of neutralizing difference, and "working" the work into availability counter to our attempt to attend to its figuration of the interinvolvement of availability and unavailability.

We might consider an additional dimension of the availability of the illuminated books pertaining to their material form: their appearance specifically *as* books. The technology of the book anticipates an intensified discursive availability – a manner of gathering perhaps anticipated from the outset by the letter's promise of sending and return, of disposing (*schicken*) always the same disposition (*Geschick*), and thereby overwriting disposition itself. Letters disclose language as disposed towards the approximation of an idealized identity of significations – language as disposed to returning presence always as the same. The technology of the book grants letters the reach within which to draw towards large-scale discursive availability, and the possibility of the consistent reconstitution of presence beyond the relational reach of contingent, relational "drawings": the possibility of nonspatiotemporal appearance. As Heidegger's discussions of literature suggest, printing technologies lend the appearance of transparency to figuration, and independent, self-sufficient presence – perhaps even ideality – to

[713] W.J.T. Mitchell, "Visible Language", in *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism*, 56.
[714] Ibid, 64.
[715] Erdman *The Illuminated Blake*, 16.

its content. The book appears capable of sending forth and returning presence as the same, and thereby suggests that presence is itself this "same" – hence it discloses presencing *as* immediate and universal availability. The book then draws up a site where a "unity of signification"[716] may be anticipated; it draws up the reach of literature. Blake arguably interrupts or troubles the ordinarily tacit demand or promise of the book to draw towards the replication of an already present unity or identity. Rather than preparing his books for large-scale reproduction and distribution, he prepares different copies of the "same" book with individual differences. As Hilton notes, for example, the "various copies" of the books have "alternative page arrangements"; some have "widely different inking and colouring schemes"; some show evidence of Blake's "revising, covering up or even gouging out from the plate words or lines so that the text of a given page can vary".[717] Makdisi remarks on Blake's approach in a manner which neatly suggests how it establishes a tension between the anticipation of the constant return of the book as the same and the singular appearance of each individual copy. A particular illuminated book, he suggests, appears "not as a master concept executed in a series of identically – that is, slavishly, mechanically, faithfully, blindly – reproduced copies, but rather in multiple non-identical copies, so non-identical that every single copy is different, and yet they are also all 'the same again.'"[718] Framing this insight in terms of our preceding discussions, we might suggest that Blake's approach discloses a dif-ference between the anticipation of sheer and permanent availability and its refusal. This particular site for the carrying out of dif-ference is crucial to our consideration of literature as unfolding the self-withholding of be-ing from within – or *as* – the forgottenness of be-ing in availability, because it suggests the possibility of availability itself in refusal, in the carrying out of dif-ference. It suggests, then, the possibility of the self-disclosure of availability *as* withdrawal or self-refusal.

The (First) Book of Urizen is particularly suited to a consideration of the essential unfolding of literature, or of language as literature, as it concerns the book itself as the site of literary figuration. *The Book of Urizen* is not simply a book about Urizen, but also – as we will suggest – Urizen's book, and a book about the book, and Urizen figured as book. What is figured in *Urizen* (or Urizen) as book is – among other things – the promise, demand, and positioning of writing,

[716] Derrida, OG, 70.
[717] Nelson Hilton "William Blake & the play of textuality", 86.
[718] Makdisi, *Reading*, 28.

of literature, of figuration arising in anticipation of total presence and in response to absence. *Urizen* figures figuring, writing, literature disposed by and disposing towards the covering over of the abyss – of the withdrawal of ground. It figures the literary figure disposed by and disposing towards reason as secure, universal, permanent and self-grounding ground. We might suggest that *Urizen* figuratively (in our modified sense) "names" that which grants presence – names it Urizen, which can be read as (among other things) "your reason" or "ur-reason";[719] *Urizen* names it also as a book. *Urizen*, like Blake's other prophetic works, appears mythic; Robert Essick has examined this mythic quality in ways which connect with our consideration of the essential unfolding of language. He notes that *Urizen* "directly create an ur-myth, one that could answer questions about what happened before the events related in Genesis",[720] and interprets this cosmogeny in semiotic terms, as figuring a differential origin of language.[721] In terms suggestive of Heidegger, Essick states that language "unfolds as a response to the breach opened up by Urizen's establishment of difference as the basis of identity."[722] Drawing more explicitly on Heidegger's language, we might suggest that *Urizen* not only figures the differential origins of semiosis, but "names" (or figures) "the holy".[723] *Urizen* names the holy *as literature,* the literary reach, the draw towards utter conceptual availability based in reason and figured in letters. It figures the book as holy – figures as a holy book, figures the literary figure as scripture. Yet we have intimated that Blake also names the holy in the sense of figuring the abyss – figuring it abyssally, in a manner which (potentially) disowns us of language and dislodges us from our everyday habits, concerns, and relation to beings. That is to say, he names the holy *as* unsettling and unsettles through naming it in this way. *Urizen* then offers the possibility of tracing the *simultaneous* draw towards sheer presence *and* its disturbance – of tracing them in the same aspect, named as the same: "Urizen". Blake perhaps names the holy by making apparent a refusal in the draw towards sheer presence; he perhaps figures the emergence of a god as well as the flight of the gods in the same movement; he perhaps figures the appearance of the gods as

[719] The resonant ambiguity of Urizen's name is well attested, though Hilton provides a useful summary of ways it has been interpreted (*Literal*, 254–255).
[720] *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, 144 – hereafter *Adam.*
[721] *Adam*, 148ff.
[722] Ibid, 150.
[723] Essick's study is of course also concerned with "naming". Concerning Urizen's naming, he notes for example: "By naming himself with the personal pronoun, Urizen names the grammatical abstraction enabling his self to come into being as an objectified generalization to itself" (152).

their flight, anticipates the sheltering of presencing-absencing even in the appearance of sheer presence.

Urizen attends to the mythic not only as a cosmogeny, however, or as holy scripture, but as prophecy. It says (*φᾰ́ναι*) ahead, anticipates, names what is to come. It draws towards the holy as outstanding, figures it in a modality of non-arrival. Its prophetic quality may then be considered another dimension of its unavailability – or as an aspect of a temporal unavailability, a refusal of the work to draw into the reach of the "present". The possibility of a clear chronology – a chronology consisting of a sequence of "presents" – is troubled throughout. But it is perhaps particularly noteworthy in the light of our study that it is an *origin*, the genesis of a unified order (*κόσμος*) which is prophesied in *Urizen*. Circling back to its cosmogeny, we might likewise note that what is disclosed concerning the past – concerning genesis, or that which enabled genesis – as still to come, as outstanding. A compelling parallel may be drawn with Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin. Heidegger reads him *as* prophetic, in that he reads him as though the time of his poetry speaks to, speaks of, or speaks for a future time – the time of Heidegger's recollection, perhaps, but also a time for which Heidegger himself can only prepare. Heidegger reads him also towards an origin – towards an origin which reflects the fundamental possibilities of human existence: an origin from which the possibilities of manifestness may be considered to unfold; yet an origin which has not happened – which remains to come. We recall that for Heidegger what is poetized in the poem is the responsive positioning in relation to be-ing's self-refusal – is the call or demand to respond to be-ing's promise and to be drawn into ek-static relation to language. Donald Ault provides an apposite account of the manner in which *The Four Zoas* both draws the reader into responsively contributing to the narrative's construction, and potentially becomes transformed through such responsive attention to it. Although Ault's idiom differs substantially from ours, his comments are strongly suggestive of the manner in which an expropriating dislocation (the text's awaiting interpretation; the text's remaining out of reach) turns into an appropriating draw, a repositioning:

> Blake experiments with creating a text that cannot question its authentic existence independent of and prior to the narrative world in the process of being constituted through sequential acts of reading, thereby creating a reader whose perception is able to

> alter the very being of the text's supposedly fixed facts and devising a narrative world that, although it comes to existence temporally through the mutual interconstitution of reader and text, functions as the primary agent by which reader and text are able to transform one another mutually.[724]

Blake perhaps anticipates and recollects a disposition which differs from the metaphysical and representational draw towards presence; and by disclosing the tension between what appears as ordinary (presence, the present, availability) and its denial, he perhaps also disposes towards another positioning. The cosmogeny and prophecy Blake offers do not image a past which has been realized, or a future which will be realized – or do not *only* image or imagine in this way.[725] They do not (or do not only) rework into a representation, into a concept – an actuality, an end. Rather, they recall the anticipation of a positioning, and anticipate the recollection of positioning. *Urizen's* prophetic quality may then also be considered "historical" in Heidegger's sense, in that it figures, refigures, and prefigures be-ing's disposition (*Geschick*); it figures, perhaps, a specific "sending" of be-ing – positionality – but through its disclosure of this aspect also recalls the possibility of a different sending.

If Blake's poetry could be considered to draw towards such a possibility, Heidegger's thinking would suggest that that possibility would not be "present" in the text – an element, quality, or property of it. It would precisely draw forth into the modality of possibility – would anticipate, invite, promise the countering aspect of a human "looking", of a responsive attentiveness, of a figuring disclosure. The various difficulties concerning Blake's or *Urizen's* placement (out of reach) reflect their anticipation of an encounter with a reader, of being drawn into a reach. These difficulties also reflect our anticipation of an encounter with them, our expectation that they will offer an aspect to view and to figure. This expectation, as our study has suggested, is itself already aspected (presents a certain aspect, expects in a certain disposition). We might expect, therefore, significant tensions concerning the relation between the ways we are positioned to relate to Blake's poetry as available within a realm of considerable access to primary and

[724] "Re-visioning *The Four Zoas*", 109.
[725] Ault's comments concerning *The Four Zoas* are pertinent: Blake generates in the *Zoas* "a narrative field in which the past is not closed and complete but open – unfinished and revisable" (ibid.).

secondary literature by Blake and on Blake, a wealth of critical, scholarly and support material, and the kind of attunement (to drawing out of reach) we have attributed to it.

We might note, for example, that there are nine known copies of *Urizen*, each unique, each perhaps able to be considered to set truth to work in its singular figuring of rifting (with reference to OWA). Yet I do not have to travel to London or Connecticut or New York to read it, or to view it. *Urizen's* text is widely available in collections and critical editions; illustrated copies, though more expensive and less widely distributed, are likewise accessible in print form. *Urizen* appears even more accessible – more immediately accessible, more universally accessible – on the internet, notably in the William Blake Archive.[726] This extraordinary boon to Blake scholars and readers provides high-quality digital scans of every page of seven of the known copies. I am able quickly and easily to compare copies, and to take my time poring over the details of the words and images. I draw them from a realm of availability, into a realm of availability. I expect them to be available and find them so.

Likewise, the extensive field of critical and scholarly material on Blake, the vast range of interpretations, elucidations and explanations which disclose even the unreachability of Blake's work as reachable (or even reached), and perhaps also draw his work as *to be reached*. This is not to suggest that the critical reception of Blake is oriented towards reducing his work simplistically to a "content", to eradicating its difficulties and tensions. We have remarked on the recognition within scholarship of Blake's inaccessibility. It is to suggest, however, that the field of availability – the handy reach of numerous and variegated points of access to Blake's work (textual approaches, historical approaches, political approaches) – is a significant part of the aspect in which we encounter that work. It is an aspect in which we anticipate it as drawing forth virtually – as drawing towards the possibility of discursive representability, of return as always the same (even if that "same" might be viewed in an infinite multiplicity of ways) everywhere. This, we have suggested, is one aspect of the promise of literature.

We might suggest therefore that our present age is the wrong time for reading *Urizen*. Our time is disjoined from the relational reach into which it was drawn. In our time, *Urizen* is available

[726] https://www.blakearchive.org/

nearly everywhere; thus, there is nowhere it may draw forth and set truth to work in its singular way – all nine of them. Yet perhaps nowhere is precisely where *Urizen* may draw forth – out of place, in the uncanny reach; but also in the peculiar nowhere of everywhere, the nowhere drawn up in anticipation of a presence which requires no place, no relations, no reach, which requires only itself always the same. Perhaps this is the right time for reading *Urizen* – the time when the draw towards availability is perhaps even more pronounced, and more invisible, than it was when it was pre-figured in *Urizen*, as well as when Heidegger anticipated the possibility of its turn to self-refusal. Perhaps it is in the aspect of sheer availability that the anticipation of self-presence may – when drawn into a relation with its refusal – recall the possibility of absence in response to that which it draws forth.

To explore this possibility, it remains now only to circle back and commence with tracing the figure.

1. Unknown, abstracted

We have remarked, however, on numerous difficulties such commencement might pose. Commencement suggests "going in" (*com-initiare*: *in-initiare*: "to go" (*ire*) "in"), and we have claimed that *The Book of Urizen* is in multiple ways *out of reach*. Finding a "way in" requires placing the poem, the book; we have marked *Urizen*'s suitability to our concern with the literary figure as significantly involving its being out of place and have anticipated receiving it – and responding to it – *as such*. Yet at the outset, *Urizen*'s resistance to being positioned as present (or even past or future) actuality – its refusal to be placed within a stable orienting set of relations – may not be immediately apparent. It is perhaps necessary at the outset to map some of the regions of *Urizen*'s availability and knowability so that we may proceed to trace our withdrawal from them, and thereby let *Urizen* be or become – or return as – unknown.

Most fundamentally and most obviously, *Urizen* appears available to a reading. It is positioned within realms of literacy and literature in which I, as literate, know my way around. My familiarity prompts me to expect certain lined figures to draw into the bearing of characters – of letters – and to expect letters to draw into the bearing of words, words to draw into the bearing of sentences; I read these figures with the expectation that they, too, will draw into the unity of a

bearing – the bearing of a book, for example, *The First Book of Urizen*. Because I am familiar with books, my perception of *Urizen* draws out beyond the physical published copy before me, into a horizon of significance in which *Urizen* has in a sense been prefigured *as* book. Within this horizon I anticipate – without necessarily being aware of my anticipation – engaging meaningfully with it: I expect to relate to it as I relate to other books (by reading through its text, for example, and poring over its illuminations; I might even set it aside in frustration or place it on some loose papers to prevent their blowing away). The horizon within which I find *Urizen* stretches also into the realm of "literature" in a second sense – it is not only within my reach as a written work, as though formed in writing and in a relation with other writing, but also as writing figured "differently". Thus, I am in a sense oriented even in the disorienting opening chapters of the narrative, guided by my expectations concerning what a literary work might entail, accustomed by my prior reading to the disconcerting tropicality of many such works. I likewise find myself in a relation to *Urizen* as poetry, expecting to read it such, and with a view also to other poetry. My visual literacy allows me to make at least a basic sense of the illuminations which accompany *Urizen*'s text. My literacy in other fields – my familiarity with various cultural, religious, political and economic concerns, for example – contributes to constituting a horizon within which I am able to encounter *Urizen*. Within this horizon, I am positioned in various ways more or less to place and to access it. I can expect the book in many aspects, each of which will reveal possibilities for my ordering it imaginatively.

