HEIDEGGER AND WITTGENSTEIN
ON LANGUAGE AND MYSTERY

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On December 30, 1929 Wittgenstein remarked to Waismann: "I can readily understand what Heidegger means by *Sein* and *Angst*."[1] It is surprising that Wittgenstein should have said that, though perhaps less so when we recall the "mystical" conclusion of the *Tractatus*.

According to the *Tractatus* the mystical is: "not *how* the world is but *that* it is" (*TLP* 6.44).[2] We think that this expresses an aspect of what Heidegger calls the Being of beings. "Man alone," says Heidegger, "experiences the marvel (*Wunder*) of all marvels: that what-is *is*" (*WMP* p. 355). Heidegger's efforts as a philosopher were singularly devoted to bringing out the significance of that tautological-sounding "marvel." Wittgenstein's efforts were not unrelated to that.

Wittgenstein was a logician. How, in his *Tractatus*, is logic connected with the mystical? We will answer that question, briefly; that will lead into a discussion of how *Angst* figures into Heidegger's elucidation of the meaning of Being. Then we will discuss some of the things these two philosophers say about the limits of explanation, about language, and about poetry. We hope to show important affinities and places where the thoughts of one dovetail with, and illuminate, those of the other.

Sein and Angst
Logic is transcendental: ". . . *prior* to every experience — that something *is so*" (*TLP* 5.552). But there is an experience that we need in order to *understand* logic: "not that something or other is the state of things, but that something *is*; that, however, is not an experience" (*TLP* 5.552). Connecting this with *TLP* 6.44, we can call this "experience" which is not an experience mystical. It is not a perception, a consciousness of "this" rather than "that." Nevertheless, something happens: a world is disclosed.[3]

The mystical turns out to be the "background" of logic, experience, description, and explanation. Explanation presupposes description: a phenomenon is described in such a way as to relate it to natural laws. Description presupposes the presence (Being) of a world in which facts can be described, or misdescribed, through propositions.

Propositional truth (*veritas*) is the accordance of a statement with a fact. Heidegger asks: Why this accordance? There must be a basis for such a relation. For, before a proposition can conform to an object, "something" must first *show itself*. (Think of this analogy: before I can judge an actor's performance, he must first appear on stage). Truth in the sense of "un-concealment" (Heidegger's etymological interpretation of the Greek word *aletheia*) is more primordial than truth in the sense of correctness. Correctness presupposes unconcealment. And Wittgenstein's "wonder at the existence of the world" seems to be a response to that primordial truth, to the *presence* of the world — *that* it is (*aletheia*), not *how* it is (*veritas*).

A proposition depicts a situation either correctly or incorrectly; it is thus "bi-polar" (*NB*, p. 93). A kind of bipolarity is also shown in the "experience" prior to logic. Wittgenstein alluded to its "positive pole" (*that* the world is). Heidegger refers to its "negative pole" in his description of *Angst*, that experience in which the world as such withdraws, where man "encounters the Nothing" (*das Nichts*). But for Heidegger, the negative aspect of the "experience" is what makes possible the positive. For *that* the world is (Being) can only show itself against the background of a "non-world" (Nothing). To adapt a line of Wittgenstein's: *That* the Nothing is not is the mystical.

Perhaps the following line from the *Tractatus* suggests something similar to Heidegger's encounter with the Nothing: "Feeling the world as a limited whole — it is this that is mystical" (*TLP* 6.45). The Nothing is the "limit" of the world; but it is not a *something* that limits the world, any more than death is an event in life (*TLP* 6.4311; cf. *BT*, sec. 51). A whole is limited, standing in contrast to what is outside its limits. But the world is a queer sort of whole, for what is "outside" the world is — Nothing. To feel the world thus, "as radically other with respect to the Nothing" (*WM*, p. 105) is not to have discovered a fact; it is to have experienced the dawning of "meaning" over the totality of facts. One sees "that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter" (*NB*, p. 74); one is struck by the *Being* of beings.

Immediately following the Heidegger remark with which we began this paper, Wittgenstein said to Waismann: "Man has the urge to thrust up against the limits of language. Think, for instance about the astonishment that anything exists." On December 17, 1930, Wittgenstein added:

> I can only say: I don't belittle this human tendency. . . .
> For me the facts are unimportant. But what men mean when they say that "The world is there" lies close to my heart. (*NT*, p. 16)

But what, we want to ask, *do* men mean? That, according to Wittgenstein, makes itself manifest but cannot be said. Trying to say it leads to nonsense. Consider Heidegger's "marvel, that what-is *is*." That is (or sounds very much like) a tautology. "But," observes Wittgenstein, "it's just nonsense to say that one is wondering at a tautology" (*LE*, p. 9).

According to the early Wittgenstein's representational view of language

(and of thought), the "picture theory," a word has meaning only as standing for an object. So, since "Being" and "Nothing" are not object-words, they have no meaning. And, since neither are they logical constants (such as "not"), they are not within the limits of lanaguage at all.

Heidegger grants that it will not be by "representational thinking" that the Nothing will be apprehended. For representational thinking is intentional, requiring an object; it cannot, therefore, apprehend "no-thing." *That* cannot be represented in thought or imagination, for its reality is "non-objective" (*WM*, p. 104). But Nothing nevertheless makes itself manifest, in *Angst* — an "experience" which cannot be understood in terms of the model of object and designation (as the later Wittgenstein might have put it). "Being" and "nothing" are not names; their use belongs to "the phenomenology of unconcealment" (our phrase).

