Chapter 8

"The Right to Be"

Stevens and Heidegger on Thinking and Poetising

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In the last years of his life, the American poet Wallace Stevens expressed interest in the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Stevens was led to Heidegger by his prior interest in Friedrich Hölderlin, the poet who preoccupied Heidegger after the book *Being and Time* (1927). Frank Kermode, in an essay with the marvellous title *Dwelling Poetically in Connecticut*, discusses Stevens's efforts to acquire information about Heidegger, the results of which were ambiguous.[1] Certainly, Stevens could not have had more than a passing familiarity with Heidegger's thought, but Kermode notes pertinent similarities and differences, given their nationalities and temperaments. While the German brooded on the meaning of Being as if the fate of humanity depended on it, the American indulged in what he called, in his *Adagia*, "casual" interests such as "light or color, [and] images."[2]

Although Stevens's pursuit of Heidegger went nowhere, I like to think that he was right to wonder whether Heidegger might have something to offer him. Metaphysically speaking, both men belonged to the same epoch. Stevens, like Heidegger, was haunted by the question of how to respond to the moral and spiritual disorders of a world from which the gods had fled (or worse). Heidegger worried about technological "enframing," in which beings appear as resources continually in the process of being optimised, enhanced and rendered ever more accessible to manipulation – an approach that is also applied to human beings and which obscures our true vocation as "shepherds of Being." Stevens characterises the modern world in rather different terms – "the great things have been denied and we live in an intricacy of new and local mythologies, political, economic and poetic, which are asserted with an ever-enlarging incoherence" – but he was at one with Heidegger when it

came to the "pressure on the consciousness" of a disenchanted technological society that weakens the "power of contemplation."[3]

Despairing of the spiritual state of the modern world, Heidegger concluded that "The only possibility available to us is that by *thinking and poetizing* [*Denken und Dichten*] we prepare a readiness for the appearance of a god."[4] Stevens, for his part, understood the modern world in terms of the Nietzschean "death of God," and he too was in search of a remedy. The right kind of poetry, he hoped, "may some day disclose a force capable of destroying nihilism."[5] *Mutatis mutandis*, Stevens wrestled with many of the same problems as Heidegger.

If Heidegger is the philosopher who poetises, Stevens is the poet who philosophises. When we think, Heidegger says, "Being comes to language," for "language is the house [*das Haus*] of Being" and "the thinkers and poetizers are the custodians of this dwelling [*Behausung*]."[6] More sweepingly, "All philosophical thinking ... is in itself poetic."[7] Thinking as Heidegger understands it is more imaginative than logical, and when it reflects on its language, it teases out semantic intimations that will dispose us; he hopes to recognise and name the god when it does arrive.

Stevens too speaks of poetry and thinking in the same breath. He characterised his poetic intentions in a letter to his friend, Hi Simons:

> The ordinary, everyday search of the romantic mind is rewarded perhaps rather too lightly by the satisfaction that it finds in what it calls reality. But if one happened to be playing checkers somewhere near the Maginot Line, subject to a call at any moment to do some job that might be one's last job, one would spend a good deal of time thinking in order to make the situation seem reasonable, inevitable and free from question. I suppose that, in the last analysis, my own main objective is to do that kind of thinking.[8]

Stevens's "kind of thinking" is reminiscent of the "therapeutic" philosophical investigations that Ludwig Wittgenstein hoped would put an end to questioning by dissolving problems rather than solving them. For Heidegger, on the other hand, "questioning" (as he puts it in *The Question Concerning Technology*) "is the piety of thought," and thinking is more concerned with deepening questions than with answering them. Thinking about technology, for example, is a matter of asking questions that will reveal both what technology is and what it is doing to us as beings for whom Being is an issue. Questioning, Heidegger believes, can free us from technological thinking; Stevens believes that poetic thinking can free us from questioning.

But surely, it is more plausible to oppose poetry to thinking? That depends on one's understanding of poetry. In another letter, written the year before his death to Richard Eberhart, Stevens emphasises that "poetry is not a literary

activity."[9] Given his verbal inventiveness, this is a very odd proposition. Stevens after all is the poet who writes, in *The Connoisseur of Chaos*, that "the squirming facts exceed the squamous mind." He crafts exquisite paradoxes, such as the one in *Peter Quince at the Clavier* in which we learn that "Beauty is momentary in the mind– / The fitful tracing of a portal; / But in the flesh it is immortal." And in *Sunday Morning*, he concludes his meditation on what Ronald Dworkin calls "religion without God"[10] with a sublimely beautiful vision of "casual flocks of pigeons" that "make / Ambiguous undulations as they sink, / Downward to darkness, on extended wings." What is this if not literary activity?