In a manner of speaking, *Urizen* also expects *me* in certain aspects. It expects my literacy – not only my ability to decipher figures, refer them to sounds, and these to meanings, but also my involvement in a realm of lettered works, an inheritance of figurations which is invariably also (one way or another) indicated in the script. It addresses that literacy in its title, for example, inviting me perhaps to hear resonances with Biblical books (*The First Book of Samuel*, for instance, *The First Book of Kings*, of *Maccabees*, of *Chronicles*; or if I am familiar enough with the Biblical tradition, "the first book of Moses" or "the first book of the Pentateuch").[727] It calls on me to read beyond the measure of what is inscribed before me, beyond the limits of the book. It positions me to relate to the book *not* as self-standing, self-sufficient object, but as drawn forth

[727] Jerome J. McGann points out that these are traditional names for the book of Genesis. "The Idea of an Indeterminate Text", 304 – hereafter "Idea".

in a horizon – drawn forth through its interplay with the meanings which furnish that horizon, through what we might commonly term its intertextuality (allusion of course suggests an orientation or movement towards play: *ad-ludere*).

Likewise, once I open the cover and commence reading, I find the book furnished for one who dwells among letters inscribed in a specific literary heritage. The book forestalls and anticipates its own beginning in an allusive *Preludium* (thus also anticipating and foreshadowing *Urizen*'s own unfolding as play: *prae-ludere*): the speaker appeals to Eternals to "Dictate swift winged words", echoing calls for divine inspiration in a poetic tradition stretching from Homer's entreaties which open the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* respectively: "sing, goddess",[728] "Tell me, O Muse"[729]; through Virgil's plea at the beginning of the *Aeneid*: "O Muse, the causes tell!";[730] to Milton's petition in *Paradise Lost*: "Sing Heav'nly Muse".[731] The conventional invocation of the Muses is evoked, and a chorus of bygone poets is thereby itself invoked, silently to prelude the prelude and to set its tone. The calls of these poets are in a way recollected as though they anticipate – have always anticipated, spoken prophetically to describe glimpses of destiny – the "dark visions of torment" about to unfold in *Urizen* and as *Urizen*. Yet this is the case insofar as I, too, am silently invoked – hailed and solicited, in my belonging to a lettered world, as one who might hear voiceless calls lending voice to the *Urizen* poet. I am thus myself also anticipated, prophesied, destined – perhaps not me specifically, but an audience attuned by its prior habitation of a literary realm to be available for listening to what rings *silently* in that realm: to what is not voiced, but which attunes. I am positioned in such a way that the poet speaker's affirmation "Eternals I hear your call gladly" – which is also a commitment, a pledge responding in advance to the promise of "swift winged words" – articulates the affirmation I already perform by attending to the extemporized calls of long departed poets. I am myself silently called upon to witness the dark visions to come – called forth as one who might bear witness to what shows itself (or refuses to show itself) in these visions, in *Urizen*. Already I give evidence by seeing aspects of the Bible in *Urizen*'s title, aspects of classical poetry in the prelude's invocation. By bearing witness, I stand in for what is not immediately present (the Bible, *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*,

[728] *Illiad* 1.1.
[729] *Odyssey* 1.1.
[730] *Aeneid* 1.8.
[731] *Paradise Lost*, I.1.

Paradise Lost; the calls of Homer and others, and the visions which unfold in their poetry in response; an entire realm of interrelated meanings; the attunement to such a realm).[732] I vouch for truth – not in the sense of correctness or validity, but in a broader sense suggested by Heidegger: availability as the possibility for meaningful disclosure.

At the outset, then, in the preludium to my reading of *Urizen*, I find myself in a relation of mutual availability with it, rather than experiencing it as out of reach. Of course, what we have addressed here is simply the basic legibility of the book rather than its singular appearance – and its singular placement, its manifest presence – as *The [First] Book of Urizen*. Underlying this basic legibility is perhaps a more fundamental aspect of my anticipation of it: I expect that what I witness will not be the arbitrary interplay of random elements. I expect the allusions, as well as other symmetries and asymmetries between *Urizen* and other writings I might note, to be motivated – to be meaningful in some way which draws beyond their immediate resonance. That is to say, even bearing in mind Heidegger's disclaimers concerning the self-sufficient actuality of poetry, I expect *Urizen* to be organized in some way. I expect that the allusion in the title may somehow relate *Urizen* meaningfully to the Bible; I expect that this allusion may in some way relate meaningfully to those in the preludium, and that these may make sense of, or with respect to, what unfolds in the narrative, and so forth. I expect these and other elements of *Urizen* to be meaningful not in isolation but with reference to an orienting set of relations which delimit the book's independent presence – distinguish the *Urizen* poet's invocation from those of the tradition to which they refer and distinguish *Urizen* itself from the invocation and its referential nexus. I expect *Urizen* to constitute its own horizon – accessible, perhaps, within the broader horizon we have marked, but not reducible to it.

Again, this expectation may be understood as implying a corresponding demand placed on me prior to my encounter with the book. I am called upon to bear witness not only to isolated elements of what I read, but to the potential for their meaningful arrangement – their imaginative *ordering*, their design. If there are, for example, potential symmetries within *Urizen* and between it and other texts, such symmetries entail performance: the *furnishing* (recalling the Old French

[732] See Heidegger's discussion of witnessing in HWD, 36ff/HEP, 54–55. In more conventional terms: I am placed within a certain literary-cultural tradition.

etymon of "perform": *par-fornir* – analysable as *per-furnish*) of a locality within which their likeness may be preserved (or defaced). To call even a simple geometric object – an equilateral triangle, for example – symmetric is to anticipate ways of *interacting* with it which will reveal and preserve its symmetry: turning it by 120° or 240°, in this instance. It is to project lines of symmetry which structure various ways in which the object may be turned (repositioned, changed) yet remain the same – to project an underlying structure which is maintained through each turn. To read *Urizen* – or perhaps simply to read – I am called upon likewise to "turn" each element I encounter to reveal its relation to other elements, and to a structure which gives their interaction and arrangement a possible bearing. This means I am called upon to project such a structure in the first place – to look beyond the book and anticipate its locality, the reach in which its relations draw together, and to which its various turns might return.

Urizen's availability for a reading is then performed through reaching or drawing towards what is to come: prepared for by the promise of an arrival offered by the book's letters and returned by me through my gathering of the letter – the promise of a disclosure, of a meaningful appearance towards which the bygone might draw, or return. Simultaneously, this availability is performed through *Urizen*'s and my reaching or drawing back towards the bygone – the silent voices of the past, whether the attunement to an allusion, or the resonances of a specific word within a specific language; the factical givenness of the horizon of our encounter. Anticipating that they will have bearing – specifically that they will probably have bearing in unfolding a creation myth – I gather the letters I read towards a meaningful ordering – the ordering of a narrative which tells of ordering; recalling already available bearings, I am able to anticipate an ordering towards which to gather. I am able to reach out to the book, draw into its reach or draw it into mine.

In this way looking beyond *Urizen* to see *Urizen*, I am perhaps able even at the outset to glimpse hints of a possible unity towards which to read. Drawing especially on a familiarity with Genesis and with *Paradise Lost* – which seem significantly evoked in the narrative –[733] I might quickly surmise that the narrative tells of the ordering of a cosmos, and that *Urizen* may make at least some sort of sense as a creation myth. There is perhaps a noteworthy peculiarity to this unity

[733] WJT Mitchell provides a detailed account of parallels between *Urizen* and *Paradise Lost* in *Composite* (see especially 122ff.).

which *Urizen* offers: its theme – origin and ordering – concerns that which, through our anticipation of it, gives rise to the possibility of theme. The book in a sense promises – or threatens – to circle back on itself, to disclose its own origin, which is also its *telos*; it promises in a sense to circle back on createdness, on ordering itself, possibly to disclose origin itself in its own origin. Its theme – the ordering of a universe – promises the unity of unity itself.

I may also sense such a promise as in a way already visible in the manifest form of the book itself. Even prior to considering *Urizen* as a thematic unity (looking beyond *Urizen*, perhaps, to bring into view the book; or perhaps returning to *Urizen* as book before drawing beyond it towards *Urizen*) the book in front of me presents an appearance of unity. A book binds together multiple leaves of script, assembling a potentially complex and extensive collection of charactered figures into a unified physical structure; this means it delimits, too, omitting those figures and characters beyond its measure, thereby establishing the horizon of its ordering. A book promises ready access to a specific ordering of thought; it invites a reading – a recollection of the thought which has been foregathered in its composition. Its collection of figures underwrites the possibility of a such a recollection and urges that it take place within the limits encompassed by the book: it calls for the reading to take its measure. With its letters and leaves bound into a specific arrangement, the book through its design lays out a path to follow; it sounds the rhythm to which its figures turn – sets the pace, orders the timing of their movement. For those versed in books, in reading, in literature, it delivers on its promise to make available an arrangement of thoughts, ideas, insights which has already been figured: gathered and organized (already worked – drawn into its *ἔργον*). The letters, words, pages are organized to order a reading and facilitate it, to guide and progress it along a specific course. Through its arrangement, the book invites the reading to participate in a preordained chronology, to gather what has been figured into a prescribed order at a prescribed time – an order which the book literally describes. This does not mean that it accommodates only a linear arrangement; it allows the organization of its figures into sections – units, chapters, individual entries in reference works. Likewise, the book promises to preserve its structure and unity regardless of any idiosyncratic reading of it: I or anyone else can return to it through multiple readings; although my perception and interpretation of what I read may change, I conspicuously return to the same letters and words arranged in the same order on the same pages. I can even return to isolated

passages or pages, or skip back and forth to analyse or focus on specific sections; the book maintains an arrangement of its figures irrespective of my actions. It appears to preserve itself in this way across multiple contexts too. Like the letter, it discloses discursive iterability: it reveals the possibility that extensively and intricately ordered thought – figured and bound – can return as the same, independent of the relational reach within which it is first drawn into presence. Thus, it promises not only a stable order, but this order as salvation from forgetfulness. It promises presence without absence, thought formed – a disclosive relation to beings – *without* the threat, or rather the certainty, of the draw into oblivion.[734]

The stable independent self-presence of the book is not even reliant on that physical unity which discloses its self-presence: the book may be copied, repeatedly transferred as itself from one physical form to the next, yet always return as the same. Thus, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the book, in promising a unity maintained (always remembered, always to be returned to) through its bound form, then also discloses unity as drawn up *beyond* this form: discloses it as underlying structure. This structure can be re-membered (its parts, its members, reassembled into the whole) across incarnations, but always return as the same. By implication, the book then also projects and discloses the possibility of distinguishing between sensible – the bound volume, the letters on a page – and intelligible – the ordering, the whole which is re-membered. The book analyses itself as remembrance and members.

Thus, the figure of the book promises to disclose its unity through its ordering and constant recollection of itself, promises to disclose the book itself as ordered ordering.[735] It presents its meaningful appearance as structured and pre-ordered, and independent of the specific relations of the reach within which it is drawn forth into a reading. That is to say, it draws up a permanent discursive unity, and draws us into discursivity. Its figure urges us to relate to it by correlating our reading to its apparently independent structure – to read in a way which re-members, which re-places all constituent parts where they belong within the unity and thereby to recollect that

[734] See Derrida's engagement with the Platonic privileging of memory in "Plato's Pharmacy".
[735] This is not to say that a book by definition *is* such an ordering; nor is it to say that in the history of books, the form was invented in pursuit of such ordering – early codices which bind apparently unrelated sheets demonstrate this. However, from the perspective of history not as historiography but as *Geschichte* and *Geschick* – as dispositioning – we might say that the book discloses the possibility of permanent discursive unity, disposes us to such a promise, and calls for us to respond with a corresponding reading.

unity. Its figure disposes us then to discourse as the projection of independent permanent presence to which the understanding is called upon to correspond. The stability of the book's arrangement ensures that such projection readily yields an appearance comparable to the appearance viewed by others who regard the same book; the book thus also reveals the conduciveness of the projection of a discursive field outside of specific factical relations to establishing, sharing and preserving understanding.

If the letter discloses the possibility of discursivity as return, the book perhaps brings into sharp focus the promise of discursivity as returning unity, and correlatively of unity as discursivity. If the letter grants literature as a body of figured thought, the book literalizes this promise by granting it a physical form: the book is the body of literature. The unity of a book is not something depicted; it draws forth as the ordering of a complex of utterances into a stable physical structure. A book as a body of literature is manifest theme – *θέμα*, that which has been placed, laid down; it is theme *as* ordering, as genesis. In *The Book of Urizen* cosmogony is figured in letters and as letters, the universe is drawn forth into and as a book. The Greek etymon of "cosmos" (*κόσμος*) literally means "order", and only in an extended sense therefore suggests "world-order" or "universe" as the ordering of existence.[736] The book appears as an assemblage into which a multitude of letters and figures are bound into specific interrelationships and draw forth into a specific relational bearing, it appears as a figure of meaningful ordering and arguably grants us a view, an aspect, of *κόσμος*. Through its ordering, the book discloses – and allows us to anticipate, expects us to anticipate, calls on us to anticipate – *κόσμος* as gathering. We might recall in this regard that in Greek the "beginning" referred to in Genesis is *αρχη*, which in Heidegger's reading means "ordering" as well as "origin" – means origin as ordering and ordering as origin.[737] We might also recall the beginning (origin, ordering) of the Gospel of John. It echoes the "Εν αρχη" which opens Genesis in its Greek translation, but discloses the *αρχη* as gathering rather than making ("ἐποίησεν"), and perhaps more conspicuously than Genesis understands gathering as word, as discourse: "Εν αρχη ἦν ὁ λόγος": "In the beginning was the

[736] LSJ "κόσμος".
[737] See, for example, VWBP, 247/OECP, 189.

logos".[738] The book as *κόσμος* manifests the gathering of the word, of discourse: the ordering of all possible turns, all verses, into a universe – as binding and bound, as an ordered unity.

2. The First Change of Urizen

The unavailability of *Urizen* then perhaps most immediately draws into view when I attempt to locate the "unity" of its manifest form. Provided I am aware that the physical copy in front of me contains only one of several different arrangements of *The First Book of Urizen*, the fact that each copy differs frustrates my anticipation that I might place it as a stable, permanent, independent identity. In multiple other ways *Urizen* likewise disturbs not only its availability as a specific arrangement of figures into the form of the unity of a book, but also the dimensions of its mutual availability as outlined above.

As we trace this disturbance more carefully, though, we may note a third reach within which I am able to access the book, a reach within which I am already positioned, but which draws more clearly into view as *Urizen* threatens to withdraw its availability. We may catch a glimpse of this withdrawal, or initiate and experience of it, when we acknowledge some potential challenges to placing *Urizen* which we elided in the preceding discussion.

We might note, firstly, that while aspects of my factical positioning may dispose me to reading *Urizen* – for example, literacy in English, familiarity with certain canonical works of Western literature – others may not. We have remarked on the remarkable possibility that my reading may recall to presence Blake's words (and may re-echo the words they echo) in a locality far removed from that of their composition – specifically, I recover their presence in twenty-first century South Africa. Yet it seems obvious that the imaginative ordering I perform will differ from the ordering Blake performed in his composition of the book. I may be familiar with Genesis and *Paradise Lost*, but I may have not been initiated into the particular religious (or counter-religious) circles to which Blake belonged, may not be a participant in the practices which reflect his beliefs, am not privy to his experience of either. Perhaps I read a *different* Genesis and *Paradise Lost* – order these works imaginatively in ways which reveal a structure unlike the one

[738] This is not to suggest that Genesis cannot likewise be read in terms of phenomenality and of possible relationships between phenomenality and discourse.

