

AN INDICATION OF BEING – REFLECTIONS ON HEIDEGGER’S ENGAGEMENT WITH ERNST JÜNGER VINCENT BLOK

In the thirties, Martin Heidegger was heavily involved with the work of Ernst Jünger (1895-1998). Jünger, who had returned from the First World War as a hero and gone on to become famous as a result of his raw descriptions of the Great War in his novel, *In Stahlgewittern*, subsequently wrote two essays which had a great influence on Heidegger: *Die totale Mobilmachung* from 1930 and *Der Arbeiter* from 1932. Heidegger remarks that because of his reading of Jünger, he had, very early, already seen what was much later to be confirmed by the dreadful events of the Second World War: “The universal dominion of the will to power within planetary history”.¹ Moreover, he says that Jünger’s description of the technical era in *Der Arbeiter* had a great influence on his line of thought in “Die Frage nach der Technik”, which Heidegger acknowledged “is indebted to the enduring stimulus provided by the descriptions of *The Worker*”.² The question arises: what exactly could this enduring stimulus (*nachhaltige Förderung*) in the work of Jünger be?

In *Über die Linie*, which was first published in a *liber amicorum* occasioned by the sixtieth birthday of Heidegger in 1949, Jünger discusses the question whether we live in the age of fulfilled nihilism and, if so, whether we can overcome such nihilism. Jünger wants to *cross the line* of nihilism into a new era where “*eine neue Zuwendung des Seins*”³ takes place and puts an end to the age of fulfilled nihilism (for further details, see §1). Six years later, in 1955, in a *liber amicorum* occasioned on Jünger’s own sixtieth birthday, Heidegger responded with an ‘open letter’: *Über ‘Über die Linie’*, later published as *Zur Seinsfrage*. In this essay, Heidegger insists on the prior question about the *essence* of nihilism. Contrary to Jünger’s *crossing the line*, Heidegger’s main concern is the line itself: “In the title of your essay *Über die Linie*, the *über* means as much as: across, *trans*, *meta*. By contrast, the following remarks understand the *über* only in the sense of *de*, *peri*. They deal ‘with’ the line itself, with the zone of self-consummating nihilism” (WM 386). In the end, Heidegger argues against Jünger that nihilism cannot be overcome at all and that the question of nihilism must be brought back to the question of Being.

What could the enduring stimulus of Jünger be, considering that according to Heidegger he asked the wrong question? Does Heidegger in *Zur Seinsfrage* merely speak kindly of a colleague, when he speaks of a *nachhaltige Förderung*? The recent publication of Volume 90 of the *Gesamtausgabe – Zu Ernst Jünger* – and other lectures and annotations from the thirties allow us to

follow Heidegger's confrontation with Jünger more precisely. Heidegger states in this volume, that the essence of technology has depths that are hidden from Jünger's view.⁴ If one thing becomes clear in this volume of the *Gesamtausgabe*, it is that according to Heidegger, Jünger pays full tribute to Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will to power and nowhere surpasses Nietzsche's line of thought.⁵ But if Jünger's work stands in such a relationship to Nietzsche's, why should a critical analysis of Nietzsche's concept of the will to power not be sufficient?⁶

Several interpreters have examined this question. Günter Figal, for example, has shown that Heidegger became the "diagnostician of modernity" because of his confrontation with Jünger.⁷ According to Figal, his diagnosis of the technological era, which figure prominently in his later work, is inspired by Jünger's analysis. Michael Zimmermann has shown that Jünger not only influenced Heidegger's diagnosis of modernity, but also his philosophical-political reaction to it:

Jünger's view that this Will to Power mobilised humanity in terms of the *Gestalt* of the technological worker influenced Heidegger in two crucial ways. First, it helped convince him that only a radical new beginning, like that proposed by National Socialism, could help Germany to escape Jünger's technological forecast. Second, it led Heidegger to look for the essence of that new beginning not so much in philosophy but in art, especially art as understood by Nietzsche and Hölderlin.⁸

He thus discerns a second level of – negative – influence, namely the stimulus (*Förderung*) to furnish an alternative to, and escape the technological future forecast by Jünger. In other words, it was his response to the thought of Jünger that drove Heidegger into the arms of the National Socialists.⁹

However true Zimmermann's analysis of Jünger's influence on the political thinking of Heidegger may be, we discern a third and positive level of influence, i.e. a *nachhaltige Förderung* which is *philosophically* motivated: In *Facts and Thoughts*, Heidegger says about the importance of Jünger that he showed the universal dominion of the will to power within planetary history (GA 16: 375). According to Heidegger, the main theme of his philosophical thinking in the thirties was the overcoming of the metaphysics of the will to power (GA 16: 376).

The *communis opinio* is that in the beginning of the thirties, Heidegger developed his own destructed concept of the will in order to overcome the metaphysics of the will to power.¹⁰ When he later on understood that the concept of the will is anchored irrevocably in human being as the subject of willing,¹¹ he dropped the concept of the will altogether. In his later thought, one of the main issues is the releasement from the wilful way of thinking and the exploration of the possibility of a *gelassen* or non-willing way of philosophical thinking.¹² My hypothesis is that Jünger has this importance for Heidegger in the thirties, because the confrontation with Jünger's way of thinking showed him that the other beginning of philosophical thinking

presupposes the irrevocable releasement of willing and a *gelassen* or non-willing way of philosophical thinking.