Implicit in the event of un-concealment is "the Nothing," i.e., the background of hiddenness or mystery which shows the presence (Being) of the world. *Angst* is the original revelation of that mystery; it is the mood in which everyday, matter-of-fact familiarity with the world gives way to a feeling of strangeness. And "only when the strangeness of beings oppresses us does it arouse and evoke wonder" (*WM*, p. 111). In *Angst* the world and the self recede into pure indifference, meaninglessness, and indeterminancy. Yet the recognition of beings *as* beings is possible only by way of that "Nothing." Now man is open to "the mystery" (*das Geheimnis*), to an awe-filled, primordial view of the miraculousness of what is normally veiled by obviousness.[4]

In his "Lecture on Ethics" Wittgenstein expresses what he called his experience *par excellence* with the words "I wonder at the existence of the world" and "how extraordinary that anything should exist." We conclude that it is against the background of "the Nothing" disclosed in *Angst* that Wittgenstein's exclamation has its force and significance.

Henry LeRoy Finch, in an appendix to his book, *Wittgenstein — The Later Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, 1976), claims that Heidegger, poses the question about the world in the traditional way — seeking a "justification for the world" (found in the Nothing), rather than resting in Wittgenstein's *exclamation:* "how extraordinary that there is anything!" But for Heidegger, the question "why is there anything?" is a prelude to an openness for *wonder* at the world. The atmosphere of Wittgenstein's exclamation is certainly found in Heidegger. "Nothing-giving-Being" is not an explanation (not even a non-sensical one, as Carnap saw it); it is a radical departure from traditional attempts to ground the world in some determination or being. For Heidegger, the world is not grounded on *anything;* it emerges out of an abyss (*Ab-grund*). "Being out of Nothing" is not a "cosmological theory"; it is a way of expressing, not theorizing about, the miracle of existence.

Mystery

Heidegger:

> No matter where and however deeply science investigates what-is it will never find Being. All it encounters always, is what-is, because its explanatory purpose makes it insist at the onset on what-is. (*WMP*, p. 353)

Wittgenstein:

> The urge towards the mystical comes from the non-satisfaction of our wishes by science. (*NB*, p. 51)

Heidegger and Wittgenstein share a far-reaching, fundamental insight: that an explanation of the world is never "the end of the matter." An explanation remains "part of the world." For both thinkers, the matter of the world always leads us to the limit of the world, and both have labored to uncover the significance of this limit.

If we place a phenomenon in an explanatory sytem, whether scientific or metaphysical, our desire for explanation may yet persist, for something must always remain unexplained, given. The ultimate "why?," the "riddle of existence," is prompted by "an 'experience' that is not an experience." No proposition could answer that question (for it would deal only with *how* the world is). The solution to the riddle is an "answer" which is not an answer.

> When the answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question. . .
> *The riddle* does not exist. (*TLP* 6.5)

The "Why?", the Question, is therefore *replaced* by the Exclamation ("How extraordinary that the world should exist!").[5] Consider the following passage, which Wittgenstein wrote about a year before his death:

> When someone who believes in God looks around him and asks where did everything that I see come from? . . . he is not asking for a (causal) explanation; . . . he is expressing an attitude toward all explanations. (*RC*, p. 58)

The attitude, namely, that all explanations (whether scientific or metaphysical) are ultimately unsatisfying. This seems to have been Wittgenstein's own lifelong attitude. (Cf. *TLP* 6.371-6.372.)

At the core of the thought of both Heidegger and Wittgenstein is a sense of a limit to explanation—a mystery.

According to Heidegger, our scientific-technological age is "forgetful of Being," in its picture of beings as no more than objects of representation, explanation, prediction, and manipulation. Human thought has come to see its world solely in terms of beings (i.e., *products* of unconcealment), and has lost its awe-inspired openness to the *process* of un-concealment, which is its origin.

Metaphysical, as well as scientific, thinking dwells in reasons, causes, principles (*Gründe*), rather than in the abyss (*Ab-grund*) of the mystery first disclosed in *Angst*. But *any* disclosure of the world presupposes a "background of hiddenness" (*lēthe*) out of which to emerge (*a-lētheia*). Therefore, according to Heideg-

ger, any world-ground disclosed by metaphysical thinking ("first philosophy") has already been given out of "something" prior to it.

Heidegger and Wittgenstein offer at the core of their thought an encounter with the limit of the world (not merely thinking the limit as negation). As a consequence, both offer what we think are complementary conclusions: For Wittgenstein, nothing can explain the existence of the world; for Heidegger, the world emerges out of Nothing. Both statements are simultaneously critical and exclamatory — critical of any logical/metaphysical/descriptive explanation of the world as such, and exclamatory of the positive consequences of this criticism. An encounter with the limit of the world leads neither to nihilism nor a re-absorption in a matter-of-fact realism. What emerges is a positive *awe* at the existence of the world as groundless. One should respond to the mystery of the world not as a problem calling for a solution, but as a call to acknowledge, and "dwell in," the mystery *as* mystery.[6]

The later Wittgenstein joins Heidegger in finding a pre-logical mystery not only in the *existence* of the world ("that it is")[7] but also in its *essence* ("what it is"). We will develop this point in the course of discussing *language,* which for both thinkers is where that "essence" is disclosed.

Language

For both the later Heidegger and Wittgenstein world and language are coextensive. Wittgenstein makes this point in *TLP* 5.6: "*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.*" (Cf. the correlation of language with form of life in *PI* 19.)[8] Heidegger uses his famous "house of Being" image to make a comparable point; let us develop it in some detail.

Imagine building a house in the wilderness. First a clearing must be found, then logs gathered and the house set up in the clearing. The wilderness is the mystery (the Nothing); the clearing is the primordial revelation of the "is," Being (what Heidegger in *ET* calls the "open," i.e., that region in the light of which beings are shown); the house is language, that gathering (*logos*) out of the wilderness in the clearing of Being where the world comes to presence. (There can be no sharp distinction between the clearing and the house; the clearing is a clearing *for* the house). Thus language is the house of Being (out of wilderness). Man has a deep need for its shelter. (Cf. Wittgenstein's *RFM*, p. 23).