Blake witnesses in his allusions. If I anticipate *Urizen* as ordered prior to my reading, I find that these and other aspects of my horizon, even while intersecting with Blake's, may both draw on and draw me towards meanings inconsistent or even incommensurate with his vision of the book's arrangement.

Some factical distance, of course, arguably characterizes the situation of any reading of any text. In the case of Blake's work, this distance may be particularly pronounced, though, and his work may appear particularly remote. There is frequently a strong sense in this work that the design towards which I am to project my reading is as intricate as it is idiosyncratic, that it can be imagined only by one fluent in a cryptic language and initiated into its occult meanings. Such inaccessibility appears not simply to be a product of the remoteness of Blake's world from mine. His friend Henry Crabb Robinson offers a description of him which suggests his removal from the common experience of his contemporaries too: he is a "Visionary" whom Robinson likens to the mystics "Jacob Bohmen[739] & Swedenborg" and someone who "lives as they did in a world of his own"; although his works have "a few admirers", they "have been the subject of derision to men in general".[740] Robinson also indicates that Blake considered his books "dictations from the Spirits" – that he wrote "for the Spirits only – he sees the words fly about the room the moment he has put them on paper And his book is then published".[741] If I understand, and speak, words as meaningful utterances – if I use them to communicate, to express – my own performance of the *Urizen* poet's call for "swift winged words" may differ profoundly from Blake's; if *Urizen*'s "dark visions" fly around the room as they "unfold", they may remain outside my grasp if I attempt to gather them as letters on the page, or to correlate to their discursively projected meanings.

Our remark here should not be read as a glib dismissal: a careful engagement with Blake's work suggests that it does not allow us to take for granted even that horizon of its availability which we named first – and prioritized because it appears so encompassing: that of the book's legibility and my literacy. We may begin to appreciate the challenges *Urizen* poses in this regard through a close examination of some details on Plate 25, although important aspects of the problems posed

[739] i.e. Jakob Böhme.
[740] G.E. Bentley Jr, *William Blake: The Critical Heritage*, 29.
[741] Ibid.

here pertain to the specific appearance and arrangement of the plate and are all but invisible in typescript copies. At the end of plate's first column, the "web" stretching from the sorrows of Urizen's soul is called "The Net of Religion".[742] The words convey a clear enough meaning. They purport to show the origin of religion – to show this origin as part of the narrative of Urizen's – and Los's – creation of the cosmos. The disclosure of religion as a web and net makes specific sense of religion as practice and institution: contrary to received views, it casts the gathering – the drawing together – as suggested in *religio* (which we might read as *re-legere* and associate with *λέγειν*) as entrapping. The words turn our perspective on the practices and rituals which reflect our spiritual beliefs, and which bring us together as a spiritual community, revealing their aspect as snares which in some way bind or limit our human potential ("twisted like to the human brain").[743] The appeal of religion is shown to be a lure, its covenant captivity.

Yet in context, the words are placed meaningfully not only within the progression of the narrative. They make sense in different ways too. For example, "net" and "web" form the nexus of multiple lines of association:[744] Urizen; curses; darkness, shadows and cold; jealousy, pity and sorrow; and human perception and understanding are interwoven such that the "cords" of association between them become "twisted" into "meshes". These lines of association form what they describe: a literal network – a site where the interrelationship of meanings, rather than their syntactical or narrative ordering – seems to emerge as the primary locality of sense. Thus, this textual weave perhaps also *per*forms what it describes: perhaps as readers, even as we "capture" and draw together these connections, we become entangled in this knotted mass of semantic and symbolic connections – drawn from association to association and held back from easy progression through the narrative. *Legere* means not only "to gather" but also "to read", and our responsive reordering of the characters on the page – our gathering of the letters – is in a sense "re-ligion". (We might try to place such resonances in relation with ordering myths further afield from those which Blake most ostensibly, and directly, references – for example in Egyptian

[742] Plate 25; VIII.9; E82.
[743] Plate 25; VIII.8; E82.
[744] A significant direction of Blake scholarship is aimed at exploring such resonances. Notable to this tradition are S. Foster Damon's *A William Blake Dictionary*, and Hilton's work which we have cited. Hilton provides a rigorous and compelling account of these sites of intersecting meaning. He refers to the a "nodal points" or, with reference to Freud, *Knotenpunkte* (*Literal*, 11, 137, 206, 237).

mythology, where the god of writing, Thoth,[745] "has strong associations with trapping and nets", and there are similarly forceful suggestions that writing is understood as "'capturing' signs".)[746] Paradoxically, and troublingly, the web of associations which reveals religion may itself then ensnare us in its net.

Turning to the details of the plate, the characters in which the phrase "The Net of Religion" is written reveal further possible localities of meaning outside those we anticipate being drawn up through the semantic, syntactic, symbolic – and even poetic – arrangement of words. Elaborate flourishes extend from the *T* and *N* – the latter already highly stylized – in ways which make the letters appear, in Hilton's apt phrasing, to "strain to become pure graphic form".[747] The letters of the word "Religion" achieve a more complete graphic transformation: the word is hyphenated as "Reli-gion", with "-gion" placed above "Reli"; the curves of the *R* and *g* intersect, and the linked circles form the image of a chain. The chain perhaps links symbolically with the cords forming the web or net. Such a connection may further be suggested by, or suggest, a pun which emerges through the division of the word "religion": the second syllable, a homophone of "gin" reveals a trap or snare hidden within the word religion – or "reli-gin" – itself. The close pairing of "Net" and "-gion" also echoes Plate 8, where we are told "Los formed nets & gins".[748] Now Los's binding of Urizen seems associated with the net of religion, and perhaps also with our reading. The figures turn this way and that, proliferate possible meanings, and call on us to turn them again and again to face different aspects which could reveal their interrelationship and underlying structure.

Less immediately meaningful correlations promise yet further possibilities for imaginative ordering. The *N* of "Net" is shaped to suggest the visual image of a chasm; it recalls the stylized way in which the word "Abyss" is formed in the book (or rather "Abyſs" – the long s melds with the *y*, which curves up to link with the *A*, forming a crevasse over which the *b* is suspended). The juxtaposition of figures promises their meaningful interrelationship and offers glimmers of novel

[745] See also Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy", 88–98.
[746] Richard Jasnow "'Caught in the Web of Words' – Remarks on the Imagery of Writing and Hieroglyphs in the Book of Thoth", 306.
[747] *Literal*, 3. Hilton draws an example of such straining from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, rather than *Urizen*.
[748] Plate 8; IV[a].4; E74.

ways of understanding each through its interplay. Correlatively, I am called upon to find a bearing which may ground the unconventional interaction of such figures: to seek an ordering which would connect abysses and nets (and, through association, webs, religion, shadows, sorrow, and so forth) – to turn "net" and "abyss" in ways which may reveal further symmetries. Perhaps as the web of relations weaves a net of associations which catches meanings, the convergence of multiple lines of symmetry forms a dense mass of bearings which, under the weight of too many possible meanings, collapses into a chasm. Perhaps an abyss is a pitfall, a kind of trap, and of course a trap is something into which one falls (one might even recall that in German a trap is a *Falle*).

Attention to almost any detail shifts sense to new possible localities of sense and engenders further possibilities for the meaningful interaction of figures. The *N*'s flourish seems also to join up with the scrollwork which divides the two columns of script on Plate 25; the scrolls branch out in ways which perhaps suggest the "cords" of Urizen's net of shadowy sorrow, as well as the web of associations which gather or ensnare us in a reading. The scrolling extends onto every page, possibly reinforcing this association with "cords"; such physical latticing of the pages of the book may invite further associations with "veins / Of blood" (III. 7)[749] and "ten thousand branches" (IVb. 7)[750] which shoot like nerves through Urizen's body as it forms. The book is Urizen's body, the scrolls his veins or nerves; or perhaps they are the chains which bind him, or the net of associations which ensnares us. Or perhaps there is a perspective from which the scrolls are all of these together. Within Urizen's body, the scrolls seem at times to conduct to or from organs of meaning – circling, underlining, pointing at or highlighting words or groups of words. On Plate 10, for example, they draw our attention to "fires", "ghastly", "bellows", "hammer" "horrible", "cavern", as well as "him" (twice in consecutive lines), "together" and "inclos'd" – a graphic invitation to seek a network of meanings (and the book is so pregnant with possible meaning that an attempt to trace such significance would undoubtedly prove fruitful). At times the scrolls are foliated or floriated, at times they burst forth as flames. Occasionally, the vine-like tendrils appear serpentine, and at times (including Plate 25), the embellishments resolve into figures, or the margins are inhabited by disconnected shapes of humans, animals, plants, or

[749] Plate 5; III.7; E73.
[750] Plate 11; IV[b]; E76.

unidentifiable entities. The presence of the scrollwork itself, of course, also calls to mind illuminated Bibles and prayer books, inviting comparisons between them.

Urizen then seems everywhere to offer possibilities for imaginative ordering – to demand interpretation not only on the basis of the semantic and syntactic arrangement of words, but potentially on the basis of any detail, which promises to reveal an intricate design if viewed from the right perspective. Possible sites of meaning, possible focal points of sense, multiply, and engender further aspects to which to turn every individual figure, which in turn comes to figure in a greater variety of ways. The bearing we anticipate certain figures to have is at times also withdrawn, or supplemented, or superseded by a different kind of bearing. An arrangement of lines which ordinarily has the character of a letter becomes a graphic image; words are divided, reorganized, and made to sound in ways disconnected from their ordinary sense; the locus of verbal meaning shifts from the sentence, or even the line of verse, to resonant, polysemous words or word fragments.[751] Devices such as repetition and parallel structure offer further ways of organizing sense – at times in ways which seem commensurate with the syntactic arrangement, at times undermining it. Decorative elements become possible indices or determiners, or are integrated into the syntax of the text as verbal connectors or punctuation marks. We have already acknowledged aspects of meaningfulness suggested by the scrolling and the calligraphy. The illuminations too are highly suggestive and seem to offer meanings that may be gleaned through the attentive application of an appropriate literacy. Everywhere there is a demand for interpretation, a reminder that *Urizen* awaits an interpretation.

Blake's statements on art confirm this sense. It seems that he tolerates no "unorganized Blots & Blurs" in his work: "Ideas cannot be Given but in their minutely Appropriate Words nor Can a Design be made without its minutely Appropriate Execution".[752] The burden he places on his audience is to "attend" to each detail, as "not a line is drawn without intention & that most discriminate and particular", and "Poetry admits not a Letter that is insignificant & particular".[753] Yet there is no obvious interpretative key with which to unlock the sense so insistently promised throughout; we cannot consistently infer what kind of bearing any figure may have – as visual

[751] See Hilton's discussion of Blake's polysemy, *Literal*, 11.
[752] "Public Address", E576.
[753] "A Vision of the Last Judgement", E560.

image, as syntactic marker, as denoting or connoting, as signifier or signified. Nor can we infer even – despite Blake's remarks – whether a figure has bearing. While on Plate 25 the *N* relates to the scrolling spine of the text, the *T* simply trails off in a vaguely decorative way. On Plate 13, two butterflies float between the lines "And a state of dismal woe" and "In terrors Los shrunk from his task". Perhaps these are swift winged words, whose fluttering presages meanings which may stir the vortex of *Urizen* into yet more violent turns; perhaps their flight is that of the soul[754] or the angels;[755] perhaps, as in Blake's *Milton*, they are Los's offspring.[756] Or perhaps they have no special significance.

Ambiguities prevail also in those larger components of sense I might expect to be foregathered in the book – such as setting, narrative structure, and the identity of characters; these also offer multiple possible ways of being arranged, and greatly expand possibilities for reordering the whole. *Urizen* is a creation narrative, and early on we are told of Urizen that "Times on times he divided, & measur'd / Space by space in his ninefold darkness". The placement of the verb and comma makes it unclear, however, whether Urizen is the agent of "divided" or its patient. Either meaning seems possible in the context: Urizen may be a demiurge who divides time and measures space to establish basic structures according to which a universe may be ordered; or Urizen may himself be in the process of being created – may be creating himself by dividing, and by dividing extending, and by extending measuring out space and disclosing it as measurable. Anticipating *Urizen* as ordered, and as a cosmogony, I may fairly easily make sense of this particular local ambiguity – reposition my perspective to reveal lines of symmetry drawing towards a larger structure. Urizen's ordering of a cosmos, I might for example infer, is at the same time an ordering of himself; or perhaps the disorienting effect of the lines evokes and reflects the chaos from which, through which or within which creation is taking place. Yet this possible identity is constantly complicated. Urizen is a creator and progenitor who orders creation, but an "unprolific" "shadow":[757] "Self-closd, all-repelling",[758] "shut"[759] in "dark

[754] Foster Damon suggests that Blake at times employs this Greek association of the butterfly with "the resurrection of the soul" ("Fly" in *A Blake Dictionary*).
[755] See Dante *Purgatorio* 10.125, as well Blake's own hint that the butterfly is a heavenly messenger in *Book of Thel* 1.18-19; E4.
[756] *Milton* Plate 26 [28]; E123. See also "Fly" in Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*.
[757] Plate 1; I.1 E70
[758] Plate 1; I.1; E70.
[759] Plate 1; I.5; E71.

solitude".[760] His self-creating withdrawal paradoxically entails his being "rent" from Los's side in a way that suggests their unity. Urizen creates the world or the universe or himself or the world as himself, but is shaped by Los into the world and a human body which is the world. Urizen is likened to the ordering creator of Genesis, to the resurrected Christ as well as Christ as Logos (though Orc is also suggestive of Christ), to God the Father as well as to the Holy Spirit in *Paradise Lost*, yet this an antagonistic figure, simultaneously also suggestive of Milton's Satan; Los, whose close connection with Urizen is literalized, is a blacksmithing demiurge, and is also Adam.[761] The event of creation in a sense occurs *ex nihilo*, with the shadowy void of Urizen as the nothing from which existence emerges; this nothing is, however, witnessed by Eternals – who are positioned counter to Urizen's shadow as God in Genesis is positioned counter to darkness ("Darkness was on the surface of the deep. God's Spirit was hovering over the surface of the waters").[762] Not only do the Eternals thus occupy the position of originating deity, but Urizen is also already "risen" in an apparently already eternal Eternity. *Urizen*'s Genesis appears then to entail ordering, rather than – or as well as – *ex nihilo* creation. As has been noted, Urizen's *ex nihilo* ordering is also a self-creation, while his "petrific abominable chaos", and later his "petrific" enclosure, "like a womb" and also "like a black globe", suggest perhaps the cosmic egg of other creation mythologies. Urizen and Los are also cosmic parents; and Urizen's book casts him as a deity who orders the cosmos by means of divine words.