VITAL QUESTIONS

The answer is that Stevens opposes poetry as a literary activity to poetry as "a *vital* activity."[11] Poetry, he says, as a vital activity, "should stimulate the sense of living and of being alive."[12] He goes on to align poetry with music on the grounds that both fuel life and nourish the spirit. That formula accords with his lifelong search for the experience of what he variously calls "force," "passion," "fury" and even "violence." Stevens adds to his observation that poetry is a matter of life not literature that "The good writers are the good thinkers."[13] Good thinking and good writing exhibit their values in a good life, one animated by a "rage for order."[14] Stevens's poetry organises a complex of terms involving an ordinary life, the oppressive conditions it sometimes imposes, and a poetic practice that, such conditions, employs poetic philosophising to revitalise life.

"Order" is one of Stevens's words for the state in which things are free from question, an experience that occasionally dawns spontaneously but is more commonly composed with difficulty from nonsensical, empty, pointless or otherwise painful situations. Examples of order are the "arranging, deepening, enchanting" night celebrated in *The Idea of Order at Key West*, the "sudden rightnesses" and "satisfactions" we can arrive at "in the act of finding / What will suffice" evoked in *Of Modern Poetry*, and the plain jar in Tennessee that "took dominion everywhere."[15] As his rage for order indicates, the task Stevens sets for himself is especially urgent when "traditional sanctions are disappearing."[16] As he puts it in *Sad Strains of a Gay Waltz*, "There comes a time when the waltz" – a symbol of the traditional sanctions – "Is no longer a mode of desire," so that the "epic of disbelief / Blares oftener and soon, will soon be constant."[17] What we now require, Stevens thinks, are not new beliefs to replace those that are no longer credible but rather a new *mode* of belief in which we take the products of our imagination as seriously as we took God, but without taking them literally. As he

explains in a letter to Simons, "If one no longer believes in God (as truth) it is not possible merely to disbelieve; it becomes necessary to believe in something else," and "I say that one's final belief must be in a fiction. I think that the history of belief will show that it has always been in a fiction."[18] But how does one believe in a fiction? By poetizing. "After one has abandoned a belief in god," Stevens writes, "poetry is that essence which takes its place as life's redemption."[19]

With the rejection of the myth of a creative god, we "pass from the created to the uncreated" and find that "modern reality is a reality of decreation."[20] In *Esthétique du Mal*,[21] Stevens apprehends, with Nietzsche, that with the death of God much else is lost – for example, a robust sense of evil:

> The death of Satan was a tragedy
> For the imagination. A capital
> Negation destroyed him in his tenement
> And, with him, many blue phenomena.

That we no longer believe in Satan may be a triumph of reason, but valuable products of the imagination ("blue phenomena") that depended on that belief died with him. The collapse of the moral order is sweeping: "The death of one god is the death of all"[22] and "Christianity is an exhausted culture."[23]

In Christianity, we are God's handiwork and are graced with a purpose: to prepare ourselves for the moment when we stand in His presence and savour the Beatific Vision. The death of the Creator would seem to leave us without purpose, but for Heidegger that is not necessarily a misfortune. He was always ambivalent about the value of understanding Being as creation or production (*poiesis*). The producer's disclosure of beings as raw materials to be shaped in accordance with a predetermined end is an overly subjective perspective that obscures a more primordial understanding of Being. For Heidegger, the idea of production must yield to a way of being-in-the-world that "lets beings be" (*Gelassenheit*). This kind of engagement eschews the "management, preservation, tending, and planning of the beings in each case sought out" and exhibits instead an "open comportment" that "frees" beings and orients us to "that still uncomprehended disclosedness and disclosure of beings."[24] We are receivers of understandings of Being, not producers of them. To see Being as an object of any kind, as a substance bearing properties, is to confuse Being with beings. Existence is what all existing things have in common, but existence is neither a thing nor the totality of all things. If only objects can be characterised, we are unable to characterise Being at all, yet we immediately understand, of course, that beings *are*. If we are to have any hope of completing "the task of thinking at the end of philosophy" and articulating the "self-concealing clearing of

presence," we must rid ourselves of the notion that Being is something brought into existence in the manner of beings, whether by natural or supernatural agency.[25]