The radical nature of this image becomes clear if we realize that Heidegger is not saying that language signifies man's world (is a description of the house); language *is* his world (the house itself).[9]

In "Letter on Humanism" (p. 206), where "house of Being" first appears, Heidegger tells us that language is not essentially symbolification or signification, since such things are defined in terms of something language has already given. He argues that since Aristotle signification has served as the standard for all interpretations of language: letters are signs of sounds; sounds are signs of mental experiences; mental experiences are signs of things (*NL*, p. 97). But in

this way language has been included among (already) represented beings – as speech, sounds, bearers of meaning, a human faculty – i.e., among *what* is present, rather than the prior *emergence* into presence out of concealment.[10] At one point Heidegger calls language "Saying as Showing" (*WL*, p. 123), where "showing" means "letting appear." A sign and its referent must first be *shown* as such. Thus showing bears the same relation to signification as does unconcealment to truth as correspondence (*WL*, p. 115). Signification and correspondence both presuppose the *presence* of referents which are subsequently related. Language as such, for Heidegger, is this prior presencing (showing).

The theory that our world is a pre-linguistic set of objects or things to which names are subsequently affixed overlooks the fact that "object," or "thing," is a linguistic event. (Wittgenstein speaks to this point in *PI* 261:

> What reason have we for calling "S" a sign for a *sensation?* For "sensation" is a word of our common language, ... – And it would not help either to say that it need not be a *sensation;* that when he writes "S," he has *something* – and that is all that can be said. "Has" and "something" also belong to our common language. . . .)

There is indeed a pre-linguistic dimension, but it is not "world"; it transcends the world as "the mystery." For Heidegger, the emergence of world out of mystery *is* language; language is the "advent of Being itself" (*LH*, p. 206).

> Saying is in no way the linguistic expression added to the phenomena after they have appeared – rather, all radiant appearance and all fading away is grounded in the showing Saying. (*WL*, p. 126).

For Heidegger, language is original disclosure; it lets beings appear.

For Wittgenstein, it is only *in* language that signs signify; therefore signification does not explain language (see *TLP* 3.3 and *PI* 13-15, 49, 257). According to *PI*, language is not primarily a matter of naming essences already disclosed, but of disclosing them:

> Essence *(Wesen)* is expressed *(ausgesprochen)* by grammar. (371)
> Grammar tells *(sagt)* us what kind of object anything is. (373)

Looking at the grammar – the employment in the language-game – of "pain," for example, reveals the nature of pain, i.e., what sort of thing we're talking about in referring to pain. *Grammar,* not experience (e.g., feeling pain and attending to it), shows this.[11] Thus Wittgenstein rejects the view which sees language as based on some sort of pre-linguistic grasp of essences.

Grammar speaks – "tells us. . ." (*PI* 373). All other "speaking" – of experiences, images, represenations – presupposes that. (Cf. Heidegger: "*Language* speaks . . . we are *letting something be said to us,* and all perception and conception is already contained in that act" [*WL*, p. 124].) For example, sense experience can tell us whether it is raining only if we understand its "language," and we understand that only if we have a grasp of the grammar of "rain," "sense experience," "optical illusion," etc. (*PI* 353-356). (Cf. Heidegger's claim that

when we walk through the woods we walk through the word "woods" [*WPF*, p. 132].) And we are able to speak of things only because we have already been "spoken to"; for grammar tells us what kind of object anything is.

Wittgenstein and Heidegger see language as primarily a field of disclosure, rather than as a matter of having names for things already disclosed. Empiricists speak of the field of disclosure as "sensuous intuition," rationalists as "intellectual intuition." Wittgenstein spent much of his time refuting these two views.[12] And he would agree with Heidegger that it is "language [that] first provides the possibility of standing within the presence of beings."[13]

In his *Notebooks* (p. 39) Wittgenstein says that his whole task was to give the essence of all being (*das Wesen alles Seins*). This was to be accomplished through clarifying the essence of the proposition (*das Wesen des Satzes*). It is to be noted that the connection between being and language (their "belonging together," to use a term from Heidegger) is not a contingent one; the essence of the former *cannot* be grasped apart from the essence of the latter. But why, then, bring in *Sein* at all? Why not stick with *Sprache* alone? Because language is *language*, neither a pure calculus nor a mere game. It "permeates our life" (*RC*, p. 57); it has to do with the possibilities of *phenomena*.[14]

In *PI*, Wittgenstein's conception of the essence of language is profoundly modified: *Sprachspiel* replaces *Satz* as the fundamental linguistic unit; "conveying information" is no longer the linguistic function *par excellence* (see *PI* 23, 304; *Z* 329); the "crystalline pure," monolithic logic of the *Tractatus* is no longer the essence of language. (And, of course, these modifications bring him closer to Heidegger.)

In *PI*, the essence of language is no longer *one* structure, hidden *under* the surface of speech, which analysis digs out (*PI* 92). It is "hidden on the surface" of a multiplicity of language-games, and is disclosed by perspicuous presentation of cases (*PI* 122).

Wittgenstein illustrates the notion of a perspicuous arrangement in his famous passage on games (*PI* 66). And he points out that, like the different kinds of game, language-uses "form a family" (*PI* 67).

> . . . these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, — they are *related* to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all "language." (*PI* 65)

Wittgenstein is not saying that language has no unity or essence, but that the traditional conception of essence ("one common thing") does not do justice to it.[15] ("Language is language" [*WCT*, p. 153] is Heidegger's crisp response to reductive accounts.)