Times on times, *Urizen* divides, promising order with each division; times on times, its aspects multiply, generating immeasurably diverse ways each aspect is able to turn with respect to the others. I am called upon to return to words, lines, illuminations, chapters, plates – to turn them to reveal different aspects, which may in turn reveal how their symmetries, asymmetries, and interactions are structured. I am positioned compulsively to seek more and more ways in which the figures I encounter can relate – drawn to seeking *all* the ways in which figures can interrelate, can be turned, arranged. Each turn demands a widening perspective – draws me towards a more encompassing unity, demands a view which can encompass what appear to be all aspects: the unity which orders each turn: the universe.

[760] Plate 4; II.4; E71.
[761] See Mitchell's detailed account of these and other connections (*Composite*, 123ff.).
[762] Genesis 1.2.

I perform, perhaps, the activity of Urizen, struggling in "conflictions with shapes / Bred from his forsaken wilderness";[763] my struggle to order the meanings of his world disclose the "winds of perturbation" which blast it – I stand in for him through being myself "rifted furious"[764] by the vortex of *Urizen*'s indistinct figures. I testify, through my own attempts to distinguish between these figures and find their measure, to Urizen's division of "beast" from "bird, fish, serpent, & element / Combustion, blast, vapour, and cloud").[765] My attempts to articulate such distinctions – to disclose them by putting them into words, as well as to join them into a unified arrangement – echo his "Words articulate".[766] I read to make sense of what I encounter – to position each figure so that it may contribute to my reading – much as Urizen orders nature when he binds "the winds merciless" and divides the waters to reveal a "wide world".[767] My search for a grounding design which makes sense of the shifting patterns of *Urizen* corresponds with Urizen's search for "a solid without fluctuation". I witness the refusal of the book's figures to draw together into such a stable arrangement – witness that they cannot "keep / His iron laws one moment";[768] I cast my own frustrated net over the inhabitants of the pages in the hope of catching and drawing together their significance.

3. The second change of Urizen

Yet still *Urizen* refuses to withdraw into unavailability. I describe the challenges it poses to my reading; I categorize them, analyze them, order them, articulate their peculiarities to make sense even of *Urizen*'s implicit deconstruction of its own structure. I anticipate that the simultaneous promise of coherence and its refusal which I encounter may themselves reveal a structure, an ordering, a form of coherence; I order a universe of possible turns as turbulent.

Moreover, this ordering does not in fact take place precisely in the manner just described – or does not take place *only* in that manner: *ex nihilo*, as it were, through a reading in which my interaction with *Urizen* appears suspended beyond any relations outside of our immediate interaction. This much is apparent in the references outside *Urizen* – to various works of

[763] Plate 3; I.3; E70.
[764] Plate 3; I.2; E70.
[765] Plate 3; I.3; E70.
[766] Plate 4; III.3; E71.
[767] Plate 4; III.5; E72.
[768] Plate 23; VIII.4; E81.

scholarship – which ran alongside (or beneath) my commentary in footnotes. It was within a horizon of relations that we first placed *Urizen*, and my reading of it in fact proceeds – even, and perhaps especially, as it evades my understanding – in a manner determined by my factical positioning.

My situation as literate within an extraordinarily far-reaching realm of literature (broadly speaking – a realm of written works, of figured thought engaging with every conceivable subject) – is such that even those aspects of *Urizen* which seem most puzzling and out of reach promise to be addressed, examined, elucidated, or in some way made sense of within the field of discourse on Blake. Scholarly introductions, monographs, essays, articles, and even summaries which grant at least some access to novice readers, are readily available. Even before I consult any of these, I anticipate that I may turn to critical works (or if I were a casual reader, a host of more introductory material) to advise on placing *Urizen* such that my attempt to read it will not prove futile – such that even my disorientation in the face of its bewildering turns may offer some form of return.

If I am called upon in my reading to establish order, the kind of ordering I must perform is not that of an *ex nihilo* deity. Nor am I even faced with inchoate depths, required to call forth manifestness itself – the light (*φώς*) which could grant appearance to what is orderable.[769] Possible sites of meaning have already been marked within the discursive field in which I am positioned, and possible ways of describing these reaches and sensibly arranging the figures manifest within them are similarly already available. Signs have already been captured in the vast network of the literary reach, extending onto the internet – an aptly named worldwide web; I encounter not isolated words and figures, but a collative discourse which offers another locality (or numerous localities) where I may gather again (*re-legere*) that which is manifest towards an imaginative ordering. My reading recollects what has already been spoken before – prophesied.

Even the unavailability of *Urizen* is readily available: scholars have commented extensively on the difficulties of reading Blake – described and analysed the peculiarities of these challenges, demonstrated where and how they arise, revealed possible ways of making sense of them without

[769] Cf. Genesis Chapter 1.

necessarily resolving them. The William Blake Archive[770] allows me to scrutinize side by side scanned images of different copies of *Urizen* on its website. Blake concordances suggest possible nexuses of meaning which may otherwise escape my notice.

The discursive field within which *Urizen* is available to me is thus far more encompassing than we indicated at the outset. It entails not only a fundamental literacy and a familiarity with a "literature" which grants a common horizon for a meaningful encounter, but a realm of representations – of descriptive, explanatory, and other elucidatory works – which allow me to bridge virtually any distance which may span between my factical position and the relational reach within which what I encounter originally emerged into appearance. If, as uninitiated into Blake's world – and unattuned to the bearing he intended for his figures – I have any sense that my reading of *Urizen* cannot be properly performed, it can, due to my positioning within the extensive discursive domain of the early twenty-first century, be thoroughly informed. My reading can in fact be so thoroughly informed that I may sense that *Urizen* is more immediately available to me than it might have been to contemporaries whose lifeworld shared more commonalities with his than mine does – and of course it is more accessible to me within this domain because it is far easier for me to access it, to acquire a copy of it or to view high resolution scans of each of its versions online.

This discursive domain, then, is the additional dimension of *Urizen*'s availability – though perhaps it may also be considered a different aspect of the others outlined in the preceding discussion. These suggested in various ways an availability in some sense constituted beyond the immediately present physical book in front of me: drawing towards *Urizen* by drawing away from it, by looking beyond *Urizen* into its horizon, and looking beyond the book towards its meaningful ordering. The present book, we indicated, figures such meaningful ordering as a permanently present and accessible unity, even as it invites the anticipation of that unity as constituted "beyond" its physical form. The perpetually expanding discursive realm of late modernity figures a domain which appears capable of encapsulating the view afforded by all three these ways of "looking beyond" – an all-encompassing locality, permanently present and available in the manner suggested by the book; a horizon which contains all horizons, a vertex of

[770] https://www.blakearchive.org/

transcendence towards which all figures eventually turn. Discursivity literally forms such a domain: forms it as a vast collection of letters, as literature; more recently, forms it also as a vast collection of data, of information (though as we have seen, in Heidegger's reading language manifests within the late modern world of technology *as* information, and the distinction between literature and data collapses). As we have suggested, this domain allows me effectively to extend my horizon to fill any gaps in my familiarity – gaps concerning everything ranging from literary genre to religious doctrine – which may inhibit my making sense of *Urizen*. I look beyond *Urizen* not into an immediate horizon, but into a literary horizon. Likewise, whatever efforts I may put into projecting meaningful ways of arranging *Urizen*'s figures can always be supplemented – and may very possibly from the outset be directed – by descriptions of its unity already available in the discursive field. Even my initial encounter with the bewildering twists of *Urizen*'s figures subtly and silently related to this field – took place, as it were, within this field. I look beyond *Urizen* to catch sight of it – draw beyond *Urizen* to reach it – into a realm of literature.

Looking beyond *Urizen* in this way, my attention can be drawn to possible meaning-bearing figures which may have been "forgotten" to me before – in the sense suggested in Heidegger's thought: utterly covered over, unable to be "got to" because the distance between my context of significance and the bearings of these particular figure is such that there is no sign even of their invisibility to me. I am also able to gain insight into likely bearings of these figures, as well as those I have already observed. For example, Essick points out additionals line of symmetry between *Urizen* and the Bible: certain stylistic features – such as the "frequent use" of "pleonasm", often "underscored by epanaphora" – seem modelled on, and attempt to evoke, the Hebrew Bible and its English translations;[771] likewise, "[e]ven on the purely grammatical level, the language of *Urizen* evokes Hebrew constructions."[772]

Some of the challenges posed by *Urizen*'s language are in turn revealed as structured by its juxtaposition with the Bible; even where I cannot make sense of it, *Urizen* may still make sense – appear as meaningfully arranged – in this way. Possible reasons for such juxtaposition promise

[771] *Adam*, 145–146.
[772] Ibid. 146.

further ways of easing difficulties: *Urizen* perhaps reflects a concern with "the character of biblical texts",[773] and participates in contemporary religious debates. It may have been composed as a "Bible of Hell" aimed at shaking the foundations of religion."[774] *Urizen*'s incoherent structure and confusing narrative strands may then "parody"[775] Genesis, exposing the inconsistencies of its narrative and revealing it as an "edited collection of mythological narratives"[776]. The unavailability of a clear narrative in *Urizen* draws it into availability as a parody.[777]

The literature thus promises to remember even the most obscure of *Urizen*'s figures, of which I may otherwise be entirely oblivious. In this way, the book's self-refusal draws out of reach once again, as the insights into its meaningful ordering draw it into availability. Earlier chapters have signalled possible concerns associated with accessing *Urizen* within the expansive reach of literature (on the subject, on any subject). Compensating for my exclusion from the singular, contextual relations which conditioned *Urizen*'s composition by becoming more informed, I am perhaps attuned to relating to *Urizen* – drawing it into my reach, disclosing it – in a specific way: with an eye to comprehending or grasping it. I am disposed, perhaps, to anticipate drawing the abundance of possible aspects of *Urizen* which I discover in my reading into a *fuller* view – a more informed view in that it conducts me into the *form*: the ordering essence, unifying structure, nature, *μορφή*. My anxiety concerning the correspondence between my own performance of *Urizen* and the "performance" of Blake's composition of the book, perhaps already reflects such a disposition within this field. If this is the case, my anxiety reveals my prior attunement to the metaphysical interpretation of being, and the accompanying metaphysical

[773] McGann, "Idea", 310.
[774] Ibid, 311–312. Many other scholars, including Essick, likewise consider *Urizen* to be part of the Bible of Hell which Blake promises at the end of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (*Adam*, 140). The reference to *The Marriage* reads: "I have also: The Bible of Hell: which the world shall have whether they will or no" (E44).
[775] McGann, "Idea", 323.
[776] Ibid, 318.
[777] Specific aspects of this parodic structure can even be returned to – and distinguished – and their interrelationship revealed, for example with reference to Mitchell's painstaking analysis, which accounts also for the interplay between *Urizen*, the Bible and *Paradise Lost*. Mitchell not only draws attention to, but makes sense of, multiple possible ways of organizing the narrative: a "three-phase sequence of pre-creation, creation, and history"; the "nine chapters" which seem to correlate to "Urizen's 'ninefold darkness'"; and a "broader… two-part structure". Mitchell even demonstrates a fundamental, unifying design in the form of an "an elaborate counterpoint of intertwining narrative lines" (*Composite*, 128).

relation to language as representation which we highlighted in earlier chapters; it assumes that ordering means permanent, stable underlying structure – means self-identical, present unity.

However, the literary realm and critical field also place within my reach possible ways of making sense of *Urizen* with respect to the concerns of this thesis and our particular interest in the book. McGann's interpretation of it as a biblical parody, for example, also suggests that Blake's ultimate aim is to draw readers towards deep mythical structures which underlie Genesis and other mythical narratives: to reveal "the infinite that is hidden beneath the obscured surfaces of all texts".[778] *Urizen*'s parodic aspect may then perhaps be comparable to a *Destruktion* which disturbs received interpretations in ways which allow a *Widerholen*, a recollection of pretheoretical (or pre-religious) experience through an attentive, appropriative, poetizing engagement with language. In McGann's words, "To read *The Book of Urizen* is to discover a Bible one has never known before; it is to learn to read the Bible in an entirely new way."[779]

Ways of approaching *Urizen* even more clearly commensurate with the approach we have adopted in this chapter and the thesis – of drawing it into the reach not only of a general reading, but of a responsive en-counter, a performative event – are also available. Notably the work of scholars who highlight the performative rather than conceptual design of Blake's works provides insights that enable a more attentive responsiveness –a co-performance.

Critics such as Hilton show how Blake – in many respects prefiguring Heidegger – seems to understand the poetic work as a site where the human being may be disowned of their everyday relation to language and being, and appropriated to a relation attuned to a demand to ground beings – a demand issued perhaps by the "Divine Imagination, the Poetic Genius": a demand, in the face of withdrawal, to engage in "creating and building", in a performative "activity" of "literal imagination".[780] These critics intimate, therefore, ways of conceiving of *Urizen*'s de-sign as rifting – as abyssal, as entailing the withdrawal of ground, as constituted through the interplay of presence and absence. In the light of such arguments, I might interpret the demand experienced in the face of the proliferating figures of *Urizen* – to turn each in relation to the

[778] McGann, "Idea", 316.
[779] Ibid, 324.
[780] *Literal*, 237.

others in order to reveal their underlying structure – as designed, rather, both to reveal the absence of any underlying structure stable enough to bear all relations, and to call for the reader to participate in the ordering of a unity which has not yet arrived. *Urizen*'s cosmos would then be not a present unity or present structure, but would be constituted in relation to absence, and reach temporally into both what has been and what remains to come.

Hilton reveals the design ordering Blake's figures as one which disturbs, repositions, and transports the reader – a structure akin to the rift-design which Heidegger sees as underlying art. Hilton describes that anticipation of unity we have attempted to trace (though in different terms, and perhaps from a different positioning in relation to the work), and traces specific ways in which Blake interrupts it. Almost paraphrasing Heidegger, he states that "the presence we sense is not meaning so much as the being of the Poetic (making, engendering) Genius": what is poetized is not a content, but the essential unfolding of language as the open, as disclosedness. Hilton even draws conclusions similar to Heidegger's concerning the relation between that experience of profound discontinuity which demands a responsive grounding (or imaginative ordering) and the aspecting of the divine: "The existing name for this encounter, this effect, is myth".[781] Hilton's remark hints that we may indeed productively read *Urizen* as – in Heidegger's words – "naming the holy".

De Luca's interpretation of Blake in terms of the sublime more definitively connects the "entirely new way of reading the Bible" to which McGann alludes with an experience of the self-withholding of the appearance of be-ing. De Luca provides an exhaustive account of aspects of Blake's style, informed by an equally comprehensive account of his influences and motivations, in a way that discloses the design of his works – including *Urizen* – as intending a specific kind of experience, rather than a representation. He makes sense of precisely the kind of unavailability we have marked in *Urizen*'s entropic figuration in terms of its disruption of everyday experience and potential disclosure of the ineffable as ineffable. His words articulate almost precisely the reading experience we have attempted to trace:

[781] Ibid, 234.