Stevens's attitude could not be more different. When he turns to the imagination for redemption after the death of God, he does so not by letting beings be but rather in order to seize on things in the world as *materia poetica* and to shape them into meaningful images.[26] For the poet, "our revelations are not the revelations of beliefs, but the precious portents of our own powers."[27] Stevens's claims for the powers of the imagination reach for the heroic. In *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, he pictures the world he would reshape as a "monster," and hopes "That I may reduce the monster to / Myself, and then may be myself / In the face of the monster."[28] In a letter, he reveals that the "monster = nature, which I desire to . . . master, subjugate, acquire complete control over and use freely for my own purpose, as poet," adding that he wants, "as a man of the imagination, to write poetry with all the power of a monster equal in strength to that of the monster about whom I write. I want man's imagination completely adequate in the face of reality."[29]

The agonistic attitude expressed in *The Man with the Blue Guitar* calls to mind the "violence" Heidegger detects in the ancient Greek understanding of the relationship between being and appearance as it is exhibited in political action, by means of which the statesman can acquire "glory," the "supreme possibility of human being."[30] In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger describes the political as the sphere of ambiguous and misleading opinion (*doxa*). The heroic founder establishes the truth that will constitute the state, a unifying principle that is concealed in the welter of conflicting opinions held by the many. To accomplish this, he must "wrest" or "rescue" the truth from its doxastic hiding place. For Heidegger, the implication that the truth is prised, with difficulty, from a resistant medium is inimical to letting beings be, but it is an apt characterisation of how Stevens apprehends the relationship between mind and world.

Like Heidegger, Stevens's aim is to assure himself that he belongs to the world. But rather than finding this in the language of dwelling, preserving, nurturing and "staying with things," as Heidegger does in *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Stevens turns things into instruments of creative vision, becoming at home in the world by mastering it.[31] In *Effects of Analogy*, he writes of "the imagination as a power . . . to have such insights into reality as will make it possible for him to be sufficient as a poet in the very center of consciousness. This results, or should result, in a central poetry."[32] In a central poem, such as *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, the poet can be:

Two things, the two together as one,
And play of the monster and of myself,

Or better not of myself at all,
But of that as its intelligence.

Stevens acknowledges "the necessity of identifying oneself with reality in order to understand it and enjoy it," but identification is possible only by means of the creative imagination's active transformation of reality.[33] The poetic value itself, Stevens says, "is the value of the imagination," without which no insights into reality will be forthcoming and poetry would be a mere literary activity in the pejorative sense. In part, Stevens can attribute this world-defining power to the imagination because he assumes that the phenomena such as affect, perception and metaphor are as real as any other aspect of the world. Like *Dasein*, Stevens finds himself thrown into a world in which things show up to him as coloured by moods, memories, anticipations, problems and tasks. "Things seen," he says, "are things as seen."[34] The root of the poetic experience is a keen awareness of what Heidegger calls the "disclosure" (*Entbergung*) of beings. The imagination must master its moods sufficiently to register not only what is present but also its presencing, if it is to observe such disclosures of disclosure as the "way, when we climb a mountain, / Vermont throws itself together."[35]

The violence of poetic imagination is also evident in *Credences of Summer*, where the "self . . . having possessed / The object, grips it in savage scrutiny . . . [to] proclaim / The meaning of the capture."[36] As Stevens puts it in *A Collect of Philosophy*, "The poet's native sphere . . . is what he can *make* of the world."[37] The poet "captures" and "subjugates" the world by fashioning it into a language whose signs, symbols, gestures, tones and rhythms arouse in him a feeling of being at home. The result delivers an apprehension of the world as a "fully made" integrated and self-sufficient whole.[38] Stevens remarks that "The habit of probing for an integration seems to be part of the general will to order," yielding his poetic drama of anticipating, glimpsing, finding, misunderstanding, losing, remembering and reflecting on ideas of order.[39]