Although the essence of language cannot be put into a formula, it does show itself, make itself manifest. It shows itself in language-games: in their variety and connectedness (*PI* 23, 65), in the way they are connected (forming a "family" — *PI* 108), in their history ("new language-games . . . come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten" [*PI* 23]), and in their

spontaneity ("Something new [spontaneous, 'specific'] is always a language-game" [*PI*, p. 224]).[16] The essence of language is a mystery in that it eludes the reductionistic "craving for generality" (*BB* pp. 17-18). Similarly, the essence of Being ("what the world is") eludes all attempts to identify it with one fixed structure (such as the Tractarian "logical form" or "form of reality").

In his book, *Language and Being: An Analytic Phenomenology* (New Haven, 1970), which discloses much common ground between Heidegger and Wittgenstein, Stephen A. Erickson claims to see a "major difference" between their views on language: that Wittgenstein does, after all, propose an explanation of language, namely "training," while

> . . . Heidegger thinks that man is brought into the realm of meaning . . . not through training but rather by means of the presence of Being itself—in short, that the transition to peculiarly human modes of behavior must remain a mystery. (p. 119).

But Erickson misconstrues the significance of training in Wittgenstein's account. Wittgenstein's point is that in the early stage of teaching a child his mother tongue teaching cannot be a matter of *explaining*—e.g., telling him what words mean. Nor is the teaching exclusively rote training, in Wittgenstein's account. The child must learn "to go on by himself" in the application of words, e.g., to continue a series of numbers that the instructor has started. The instructor will point to examples ("paradigms"), giving "signs" of encouragement at appropriate times, etc. The child, he hopes, will get the point. (See *PI* 208).

In order to learn, the child must react to the teaching in a certain way. Here Wittgenstein speaks of "primitive reactions." At some point, the child must "just see" how to proceed—e.g., in continuing a series of numbers, or the application of a color word. The existence of such reactions is fundamental to the teaching and learning of language. The learner must be able to gather the instructor's intention, at some point. And he must react to the training he is given in such a way that his elders respond to what he does *as* a case of "going on in the *same* way." This is the "agreement in judgment and forms of life" that makes language possible (*PI* 241-42).

This fundamental agreement is, for Wittgenstein, a *proto-phenomenon* (*Urphänomen*), something to be described, not explained.[17] For here an "explanation" (of, e.g., the fact that we agree in calling *A* and *B* shades of the same color) will simply reintroduce the same problem at another level (e.g.: "We agree because we go by the *same rule*;" "But what explains the fact that we are in harmony about *how to apply* the rule? . . .")

Thus, Wittgenstein would agree with Erickson that there is a sense in which the transition to peculiarly human (linguistic) modes of behavior must remain a mystery. Indeed Wittgenstein's proto-phenomenal "agreement in reactions" is comparable, we suggest, to what Heidegger called *logos:* that inexplicable, pre-ratiocinative, "gathering" which is at once language and the primordial presence of Being. Heidegger traces *logos* to the verb *legein* and consequently calls *logos* the "gathering" of what presences out of concealment, that

primordial "collecting" within which a world is shown (see, e.g., *IM*, pp. 170-76). And a Wittgensteinian example brings out part of what Heidegger has in mind here. Consider the human ability to follow, or learn to follow, a pointing finger to an object. This response is a proto-linguistic "gathering" that we rely upon in teaching children language. It is a prototype of the more sophisticated "gatherings" that will be made possible by mastery of various "object-and-designation" language-games.[18]

Heidegger and Wittgenstein share a sense of an irreducible mystery surrounding language — a mystery disclosed in the ultimately unsatisfying character of all explanations and definitions of language.

Language, Being and Metaphysics

The sense of the *mystery* of Being, which (as we have argued) Wittgenstein shared with Heidegger, has as a consequence: renouncing the search for a *science* of Being.

Neither philosopher believed that metaphysical problems and theories are without value. But both wanted to limit the pretensions of metaphysics, and both criticized it. According to Wittgenstein, metaphysics confuses matters of grammar with matters of fact (Z 458). According to Heidegger, metaphysics overlooks the "difference" between Being and beings. We suggest that these two criticisms come to much the same thing. What precisely *that* is we try to spell out in the following argument:

A grammar is prior to facts (or beings); it lets them come to presence. It is a *form* (style, or manner) of presentation and representation. Therefore a grammar is not a science. For every science represents facts in propositions, i.e., in verifiable descriptions. A grammar gives a method of describing, not a set of descriptions. Moreover, unlike scientific propositions, grammatical "propositions" are non-verifiable. E.g., it is nonsense to speak of justifying the grammatical rule " 'Red' is a color word" by pointing to what verifies it and saying, "See, red *is* a color." (Cf. Z 331.) Grammar is autonomous, not to be verified by "what is present" (facts, beings), not to be justified by describing "how the world is."

Metaphysics oversteps its bounds when it tries to be a science, i.e., when it goes beyond simply presenting grammar. But grammatical investigation can err in another way: forgetting the *mystery* of Being by *equating* a grammar, or set of grammars, with Being. For Heidegger, Being means presence as such. But a grammar is a *form* of presence, a *style* of presentation, not presence as such. And the identification of any such "style" with Being would spell the ossification of thought. This point harmonizes with the later Wittgenstein's stress on the irreducible *multiplicity* of language-games.

Language and Being are inseparable but not identical. "Language is the house of Being."

In sum: Both philosophers investigate grammar (especially Wittgenstein);

both acknowledge and "guard" the mystery of Being (especially Heidegger).[19] But neither does metaphysics — if that implies searching for a science of Being or a verification of grammar.

Poetry and Thinking

What we have been calling "the mystery of language" is further disclosed in the poetic dimension of language, a subject to which we now turn.