> The more that Blake withholds from his texts those concessions to referentiality that create the illusion of representing objects known to our understanding – such as syntactic and narrative continuity, familiarity of allusion and the like – the more his words, letters and lines take on a distinct intensity of their own, and the more thoroughly they recede from the grasp of the Corporeal Understanding.[782]

Another critic who emphasizes the performative demands of Blake's work is Stephen Behrendt, who offers a way of interpreting the manner in which the specific medium of Blake's illuminated works is designed to induce a creative, ordering performance on the part of the reader. Behrendt suggests that the interaction in Blake's illuminated works between image and text positions us to respond simultaneously to the "different varieties of aesthetic, intellectual and affective responses" of each medium, and to look beyond both towards a projected "third text" which "partakes of both the verbal and the visual". Such a third text, it seems, orders the verbal and visual – but in a way that projects this order neither as "the sum of, nor identical" with either.[783] With reference to Heidegger's thinking, we might reinterpret the interpretive demand Behrendt identifies in Blake's illuminated works (the demand to participate in generating the significance of the relation between words and image) as the demand groundlessly to ground. We might also reinterpret and appropriate the way he understands the repositioning which results from that demand, considering it not as a shift of the locality of meaning into a third text, but as a drawing up and drawing into the between. That is to say, Behrendt's insights provide the hints we need to develop and progress a theoretical argument of our own based in Heidegger's thinking. We are now able to conceive of the interaction between words and illuminations in Blake as the abyssal draw of groundlessness, the carrying out of difference.

Likewise, we might now shed light on the turbulent interplay of other figures. We are drawn, for example, by the interaction of the scrollwork and the written work – as tendrils spread and intertwine with letters or point at them, as characters extend beyond the measure of their referential function to resolve into vines or snakes or flames or flourishes – into the between which marks the difference between decoration and sign. As each figure disturbs or transgresses

[782] *Words of Eternity*, 43.
[783] "'Something in my Eye: Irritants in Blake's Illuminated Texts", 81.

the boundary which delimits its individual presence, we are called upon to ground anew its difference from other figures, and confronted with the ultimate groundlessness of such distinctions. Yet distinctions are not completely obliterated – although the modality of their presence flickers, the scrolls and letters never become simply identical. The promise of an ordering, a grounding decision concerning difference, remains, and so we are called upon to ground: to distinguish, to decide, to anticipate an ordering where none is available, where none presents itself within our reach. Likewise, where Blake withdraws or transforms what we might consider the ordinary functions of specific figures, we might suggest that the rift of a between is drawn up as the figure differs from itself. What is figured in *Urizen*, then, is the drawing or rifting of the abyssal refusal of ground, and the draw into the abyssal refusal of ground; *Urizen*'s figures draw up and draw into the between. Within the between, where *Urizen* refuses the present arrival of its meanings, its unavailability finally appears within reach – or rather, I am transported into the chiastic reach it draws up. What is figured is origin, originating – the ordering of a cosmos is literalized in reading, my ordering of the book. As I was prophesied in the *Preludium* as one who would recall the call to the Eternals which recall the invocation of the Muses, I am prophesied by the book: its withdrawal of unity and demand for ordering call me to a responsive act of genesis.

Yet if I am tempted on this basis to view myself as the unity which orders *Urizen*, as the centre around which it gathers through my reading, I might reread the letters "The Net of Religion" to which I attended briefly before. The word "Religion" – which connotes and denotes a form of unity, of organization: which expresses the hope or anticipation or promise of an ultimate unity or an original one – performs in *Urizen* the rifting division of its own unity described above. In the quoted line, "Religion" denotes, connotes, visually images, literalizes, and divides itself. These shifts disturb our usually unacknowledged and unexamined expectation that a word speaks or figures univocally – not simply in the sense of denoting a single meaning, but in the sense of drawing into presence as a unity, drawing into a unity that is preordained: a unity of shape, of function, a modality of presence which is stable and enduring. Religion, gathering again (*re-*) what has been gathered and laid before (*legere*, *λέγειν*) is disclosed as essentially ambiguous: not ambiguous in the sense of deviating from an established univocity, but ambiguous in the sense that it unfolds from or towards ambiguity, and can figure the possibility of unity only because it

unfolds in this way.[784] Re-ligion, gathering again – gathering into a reading (*Lesen*) – what has been spoken, said, written, *discloses* the essential ambiguity of words, of figures, of language, in that it shows how language points all around (*Be-deuten*; Heidegger reads *be-* as *ἀμφί-*)[785] towards ab-ground or abyss (as "Religion" points in *Urizen* to "Net", to the *N* which is an abyss, which is *Abyſs*). Re-ligion shows also how all language draws or drives (*agere*) all around (*ambi-*) towards the abyss: into the between which rifts as the unsustainability – the ungroundability – of univocity, unity, universe. I cannot be the deity of *Urizen*; I am not the independent agent of its ordering – rather, ordering is what I am called upon to do. This ordering, which we might also call reading, is another name for witnessing or testifying in the sense we considered at the outset of our reading – it is responsively attending to the possibility of ordering, and thereby disclosing this possibility by disclosing an order. My ordering is thus nothing like the potent act of a deity, cannot be considered to be creative or original in a sense which would suggest my agency as primary – as asserting meaning, controlling meaning, as production, *ποίησις*, as bringing something forth *ex nihilo*. Ordering is simply disclosing the interplay between presence and absence – is a co-performance, is simply responding to that interplay from within the between. Inasmuch as I perform an ordering of *Urizen*, create, originate, I do so only as one inspired – I do so only inasmuch as an aspect of the self-withholding of be-ing, an attunement towards the essence of being, has been granted me, and granted me within a specific disposition. Inasmuch as I perform an ordering, this performance is simply an echo of the voices which prophesy mine (and resonate throughout the discursive network within which I am placed) and a responsive figuration of dark visions of the Eternals – of the self-showing of the inapparent.

4. Hol(e)y names

What is figured, then, what is literalized, is the essential unfolding of language; what is figured is a responsive positioning to be-ing. We anticipated, however, that the figuration of *Urizen* would also entail a naming of the holy. Naming, we recall, calls what was previously not called into proximity – calls it into the reach of possible relations into which it may draw forth into presence. Although it calls out to what is not yet present and does so through recollection – what is not yet present is already *anticipated*, and so naming recalls that anticipation. Naming the holy

[784] Cf. Heidegger *Andenken*, 25–26/*Remembrance*, 22
[785] ZWDS, 106.

grants an aspect to the aspectless granting-refusal, presencing-absencing which allows beings to be called into any relations – called into proximity, drawn towards presencing – in the first place; it grants an aspect then also to the ek-static unfolding of manifestness. It draws both on the anticipation that beings may be present as well as on ways of anticipating manifestness available – though in obscured ways – in a given language. Such naming, in that it responds to a non-presence, and attunes to absence and withholding, is unsettling. Finally, by granting an aspect to be-ing's self-withholding, such naming disposes or attunes – or at least has the potential to dispose or attune: it discloses possible ways of interpreting the manifestness of beings, and thereby discloses possible ways of relating to them.[786]

If *Urizen* does name the holy, it may draw into availability in another modality – as an artwork (in Heidegger's sense), and therefore perhaps as "literature" in the sense of a literary artwork. There is much in its rifting design which recalls Heidegger's discussion of the artwork. *Urizen*'s figures mark absence and recall it to our attention. They do not represent – they refuse the presentation of the present, hold us back from present availability, and draw (and draw us) towards possibilities. They disturb ground, collapse it, yet call for groundless grounding. These figures demand decision, demand ordering; *Urizen* is in this sense original: it promises, calls for, demands originating – the renewed anticipation of a possible ordering disclosed through renewed anticipation of the orderings which have been. For Heidegger, the artwork also encloses a god – draws up a site for his appearance. Thus, as we continue tracing *Urizen*'s figures, now with an eye to its naming of the gods, we hope to attend also to whether these figures may be the literary figures of a literary work, and whether – despite readings which suggest that it is parodic – *Urizen* is the site for communion with a divinity.

Urizen is a myth which tells of the ordering of the universe. It figures a way (or ways) in which we might understand that ordering, and in which we might attempt to relate to that which grants it – not only through the manner in which its figures disturb and dislocate, demand decision, and draw into ek-stasis, but also in its figuring of a set of divinities, in particular Urizen and Los (on whom we will focus). We have hinted that the identities of these divinities are somewhat unstable – notably, at times they appear as gods or immortals, at time as human. They seem to

[786] See, for example, *Parmenides*, 165ff./111ff.

occupy, then, a between – between god and mortal – which can be likened to the position of those whom Heidegger calls the divinities. We might also relate them to the gods and demons which Heidegger discusses in *Parmenides*: like these figures, they grant an aspect to the aspectless – grant a "look" by which to recognize the inapparent gifting-refusal of be-ing in the manifestness of beings.[787] In this sense, through its naming of divinities – both through the proper names it assigns them, and through various appellations it gives them and specific ways it figures them – *Urizen* may provide the site for the self-withholding appearance of gifting-refusal.

To begin with, we might note some of the well-established associations evoked by the name of the first of the two ordering divinities, "Urizen". Critics have remarked on its polysemous quality: it can be read as "your reason" or "ur-reason"; as "horizon"; as "your eyes in"; and as "you risen".[788] Before considering in more detail the possible significance of these ways of sounding Urizen's name, we might also mark – as Essick does – that Urizen is first "named" in *Urizen*'s narrative as a "shadow": "Lo, shadow of horror is risen". Essick interprets this naming in a way commensurate with its interpretation as figuring that which grants the possibility of manifestness. The shadow, appearing first, is a sign (the sign of the "object creating the shadow"), but an "insubstantial" one which "records an absence". The "primal act in *Urizen*" is a semiotic ordering, or the constitution of the cosmos through the establishment of "*difference* as the fundamental ontological category."[789]

However, we might suggest that this semiotic ordering on the basis of difference itself points to the self-withholding of be-ing which opens the possibility of signification. Certainly, Urizen is figured from the outset as withdrawn ("Unknown, unprolific! / Self-closed, all-repelling"; "vacuum"; "abstracted") and withdrawing, and his generation or ordering of a cosmos (or himself, or himself as world or book) appears frequently to be effected *as* withdrawal or as a deepening of withdrawal.

If we are tempted to conclude that Urizen is therefore a direct representation of abyssal self-withholding, though, we might consider that he is also named, in the third line of the narrative –

[787] For example, *Parmenides*, 152–155/102–104.
[788] Many critics have observed these, but Hilton provides a useful summary (*Literal*, 254–255).
[789] Essick, *Adam*, 149.

and therefore before he is named "Urizen" – "Demon". We recall here Heidegger's analysis of the demonic as suggestive of visibility of beings – their manifestness – which allows us an indirect glimpse of the utterly inapparent, self-withholding be-ing. As "Demon", Urizen is the shadow of the insubstantial, the utterly self-withholding: that which gives the sign of being – that which signals it, which points to it in beings – but cannot be equated with it. As demonic index, Urizen points at the withholding of be-ing, rather than standing in for "its" presence.

This means that if *Urizen* attempts to show what prefaces Genesis,[790] what happens before the beginning, then this is precisely what it does. Because what it shows in its showing of the appearance of appearance is the impossibility of be-ing's being shown – the withdrawal of being from any naming. What it shows, in also showing itself as showing, is the sign which points outside itself, to something which perhaps precedes it, which must always precede it – even at the very beginning, or indeed before the beginning. What is shows is the impossibility of a beginning in the form of a first cause; the shadow does not appear at the beginning but is already there when we begin. At the beginning, a withdrawal has already taken place.

Urizen then names the ordering of cosmos – the rising into manifestness – as aspecting withdrawal. But he gives this withdrawal a specific name or names – a specific aspect: Urizen: your reason, ur reason, horizon; these in relation with Los. Preceding chapters will already suggest significant resonances in this regard. Horizon, as earlier discussions in this chapter have also indicated, suggests delimitation – the marking out of a boundary – but also the kind of delimitation which allows beings to draw forth into presence. When we see beings – or when they appear to us as manifest – we look beyond them into the horizon of significance within which we encounter them; the relations which constitute this horizon provide the bearings which ground and make possible the appearance of the being. As we discussed in Chapter 2, in metaphysics, reason promises the possibility of grounding beings independently – or at least with the appearance of independence. The interpretation of being as beingness and language as representation offers reason as a permanent stable ground for presence; moreover, reason offers the projection of beings as objects for the regard of a subject: the solid without fluctuation.

[790] Critics like Essick (*Adam*, 141) and McGann ("Idea", 317) have suggested that *Urizen* is concerned with the events which precede Genesis.

"Urizen" literalizes the interpretation of horizon, the delimitation which offers the outward look ([idea], *Aussehen*) of beings, as reason; it names the visibility of beings, which aspects self-withholding manifestness, "your reason". Urizen generates by withdrawing – withdrawing, perhaps, from relationality, from horizonal bearing, withdrawing into the all-encompassing horizon of the projection of existence as a realm of objects. My own "performance" of Urizen, my attempt to order the cosmos that is *Urizen*, itself perhaps discloses how horizon may be interpreted as reason (or my reason, in the case of my performance). My Urizenic approach was to relate figures and to relate to figures – to disclose them – by means of disclosing their underlying structure. Though we did not follow through on the implications at the time, by directing myself towards structure, I prioritized structure – anticipated or disclosed beforehand the being (the manifestness, the ordering) of the figures I encountered *as* structure. Corollaries of such positioning are that structure and figure are disclosed as divisible – as distinct presences or modalities of appearance – and structure is subtly prioritized. Such prioritization in turn expects, promises or demands the preservation of structure as the presencing of the figure (or entity): the structure is what is maintained through all the transformations of the entity – the unity of *Urizen* I sought in directing its multitude of turns. The structure is what may always be returned to as the same – it is manifestness as the solipsistic withdrawal into the selfsame. Urizen is ur-reason: the most original, in that it most originates and is the highest form of ordering; Urizen is ur-reason in the sense of the origin to which all ordering returns, is projected so that it may return. Simultaneously, the disclosure of presence as permanent underlying structure also projects me – as one who witnesses, testifies to, discloses presence as permanent underlying structure – as a subject before which the field of objects is placed. Yet another solipsism is revealed: the manifestness of beings as present to reasoning discloses the subject as the same towards which representations may perpetually return. Urizen is *your* reason, projecting you as subject, and as subject projecting you as *ur*-reason: the *telos* and thus ultimate origin of ordering.

Urizen is not only withdrawn into self, however – does not achieve, or achieve fully, the solipsistic ordering of permanent unity towards which he appears to strive. He is not (only) an independent self-identical unity but forms a kind of unity with Los; his division from Los – an "obscure separation" – is one of the moments of creation in the narrative: one of the events of

genesis. In this cosmic ordering, Los becomes the creative agent, shaping Urizen, binding him into form. The naming together of Urizen and Los perhaps recollects and figures the possibility of ordering, of manifestness – even of the projection of presence as solid without fluctuation, as solipsistic return always to the same – as loss. It recollects cosmos, then, as entailing a reciprocity, as well as an essential absence – as entailing a relation or responsiveness to absence.