In this article, we test this hypothesis in relation to the aforementioned recently published lectures, annotations and *Unveröffentlichte Abhandlungen* from the thirties.¹³ After a brief explanation of Jünger's diagnosis of modernity (§1), we consider Heidegger's reception of the work of Jünger in the thirties (§2). He not only sees that Jünger belongs to Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will to power, but also shows the modern-metaphysical character of Jünger's way of philosophising. In section three, we focus on Heidegger's confrontation with Jünger in relation to the consummation of modernity and in section four we focus on the real controversy between Jünger and Heidegger: the releasement of willing and the necessity of a radical other beginning of philosophical thinking.

§1 Jünger's Diagnostics of Modernity

In this first section, we explain briefly Ernst Jünger's diagnosis of modernity as it emerges in *Die totale Mobilmachung* and *Der Arbeiter*.¹⁴ Like many of his contemporaries, Jünger also took part in the First World War and showed also an enthusiasm (*Begeisterung*) for the war:

We had come from lecture halls, school desks and factory workbenches, and over the brief weeks of training, we had bonded together into one large and enthusiastic group. Grown up in an age of security we shared a yearning for danger, for the experience of the extraordinary. We were enraptured by war. We had set out in a rain of flowers, in a drunk atmosphere of blood and roses. Surely the war had to supply us with what we wanted; the great, the overwhelming, the hallowed experience. We thought of it as manly, as action, a merry-duelling party on flowered, blood-bedewed meadows. 'No finer death in all the world than ...' Anything to participate, not to have to stay at home!¹⁵

But his novels and essays go beyond the description of the historical event and personal experience of the Great War. Jünger characterizes his war experiences as a shaking of the world order, an *Erschütterung der Weltordnung*.¹⁶ To understand what is at stake in such a shaking of the world order, we ask for the measure or unity in which reality appears as ordered.

Within the metaphysical tradition, this measure or unity is found in the ontological provision of the essence of beings; the transcendental horizon of the Platonic *idea* or the categories of thought. The idea or category is the fixed measure or unity, in which reality appears as a meaningful order. For Jünger, these categories were hitherto found in Enlightenment ideals such as rationality and humanity, morality and individual freedom. But in the trenches of the First World War, he experienced that such categories became meaningless. Man and things no longer derived their value from a fixed value or idea, but emerged as *potential energy*, which derived its value from the extent to which it is fruitful in different situations, the extent to which it is beneficial for life; a church appears for instance *as* orientation point for the

artillery or as a possible crow's nest. Jünger describes this "increasing conversion of life into energy"¹⁷ as *total mobilization*, within which people and things appear as *functional*, or – in the terminology of total mobilisation – as *work (Arbeit)*.

According to Jünger, this work-character of all men and things enabled the use of all available means and forces for the war:

Because of the huge increase in expenses, it is impossible to cover the costs of waging war on the basis of a fixed war budget; instead, a stretching of all possible credit, even a taxation of the last *Pfennig* saved, is necessary to keep the machinery in motion. In the same way, the image of war as armed combat merge into the now extended image of a gigantic work process (*Arbeitsprozess*). In addition to the armies that meet on the battlefields originate the modern armies of commerce and transport, foodstuffs, the manufacture of armaments – the army of work in general. In the final phase, which was already hinted at toward the end of the last war, there is no longer any movement whatsoever – be it that of the home worker at the sewing machine – without at least indirect use for the battlefield. In this unlimited marshalling of potential energies, which transforms the warring industrial countries into volcanic forges, we perhaps find the most striking sign of the dawn of the age of work (*Arbeitszeitalter*) (TM 125f).

The *shaking* of the world order, first of all, indicates the destruction of the horizon of the Platonic *idea* and the experience of *nihilism* – the *nihil* or absence of fixed measures for earthly life – and shows the technical era, in which man and things emerge in terms of its function, as *operative (Arbeiter)*.

Now Jünger supposes that this total mobilisation involves a *Gestalt-switch*, a change that transforms the way in which reality appears *and* the way man deals with it. The *Erschütterung der Weltordnung* is thus not only an indication of the transformation of the way reality appears in World War One. That is, Jünger does not only see that the world is totally mobilised, but along with this he envisages the appearance of a new type of man – the type of the worker – who is at home in the totally mobilised world. This change in the appearance of the world together with the way people deal with it, leads Jünger to conceive of a new turn of 'Being' – the *Gestalt* of the worker - which is capable of "guaranteeing a new certainty and new rank order of life" (Arb 99). 'Being' is understood here in line with the metaphysical tradition, as a *Gestalt*, form or measure in which reality appears as *ordered* (see for further details on Jünger's concept of Being §2). In the case of Jünger's *Gestalt* of the *worker*, this form or measure must be found in *work*: that is, in the stamped *face* of reality as *work* and human dealings with it, grasped in terms of the type of *the worker*. The shaking of the world order in World War I not only show the technical era of *total mobilization* (nihilism), but can also be conceived as a new turn of Being ; the *Gestalt* of the worker.

According to Jünger, this *Gestalt* can only be surmised within total mobilisation.¹⁸ Instead of avoiding total mobilisation by the restoration of the Enlightenment ideals, we have to affirm and confront ourselves with total mobilisation. He calls this attitude heroic realism. Heroic realism consists in

the production of a new measure – the type of the worker as representative of the *Gestalt* of the worker – and in the transition towards a world in which the type of the worker represents the *Gestalt* of the worker.¹⁹ This new measure is produced in order to overcome our totally mobilised world and reach a new certainty and new rank order of life; the work-world. In the soldiers of World War One, Jünger sees the harbingers of this new breed of *Arbeiter*, this new type of man who is at home in the totally mobilised world.