"Poetry," for Heidegger, is a simultaneous revealing of Being and attunement to the mystery (concealment). Here, language is no longer confined to beings or facts (as in representational language, where the determinations of beings are the sole concern). Poetic language allows disclosure out of concealment, and is the very event of unconcealment itself. Poetry (and art in general) stems from the creative openness to non-being, or not-yet-being. The relation between language and mystery rests, therefore, in the secrets of the creative process. The poet, in creating, brings forth from darkness the light of Being (what Wittgenstein calls the *dawning* of an aspect (*PI*, p. 194) — i.e., not merely the aspect alone). Furthermore, the way art disrupts convention and shows the world anew after unsettling us, or the way its meaning often "hides" and eludes us until suddenly a veil is lifted and we see — this tension characteristic of art most clearly illuminates the *relation* between language and its limit. The mystery and language are not mutually exclusive; the mystery gives language through the poet.[20]

According to Heidegger, poetry "founds a world." Homer, for example, established a context of meaning within which the Greeks discovered "who they were." Therefore poetry is foundationally prior to other modes of language.

> Poetry proper is never merely a higher mode of everyday language. It is rather the reverse: everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer. (*L*, p. 208)

Heidegger's thinking is a thinking that recalls the forgotten poetry of language, where language first shows itself from hiddenness.[21]

The later Wittgenstein's notion of *language-games* suggests (as Karsten Harries has pointed out[22]) something akin to Heidegger's "poetic creativity." Consider the following (*PI* 23):

> . . . new types of language, new language-games . . . come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. . . .
> Here the term "language-*game*" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life. (Cf. *PI* 83 and p. 224).

We want to say: Those "players" who speak our language-games into being are also poets, in Heidegger's broad sense of the term. And the greatest of them bring to light ways of being in the world, forms of life.

It must be recalled, however, that language as a whole (encompassing countless language-games) stands out against a background of meaninglessness

and indeterminacy (or more positively, silence). To adapt *TLP* 6.45 to this theme: Feeling language as a limited whole—it is this that is mystical.

Poets and thinkers are especially attuned to the mystery of language. At times they feel overpowered by its finitude: "Words strain,/Crack and sometimes break, under the burden . . ." (Eliot, *Four Quartets*). And they feel wonder when language reveals its hidden power: when, at last, the right words emerge out of concealment. Only here, on the brink of darkness, does the essence of language shine.

Wittgenstein remarks in a 1931 notebook:

> The inarticulable (that which seems to me mysterious [mystical, *geheimnisvoll*] and what I'm unable to articulate) gives, perhaps, that background against which what I can articulate gets meaning. (*VB* p. 38)

Heidegger would say that the poet is especially attuned to this mysterious background. At its best, poetry is a saying which makes us see that there always remains something that cannot be said;[23] and in so doing, in its care for the inarticulable, poetry protects the power and meaning of speech.

The thinker, in Heidegger's use of the term, is in the service of language and thus of poetry. He helps to recall language to its pre-theoretical, "poetic" emergence. Things do not appear as things without his vigilance:

> The first step toward such vigilance is the step back from the thinking that merely represents—that is, explains—to the thinking that recalls and r sponds. (*T*, p. 181)

Here we are reminded of Wittgenstein's criticisms of Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Frazer was constantly explaining primitive practices, and subsequently judging them according to the canons of scientific explanation. But pre-theoretical language may not play the same game as technological and scientific language, e.g., formulating hypotheses; rather, it may reflect an immediate response to the world (its "presencing"). According to Wittgenstein, opinions and hypotheses, whether correct or erroneous, are not what characterize primitive (primordial) thought; rather:

> . . . the characteristic feature of the awakening mind of man is precisely that a phenomenon comes to have meaning for him. (*ROF*, p. 67)

Wittgenstein, as a thinker in Heidegger's sense of the term, often recalls us to a "proto-phenomenal," pre-theoretical dimension of speech and experience. Consider, for instance, the following description of "seeing" from *Zettel*:

> We do not see the human eye as a receiver, it appears to not let anything in, but to send something out. The ear receives; the eye looks. (It glances, it flashes, radiates, gleams) One can terrify with his eyes, not with one's ear or nose. When you see the eye you see something going out from it. You see the look in the eye. (222)
>
> . . . I . . . say that I see the look that you cast at someone else. And if someone wanted to correct me and say that I don't really *see* it, I should take that for pure stupidity.
>
> . . . 'naive language', that is to say our naive, normal way of expressing ourselves, does not contain any theory of seeing . . . (223)

Such a description, which some might dismiss as merely metaphorical, has in fact a "poetic priority," in that it gives precedence to the way seeing *first* shows itself in our experience. Children do not first see *eyes*, but *looks* of love, anger, etc. It is not that something like optics is false. Rather it is the *reduction* of the phenomenon of seeing to the eye mechanism that errs.[24]

Both Heidegger and Wittgenstein oppose reducing phenomena to something else, through explanation, since this covers over the way the world first inexplicably shows itself. Consider these passages from *Vermischte Bermerkungen*:

> Man . . . must wake up to astonishment. Science is a means of putting him back to sleep. (p. 19, 1930)

> People who always ask "why" are like tourists who, reading a Baedeker, stand before a building, and by reading about the history of origin, etc., etc., are prevented from *seeing* the building. (p. 82, 1941)

The language of science (and metaphysics) generally explains, grounds things in principles. And while Wittgenstein is not against scientific thinking, he is sensitive to the dangers of its unlimited sway over human life and speech: "Science: enrichment and impoverishment. The *one* method shoves all others aside." (*VB*, p. 111, 1947) Other methods—of disclosure, shall we say?—are found in the arts.

> One could say [Wittgenstein remarked in 1947] that art *shows* us the miracles of nature . . . (The blossom opening. What is *glorious* about it? One says: "Look at how it opens up!").