The name Los perhaps specifically discloses this relation to absence as painful – recalling that in addition to seeking a "solid without fluctuation", Urizen seeks "joy without pain". Critics have suggested that Los perhaps evokes the "Los(s) of paradise"[791] or the "Los of Eden"; in the passage where Los first appears, Urizen is "rent from Eternity", and "The Eternals said: What is this? Death / Urizen is a clod of clay." Urizen – horizon – delimits, establishes measure, orders; Urizen – horizon – is also delimited, made finite, mortal, subjected to Los(s). The painful finitude of existence, the withholding of a permanent, stable relation to entities – and even to myself – opens the horizon for their disclosure. The experience of loss, of absence, of the slipping away or refusal of beings, of the receding of my finite existence and the approach of my death – and therefore of the possibility of no more possibilities – is what calls upon me to order imaginatively, and what allows beings to appear to me in the first place. "Experiencing… Los", in Hilton's words, "we find ourselves creating and building, beginning and ending in an activity of literal imagination."[792]

Significantly, the unity in distinction of Urizen and Los is insistently figured in connection with rifting and with the Abyss. As they differentiate – as the difference between them is painfully carried out, with Urizen "rent from" Los's "side" – there appears "a fathomless void". This void is perhaps the span of Eternity standing "wide apart"; it is perhaps also the aforementioned "Abyss" named several times in several ways ("The Abyss of Los", "the endless Abyss of Space").[793] Once awoken from his death, Urizen proceeds to measure, divide, and explore the Abyss – to ground the absence of ground by projecting its absence as measurable. Yet even as it is subjected to this measure, it serves as a reminder of the emptiness, the nothing, the limit, the otherness which cannot be reduced to a measure, which draws forth presencing.

[791] McGann, "Idea", 318.
[792] *Literal*, 237.
[793] Plate 15; V.7; E78.

Bearing mind discussions in Chapter 3 concerning language as figuring emptiness – as refiguring (recalling and anticipating anew) the abyss of be-ing – we might consider the names of Urizen and Los also in terms of language. These names may be interpreted as naming the relation to be-ing *as* language – as naming ways in which language positions and is positioned to disclose (to order beings such that they draw into presencing). Essick's reading of *Urizen* as concerning the semiotic ordering of the cosmos of course already suggests one way of understanding Urizen as a discursive divinity; however, our perspective of course concerns not semiosis, but presencing-absencing gifting refusal.

We have already remarked in preceding discussions on the apparent association for Blake between Los and Poetic Genius; in *Urizen*, Los plays the role of demiurge, performs the imaginative ordering. Hilton once again offers numerous further insights into the intricate ambiguous play around Los's name and the quality of his divinity: Los is an anagram of *sol* – the sun; if we "follow some Swedenborgian traces" – and perhaps, returning from Hilton to Heidegger, follow some Platonic traces too, towards the sun as the source of phenomenality – we find "sun" suggesting "the spiritual sun", which is Christ, which suggests an interpretation of "the word 'sun' as another name for the Word".[794] Los then suggests Logos. (This connection is perhaps further indicated by the name of "Los's poetic city" in *Jerusalem*: Golgonooza, whose "inner form", Hilton suggests, is "*logon zooas* (*λόγον ζωῆς*)".[795] If Los is Logos, however, it is a logos itself marked by loss: logos with the "go" excised, perhaps with the drive towards *telos* removed. Articulating his name in this way uncovers (or invents) another possible aspect figured in a cross-linguistic pun: *te-los*. *Te* is the Latin ablative form of the pronoun meaning "you"; the ablative indicates movement away from or separation – rending, rifting, loss. *Te-los*: loss from you (paired with and distinguished from "you risen", perhaps). Or we might even detect a cacographic rather than a cross-linguistic play, and read *te-los* as *the los(s)*. Either interpretation would point to loss as itself an aspect of *telos*: would playfully invite us to reinterpret the draw towards presence – the end as the origin and ordering towards which an entity gathers into presence – as in part constituted through loss. Circling back to the naming of Logos as Los – as

[794] *Literal*, 236–237. Hilton traces the weave of far more intricate and subtle connections. We pick up here only on those that are relevant, however, with inevitable loss of nuance.
[795] Ibid, 236.

painful and incomplete logos – this appellation then both figures the word as that through which beings may draw into appearance (through the imaginative ordering of language) and figures the word (and manifestness) as essentially determined by loss (with imaginative ordering necessarily drawing away from some possibilities as it discloses others while preserving and holding open the abyss).

Recalling the Latin translation of *λόγος* as *ratio*, reason, this identification of Los with Logos reveals language itself as another dimension of the unity in distinction of Los and Urizen. This unity in turn recollects the Urizenic approach to ordering – dividing, measuring, seeking a solid without fluctuation – as discursive. Urizen *also* names logos – names it, perhaps, as the hope of a logos without loss: the hope only to go, to rise into presence without receding, to arrive at the end, the limit into which an appearance has already drawn and will remain drawn.

Circling back on our consideration of Urizen as the ordering which grants manifestness as reason, we must now reconsider this manner of ordering with respect to language. Language enables that turn in the aspect of an entity – that shift in position – which grants a perspective from which to view the relationship between entities and bring into view the structure which underlies that relation. Urizen, as we have indicated, figures the expectation that there is a structure which structures all structures, and names that structure (or hopes for that structure, intends that structure as) "reason". We might now further suggest that Urizen figures language as underwritten by a promise to relate utterance to the ur-structures of ur-reason, and as therefore also issuing a demand to structure discourse in a manner which anticipates and draws towards such a relation.

In this light, we might return to another way in which Urizen is named with respect to language, is figured as discursive: his figuration as a book – as *The Book of Urizen*. As we have suggested, the ordering of this book literalizes the ordering of the cosmos. Urizen also identifies his own acts of ordering with the writing of his books. After relating how he "fought with the fire", "bound" the "merciless winds", and "repell'd the vast waves" to reveal "A wide world of solid obstruction",[796] he declares:

[796] Plate 4; II.5; E72

Here alone I in books formd of me-
tals
Have written the secrets of wisdom
The secrets of dark contemplation
By fightings and conflicts dire
Plate 4; II.6; E72[797]

The "books" are what his "fightings and conflicts dire" draw into appearance. We recall that his cosmic ordering takes place as withdrawal; in this passage, this disappearance is revealed to be a withdrawal into writing which generates writing. This withdrawal into writing is not a displacement of Urizen's identity, however – does not demand that we revise earlier suggestions concerning his solipsism. His writing is also a withdrawal into self: fighting with fire he is "consum'd / Inwards", and he insists that his confrontation with "the void" is likewise solitary – "self-balanc'd stretch'd o'er the void /I alone", just as "alone I in books formd". When he presents his book, he proclaims: "Lo! I unfold my darkness".[798] Withdrawal, ordering, and Urizen seem to draw into an even tighter identity if we mark the layout of the illuminated plate, which divides the word "metals" with a line break. In a concealed way, Urizen declares: "Here alone I in books formd of *me*".[799] Urizen orders the cosmos that is the book out of himself – the letters and words are structural members of a unity ordered as his own existence. We might even trace the hint of an ambiguity which allows us to read "formd" not only straightforwardly as a participle qualifying "books" ("I have written in books which have been formed of me"), but also as a verb which expresses the action of Urizen's rising into appearance *within* or *as* books: "here I drew into form: formed in books, formed into books".

The "Book", "written in my solitude",[800] is how Urizen dis-closes himself – presents himself, unfolds his darkness, draws from oblivion into manifestness. The disclosure of the book, and disclosure through the book, then re-present Urizen, figure him so that he may rise into presence. The letters, words and figures of the book re-member him, figure him as composed – a unity

[797] We have followed here the arrangement on the plate, rather than the layout provided in Erdman. This is to highlight the ambiguity in the line "books made of me-".
[798] Plate 4; II.7; E72
[799] This is yet another ambiguity which Hilton points out – see *Literal*, 230–231.
[800] Plate 4; II.7; E72

composed of parts (of members) – enabling him to be present to himself as a whole. Hilton notes that the illumination which apparently represents Urizen and his open book also appears in *A Small Book of Designs* and is labelled there "The Book of my Remembrance".[801] The book preserves Urizen from forgetfulness, from drawing into oblivion – puts him always back together again as a composition, as the position (the underlying structure) which draws and holds together the parts, the figures. The book insulates him from loss. When he first emerges from the "depths of dark solitude", before presenting his book, he asks "Why will you die, Eternals?" The book, the constant commemoration of Urizen's composition, is intended to draw his death itself into oblivion.

The book discloses, re-presents and re-members not only Urizen himself, but also the beings he orders. The book is how he draws beings into appearance: the remembrance figured by the book grants a unity which may structure the appearance of beings – as components of a whole. One way in which this unity is named is as law: the book is a book of "Laws".[802] That is, it is a book of the general, the *κοινόν* – or *ἀρχή* as *τέλος* as *ἰδέᾳ* as *κοινόν* – which, abstracted from each particular instance, must apply to all; it is a book of the all-encapsulating horizon, the region within which all interrelations can relate. It is a book of the structure which underlies and orders every turn: the universal "one" ("One command, one joy, one desire, / One curse, one weight, one measure / One King, one God, one Law.").[803] The book – Urizen as book – both distinguishes itself from the many and governs over them by being what they have in common: what binds them together. The book is the structure revealed as underlying – or promised as underlying – all relations between all figures, all aspects of all figures. In being so distinguished, as that which is utterly apart from all else but holds all else together in its commonness, it is also, it would appear, the most singular of all.

The book thus grants an appearance to manifestness itself, to being – to the very possibility that beings may draw into appearance. It discloses this possibility as a book. It discloses also a promise of language – a specific positioning language affords in relation to the possibility of the appearance of beings, a promise attuned by your reason. It is the promise offered by the letter,

[801] *Literal*, 251.
[802] Plate 4; II.8; E72.
[803] Plate 4; II.8; E72.

the word, the book, to bind the appearance of beings into a solid without fluctuation, returning always as the same – the promise of a figure which is a law, binding to all. Such law promises, perhaps, "peace", "love", "unity", "pity", "compassion", "forgiveness",[804] in that it anticipates and draws towards the elimination of strife. It seeks, that is, the position with respect to which no countering – or conflicting – position may arise; it seeks to eliminate the possibility of loss, of remainder, of a differentiating rift which demands decision – which calls for possibilities to be cut away (de-cision) and to disappear unrealized into oblivion. Urizen offers choice – "Let each one chuse one habitation"[805] – but it is a false choice. He has already decided that decision entails selecting "one", returning always to the one, to unity without fluctuation. The law – the universal law – promises to ease the necessity of decision by revealing everything and everyone through the same structure: the structure of universality. It promises peace, love, unity and so forth also by ordering all appearances to be equal and equally available to all.

We might, however, interpret the manner in which the book anticipates and discloses language not only as "law", but also as literature. It promises the gathering of thought into figures – imaginative ordering which discloses self and beings. It promises also the gathering of figures and imaginative orderings into a structure which can preserve their presence – which would prevent their return to obscurity (the reclosure of the view they open) – and which can instead enable their perpetual re-membrance: the infinite recollection in readings (re-ligion) of what they disclose. It promises the arrangement of figures not within a local, singular horizon, but drawn outside of relations – projected into or as a virtual ordering (a universal law, a structure which may remain the same).

The book as Urizen, as reason, as that which grants the manifestness of beings, perhaps then names a disposition of be-ing – a sending or destiny of be-ing: being offering the aspect of actuality, projected as objectivity, related to the human being as subject through language as representation. Urizen withdraws into a solipsism in order to order himself and beings into a stable discursive arrangement, an arrangement which projects him as that in relation to which the ordered structure is disclosed. Reason is the ordering principle according to which he may

[804] Plate 4; II.8; E72.
[805] Plate 4; II.8; E72.

project every possible arrangement of every possible being into a unified structure; this projection orders everything in advance as structured with respect to reason. Urizen's regard looks beyond the appearance of beings – divides, cuts, measures them apart from their singular factical relational bearing – to bring into view a permanently present structure, an interaction of causes and effects, which may give rise to a specifically delimited manifest appearance. This projection therefore discloses the being of beings as objectivity, discloses beings as objects.

It discloses beings in this way, however, only *to* reason – that is to say, only to the regard of a look which sees the meaningful appearance of that which appears as grounded in reason. It discloses beings to your reason, discloses you as a subject with your eyes in (ur-iz-en) the projection of existence as objectivity. With your eyes in the book of Urizen, you are positioned to re-member what is permanently present, to re-present the always available, always underlying structure – to re-present each figure, each appearance, each being, as a component of that structure – through your reading, your re-ligion.

The book of Urizen, the book as Urizen, therefore perhaps names or aspects – anticipates and draws towards – universal unity in the form not only of a single book, but of literature. Urizen names literature as the possibility that all formed thought may be collected and held together in and as a single structure. It names, therefore, discursivity: discursivity understood as representation, as revealing beings through their projection as objectivity, making them constantly available without loss; discursivity also as withdrawn, however, and removed from any relations other than those of the projected horizon of objectivity. In this horizon, beings are all projected as the same, and may return through a representation as the same – return to a subject. Urizen names, then, discursive representability – figures the draw towards presence as nonspatiotemporal, towards the totalization of discursivity. Urizen figures an ordering – a modality of the manifestness of beings – disposed to remembrance, to forgetting forgetting: to getting only, and never losing. Urizen grants a name, an aspect, to the forgetfulness of being.

Yet *Urizen* also remembers the forgetfulness of this forgetting – discloses it as forgetful. *Urizen* recalls the relation of appearance to loss – disclosing Urizen's remembrance as covering over loss – and recalls loss to appearance. Los appears when Urizen withdraws again – when he

withdraws into appearance, and "The vast world of Urizen appear'd".[806] He appears as though out of oblivion: with no clear reason presented, no context, no grounds for his appearance – as though loss were simply always there, or as though appearance appears with loss. He appears in relation with Urizen: "round the dark globe of Urizen". He counters the look – the aspect, the outward appearance – with a look of his own ("Kept watch"). He discloses the appearance Urizen presents from a different position, or with a different disposition – one attuned to "anguish", weeping and "howling".[807] From the position of Los, Urizen's aspect – his ordering of himself and world into a relation of subjectivity to objectivity, his self-projection into nonspatiotemporal discursivity – appears as a dark globe, its obscurity perhaps forgotten to itself. From the position of Los, Urizen's withdrawal into a solipsistic, self-sustaining structure – his withdrawal from any relation to the other, any possibility beyond his self-actualization and preservation – is experienced as Urizen's being "rent from his side". You risen appears, perhaps, as loss from you. Urizen's solipsistic appearance is disclosed – through his own relation to loss – as being constituted on the basis of relations outside itself; his projection of an appearance without pain, without fluctuation, is likewise disclosed as painful. Los proceeds with disclosing Urizen – figuring him, ordering his appearance – as the narrative progresses, a reminder of the relation even of self-presence to an other, a remainder, the possibility of non-arrival.