§2 *The Fundamental Metaphysical Position of Jünger*

In his annotations from the thirties, Heidegger states that Jünger “sharpens, hardens and articulates” Nietzsche’s metaphysical design of the world, out of his essential experiences of the First World War (GA 90: 227f). According to Heidegger, Jünger understands this *Weltentwurf* of the will to power in terms of total mobilisation. Will to power means that reality is grasped in terms of its benefit for life (power-preservation (*Machterhaltung*) and power-enhancement (*Machtsteigerung*)); a forest appears for instance *as* a potential producer of wood or *as* recreation after work. Accordingly, the increasing conversion of life into energy (total mobilisation) means that man and things emerge as *potential energy* for power-preservation and power-enhancement, that they have a functional worth. Therefore Heidegger concludes that in his description of total mobilisation, Jünger, more than anybody else, shows our current world of the will to power (GA 90: 263; cf. 53). Heidegger draws two conclusions from Jünger’s metaphysics.

a) *The Platonism of Jünger*

Within the metaphysical tradition, the *Gestalt* is conceived in various ways. The first way is that of Platonism. In Platonism, the *Gestalt* (*idea, eidos* or form) is the ideal and transcendental form (Being) which is the measure for all beings on earth, the world of becoming. The chasm – opened up by Platonism – between the merely apparent beings here below and the real Being somewhere up there is not neutral. In respect of the transcendental realm of Being above, the world of becoming down here is a non-being, which thus has to be denied. Here the *Gestalt* (Being) is conceived in the *turning away* from our worldly existence, and this implies the negation (*nihil*) of the world of becoming in Platonism. In the Platonic conception of the *Gestalt*, the transcendental realm of Being prevails over the world of becoming.

The second way is that of Nietzsche. Nietzsche sees the nihilistic character of Platonism, the denial of life in its conception of the *Gestalt*. His reversal of Platonism takes its point of departure precisely from within the world of becoming and conceives the *Gestalt* as the *product* of the will to power of life. The *Gestalt* is a *Herrschaftsgebilde* amidst the world of becoming, which serves the power-preservation and power-enhancement of life. The *Gestalt* is

a necessary condition for the power-preservation of life, which would otherwise evaporate in the face of relentless variability (becoming). Nevertheless, this *Gestalt* is not stable and everlasting, because all stabilization destroys becoming, the principal character of life. Thus the *Gestalt* has relative duration and in this way serves the power-enhancement of life. In Nietzsche's conception of the *Gestalt*, the world of becoming prevails over Being.

According to Heidegger, the same reversal of Platonism is at stake in Jünger's thought. Like Nietzsche, Jünger sees the possibility of overcoming nihilism in the will to power. The *Gestalt* of the worker is represented by the will to power of life, and should not be confused with the Platonic idea. Nevertheless, Heidegger says that in the reversal of Platonism "all the props of Platonism return" (GA 90: 82). Why? According to Jünger, there is no home base (*Heimat*) to be found in the world of becoming – he calls this the "elementary world". The *Gestalt* is necessary to regulate the elementary world of becoming. The representation of the *Gestalt* means a stable order that is unshakeable (*unerschütterlich*) and guarantees as such "a new security and rank order of life" (Arb 99). This security he finds in the *Gestalt* of the worker.

The *Gestalt* (Being) is necessary in order to regulate the elementary (becoming). Jünger understands this regulation in line with the metaphysical tradition so that a 'substance' is given a 'form' (Arb 214). The emphasis on the elementary points to "the primacy of the *hule*", according to Heidegger, which is brought in order by the *Gestalt* (eidos) (GA 90: 124; cf. 94, 96). On the one hand, the *Gestalt* is the result of the reversal of Platonism, which represents something stable in the world of becoming. On the other hand, Jünger's elementarism is Platonic. Only the *Gestalt* – the everlasting and eternal Being – is able to regulate the elementary. Thus, according to Heidegger, this attempt to reverse Platonism remains unsuccessful: "Out of the necessity of the revaluation of all values, which is a reversal of Platonism – which has to remove Platonism but isn't able to do it! The idea remains in force as *Platonic perception*" (GA 90: 23). "All properties of Platonism return: "once again Platonism, 'everlasting being'".²⁰

b) The Modern Character of Jünger's Platonism.

That Jünger is focusing on the regulation of the elementary or the *Meisterung des Chaos* brings Heidegger to a second conclusion: Although his "Platonic metaphysics of the *Gestalt*" represents the *Gestalt* as everlasting and transcendental, it is at the same time essentially *modern* (GA 90: 93f). In what does the modern character of Jünger's metaphysics consist? For Heidegger, modernity is marked by the thinking of René Descartes. Descartes sought after indubitable and certain knowledge and he found the unshakeable foundation (*fundamentum inconcussum*) for this in the *ego cogito*; human being is the

subjectum which is the basis for certain knowledge. Like Descartes, Jünger is also seeking certainty. He finds this *fundamentum inconcussum* of certainty in the *Gestalt* of the worker.