In poetry, *language* becomes art by renouncing question and answer for the sake of exclamation and presentation.[25]

Both thinkers want to protect the "poetic mode," the receptivity to the presencing of Being (*Seinlassen*, Heidegger calls it). Such a disclosure of the world precedes the disclosure by means of the scientific-technological "why?" and "how?."

According to Heidegger, in poetry (and art generally), the "*that* it is" is prominent (*OWA*, p. 65). Compare the following from Wittgenstein's early notebooks: "The artistic marvel is that the world is. That there is what there is" (*NB*, p. 86, our translation). In other modes of discourse, that something *is* is taken for granted as commonplace. This is why freshness and surprise are so crucial for aesthetic effect. And "freshness" and "surprise" suggest the quality of original revelation out of concealment.

Many of Wittgenstein's readers have remarked that his philosophical writings are themselves poetic. The freshness and surprise of their imagery and examples are integral to the illumination and "therapy" which they offer. (Here Wittgenstein, as master "therapist" and teacher of therapeutic skills, supplements Heidegger.)

Consider the following passages from *PI*:

> The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. . . . we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful. (129)

> We find certain things about seeing puzzling, because we do not find the whole business of seeing puzzling enough. (p. 212)

> Don't take it as a matter of course, but as a remarkable fact, that pictures and fictitious narratives give us pleasure, occupy our minds. ("Don't take it as a matter of course" means: find it surprizing, as you do some things which disturb you. Then the puzzling aspect of the latter will disappear, by your accepting this fact as you do the other.) (524)

What we see here is that philosophical perplexity can come from, as it were, a one-sided diet of wonders, i.e., from fixation on unfamiliar wonders and obliviousness to ones "right under our nose" (*PI* 129; cf. 436). In our search for understanding, the aspects of things which are most important for us and always present, the "proto-phenomena" (*Urphänomen*), tend to get concealed.

Heidegger's only published reference to Wittgenstein comes in a discussion of the "hermeneutic circle," i.e., the idea that the understanding is always already in the presence of that for which it searches. He cites (*H*, p. 31) an image of Wittgenstein's: that of a man trying to get out of a room by first trying a window, which is too high, then the chimney, which is too narow; if he would just turn around he would see that the door has been open all along.[26] It seems that both philosophers are continually trying to get us (and themselves) to turn towards an "opening" that has always been there.

The Spirit of Their Work

Both Heidegger and Wittgenstein believed that the spirit which dominates the modern age, the scientific spirit, tends to repress or corrupt other aspects of life and thought. And each felt himself called to counter, or set limits, to it. In the Preface to *Philosophical Remarks*, Wittgenstein speaks of the spirit of his own work:

> This spirit is different from the one which informs the vast stream of European and American civilization in which all of us stand. *That* spirit expresses itself in onwards movement, in bulding even larger and more complicated structures; the other in striving after clarity and perspicuity in no matter what structure. . . .

In an earlier version of that Preface, he had said that the word "progress" characterizes our civilization (*VB*, p. 22; cf. motto of *PI*).

Heidegger certainly shared with Wittgenstein a suspicion of the "philosophy of progress." Both thinkers propose what Heidegger calls a "step back" to a mode of awareness which has been covered over by our advances.

The preceding passages, and the one that follows (from a 1947 notebook), show how far Wittgenstein was from the spirit of positivism:

> Science: enrichment and impoverishment. The *one* method shoves all others aside. Compared with this all the others seem poor, at best preliminary stages. You must descend to the sources in order to see all of them along side of each other, the neglected and the favored. (*VB*, p. 118)

Compare the following passages, in which Heidegger warns of the danger of modern science and technology, which he characterizes as "ordering" and "enframing" (*Gestell*):

> Where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing. . . . Where enframing holds sway, regulating and securing . . . mark all revealing. They no longer even let their own fundamental characteristic appear, namely, this revealing as such. . . . (*QCT*, p. 309)

> This one-track thinking . . . is one of those unsuspected and inconspicuous forms . . . in which the essence of technology assumes dominion—because that essence wills and therefore needs absolute univocity. (*WCT*, p. 26)

In the *Blue Book*, Wittgenstein links bad philosophy with "our preoccupation with the method of science":

> I mean the method of reducing the explanation of natural phenomena to the smallest possible number of primitive natural laws; and, in mathematics, of unifying the treatment of different topics by using a generalization. Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistably tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness. (p. 18)

We believe that counteracting this tendency was the main focus of the later Wittgenstein's activity as a thinker.

Heidegger maintains that the power of modern science to capture thinking is found in its capacity for demonstration and tangible results. But he asks:

> . . . is the manifest character of what-is exhausted by what is demonstrable? Doesn't the insistence on what is demonstrable block the way to what-is? (*EPTT*, p. 72)

Heidegger wanted to exhibit something more fundamental than either traditional philosophy (metaphysics) or science, thereby showing their limits. And, like Wittgenstein, he saw his work as, in a way, the "end of philosophy," rather than its further progress. But for Heidegger, the "end of philosophy" is not the disappearance of philosophy (see *OM*, p. 85), but rather the renunciation of its status as the *ground* of thinking. He simply wants to uncover the origin of thinking, and thus also the openness for future disclosures. Heidegger sees this as especially urgent today because our technological age, with its reduction of Being to manipulable and calculable determinations, threatens to completely obviate this openness. We have come to see man as "master of the earth." Although Heidegger does not reject philosophy or science, he calls on them to find their origin in their own self-transcendence. Poetical thinking, "thinking that recalls," becomes the mediating access to and disclosure of this sacrifice which anticipates the "gift." Then man becomes the "shepherd of Being":

> It is one thing to just use the earth, another to receive the blessing of the earth and to become at home in the law of this reception in order to shepherd the mystery of Being and watch over the inviolability of the possible. (*OM*, p. 109)