Even the pivotal moment of disclosure on which the preceding discussion had focused – Urizen's self-presentation and self-preservation as representation, as permanent unified presence; his remembrance of himself as book – is marked with absence and draws into a kind of forgetfulness. The plate which treats this episode (Plate 4) appears only in three copies of the book. In the others, Urizen does not relate the narrative of his struggle with the elements and his composition of his books, does not say "Why will you die O Eternals?" – does not speak at all, is deprived of logos. His supreme unity is itself remembered as disunity; his sheer self-presence is revealed to be run through with lack – abyssal, hole-y.

We might then suggest that Urizen names what in Heidegger's thinking is unnameable – names the holy from within the modern disposition to being, from within the forgetfulness of be-ing.

[806] Plate 5; III.7; E73.
[807] Plate 6; III.9; E73–74.

This mythic naming perhaps names reason as the god of modernity, and by naming reason in relation to loss, recollects reason itself as a response to abyssal withdrawal, as itself emerging from or in response to groundlessness. This naming re-covers the anticipation of be-ing as a being, and its consequent disposition towards beings in their representability, as hole-y – as groundless, drawn from and drawing into an abyss, as mysterious. Urizen and Los disclose the projection of world as objectivity and the return to the subject as a disposition of be-ing, structured through the interaction between presence and absence, despite the appearance that this projection draws towards sheer presence.

5. The book of my remembrance

Yet how am I to hear these holy names? Am I urged to hearken to them? Am I to call out to them, invoke them, appeal to them or praise them in prayer? How do they reach my hearing – in what way are they perceptible, manifest? Can I conceive of Urizen and Los as literal divinities; am I called upon to do so? Is *Urizen* figured as literature – do its literary figures rift in such a way as to open the space for the habitation of a god? Or are *Urizen*'s figures representations; are its names frustrated recollections of what Heidegger calls the flight of the gods, and the refusal of the possibility of a holy naming?

We might argue that when Urizen draws himself into the book, and the book into a world, the aspect he presents is perhaps not that of a god, granting its look to beings. He looks as a subject, abstracting all aspects of beings into a universalizing ordering. If Urizen as book names the holy as subject, and thereby grants beings their look as objects, perhaps we might read his book – *The Book of Urizen* – neither as holy gospel, nor as literary artwork; it may be available only as object.

My reading would then be called upon to expect it as object, to relate to it as object – to collect or recollect its figures too as objects: representations, signs, members of a signifying structure. However, my Urizenic performance, which unfolded through the anticipation of such a demand, suggested some resistance offered by *Urizen*'s figures to being read – or disclosed – in this way. If Urizen does "name" manifestness as objectity in relation with reason as scored through with loss, it does so in a way unsuited to the movement of representation. This is perhaps particularly

apparent in that moment of Urizen's presentation of the book. The relation to absence we have marked in this episode – its omission from all but three copies of the book – is itself concealed. It is all but invisible when we regard *Urizen* as a stable unity, only becoming apparent when I look beyond the physical book before me to consider multiple interrelating figures named *The Book of Urizen* or *The First Book of Urizen* (or look beyond the book to the scholarship which calls to attention what may escape my notice). It is also questionable whether the absence or lack which appears should be considered a representation. It may indeed be possible to frame it as such – to state that the omission of a central event in the narrative represents incompleteness. Yet the abyssal quality of the book is not simply represented, it is occasioned – it befalls (*ob-cadere*, to fall down or fall away) the book; there is a literal hole in the text, above which our reading becomes suspended, and into which it may fall. It is a trap, a gin, but also perhaps an opening which grants the room within which to draw the figures of the book into meaningful relation.

The demand which we have marked as likewise occasioned – rather than represented – in the book, to draw its figures into ever-shifting regions of coherence, similarly evidences a modality of appearance or availability quite different from that of object or representation. The book perhaps shows itself *as* this order to figure, to order imaginatively – its figures address us not as representations but as injunctions or promises; the book presents the aspect of a call for grounding. Thus, scholarship which attends to this demand in *Urizen* (and Blake's work more generally) allows us to understand it as performative event rather than object.

Understanding *Urizen* as event rather than an object draws us towards conceiving of it as art – as literature, a literary artwork. Its figures are not static but dynamic; they are not simply ordered, but order: they appeal to the reader to participate in the performance – to respond to their *promise*, rather than their representation. They do not simply depict, but effect – they draw the reader into repositioning themselves in order to effect their co-performance. They therefore dispose: they appeal not to the reasoning intellect but to disposition. They also dispose in that they shift the reader's position in relation to that which she perceives, as well as to what makes perception possible – to what interrupts and disrupts the relation to meaning as presence. What is figured might then be a call to imaginative ordering, as well as an attunement to the interplay of presencing and absencing.

We might suggest that the interplay between presence and absence occasioned by a reading of *Urizen* is so insistent that even attempts to disclose its figures as representations and its ordering as objecthood are perhaps themselves drawn into performance: the performance of Urizen, the search for a unity which can draw and hold together the conflicting elements of his world. When I relate to *Urizen* as object, I disclose Urizen by disclosing myself as Urizen; what is revealed, however, is – once again – not quite represented. As I represent, I am *drawn into* confusion or frustration, or into an intensified sense that there is information I could absorb or a perspective I could adopt which would make sense of what I read; if I succumb to the force of the draw, it is the failure of my representations, rather than a different, more enlightening representation, which discloses my Urizenic position.

The forestalling of meaning's arrival – the sense that sense is withheld – has an aspect in *Urizen* not unlike that of the god's concealed appearance in the temple. It is an aspect which we might call awful, in the literal sense – an aspect which demands as its counter shock, amazement, fear, reverence ("Abashed the devil stood / And felt how awful goodness is").[808] It is an aspect of the self-withholding of be-ing: its mystery, its difference from beings, its unreachability. The naming of the holy may perhaps be understood precisely as aspecting this aspectless aspect of be-ing – that is, anticipating, expecting, recalling and responding to its unavailability, unreachability, inconceivable alterity. The flight of the gods and the forgetfulness of being which for Heidegger characterize late modernity entail a fundamental attunement – a basic way of relating to beings and the possibility of their appearance – indisposed to countering the look of be-ing with awe. In this connection, the question concerning *Urizen*'s naming of the holy turns perhaps into a question concerning *my* availability to its reaching, *my* susceptibility to responding to it with shock, amazement, fear and reverence. The question concerning *Urizen*'s status as artwork likewise turns into a question concerning my position and responsiveness, rather than the qualities and characteristic of an object.

I have intimated that my positioning within the field of literacy, literature, the literary may dispose me to avoiding *Urizen*'s disruption and forestalling of meaning by becoming more and

[808] *Paradise Lost* IV.846–847.

more informed about it: if the vast explanatory field within which I am immersed promises that every figure may be placed through some disclosure of the book's design, or reference to historical circumstance or personal motivation, the undecidabilities I encounter appear less threatening (or awful): the figures have in fact been decided, and I simply need to be informed about the decision. On the other hand, the discursive field also opens possibilities for a performative approach which seeks out undecidabilities, and perhaps seeks ways not only to describe their undecidability but also to relate to them *as* undecidable. Yet this very availability of means with which to relate to *Urizen*'s self-withholding demand to ground may itself forestall the experience of awe which would disclose the names of Urizen and Los as holy.

Or rather, not the specific availability of specific interpretive supports, but my anticipation that *some* suitable means of productive engagement with *Urizen* is possible, may frustrate my possible frustration. If I anticipate that my reading will offer a return, will in some way be worthwhile – whether that return is a conceptual understanding of the interplay of *Urizen*'s many figures, or a shift in my own perception of the nature of language and perception – then there is perhaps a sense in which I return to a Urizenic performance, though this one may be subtler than the first. The rifting figures I encounter may draw me out beyond myself – draw me into a temporalizing re-anticipation of possible ways of arranging them and grounding their arrangement; draw me into a performance of imaginative ordering – but with the promise that I will still return to myself. If I am confronted with an excess or loss of meaning, I am able to draw this excess or loss – or my experience of it – back into myself, incorporate it into my self, my subjectivity. My experience of loss does not threaten to diminish or reduce me, threaten me with oblivion, forgetfulness, the loss of myself to myself (Why will you die?); rather, it promises self-generation – my enrichment, the expansion of my insight, my experience, my depth of knowledge or feeling. Loss is not only economical; it is generative. All figures remember the same ordering: the promise of an ever-expanding order which reaches out in such a manner as to preserve the possibility of ordering, the drive to ordering, the will which discloses all as orderability. If *Urizen* is concerned with what happens before the beginning, we might interpret what it reveals as anticipating genesis as will: will willing itself, willing order, relating to beings such that they will always offer a return, arranging them into a structure which will return them always to the same: the self: Urizen: You Risen: you, the subject. If *Urizen* is prophecy, we

might consider it perhaps as prophesying the disposition of being as will, and the late modern relation of human beings to beings determined by this disposition, as Urizen.

There is thus the possibility that the attempt to relate specifically to *Urizen*'s unavailability itself draws out of reach within the realm of sheer discursive availability of the early twenty-first century. Yet this unavailability of unavailability may itself present an aspect of the withholding of be-ing. It may disclose my position in relation to the withdrawal of be-ing as one in which I am positioned as will; it may disclose the availability of beings and the promise of return to self as recalling be-ing's withdrawal. The proliferation of possibilities for the imaginative ordering of *Urizen* may then re-cover its forgetfulness, its refusal to appear; and its failure to appear re-cover imaginative ordering as a rift which tears open emptiness and emerges as its rupture.

Literature perhaps draws forth as this rupture. The letter draws forth with the promise of remembrance as a response forgetfulness – to *λήθη*, absence, unavailability. It draws forth the privation of forgetfulness, but also as its memorial. As privation, literature promises remembrance as the obliteration of forgetfulness – draws towards total discursive availability: the totality of all literatures, the positioning of all beings as representable. As memorial, it promises remembrance as mindfulness of the emptiness from and towards which it draws – urges the anticipation of what has been to recollect what is to come. *Urizen* figures – literalizes, even – both promises: reveals each within the other. In this way, it commemorates the possibility that literature *is* not, but itself remains to come.

The attunement of my responsiveness – whether I am capable of sensing in this promise of literature an aspect of be-ing, and of being awed into turning my gaze from the holy figures of Urizen and loss: this also is not decided in the work.

Conclusion

What is called literature is a matter of historical contingency; the limitations implicit in any attempt to discuss what literature is are well established. However, Martin Heidegger's philosophy suggests that the specific limitations on how and why we ask about literature are projected in advance by the manner in which we understand being (by what we mean by "is") and the demands that this understanding places on language and thinking. In metaphysics, being is understood in terms of substantive presence and the temporal present. Thinking is called on to understand truth as correspondence, and to enquire into the beingness of entities and their grounds. Language appears as human expression, and both calls for and is called on to represent already constituted objects. Words appear as meaning-bearing signs.

Thus, a reconsideration of the meaning of being – of what is entailed by the "is" when we ask "what is…?" – offers the possibility of conceiving of and relating to literature in ways not determined by the suppositions of metaphysics. We have attempted to pursue this possibility through an exploration of Heidegger's rethinking of the meaning of being – both because that thinking suggests a fundamentally different approach to asking "what is…?", and because it specifically explores language as the site of a reciprocity between human being and being.

His thinking suggests that questions concerning language are not separate from questions concerning being; nor are these questions separate from the human thinking which attempts to relate meaningfully through language to entities, and to the possibility of their manifest appearance. Heidegger claims that we are addressed by the manifestness of beings, and called upon to respond to that manifestness by disclosing beings as manifest – as available in some way to our thinking and perception: as "there" such that we might relate to them, whether cognitively or in our practical engagements with them. The appearance of beings is therefore determined by responsiveness – by our response to being's address. Thus, responsiveness has emerged as a central concern of the thesis. This concern has required expression along two lines (an approach suggested by Heidegger's thinking): first, by pursuing questions concerning what responsiveness to being entails and how it is determined; second, by attempting to attend responsively to the address of being – to enact responsiveness, to be responsive. In this light, "what is called

literature?" turned into a question concerning responsiveness to literature, or literature as responsiveness to the manifestness of beings.

Significantly, Heidegger understands both the address of being and our response to it as occurring through language. Language is not simply a communicative tool we use to describe or report on beings which are already present to us in some other modality; rather, language determines the manner in which beings appear to us in the first place. Thus literature, which we might conventionally understand as fundamentally linguistic – as thought figured in some way in letters – may be considered a significant site in which the reciprocity of being and human being plays out. The manner in which this reciprocity plays out in literature or as literature is then a matter of some importance, since our contemporary existence is immersed in literature – in broad senses of a "familiarity with letters",[809] of literacy, of the vast collections of written works available to us and the knowledge we acquire from those works; as well as in the narrower sense of valued or artistic writing. If there is a reciprocity between language and the way we understand beings as in being, then the question "what is called literature?" must transform to reflect that reciprocity.

We anticipated such a transformation through a consideration of Heidegger's question *was heißt Denken?* Rather than enquiring about an object, the question comes to concern how our relation to the manifestness of beings calls forth literature; how we anticipate that manifestness when we disclose it in literature; how calling a certain realm of the availability of beings "literature" inflects the way we relate to that availability. The question also comes to concern what calls for and what calls forth literature – a concern to which all others pertain. This is the question of how the manifestness of beings calls upon us to disclose the availability of beings in, or as, literature in the first place.

The sense – suggested by Heidegger's thinking concerning the relation between being and language – that calling a certain realm of the availability of beings "literature" may affect the way we anticipate their availability in that realm, and therefore how we relate to them and disclose them, meant that the particular inflections and denotative and connotative reach of the

[809] "Literature", OED.

word “literature” has been significant to our study. The word pertains to the gathering of letters – of *litterae*. It anticipates the availability of beings within specifically *lettered* discourse – that availability *as* figured in letters. Thus, a central question is how this anticipation – that beings may in some way be shown in their manifestness through the figuration of letters – positions us to relate to them and interpret ourselves. Consequently, although our inceptive interest is in literature in the sense, broadly speaking, of valued writing – of what has frequently been valued specifically as artistic writing, *belles lettres* – it was necessary from the outset also to consider literature in the sense of writing more generally, a realm of letters. If how we call forth or are called by literature may in some sense be determined by our calling it “literature”, then the ambiguity of the word would itself inflect how we anticipate, relate to, and respond to literature. We therefore enquired into the positioning with respect to language, beings and being we are called into, and which we call forth, both when we call written works generally – and the discursive realm they constitute – “literature”, and when we call artistic writing “literature”.

This pursuit required us firstly to reposition our thinking of the manifestness of beings in its reciprocity with human being through a close engagement with Heidegger’s thinking and philosophical approach. Heidegger shows how we are able to engage meaningfully with beings – disclose them as manifest in both our cognitive and our practical comportments – by relating whatever we encounter to a context of significance. For Heidegger, one of the fundamental ways in which human existence is constituted is through our immersion in the relations of significance which draw together into a “whole”. We cannot ever step outside of “world” – of the gathering of meaningful relations. This means also that whatever we encounter has already in a sense been “foregathered”; our interpretations make explicit meaningful possibilities which are already available – made available by the specific ways in which the relations of significance in which we find ourselves have been drawn together. The whole shows us *how* beings are significant, or may be taken up as significant; thus, the whole is itself referred to, if in a background way, in any other relation between entities we make explicit through our interactions with them.