According to Heidegger, the *Gestalt* is the product of the will to power, which projects a perspectival *picture* to regulate the elementary (GA 90: 21, 133-137). Such a world picture is not a *painting* of the world, but means rather that the world is grasped *as* picture. The world *is*, “insofar as it is set in place by representing-producing [*vorstellend-herstellender*] humanity”.²¹ Only what is represented in accordance with this picture *is* in the proper sense of the word. Jünger’s “*Gestalt*” is such a world picture, according to Heidegger. In representing the world as picture, the elementary is filtered out in favour of the presence of the world as representative of the *Gestalt* of the worker. Heidegger calls this representation of the world as picture the “mastering of the earth” in the “fight for the domination of the earth [*Erdherrschaft*]”.²² These *Gestalten* or world pictures are not needed in all times according to Heidegger. They are only necessary at all “in reality as will to power, in chaos, and that means in modernity” (GA 90: 134). That is to say, only when truth is understood as certainty does reality appear as chaos that must be regulated.

It is important to be clear that Jünger doesn’t speak about the *Gestalt* of *work*, but about the *Gestalt* of the *worker*. Like Descartes, Jünger connects the question about the subject with the question about human being, namely the type of the worker which represents the *Gestalt* of the worker. According to Heidegger, the reason for this connection is “modern metaphysics, which understands human being as subject” (GA 90: 132f). For Heidegger, Jünger’s representation of the *Gestalt* is grounded in the “determination [*Festsetzung*] of the animal man” (GA 90: 23). The type of the worker as representative of the *Gestalt* of the worker is the ‘determinate animal’, which founds the regulation of the elementary in a world picture.

However, that the grounds for certainty are found in the *Gestalt* of the worker does not, according to Heidegger, mean that the type of the worker (Jünger) is identical with the *ego cogito* of Descartes. It means only that since modernity all philosophy is anthropological and every representation anthropomorphic (GA 90: 99; GA 5: 99f). Ever since Descartes, the question about the *fundamentum inconcussum* has been connected to human being as *subjectum*. Therefore, Heidegger characterises Jünger’s fundamental metaphysical position in the following way: “the unconditional anthropomorphism of absolute subjectivity of the *homo natura* as *homo faber militans*” (GA 90: 45; cf. 5).

The fundamental metaphysical position of Jünger’s Platonism is modern because it remains trapped in the *Gestalt* of human being as subject. “*The self-assertion in the Gestalt is then the only form of certainty and security*, because exactly this represents the highest subjectivity in the domain of modern

freedom anyway” (GA 90: 134). This subject is the ground for the modern understanding of truth *as* certainty. The certainty of the *Gestalt* is therefore the certainty of the subject, where the objectivity of the object is reduced to and guaranteed by the representation of the subject. The regulation of the elementary through the projection of the *Gestalt* aims at the domination of the earth and so is an indication of the *Kampf um die Erdherrschaft*,²³ whereas the *Gestalt* of the worker is the concealed *meaning (Sinn)* of our world, human being is the subject which *gives* this meaning to the meaningless by regulating the elementary.

§3 *The Consummation of Modernity as Indication of “Being”*

Now we have reconstructed Heidegger’s reception of Jünger’s metaphysical position from his notes and unpublished papers, we can focus on Heidegger’s confrontation with Jünger in relation to the consummation of modernity and the necessity of another beginning of philosophical thinking.

Heidegger also calls the epoch of the worker “the epoch of the consummation [*Vollendung*] of modernity” (GA 90: 96, 78, 139). To what extent can the thinking of Jünger be called the consummation of modern metaphysics? As we saw before, Jünger’s basic experience is the collapse or the end of metaphysics (nihilism). In this context ‘consummation’ thus means the end of a specific conception of philosophy, namely of the philosophical orientation toward a transcendental world of ‘Being’. In his thinking Jünger is working on the overcoming of this end.

Yet this is not Heidegger’s conception of consummation. For him it does not mean the end of the modern view of the human being as *animal rationale* and the rise of a new type of man, the worker. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* from 1935, Heidegger explains that *Ende* does not mean that something ends, can go no further and can be followed by something else. End can also be called a limit, namely that which surrounds and limits our field of vision (*Gesichtskreis*). Considered thus, consummation means that something – in this case the *modern* way of philosophical thinking – comes to its *limit* and so – in its limit – will show itself *as such*.²⁴

To what extent can Jünger’s thought be called the consummation of modern metaphysics in this second sense of the word? According to Heidegger, Jünger is the only real follower of Nietzsche, because he doesn’t speak *about* Nietzsche and his doctrine of the will to power. He *sees* beings as will to power without *describing* them: “his way of thinking is itself a *Gestalt* of the will to power; in Jünger’s language: thinking itself has “work-character” [*Arbeitscharakter*]”.²⁵ Jünger calls his own way of thinking heroic realism, because he does not only see the reality of the work-character (*Arbeitscharakter*) of people and things in the world, but also affirms this in such a way that his own way of thinking has *Arbeitscharakter* itself.

In *Der Arbeiter*, this becomes concrete when Jünger comments on the status of his own statements:

Please note, that all these terms are ready to be understood. They are not what really matters for us. They can be forgotten or put aside right away, after they are used as working values [*Arbeitsgrößen*] to understand a fixed reality, which exists in spite of and beyond these concepts (Arb 313).

Jünger is saying here that his own terms have to be understood as *work*, just as other things in the world are, which means that these terms are working hypotheses which have to be fruitful for the power-preservation (*Machterhaltung*) and power-enhancement (*Machtsteigerung*) in different situations. Thus the descriptions in *Der Arbeiter*, which show the work-character (*Arbeitscharakter*) of our world, also have this work-character themselves. As such, Jünger understands his own method of writing in *Der Arbeiter* just as he understands the totally mobilized world, namely out of Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will to power.