Thinking is essential to Stevens's poetry because with the decreation of the world, a naïve belief in fictions of the absolute is no longer possible. We cannot help but ask for and offer reasons to accept fictions. Of course, poetic thinking is not mere reasoning; the fiction we accept will be "The fiction that results from feeling."[40] Even so, as he says in *Two or Three Ideas*, the "supreme fiction," the one that renders the world meaningful, "must be abstract" – that is, it must take the form of an ordinary proposition that one may accept or reject in the course of reasoning about it. As Stevens puts it, "Underlying [the supreme fiction] is the idea that, in the various predicaments of belief, it might be possible to yield, or to try to yield, ourselves to a declared fiction."[41] To yield to a declared fiction requires both reason and

passion, which combine to form an "exquisite truth": "to know that it is a fiction and that you believe in it willingly."[42]

But, what precisely is thinking? Paradoxically, thinking employs questioning as a means to freedom from questioning. "The man who asks questions," Stevens says, "seeks only to reach a point where it will no longer be necessary for him to ask questions."[43] Stevens's questioning moves in the opposite direction from Heidegger, who asks what something is in ways that promise to reveal its mode of presencing. There are always more questions to be asked, because Heidegger's kind of question does not invite a definitive answer. The final three sentences of *Being and Time* ask the "the question of Being" (*Seinsfrage*) again, as Heidegger wonders whether there is "a way which leads from primordial *time* to the meaning of *Being*."[44] Stevens, on the other hand, seeks to remove objections to a fiction and to make the case for accepting it.

THE MEANINGS OF RIGHT

A clue to Stevens's understanding of thinking is found in a curious formulation in his late poem *The Sail of Ulysses*, which speaks of an enigmatic "right to be."[45] Ulysses, "symbol of the seeker," crossing the sea at night, "read his own mind. / He said, 'As I know, I am and have / The right to be'." The thought is reformulated in Canto V: "A longer, deeper breath sustains / This eloquence of right, since knowing / And being are one: the right to know / Is equal to the right to be."

Ulysses indicates the transition from the physical courage of the warrior–hero to the intellectual courage required to face up to the loss of the traditional sanctions. Removed from places and persons that would naturally confer identity and authority (Ithaca, Penelope, Telemachus), the homeless wanderer discovers the ways of his new world and turns them to his advantage so far as his wits permit. The poem's uncharacteristic explicitness regarding the meaning of Ulysses ("Symbol of the seeker") seems intended to draw our attention to Stevens's predecessors T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce, for the figure of Ulysses was central to their thinking about modernity. For them, the modern artist self-consciously takes on the burdens of exile, discovery and self-invention and aligns himself with the mythic quest.

Ulysses, speaking or rather thinking in the first person, appears to derive both his existence and his right to exist from the act of "read[ing] his own mind," in what seems to be an unmistakable allusion to Descartes's observation that even radical doubt implies the existence of a doubter, so that "I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time that I . . . mentally conceive it," including the occasions when one doubts it.[46] This Cartesian "deduction" of existence

from thinking ("As I know, I am") reinforces the Modernist symbolism: Descartes, like Ulysses, deprives himself of the familiar (in his case, familiar beliefs) in order to attempt the feat of hanging his existence on a mere act of thought.

This prefatory stage-setting evidently presents Stevens's own genealogy. Like Ulysses and Descartes, he sets out from privation: the death of God requires him to compose supreme fictions of order. As we work through the poem, it transpires that "deduction" is not the right characterisation: knowledge and being are unified parts of a larger self-evident whole that is expressed immediately through the "eloquence of right": "knowing / And being are one." It is this unity ("A longer, deeper breath") that expresses or asserts ("this eloquence") its right to be.

But what kind of right, exactly, is the right to be? The critics who have explored the matter emphasise that the topic of rights was imposed on Stevens by the circumstances under which the poem originated. It was written for the Phi Beta Kappa exercises at Columbia University's politically charged centennial commencement in 1954, whose organizing committee asked Stevens to address the topic of *Man's Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof*.[47] Yet like so much of Stevens's late poetry, the subject of *The Sail of Ulysses* seems more spiritual than political, devoted as it is to presenting an apocalyptic vision of the speaker's breakthrough to a "final order," a "great Omnium" in which "the litter of truths becomes / A whole, the day on which the last star / Has been counted, the genealogy / Of gods and men destroyed."[48] This breakthrough is achieved thanks to a kind of grace: "Not an attainment of the will / But something illogically received."[49] The accomplishment seems personal, not political, attributed after all to a single individual, Ulysses, who is interested in persuading no one but himself.