Clearly, not all of that is to be found in Wittgenstein. But consider the follow-

ing passage from a 1930 notebook:

> I am not interested in erecting a structure (*Gebäude*), but in making transparent the groundwork of possible structures. (*VB*, p. 22)

The reference to "possibility" in these last two quotations is relevant to the theme of this paper. We have proposed that both Heidegger and Wittgenstein recommend a sense of mystery, in contrast to traditional philosophical "answers." Both see philosophy as, not a quest for answers, but a matter of preserving the process of thinking from reduction to a single form. What is distinctive about them is that they are less interested in positions that in the openness within which possible positions take shape.[27]

1 Translated by Michael Murray in "A Note on Wittgenstein and Heidegger," *Philosophical Review*, 83, 1974, p. 501.

2 The following abbreviations will be used throughout:
Wittgenstein:

BB – *The Blue and Brown Books*, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1965.

LE – "Lecture on Ethics," *The Philosophical Review*, 74, 1965, pp. 3-12.

NB – *Notebooks*, 1914-1916. Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1961.

NT – F. Waismann, "Notes on Talks with Wittgenstein," tr. Max Black, *The Philosophical Review*, 74, 1965, p. 12-16.

PI – *Philosophical Investigations*. Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe, N.Y., Macmillan, 1953. (Numbers after "*PI*" refer to sections unless otherwise noted.)

PR – *Philosophical Remarks*, tr. Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1975.

RC – *Remarks on Colour*, tr. Linda L. McAlister and Margarete Schättle, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977.

RFM – *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe, Cambridge, Mass., M.I.T. Press, 1967.

ROF – "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*," tr. John Beversluis, in *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives*, ed. C. G. Luckhardt, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1979.

TLP – *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, tr. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961. (For 6.44, we have modified the Pears-McGuinness translation.)

VB – *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1977. (Here we use our own translations.)

Z – *Zettel*. Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1970.

Heidegger:

BT – *Being and Time*, tr. John Marquarrie and Edward Robinson, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1962.

DL – "A Dialogue on Language," in *On the Way to Language,* tr. Peter D. Hertz, Harper & Row, 1971.

DT – *Discourse on Thinking,* tr. John Anderson and E. Hans Freund, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1966.

EPTT – "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *On Time and Being,* cited below.

ET – "On the Essense of Truth," in *Basic Writings,* ed. David Krell, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1977.

H – *Heraklit,* Frankfurt, 1970 (E. Fink, co-author).

IM – *An Introduction to Metaphysics,* tr. Ralph Manheim, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1959.

L – "Language," in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* tr. Albert Hofstadter, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1971.

LH – "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings, op. cit.*

NL – "The Nature of Language," in *On the Way to Language, op. cit.*

OWA – "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought, op. cit.*

OM – "Overcoming Metaphysics," in *The End of Philosophy,* tr. Joan Stambaugh, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1973.

QCT – "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings, op. cit.*

T – "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought, op. cit.*

TB – *On Time and Being,* tr. Joan Stambaugh, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1972.

WL – "The Way to Language," in *On the Way to Language, op. cit.*

WPF – "What are Poets For?", in *Poetry, Language, Thought, op. cit.*

WCT – *What is Called Thinking?,* tr. Fred Wieck and J. Glenn Gray, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1968.

WM – "What is Metaphysics?," in *Basic Writings, op. cit.*

WMP – Postscript to "What is Metaphysics?", in *Existence and Being,* ed. Werner Brock, Chicago, Gateway, 1949.

W – "Words," in *On the Way to Language, op. cit.*

3 Do we want to say that a computer might *understand* logic (or language)? Not, perhaps, unless we can make sense of ascribing this "experience" to it.

4 Some clarifications:
Heidegger's thinking is radically different from that of certain mystics who also speak of a "Nothing" (Eckhart, e.g.). Heidegger in no way proposes the Nothing as a dimension utterly apart from things, which beckons us away from the world. The Nothing discloses *Being.* Nothing and Being are distinguishable but not separable.

For Heidegger, the mystery (concealment) is "prior" to Being (coming-to-presence). Yet concealment is never to be thought *apart from* Being. Hence it is appropriate to talk of the "mystery of Being" (again the aptness of the term un-concealment). Being means the process of concealment un-concealing itself. So there is one sense in which Being is the mystery, but another sense in which the mystery is "prior" to Being. Furthermore, we should distinguish between *the* mystery

Being/Nothing, the mystical) and *a* mystery (how individual beings are seen in view of the limit of explanation).

5 We are indebted to Finch for this point.

6 Cf. William Barrett's *The Illusion of Technique,* Garden City, 1978, p. 154.

7 We know of no reason to think that the later Wittgenstein would reject *this* aspect of his earlier work.

8 In *TLP* "my language" contrasts with "Language" while in *PI* it contrasts with "our language." In *PI* the notion of an "absolutely objective" Language and Logic, transcending forms of life, is rejected.

9 A "world" is the manner in which Being becomes accessible to man in a particular epoch; it is a style of unconcealment – a form of life.

10 Language in this fundamental sense shows itself when, for example, we can't find the right word for something, or more especially, when the appropriate word is given to or withheld from the poet, the one who tries to speak what has never been spoken (*NL,* p. 59).

11 See Waismann's "How I See Philosophy," in H.D. Lewis, ed., *Contemporary British Philosophy,* 3rd series, London, 1956, p. 489: "Wittgenstein saw through a big mistake . . . ," etc.

12 See G.E.M. Anscombe's "The Question of Linguistic Idealism," an article to which we are indebted. In J. Hintikka, ed., *Essays in Honour of G. H. von Wright,* Amsterdam, 1976, pp. 188-215.