Heidegger concentrates on this identification of the subject of *Der Arbeiter* (worker) and the way this subject is being discussed in Jünger's book (work). "Is the essence of the worker determined out of the *essence of work*? ... Or is the essence of work put forward out of the essence of the worker? ... how does Jünger decide? Does he see this question at all, does he notice its weight?" (GA 90: 52f) On the one hand, the subject (worker) is the basis for the working character of the world as its object. On the other hand, the essence of the worker is determined by work as its object. According to Heidegger, Jünger's descriptions of our work-world move around in a flat circle (*flachen Zirkel*).²⁶ These move unnoticed over from *what* is described ('Being' as work) to *how* it is described (thinking as work) and so mutually define one another. "The actual motion is not in reality as work ('Being') nor in the way we grasp the world (thinking), but in the capacity to move back and forth between 'Being' as work and thinking as work".²⁷ Jünger's descriptions are caught up in the continuing circle of the work-character of thought (will to power) to the work-character of reality (will to power) and vice versa.

We understand why Heidegger says that Jünger is the consummation of modern metaphysics when we take the 'flat circle' of Jünger's descriptions literally. The circular course of Jünger's descriptions of reality as work for human being as worker *encircles* and *delimits* not only Jünger's field of vision, but the *Gesichtskreis* of modern metaphysics as such. The consummation of modern metaphysics as *end* (limit) consists in its being delimited and this delimiting *is* the encircling, which shows itself in the circular course of the descriptions in *Der Arbeiter*. The circular course is delimiting reality as work as the object for the worker as the thinking subject, which means that *Der Arbeiter* as such *is* the end (*Ende*) or *Vollendung* of modernity.

In a note, Heidegger writes: “Jünger’s descriptions (and explanations) achieve only this: indicating Being by showing beings (in the character of the will to power), without questioning this Being” (GA 90: 73). What is indicated in the descriptions of *Der Arbeiter*, is a continuous transition (*Übergang*) of the work-character of the world (will to power) to the work-character of the way human being is dealing with it (will to power), to the work-character of Jünger’s way of speaking about all this (will to power). This circular course, which is the consummation of modern metaphysics, confronts us with the work-character of the *whole* of beings, with ‘Being’. It is in this way, that the descriptions of *Der Arbeiter* indicate ‘Being’.

The question arises why, according to Heidegger, Jünger only *indicates* Being without questioning it? We could just as well claim that Jünger’s descriptions of the technical era show us something important about the *essence* of the modern age – its work-character – and thus about ‘Being’. But for Heidegger, the question of Being is no longer the metaphysical question *what* beings *as such* are and does not end up in a metaphysical description of the being of beings – will to power or total mobilization as the beingness of beings. Heidegger’s question of Being asks after ‘Being’ itself, the *meaning* of Being (*Sinn von Sein*). According to Heidegger, Jünger only indicates ‘Being’ by showing the will to power of beings (work and workers), but does not have an eye for the modern metaphysics which is the basis of his own metaphysical position. He claims that Jünger ignores the relation between the *essence* of the subjectivity of human being and the *essence* of the will to power (Cf. GA 90: 13). To what extent is this the case? With the development of our answer to this question, the real controversy between Heidegger and Jünger comes to light.

For Heidegger, ‘Being’ cannot be associated with work and workers. Work and workers designate in the first instance (human) beings in the world, and so concern in this way metaphysically understood *beings*, whereas ‘Being’ concerns the way reality appears together with the way people deal with it. In the epoch of the worker, reality appears as produced and represented (will to power) for representing-producing humanity (will to power).²⁸ It is this representing-producing character of being and thinking, which is indicated in the circular course from the work-character of the world to the work-character of the way human being is dealing with it, that Heidegger conceives as an indication of ‘Being’.

Heidegger learns from the confrontation with Jünger that it is exactly the will to power of representation itself which blocks access to this ‘Being’. Why? The thinking of Jünger is bound up with the will to power of representation and for that very reason remains dependent on the representation of work and workers as metaphysically understood *beings*. His thinking is absorbed in the circular course like a snake biting its own tail –

moving from the work-character of the world to the work-character of human being and so on – without questioning whether the worker is determined by work or vice versa; because of this circular course, “the modern freedom of subjectivity is completely absorbed into the corresponding objectivity”.²⁹ And because the will to power of representation is absorbed in and by the circular course, it encounters only the re-presented (beings) and remains blind for ‘Being’.³⁰ So the will to power of representation characterizes the thinking in *Der Arbeiter* in such a way that the will to power is its end or limit, but is not accessible by this very concept of the will to power.³¹ And this is the reason why Jünger’s the are said to *indicate* Being without asking after it.

§4 Zirkelgang or Übergang: *The Controversy Between Jünger and Heidegger*

In the introduction to this article, we said that the main theme of Heidegger’s thinking in the thirties was the overcoming of the metaphysics of the will to power. Till the mid-thirties, Heidegger seemed to be quite revolutionary in heralding the other beginning of philosophy. In this period, he developed a destructed concept of the will to characterize his own way of philosophical thinking, and was *willing* the overcoming of metaphysics.³² In the opening paragraph of his Rectoral Address (1933), for instance, he starts with the ‘spiritual mission of the university that must be *willed*’,³³ and he ends this lecture with the remark that “it is our will that our people [*Volk*] fulfil its historical mission”: “We will ourselves” (GA 16: 117).³⁴ In this period, he characterizes this question of Being as *Wissen-wollen*: “Questioning is willing-to-know. Whoever wills, whoever lays his whole *Dasein* into a will, is resolute (*entschlossen*). Resoluteness delays nothing, does not shirk, but acts from the moment and without fail” (GA 40: 23).