Most critics regard the poem as a failure, and they are especially dismissive of the poem's appeal to rights. As B.J. Leggett concludes, "the word *right* stands out awkwardly . . . as a sign of Stevens' inability to fuse twentieth-century ideology with Ulysses' more primitive epistemology."[50] The word "right," however, seems "awkward" for Ulysses only if one conceives of rights as exclusively political.[51] But, while rights clearly originated in political and legal contexts, ordinary usage admits of a wider range of meaning.[52] Of special relevance is the general category of *attitudinal* rights, which includes the *affective* rights illustrated by the first example (such as the right to feel proud of an accomplishment or to feel uneasy about a proposal) as well as the *epistemic* rights described in the second example (the right to affirm or deny a belief or proposition).[53] For Wenar, the basic meaning of *right* is "conclusive reason." One's right to a belief, for example, rests on the reasons one has for holding that belief: one has just as much right to a belief as one has reason to affirm it. A broad sense of "right," that is, defines rights

as *justifications*. Once we see them as conclusive reasons that support beliefs and feelings it becomes apparent that the concept of rights, in the sense of epistemic and affective justification, is one of Stevens's central concerns.

From a logical point of view, Stevens's reflections on belief take the form of nonmonotonic reasoning: his intellectual universe is characterised by probabilities, default assumptions, revision, and, to use the most general term, "defeasibility."[54] The fact that our intellectual commitments are vulnerable to defeaters – arguments and observations that support contrary or otherwise incompatible commitments – means that nothing is "final":

We live in a constellation
Of patches and pitches,
Not in a single world,
In things said well in music,
On the piano and in speech,

As in the page of poetry—
Thinkers without final thoughts
In an always incipient cosmos.

"Thinkers without final thoughts" rely on explanations that are merely more likely than currently available alternatives (and may therefore be incorrect) and working hypotheses whose only warrant is the current absence of evidence to the contrary (so that exceptions are always on the horizon), and they stipulate the abandonment of old beliefs in the light of new knowledge. Stevens sometimes parodies analytical or dialectical forms in order to highlight the unreliability of his method, as in *Connoisseur of Chaos*:[55]

A. A violent order is a disorder; and
B. A great disorder is an order. These
Two things are one. (Pages of illustrations.)

One expression of defeasibility is Stevens's recognition that figures of order have life cycles. An "old order," one that is no longer credible, "is a violent one" in the sense that its inconsistency with what has since come to light inhibits free transactions between imagination and reality. It would be "pleasant as port" to understand apparently competing orders (as between old and new, for example) as complementary parts of a whole by positing a "law of inherent opposites, / Of essential unity."[56] But, our default explanation of how apparent opposites are reconciled – the Christian fiction that "the pretty contrast of life and death / Proves that these opposite things partake of one" – is unavailable: "that was the theory, when bishops' books / Resolved

the world. We cannot go back to that."[57] When new discoveries render old beliefs, however appealing, incompatible with what is now thought to be true – when "the squirming facts exceed the squamous mind" – consistency demands that we abandon the old.

The demands of consistency, however, do not necessarily have to be met. Stevens is more than willing to entertain an alternative to the revision of belief: that of tolerating inconsistency rather than eliminating it. From the perspective of this mood, the "violence" of a discredited order "proves nothing. Just one more truth, one more / Element in the immense disorder of truths." Stevens not only tolerates inconsistency, he affirms it, or as he puts it: "A great disorder is an order." When disorder is sufficiently dramatic, it becomes a form of order. This kind of disorder makes up in liveliness what it lacks in authority: "Now, A / And B are not like statuary, posed / For a vista in the Louvre. They are things chalked / On the sidewalk so that the pensive man may see."[58] As Heidegger argues in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, the things housed in places such as the Louvre are not in the world in the way they once were, so that while we may admire them for their beauty, they can have no real ontological significance for us.[59] Chalk drawings on sidewalks have no such meaning either, but they can be *materia poetica* if one acquires the right to the feelings and thoughts they arouse by rendering them in a compellingly poetic form.