Of crucial significance is that world, the “whole” within which we find ourselves held in determinate relations of significance which connect us with others and with beings, is not itself an entity in the sense of a substantive being. It is not present, but unfolds through

temporalization. Thus, the manner in which this totality of significance is itself available to our understanding is in a modality which differs from the present availability of beings. Paradoxically, it appears – and beings appear *as* significant, or possibly significant – only in relation to its own refusal. Since we understand beings only indirectly by referring them to each other and to a context of significance, it is necessary for us to have some background sense of how or why beings are significant; that is, it is necessary for their significance to be grounded. Yet precisely the fact that we only relate to beings indirectly with reference to a whole means that their manifestness is fundamentally groundless – without an absolute ground which would make them immediately present. Thus, we are called upon to ground their appearance – to draw together a meaningful whole by projecting some fundamental sense of how they are significant. This simultaneous refusal of the availability of beings, and granting of their availability through a grounding called for by the refusal, is what conditions manifestness. That beings are manifest through granting refusal means that to disclose beings we are drawn into a relation with refusal and with absence. Thus, "presence" – manifest availability – only eventuates through temporalization: through our ek-statically drawing towards and recollecting possibilities, rather than simply dealing with already actualized immediate presences.

Heidegger therefore reinterprets what at the origin of metaphysics was understood as the "sightability" of beings in terms of this simultaneous refusal and granting – the differencing interplay between nothing and whole. Rather than "grasping" beings in their perception of them, human beings are called upon to counter the "look" of being – look here understood as view rather than gaze ("that bridge looks sturdy", rather than "I look at the bridge"). This "look" is not in fact anything visible – is not any *thing* – but is the differencing relation of presence and absence, the refusal which grants manifestness through its grounding demand. Human beings only perceive in response to this "look" – to the gifting and the refusal. It calls us to consider beings as *in being*, as related in some way that matters. We have called this look of being the aspect of be-ing, not simply in the substantive sense (the view, the side offered for a viewing, the look), but also in the obsolete verbal sense (the sense which for us bears the greater emphasis). Thus, we have used it to suggest: "to have an aspect", "to behold", "to face", "to survey", "to watch", "to look for" and "to expect". By referring to the gifting refusal of being in this way, we have hoped to further emphasize the reciprocity Heidegger points out as determinative in the act

of perception. Perceiving entails responsiveness: it is receiving, rather than grasping. We disclose beings as a response to the aspect of being.

On the basis of these insights, we have traced different ways in which this reciprocity between being's aspecting us, and our countering that aspect by disclosing beings as in being, plays out in language. Depending on the "view" we are afforded of manifestness itself, we "expect" – and aspect – beings in different ways. But this "view" is itself only afforded through language – as we noted, the aspect of being is not a "presence" or substance. Its modality of appearance is differencing. Language draws forth as a response to the refusal of the appearance of that which grants manifestness; it figures differencing, and thereby grants a manifest appearance through which we can relate to beings in their being. This also means that language in a sense figures *how* beings are significant – or more precisely it disposes or attunes their availability in some way. This is because language preserves the differencing relation between refusal and whole: it "refers" to both refusal and whole in their differencing interaction, bringing the whole in view in some way, and anticipating its configuration. Significantly, though, language also fails itself to provide the unmediated presence of beings – this is in part why differencing remains preserved within it.

Thus, the manner in which we relate to language also grants a prior "view" of the look of beings before we disclose them. Be-ing aspects language; language "speaks" us in specific ways in response. Considered in the light of the aspect of be-ing, we interpreted "literature" as called forth in two principle ways; likewise, we interpreted two principle ways in which we are called upon by literature to respond to the aspect of be-ing. We interpreted these two callings of literature broadly as calling forth literature in the distinct senses of written works collectively and of artistic writing, though we did not take this distinction as absolute.

Within metaphysics, language responds to the aspect of be-ing through its capability for establishing a correspondence between the visibility of an entity's substantive being (the "look" of being as interpreted metaphysically) and the understanding of that being. Language is understood as representation, and analysed as meaningful utterance. The elements of this meaningful utterance are themselves interpreted in terms of representation, with an embodied

utterance referring meaning. Thus, meaning is construed as separable from utterance, and each understood in terms of presence. On this basis, writing appears to offer a stable and permanent embodied form for utterances; writing aspects such embodied meaning: reveals, and through revealing, anticipates and calls forth. Thus writing, as is indicated in Derrida's reading of Husserl, figures the possibility of drawing towards objective ideality[810] – towards a permanent and stable presencing of a being's sightability in terms of its substantive being. Literature as the gathering of writing is thus called forth, and calls for, an intensified draw towards discursive representation. In response to the "look" of being as will to power in late modernity (what Heidegger considers the completion of metaphysics, or its ultimate realization), literature draws forth as a reach within which beings, disclosed in their discursive representability, are posited as orderable and immediately available. Human beings respond to this aspect of literature by continuously securing and extending its discursive reach through more representations in the form of more literature.

In Heidegger's view, "literature" understood as literary art participates in, and indeed forms part of, this discursive reach. Yet an alternative call of literature becomes apparent through a consideration of Heidegger's attempts to trace a language which responds to the aspect of be-ing as gifting refusal (rather than its "sighting" as beingness). Significantly, it is in poetry that Heidegger finds important clues concerning what such responsiveness might entail. Poetry points to, anticipates, aspects an answer to be-ing through its very poetizing. Poetry figures the "silence" of be-ing's call, and echoes it such that we are able to apprehend it. Poetry is therefore capable of naming the holy. That is to say, it is capable of drawing something into appearance in a way which maintains a tension with the possibility of its non-appearance or disappearance. Through this tension, the refusal of the immediacy of beings, and the demand to ground their appearance, may be brought into view. Thus, poetry might figure that demand, and call upon us to respond by creatively, groundlessly, and responsively grounding meaning. For Heidegger, the orderability, immediacy and availability in which beings appear in the discursive reach of availability covers over this demand of language, which he considers to be essential to language. Poetry offers the potential of renewing this demand, and perhaps of fundamentally shifting the

[810] See IOG, 90.

way in which we relate to beings through language – and therefore relate to them in all our comportments.

We considered the possibility of a similar role for literature on the basis both of Heidegger's own non-metaphysical, non-representational rethinking of meaning and utterance. Literature figures through drawing a mark (*littera*). Yet Heidegger's thinking suggests that this figure should not be understood as a sign – a present entity which refers – or in terms of signification. It is a rift, a drawing in the sense not only of a meaningfully gathered marking, but also in the sense of a drawing open; it draws together by drawing away. The written figure offers an aspect which relates to be-ing in its gifting refusal – which re-marks that refusal. There is perhaps the possibility then of responding to this aspect – of expecting and disclosing the figure as the drawing of nothing.

We have detected further hints of an abyssal call of literature in Derrida's thinking on writing. Derrida shows how writing is marked by absence. The (written) mark lacks self-sufficient presence, and maintains itself in a modality of possibility: the possibility of its being re-marked – drawn into another context. Writing figures its own self-difference. It also temporalizes (or in Derrida's vocabulary entails "temporization").[811] Like poetry – in Heidegger's understanding of it – writing relates continuously to what is to come.

We suggested that when we anticipate literature specifically as art, we may be called into a relation with it which responds to these alternative "callings" of literature. The work of art draws attention to its singularity and contingency. It suspends the arrival of any immediately and fully graspable conceptual meaning. It invites us to relate to its own appearance in terms of differencing. Thus, the literary artwork may invite us to respond to its letters as figures of difference – as figures which draw nothing. It may also invite us to relate to the writing which composes it in terms of its suspension of presence and anticipation of an other to come.

Yet we also indicated that an additional call of literature may be heard if we attend to the two calls we traced in conjunction – suspended in a relation of difference. The draw towards

[811] See "*Différance*", 13.

discursive representability and immediacy in relation to the draw towards the naming of the holy through the suspended figuration of nothing may itself entail a responsive figuration of the aspect of be-ing. These two calls of literature may themselves figure differencing through their interrelation. Through this figuration, the call of literature as discursive representability may itself sound forth as a call of be-ing, and perhaps be transformed in a way which opens possibilities for a different relation to be-ing within the literary reach.

We attempted to attend to these two calls simultaneously through a reading of Blake's *The First Book of Urizen*. This reading was aimed at tracing what is figured in the writing. *Urizen* suggested itself as suitable for such a reading in many respects. Notably, it may be said to figure figuring – to literalize the literary unfolding of meaning itself – in a way comparable to how Hölderlin, in Heidegger's view, poetizes poetizing.

Our attending to what is figured in *Urizen* in significant respects followed Heidegger approach to engaging with what is poetized in the poem. We interpreted what he means by "what is poetized" as the essential unfolding of language itself – that is, as its echoing of the stillness of be-ing's call (in Heidegger's terms). Thus, we attempted in figuring what is figured in *Urizen* to trace the disowning demand of the figure, and its call into responsiveness and ek-stasis. Simultaneously, however, we attempted to attend to the call of literature from its realm of discursive representability to relate to *Urizen* as available, orderable and present. We attempted, then, to attend to these calls simultaneously and in their differencing.

This entailed a performative approach. It involved tracing the figuration of what is figured: not describing it, but being figured by it – submitting to its call. The reading aimed therefore at attending to how *Urizen* put meaning at stake for me personally in my reading; how I experienced and responded to the demands of its figures. It traced ways in which these figures unfold through a relation to differencing. It likewise traced how this relation, which is attuned to delay and non-arrival, is in tension with the demand for arrival arising from my positioning within the realm of discursive availability which characterizes the contemporary field of literature. The performative nature of the reading delivers no final conceptual conclusion with respect either to *Urizen* or the literary. Yet attending to the promise and possibility that *Urizen*

might figure the aspect of being, it is to be hoped that this reading in some small way refigured the poem's figures, and thereby called for and called forth – or reinscribed the demand for – responsive figuration.

The thesis makes a contribution to the fields of literary studies, literary theory and philosophy. In terms of the latter, it contributes to Heidegger studies firstly by offering a detailed and extensive engagement of Heidegger's thinking on language. Although much critical attention has been given to this central concern of Heidegger's work, the thesis offers new insight into the way in which he understands the reciprocity between language, thinking and being, and the role of differencing and disposition within this reciprocity. Likewise, its tracing of the manner in which this reciprocity plays out and is called forth and called for through Heidegger's own close engagement with language contributes to the understanding of his specific hermeneutic-phenomenological approach. An important aspect of the thesis's contribution in this regard is its careful attentiveness to Heidegger's language – to the resonances and inflections of specific words, and their interconnections with others. While attention is frequently given to such resonances, much critical engagement with Heidegger seeks primarily conceptual insight from these connections. The thesis demonstrates the centrality of the tonality of Heidegger's language – and the centrality of tonality to his engagement with Greek words. By tracing the manner in which Heidegger follows, and by following re-calls the "directive"[812] of language towards a responsiveness to manifestness, the thesis therefore contributes to hermeneutic-phenomenological approaches to the study of Heidegger. The thesis also contributes to the critical understanding of Heidegger's thinking on language through its close engagement with *Zum Wesen der Sprache und Zur Frage nach der Kunst*, a text which offers significant insight into Heidegger's thought on both language and art. Since this work had not yet been translated into English during the drafting of the thesis,[813] there has as yet been limited critical engagement with it in English.

The thesis's interpretation of central aspects of Heidegger's *Parmenides* lectures further contributes to the field by drawing out and elucidating connections between his discussions of

[812] See, for example, *Parmenides*, 18/13.
[813] A translation was published in 2023. Regrettably, I have not had the opportunity to consult it.

ἀλήθεια, language, gods and demons, and the human encounter with being. Since the manner in which language "attunes" or disposes the human being is vital, and since the directive of language is therefore indicated in significant respects through its tonality, the translation of Heidegger's work both poses a significant challenge to, and is of crucial importance to, the reception of his work. The thesis's translation of *Blick* as "aspect" offers both clarification of Heidegger's formal indication of "sightability" as it is oriented towards reciprocity and responsiveness, and a novel interpretation of the reciprocity which Heidegger describes. That is to say, "aspect" does not translate *Blick* in the sense of rendering a conceptual content in a different language; it interprets the directive which Heidegger traces in *Blick* and recollects that directive in an English word, where its resonance and inflection might point to the responsiveness entailed by manifestness and the human apprehension of beings as manifest.

The thesis also contributes to Heidegger studies through its investigation of his thought concerning literature. Since this is not a central concern, it has not received much critical attention. However, as the thesis has demonstrated, literature may be considered important to his thought in that it occasions the reciprocity between language and the forgetfulness of being, and therefore requires critical attention with respect to the historical positioning of the human being in late modernity. Such attention may be particularly important to attempts to bring Heidegger's thinking to bear on our contemporary relation to language (to vast "literatures"), attuned as this relation is to search engines, large language models, artificial intelligence, and so forth. The thesis also suggests possibilities for pursuing a philosophical approach *through* literature, however – of emulating Heidegger's own pursuit of an understanding of, and possible transformation in, the reciprocity between being and human being through his engagement with poetry. That is to say, it suggests ways of refiguring Heidegger's poetic thinking – of re-calling its call, of reworking its performance, and renewing its demand – through attentiveness to the figures of literature, rather than only through descriptions and critical evaluations of that thinking. The thesis also points towards literature as a potential site for an exploration, based in Heidegger's thinking, of the interacting – and differencing – demands of language in what is called literature *as* gathered knowledge and *as* artistic writing, and therefore of pursuing a being-historical thinking attentive to the modern dispensation of being.

While the thesis does not offer a novel methodology or a systematic literary theory, its approach may nevertheless contribute to literary studies and literary theory in several respects. It provides an account of figuration and language not based in divisions between sensible and intelligible, or in understandings of language as signification or representation. These perspectives may open possibilities for the development of language-centred theoretical approaches, and theoretical studies of figuration, likewise not based in deep metaphysical suppositions. The thesis may also contribute to reader-response approaches in that it gives a philosophical account of responsiveness which may nuance and provide philosophical motivation to support existing reader-response theory, and may suggest new directions for pursuing theoretical approaches in this area. The thesis may also, through its reading of *Urizen*, suggest ways in which the study of literature might be pursued on the basis of a philosophical prioritization of responsiveness and the reciprocity between reader, work, and the literary-cultural field within which the reading is performed, *as these are themselves specifically inflected* by an underlying sense of what it means for beings to exist and of how we relate to them. This emphasis on reciprocity also contributes to approaches to the study of literature which attempt to avoid the prior projection of the literary encounter as one which takes place between subject and object. The thesis attempts an approach through which the reading emerges from and as a tension between reader, work, and reading horizon, letting each contribute to manifesting the other through the reading; in this way, the reading tries to avoid the reception of any of the participants in this encounter in the modality of presence – and therefore in the modality of subject or object. This approach may therefore suggest further ways of reorienting the literary encounter from different perspectives.

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For the sake of clarity, works by Martin Heidegger have been listed separately. Book length works by Heidegger in German are listed first, followed by book length works translated into English. Shorter works by Heidegger follow next, German first, then English. A general reference list follows.

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