But from the confrontation with Jünger, Heidegger learned that every “overcoming of the metaphysics of the will to power” is doomed, as long as it is characterized by the will. The will is absorbed in the circular course from the work-character of the world to the work-character of the way human being is dealing with it, the circular course which indicates the end of metaphysics. To put it differently, Heidegger learned from Jünger that the overcoming of the metaphysics of the will to power is the *Zirkelgang within* metaphysics and not the *Übergang* to another beginning of philosophical thinking, as long as it is characterized by the will. When he realized this, he began to advocate the release from the wilful way of thinking. In his later work, Heidegger speaks about the willing of the non-willing, about a *gelassen* or non-willing way of philosophical thinking – because the will itself is the main barrier for the experience of ‘Being’.³⁵

The experience of ‘Being’ demands our bidding farewell to the concept of the will, and demands a radically different other beginning of philosophical reflection (*Besinnung*).

Why a beginning at all? ... Because only the greatest occurrence, the innermost knowing, can still save us from being lost in the bustle of mere events and machinations. What must take place is enopening being for us and putting us back into this [Being] and thus bringing us to ourselves and before the work and the sacrifice.³⁶

This *Rettung* is the transition to a way of human existence that is exposed to the experience of 'Being' (*Dasein*).

That Heidegger bids farewell to the willful way of thinking does not mean that he is attempting to break out of the circular course, for doing so would equally lead us to lose contact with 'Being'. As such, Heidegger is concerned with the right way to attain and to *enter* the circular course, to move in the circular course of the will to power of representation and at the same time to hold back, to experience 'Being' in its centre.³⁷

Heidegger calls this new beginning of philosophical reflection (*Besinnung*) a decision (*Entscheidung*). This *Ent-scheidung* does not concern any division between two eras, for instance between the era of the worker and a new era, in which we reflect on the sense of Being. In fact, 'Being' shows itself only *in* the circular course of representation. As becomes clear with the end of modern metaphysics, the decision concerns the unbridgeable division or twofoldness between the omnipresence of work and workers on the one hand and 'Being' on the other hand.³⁸

And here culminates Heidegger's critique of Jünger. Heidegger speaks about the "great indecisiveness and undecidability of this whole fundamental metaphysical position" (GA 90: 54). Because Jünger is absorbed in the circular course of representation, he does not see this realm of the decision (*Entscheidungsbereich*) and so continues to understand every decision as an act of rationality (*Vernunft-akt*) of man as subject. According to Heidegger, the work of Jünger is rather that of settling thinking into indecisiveness (*Entscheidungslosigkeit*). In this, 'Being' sinks into oblivion (*Seinsvergessenheit*) and thinking is absorbed by the hegemony (*Vormacht*) of beings.³⁹ In this respect, Jünger is not only the end of modern metaphysics for Heidegger, but also the perishing (*Ver-endung*) of this end (*Ende*) (GA 90: 74), the oblivion of this end in the circular course of representation.

And here Heidegger sees the greatest danger of our time:

And the danger is now that the oblivion of Being ... will certainly solidify and all that will be sought after and operated with is the real, is beings. That the ground and the truth of this reality become more and more inaccessible. And in that, the book [*Der Arbeiter*, VB] has 'work-character'. (GA 90: 75)

Can we allow that this danger is the greatest danger of *our* time? Then, Jünger could be in fact a "passage, an encouragement of the transition" (GA 90: 15) to Heidegger's radical new beginning of philosophy.⁴⁰