Why, late in his career, did Stevens need to claim the right to *be*, even if only through the figure of Ulysses? As he wrote to Hi Simons, he felt that poetry improvises fictions of order as a response to the loss of traditional "sanctions." He goes farther in *The Figure of the Youth as a Virile Poet*, asserting unequivocally that "the poet *finds a sanction for life* in poetry that satisfies the imagination."[60] Successfully creating fictions of order authorises and gives authority to the poet, allowing him to take his rightful place on the public stage even at a time when "life as we live it from day to day conceals the imagination as a social form."[61]

For the early Heidegger, the metaphysical tradition was committed to the belief that one should know what one is, as opposed to resolutely and authentically deciding who one will be. Heidegger, like Nietzsche, felt that abandoning Plato's conviction that virtue and knowledge coincide would open up new vistas for humanity. To use Heidegger's language in *Being and Time*, we would see ourselves as ontological beings, in the sense that we must face up to the issue of how to understand ourselves. The later Heidegger eschewed both Plato and the Nietzschean project of "becoming what one is."[62] Instead, man was a mortal who dwells on the earth and under the sky, awaiting a new god.[63] Stevens also sees no reason to choose between Plato and Nietzsche and affirms instead that, as supreme fictions, "knowing / And being are one."

Heidegger awaits the appearance of a god, but Stevens will not wait. The aim of making supreme fictions is not only to satisfy the rage for order but to participate in the "great things in life" and establish in the world an authentically poetic way of being.[64] A poet's right to be, in the sense of the status properly assumed by poetry in the public sphere, is not a natural right. It is earned by creating a fiction so powerful that "the sense lies still, as a man lies, / Enormous, in a completing of his truth."[65] Characterising Pindar's artistic vision, Heidegger says that "poetizing is to place into the light."[66] The poet who creates "a description that makes it a divinity"[67] achieves greatness in every bit as worthy of commemoration as Ulysses, and becomes visible in the world as the "shining appearance" that Heidegger's ancient Greeks regarded as the "supreme possibility of human being," namely "glory."[68] No wonder Stevens wrote in *The Planet on the Table* that "Ariel was glad he had written his poems."[69]

It was not important that they survive.
What mattered was that they should bear
Some lineament or character,

Some affluence, if only half-perceived,
In the poverty of their words,
Of the planet of which they were a part.

NOTES

1. See Frank Kermode, "Dwelling Poetically in Connecticut," in *Wallace Stevens: A Celebration*, edited by Robert Buttel and Frank Doggett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 256–73. Ironically, Stevens seems to have been under the impression that Heidegger was Swiss. For other studies connecting Stevens and Heidegger see Paul Bové, *Destructive Poetics: Heidegger and Modern American Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) and Thomas J. Hines, *The Later Poetry of Wallace Stevens: Phenomenological Parallels to Husserl and Heidegger* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1976). For criticisms of their approaches see James S. Leonard and Christine E. Wharton, "Wallace Stevens as Phenomenologist," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 26, no. 3 (Fall 1984): 331–61.

2. Wallace Stevens, "Adagia," in *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose*, edited by Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (The Library of America, 1997), 901.

3. Stevens, "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," *Poetry and Prose*, 652, 654.

4. Martin Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us: The *Spiegel* Interview (1966)," in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, edited by Thomas Sheehan (Precedent Publishing, 1966), 57. My emphasis.

5. Wallace Stevens, *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, edited by Holly Stevens (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 602.

6. Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Pathmarks*, trans. William McNeil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 239.

7. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volumes One and Two*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 73.

8. Stevens, *Letters*, 346.

9. Stevens, *Letters*, 815.

10. See Ronald Dworkin, *Religion Without God* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

11. Stevens, *Letters*, 815. Emphasis added.

12. Stevens, "Adagia," 913.

13. Stevens, *Letters*, 815.

14. Stevens, "The Idea of Order at Key West," *Poetry and Prose*, 106.

15. Stevens, "Anecdote of the Jar," *Poetry and Prose*, 60.

16. Quoted in "Talk with Mr. Stevens," *New York Times*, October 3, 1954. See also *Letters*, 334: "Life without poetry is, in effect, life without a sanction."