13 From Heidegger's *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung,* (Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1951), p. 35; tr. John McCumber, in his article "Language and Appropriation," *Personalist,* Oct. 1979, p. 384.

14 See *PI* 90. Cf. *TLP* 5.552 on the " 'experience' that something *is*" being essential for understanding the logic, or grammar, of language. This 'experience' seems to be inseparable from our experience of *speaking* a language and *applying* logic. See 5.557.

15 Cf. Ignace D'hert, *Wittgenstein's Relevance for Theology,* Bern 1978, pp. 72-77 ("The essence of language"). Incidentally, D'hert's overall understanding of the relation between language and mystery in Heidegger and Wittgenstein seems to be similar to our own.

16 We are indebted to somebody – we can't remember who – for parts of this paragraph.
Incidentally, the following, from Derek Bolton, *Approach to Wittgenstein's Philosophy,* Atlantic Highlands, 1979, is relevant to our "history" allusion:

> . . . *time* and *change* are essential to the new philosophy [of W.]; time, or what happens through time, is essential to what there is, and to our understanding. (p. 100)

> Cf. Heidegger's *Being and Time!*

17 On "proto-phenomena" (*Urphänomen*) see Norman Malcolm, *Thought and Knowledge,* Cornell, 1977, p. 152. Cf. B. R. Tilghman, "Seeing and Meaning," *Southern Journal of Philosophy,* XIV, pp. 523-33. Incidentally, in the following passage Heidegger uses the term *Urphänomen* in a

strikingly Wittgensteinian way:

> Language is a primal phenomenon whose *proprium* is not amenable to factual proof but can be caught sight of only in an unprejudiced experience of language. Humans may be able to invent artificial speech constructions and signs, but they are able to do so only in reference to and in terms of an already spoken language. [Cf. *PI* 120.] Thinking remains critical also with respect to primal phenomena. For to think critically means to distinguish constantly between that which requires proof for its justification and that which, to confirm its truth, demands a simple catching sight of and taking in. [Cf. *PI* 92, 122, 66.]

From *Phänomenologie und Theologie*, tr. James Hart and John Maraldo, in *The Piety of Thinking*, (Bloomington, 1976), pp. 25-26.

18 The ambiguity of "gathering" (or "collecting into a setting") is very significant, as is the parallel ambiguity of "convention." Gathering, as understanding or getting the point, is a linguistic event, and therefore involves "going by conventions." Conventions are "rules" (e.g., signposts) that a community — a gathering or "convention" of language-users — acknowledge and go by in practice. See *PI* 143-242. Cf. Heidegger's discussion of *Mit-sein* in *BT.*

19 The comparison with Heidegger helps us to appreciate what is (usually) in the background of Wittgenstein's work. Does Heidegger *ever* "investigate grammar"? Yes. See, for example, *What is a Thing?* (South Bend, 1967).

20 For Heidegger, poetry in a wide sense does not exclusively refer to techniques or formal characteristics (rhyme, meter, etc.), but rather dwelling in the *claim* of the mystery-giving-language. Such a claim, a calling, is what makes the poet a poet.

21 Heidegger often investigates the etymologies of words out of a conviction that their newer, more technical, uses often hide a poetic resonance that discloses a deeper meaning (e.g., "logic" from *logos* as "gathering"). "The older a word, the deeper it reaches" (W., *NB*, p. 40). Complementing Heidegger's investigations are Wittgenstein's efforts to "bring words back" (*PI* 116) from their shadow-existence in the world of metaphysical-epistemological abstractions. To this end, Wittgenstein reminds us of the "everyday" (non-philosophical) use of words. But when he does this he is not, as Karsten Harries suggested (see next note), trying to protect non-poetic "idle talk"; rather, he is trying to protect language from "gassing" — e.g., rationalistic attempts to explain our langauge-games by reference to an "objective foundation" outside of the stream of life.

22 Karsten Harries, "Wittgenstein and Heidegger: The Relationship of the Philosopher to Language," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 2, 1968, p. 289.

23 Cf. M. O'C. Drury's definition of a "deep thinker" in Hintikka, ed., *op cit.* p. 26.

24 Compare the following passage from *OWA* (p. 26) where Heidegger objects to reducing things to sense qualities; where a situation of meaning is prior to sensations:

> We never really first perceive a throng of sensations, e.g., tones and noises . . . rather we hear the storm whistling in the chimney. . . .

> In order to hear a bare sound we have to listen away from things, divert our ear from them, i.e., listen abstractly.

25 We suggest that the "silence" enjoined by *TLP* 7 was meant to exclude attempts to state logico-ontologial "truths" and "explanations," not to rule out language-in-the-service-of-poetry.

In 1917 Paul Englemann sent Wittgenstein a copy of Uland's "Graf Eberhards Weissdorn." Wittgenstein replied:

> The poem by Uland is really magnificent. And this is how it is: if only you do not try to utter what is unutterable then *nothing* gets lost. But the unutterable will be—unutterably—*contained* in what has been uttered! (Letters from L. W., *With a Memoir,* Oxford, 1968, p. 83; dated 9/4/17.)

This seems to be a case of what Heidegger would call "a renunciation of language that is not a mere lapse into silence." (*W,* p. 147) As Virgil Aldrich says, for Wittgenstein the mystery is not obscured by language: "The unutterable for him is made manifest in the utterance" (*Monist,* 59, 1976, p. 478). Heidegger clearly expresses this idea of *simultaneous* manifestation and ineffability in the following passage:

> That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call the mystery. (*DT,* p. 55)

26 Heidegger does not give his source. But for a similar image, see "Wittgenstein as a Teacher" in K. T. Fann, ed., *L. W.: The Man & His Philosophy,* New York, 1967, p. 52.