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References

1. Martin Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges, Gesamtausgabe Band 16*, Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000, p. 375 (hereafter: GA 16: 375); my translations.
2. Martin Heidegger, 'Zur Seinsfrage', *Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe Band 9*, Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976, p. 391 (Hereafter: WM: 391); tr. Martin Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being', *Pathmarks*, trans. William Mc Neill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 295.
3. E. Jünger, *Über die Linie, Sämtliche Werke Band 7*, Stuttgart: Klett Cotta 1980, p. 267
4. Martin Heidegger, *Zu Ernst Jünger, Gesamtausgabe Band 90*, Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004, p. 6 (Hereafter: GA 90: 6). What then is the essence of technology according to Heidegger? "Technik nicht Weise der Mobilisierung, sondern Grund der Wahrheit" (GA 90: 80).
5. We agree with Günter Figal, that Heidegger seeks to pin Jünger to his early position in *Der Arbeiter* while Jünger's later work is much closer to Heidegger, than he would admit: "Heidegger möchte Jünger über die Kontinuität seines Schreibens aufklären und ihn auf seine frühere Position festlegen. Das ist Heidegger vor allem wichtig, weil es ihm Gelegenheit gibt, sich mit der früheren Position Jüngers auseinanderzusetzen – allem Anschein nach liegt darin sogar sein vorrangiges Interesse. Jünger setzt sich auch mit seiner früheren Position auseinander; aber um dazu wirklich imstande zu sein, muss er seine Perspektive geändert haben, und dann wird Heidegger mit seiner Antwort nicht gerecht. Dann könnte es außerdem sein, daß Heidegger die Punkte entgehen, an denen Jünger der Heideggerschen Perspektive nahekommt und eventuell sogar Möglichkeiten eröffnet, diese präziser zu fassen oder zu ihrem Vorteil zu relativieren" (Günter Figal, 'Der metaphysische Charakter der Moderne. Ernst Jüngers Schrift *Über die Linie* (1950) und Martin Heideggers Kritik *Über "Die Linie"* (1955)', Hans-Harald Müller, Harro Segeberg (ed.), *Ernst Jünger im 20. Jahrhundert*, München: Eugen Fink Verlag, 1995, p. 184-185). For a concrete elaboration of a perspective in which Jünger comes into the neighbourhood of Heidegger, see also Vincent Blok, 'Kontroversen über die Sprache. Die Einseitigkeit von Heideggers Auseinandersetzung mit Ernst Jünger', *Existencia* (2007), p. 19-30.
6. According to Heidegger, the confrontation with Nietzsche is tainted because of positivistic and romantic interpretations of his work. The achievement of Jünger is that he is the only real follower of Nietzsche (GA 90: 227; vgl. 239, 255, 277f). He shows our world of the will to power, free from positivistic and romantic connotations. As opposed to the positivists he has a nose for the metaphysical question about the essence of beings: "Es ist ein Zurückholen der Metaphysik in das 'Volk'" (GA 90: 76; vgl. 254f). As opposed to romanticism, "schreibt [er] das Wirkliche nicht ab für eine unverbindliche Vorführung, sondern die Beschreibung schreibt uns selbst ein in die Zugehörigkeit zu diesem Wirklichen" (GA 90: 255) (this observation of Heidegger needs some modification. Whereas he says here that Jünger's only achievement is that he portrayed the will to power free from positivism and romanticism, he elsewhere explicitly calls the position of Jünger *romantic positivism*: "Der heroische Realismus ist der *romantische Positivismus*, jener, der über sich selbst in unerkannte Positivismen hinaus-schweift, dabei aber gleich heftig *gegen* alle Positivismen, *gegen* alle 'Romantik' zu Felde zieht. Denn was ist das, wenn man nur *das Seiende* kennt und dieses als das Wirkliche und dieses als das die Zeit Bestimmende, auch wenn man das Seiendste in der *Gestalt* sieht?" (GA 90: 90; 177, 181-183). Jünger affirms our world of the will to power without searching for exclusion or excuses. His singularity is, in other words, that he is in *our* time the gateway to Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will to power. But when Jünger pays full tribute to Nietzsche, it is not clear why Heidegger should speak of a *nachhaltige Förderung*.
7. Günter Figal, 'Erörterung des Nihilismus. Ernst Jünger und Martin Heidegger', *Etudes Germanistiques*, 1996, p. 718.
8. Michael Zimmermann, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity. Technology, Politics, Art*, Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990, p. xx.

9. "Obwohl er die männliche Rhetorik von Jüngers "heroischem Realismus" verwendete, hoffte Heidegger, dass der Nationalsozialismus es dem deutschen Volk erlauben würde, für es selbst zu sorgen und sich nicht im Brachland des technologischen Nihilismus zu verlieren. Daher suchte Heidegger nach einer Alternative zu Jünger..." (Michael Zimmermann, 'Die Entwicklung von Heideggers Nietzsche-Interpretation', *Heidegger Jahrbuch*, volume 2 (2005), p. 111).
10. See for the development of Heidegger's treatment of the problem of the will the monumental study of Bret Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007, hereafter: Davis (2007).
11. Cf. M. Heidegger, "Nietzsches Wort 'Gott ist Tot'", *Holzwege*, GA 5 (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann 1977), p. 243; hereafter referred to as GA 5.
12. M. Heidegger, *Feldweg-Gespräche*, Gesamtausgabe Band 77, Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann 1995, p. 309.
13. See also Daniel Morat, *Von der Tat zur Gelassenheit. Konservatives Denken bei Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger und Friedrich Georg Jünger 1920-1960*, Göttingen: Walstein Verlag, 2007; Bernard Radloff, *Heidegger and the Question of National Socialism. Disclosure and Gestalt*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.
14. For further elaborations on this theme, see Vincent Blok, 'Der ontologische Sinn der Gestalt. Zum Verständnis des Arbeiters', *Les Carnets Ernst Jünger*, 10 (2005), p. 173-192 (Hereafter: Blok (2005) 173-192).
15. Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern, Sämtliche Werke Band 1*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981, p. 11.
16. Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter – Herrschaft und Gestalt, Sämtliche Werke Band 8*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981, p. 99; hereafter referred to as Arb.
17. Ernst Jünger, "Die totale Mobilmachung", *Sämtliche Werke Band 7*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981, p. 125; hereafter referred to as TM.
18. As explained, total mobilization is a form of nihilism; as such, the world, under total mobilization, is devoid of meaning. Within such a world there is no Being (*Gestalt*): Being (*Gestalt*) can, at most, only be surmised. "Das Sehen der totalen Mobilmachung darf also nicht mit dem Sehen der neuen Gestalt verwechselt werden. *Wir leben in einem Zustande, [...] in dem man zunächst sehen lernen muss [Arb: 88]*, dass die totale Mobilmachung in ganz andersartiger Weise eine durch die Gestalt geprägte Ordnung ist: „Das Vergangene ist so beschaffen, dass man an ihm nicht haften, und das werdende so, dass man sich in ihm nicht einrichten kann [...]. Was gesehen werden kann, ist nicht etwa die endgültige Ordnung, sondern die Veränderung der Unordnung, unter der ein großes Gesetz zu erraten ist“ [Arb 100f] (Blok (2005) 192).
19. For further elaborations on the specific character of this production – the will to power as art – see Vincent Blok, 'Die Bändigung des Elementaren – Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst in "Der Arbeiter"', *Existentialia* (2008), p. 83-98.
20. GA 90: 81; vgl. 22f, 28, 74, 81f, 93f, 100, 131, 167; although Heidegger points to Jünger's Platonism, what is at stake is the relation between Platonism and the reversal of Platonism. He does not draw from this the conclusion that something else that matters in Jünger can be found in Nietzsche or Plato, but only that Jünger thinks everything unclearly, mixes up and levels out everything (GA 90: 131). In fact, there is a *fusion* between Nietzscheanism and Platonism happening in the work of Jünger, which cannot be elaborated in this article.
21. GA 90: 133-137; Martin Heidegger, 'Die Zeit des Weltbildes', *Holzwege, Gesamtausgabe Band 5*, Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann 1977, p. 89; hereafter referred to as GA 5; tr. Martin Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young, Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002, p. 67f.
22. GA 90: 53, 59, 80; GA 5: 111.
23. GA 90: 22f, 39, 53, 59, 80, 151; GA 5: 111; Martin Heidegger, *Die Geschichte des Seyns, Gesamtausgabe Band 69*, Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998, p. 74.
24. Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik, Gesamtausgabe Band 40*, Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983, p. 64.