17. Stevens, "Sad Strains of a Gay Waltz," *Poetry and Prose*, 100.

18. Stevens, *Letters*, 409.

19. Stevens, "Adagia," 901.

20. Stevens, "The Relations Between Poetry and Painting," *Poetry and Prose*, 750–51.

21. Stevens, "Esthétique du Mal," *Poetry and Prose*, 277.

22. Stevens, "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," *Poetry and Prose*, 329.

23. Stevens, "Adagia," 914.

24. Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 125.

25. Martin Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," *Basic Writings*, 448.

26. See Stevens, "Materia Poetica," *Poetry and Prose*, 916–20.

27. Stevens, "The Relations Between Poetry and Painting," 750.

28. Stevens, "The Man with the Blue Guitar," *Poetry and Prose*, 143.

29. Stevens, *Letters*, 790.

30. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 112–17.

31. See Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," *Basic Writings*, 353.

32. Stevens, "Imagination as a Value," *Poetry and Prose*, 731.

33. Stevens, *Letters*, 464.

34. Stevens, "Adagia," 902.

35. Stevens, "July Mountain," *Poetry and Prose*, 476.

36. Stevens, "Credences of Summer," *Poetry and Prose*, 325.

37. Stevens, "A Collect of Philosophy," *Poetry and Prose*, 863. My emphasis.

38. Stevens, "A Collect of Philosophy," 864.

39. Stevens, "A Collect of Philosophy," 862.

40. Stevens, "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," 351.

41. Stevens, "Two or Three Ideas," *Poetry and Prose*, 842.
42. Stevens, "Adagia," 903.
43. Stevens, "Adagia," 913.
44. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 488.
45. See Stevens, "The Sail of Ulysses," *Poetry and Prose*, 462–67. See also "Presence of an External Master of Knowledge," *Poetry and Prose*, 467–68. "Presence" is a version of "Sail" published, unlike the latter, during Stevens's lifetime in the *Times Literary Supplement*. It is much shorter than "Sail," but with respect to the most important lines for my discussion "Presence" is identical to it.
46. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Writings of René Descartes,* Volume II, trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 16.
47. See Alan Filreis, *Wallace Stevens and the Actual World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 263–64.
48. Stevens, "The Sail of Ulysses," 464.
49. Stevens, "The Sail of Ulysses," 464.
50. B. J. Leggett, *Late Stevens: The Final Fiction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 120.
51. As Leggett seems to do. See his *Late Stevens*, 120.
52. Consider two examples compiled by Leif Wenar: (1) *Artur Boruc Had Every Right to Feel Aggrieved at Eduardo's Champions League Play-Off Antics* (headline from the *Daily Telegraph*); (2) "Externalists are people who think the epistemic merit of a belief – one's right to accept a proposition as true – does not depend upon justification. Justification is only *one* of the ways of securing a right to believe." See Wenar, Leif, "Epistemic Rights and Legal Rights", *Analysis* 63, no. 2 (2003): 142–46. Wenar is quoting Fred Dreske, "Entitlement: Epistemic Rights without Epistemic Duties?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60, no. 3 (2000): 592. See also Jeffrey Glick, "Justification and the Right to Believe," *Philosophical Quarterly* 60, no. 240 (2010): 532–44.
53. On attitudinal rights, see T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 22–24. See also Wenar, "Epistemic Rights and Legal Rights."
54. On the concept of defeasibility, see John L. Pollock, "Defeasible Reasoning," *Cognitive Science* 11 (1987): 481–518.
55. Stevens, "Connoisseur of Chaos," *Poetry and Prose*, 194–95.
56. Stevens, "Connoisseur of Chaos," 194.
57. Stevens, "Connoisseur of Chaos," 194.
58. Stevens, "Connoisseur of Chaos," 195.
59. Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings*, 166.
60. Stevens, "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet," *Poetry and Prose,* 684. My emphasis.
61. Stevens, "Imagination as a Value," *Poetry and Prose*, 732.
62. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 657.

63. Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," *Basic Writings*, 352.
64. Stevens, "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," *Poetry and Prose*, 652.
65. Stevens, "Bouquet of Roses in Sunlight," *Poetry and Prose*, 370.
66. Heidegger, *Metaphysics*, 113.
67. Stevens, "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," *Poetry and Prose*, 405.
68. Heidegger, *Metaphysics*, 117.
69. Stevens, "The Planet on the Table," *Poetry and Prose*, 450.