25. GA 90: 227; cf. 287, 247, 263.
26. GA 90: 6; Martin Heidegger, *Besinnung, Gesamtausgabe, Band 66*, Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997, p. 17.
27. Wouter Oudemans, 'The Man of the Crowd. Of: Wat heet informatisering?', F. Geraedts, L. de Jong, (ed.), *Ergo Cogito V. Pleidooi voor de filosofie*, Groningen: Historische uitgeverij, 1996, p. 176; vgl. GA 90: 173.
28. In the thirties, the appearance of the world together with the way people deal with it is called machination and lived experience (*Machenschaft und Erlebnis*): vgl. "Denn dieser Wille, der alles macht, hat sich im Voraus der *Machenschaft* verschrieben, jener Auslegung des Seienden als des Vor-stellbaren und Vor-gestellten. Vor-stellbar heißt einmal: zugänglich im Meinen und Rechnen; und heißt dann: vorbringbar in der Her-stellung und Durchführung. Dies alles aber aus dem Grunde gedacht: das Seiende als solches ist das Vor-gestellte, und nur das Vorgestellte ist seiend" (GA 65: 108-109). In this article, we do not focus on Heidegger's concept of machination. For this, see the studies of Sandro Gorgone, 'Machenschaft und Totale Mobilmachung: Heideggers *Besinnung* als Phänomenologie der Moderne', *Heidegger Studies* 22 (2006), p. 49-69 and Bernard Radloff, 'Self-overpowering Power and the Refusal of Being', *Existentialia*, nr. XVII (2007), p. 393-421.
29. GA 5: 111; tr. p. 84; vgl. GA 90: 14, 59, 78, 100f, 154, 264
30. "Das metaphysische Vorstellen verdankt diese Sicht dem Licht des Seins. Das Licht, d.h. dasjenige, was solches Denken als Licht erfährt, kommt selbst nicht mehr in die Sicht des Denkens; denn es stellt das Seiende stets und nur in der Hinsicht auf das Seiende vor" (WM 365).
31. Vgl. GA 66: 16; GA 90: 100f.
32. "Ich bin noch unentschieden und glaube nur das Eine zu wissen, daß wir uns auf große geistige Wandlungen vorbereiten, d.h. diese selbst mit heraufführen müssen" (GA 16: 169).
33. M. Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges*, Gesamtausgabe Band 16 (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann 2000), p. 108.
34. For Heidegger's destructed concept of willing in his Rectoral Address, see Vincent Blok, Heidegger and der Nationalsozialismus oder die Frage nach dem philosophischen Empirismus, *Studia Phaenomenologica* X (2010), p. 287-292.
35. vgl. "Denn dieser Wille, der alles macht, hat sich im voraus der *Machenschaft* verschrieben, jener Auslegung des Seienden als des Vor-stellbaren und Vor-gestellten. Vor-stellbar heißt einmal: zugänglich im Meinen und Rechnen; und heißt dann: vorbringbar in der Her-stellung und Durchführung. Dies alles aber aus dem Grunde gedacht: das Seiende als solches ist das Vor-gestellte, und nur das Vorgestellte ist seiend" (GA 65: 108f). For Heidegger's criticism on the will, see Davis (2007: 146-185).
36. Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*, Gesamtausgabe Band 65, Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989¹⁹⁹⁴, p. 57; tr. Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad, Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 40.
37. "Bei dieser Kreisbewegung ist nicht das entscheidend, was der vulgäre Verstand allein sieht, das Entlanglaufen an der Peripherie und das Zurückkommen an dieselbe Stelle auf der Peripherie, sondern das im Kreisgang mögliche und in ihm allein mögliche Blicken ins Zentrum als solches" (Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 29/30, Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), p. 267).
38. This decision cannot be understood as a decision *against* work and workers and *for* the whole of Being, because such a decision would neutralize the twofoldness (vgl. GA 66: 15, 24, 46, 57; GA 69: 68; GA 90: 13-15).
39. GA 90: 34, 13, 84; GA 69: 49; GA 67: 6
40. I would like to thank the members of my research group in Nijmegen, especially Ben Vedder, Gert-Jan van der Heijden and Andreea Parapuf, as well as the reviewers of JBSP for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.