

PARMENIDES AND HEIDEGGER (1.1.0)

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1. Parmenides

In Parmenides a new dimension in the relationship between thought and being arises. Thought is given the full status of eternal being, but in doing so it becomes completely defined on that basis. Thought becomes being and no more. Any thought which does not think being is nothing. Thought is nothing, except that thought which thinks what is necessary, eternal, and unchanging.

The duality of being and nothing is expressed by Parmenides' goddess as two paths: one of them is and cannot not be; the other is not and cannot be.¹ The one is necessary, the other necessarily nothing. The one is true reality, the other is pure emptiness; no one may apprehend, accomplish, or indicate it.² This is the one and only choice: ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν—"it is or it is not."³ This is the choice between the two ways of which there is only one genuine way, only one that actually attends to what is at all. The other, by necessity, can only be left unthought and nameless.⁴

The path of nothing is not. Only being itself is. Being is all that there is. Being is what is in the fullest possible sense. Only the most perfect, most complete definition of what is can suffice. There can be no change, no differentiation, no movement, no birth, and no death. All of these are a diminution of the fullest possible form of being.

ἀγένητον ἐὸν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἐστιν
οὐλον μονογενές τε καὶ ἀτρεμές ἡδὲ τελεστόν·
οὐδέ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἐστιν ὁμοῦ πάν,

¹ Fragment 2, lines 3 and 5. All quotations of the Greek text and translations are from the appendix of Palmer, J. (2009) *Parmenides & Presocratic Philosophy*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 362–375.

² Fragment 2, lines 7–8.

³ Fragment 8, line 16.

⁴ Fragment 8, lines 16–18.

ἓν, συνεχές.

Being is ungenerated and deathless,
whole and uniform, and still and perfect;
but not ever was it, nor yet will it be, since it is now together entire,
single, continuous.⁵

τῶυτόν τ' ἐν τῶυτόῳ τε μένον καθ' ἑαυτό τε κεῖται
χοῦτως ἔμπεδον αὔθι μένει· κρατερὴ γὰρ Ἀνάγκη
πείρατος ἐν δεσμοῖσιν ἔχει, τό μιν ἀμφὶς ἔργει,
οὔνεκεν οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον τὸ ἐὼν θέμις εἶναι·
ἔστι γὰρ οὐκ ἐπιδευές· ἐὼν δ' ἂν παντὸς ἐδειτο.

Remaining the same, in the same place, and on its own it rests,
and thus steadfast right there it remains; for powerful Necessity
holds it in the bonds of a limit, which encloses it all around,
wherefore it is right that being be not unfulfilled;
for it is not lacking: if it were, it would lack everything.⁶

Being appears as the purely ideal rational object: limited rather than indefinite, limited in a perfect way, perfectly circular, equal for all eternity; internally pure, the same in all directions, bound and structured by necessity. Parmenides' being isn't a physical object that can be seen or touched. Parmenides abstracts from the general concept of the object towards an ideal object that fulfils the sense of being in the fullest way possible. The features of this pure object are also the features of the thought that thinks it, as the two are essentially the same. The reality of thought is the reality of its concept of being. To think being is for thought to become what being is.

τῶυτόν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὔνεκεν ἔστι νόημα.
οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐν ᾧ πεφρατισμένον ἐστίν,
εὐρήσεις τὸ νοεῖν· οὐδὲν γὰρ <ἦ> ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται
ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐπεὶ τό γε Μοῖρ' ἐπέδησεν
οὔλον ἀκίνητόν τ' ἔμμεναι.

The same thing is both for thought and that because of which there is thought.
For not without being, depending on which it [i.e. thought] has been expressed,
will you find thought: for nothing else either is or will be
except being, since Fate bound it

⁵ Fragment 8, lines 3–6. Translation altered.

⁶ Fragment 8, lines 29–33. Translation altered.

to be whole and unmoved.⁷

Being is that which thought depends on to be genuinely expressed. Being is not merely thought; thought is the same thing as being. Being is first in order, the defining element in the relationship. The definition of being defines the definition of thought. Without being, thought would be nameless, purely nothing. For thought to be at all, for thought to be something that is, it must think being. The thought that thinks a lack itself lacks everything. It is a phantasm, a shadow that has chosen the way of oblivion rather than immortality. The path of being is no more than thinking and saying being. The path of nothing is where being is not thought or said. To attend this path is for thought to remain outside that which is. If it thinks nothing it is nothing; if it thinks something it is something: *the same thing is both for thought and that because of which there is thought*. Nothing depends on thought, while everything depends on being. In this way thought and being are the same.

Mortals remain on the path of nothing. They suppose that being changes, moves; they suppose that being is and is not the same,⁸ that it lacks a purely uniform identity that would allow it to remain the same as itself in the highest possible sense. These suppositions lack the criteria to be anything at all. That which is in any way other than itself, other than the perfect nature of being, slips according to absolute necessity into the category of nothingness. It is not and must not be because it is not being. The meaning of necessity here is the lack of conformity to the way in which being is defined. Mortals misunderstand the nature of being. They understand what is in a myriad of ways that fail to reach being itself:

τῷ πάντ' ὀνόμασται
ὅσσα βροτοὶ κατέθεντο πεποιθότες εἶναι ἀληθῆ,
γίγνεσθαι τε καὶ ὄλλυσθαι, εἶναί τε καὶ οὐχί,
καὶ τόπον ἀλλάσσειν διὰ τε χροῶ φανὸν ἀμείβειν.

To it all things have been given as names,
all that mortals have established in their conviction that they are true,
both coming to be and perishing, both being and not,
and altering place and exchanging brilliant colour.⁹

A science is created by the mortals of two distinct forms:

⁷ Fragment 8, lines 34–38. Translation altered.—See Palmer's textual notes for the supplement in angle brackets (p. 385).

⁸ Fragment 6, line 8.

⁹ Fragment 8, lines 38–41. Translation altered.

ἀντία ... ἐκρίναντο δέμας καὶ σήματ' ἔθεντο
χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, τῇ μὲν φλογὸς αἰθέριον πῦρ,
ἥπιον ὄν, μέγ' ἐλαφρόν, ἐωυτῶ πάντοσε τωυτόν,
τῶ δ' ἐτέρῳ μὴ τωυτόν, ἀτὰρ κάκεϊνο κατ' αὐτὸ
τάντία, νύκτ' ἀδαῆ, πυκινὸν δέμας ἐμβριθές τε.

They distinguished things opposite in form and assigned them marks
distinct from one another, for the one the eternal flame of fire,
being gentle, most light, every way the same as itself,
yet not the same as the other; but that one is in itself
the opposite, dark night, dense in form and heavy.¹⁰

And within this science there is an understanding of thought:

ὥς γὰρ ἐκάστοτ' ἔχει κρῆσιν μελέων πολυπλάγκτων,
τὼς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παρέστηκεν· τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ
ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονεῖ μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώποισιν
καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί· τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἐστὶ νόημα.

For as on each occasion is the temperament of the much-wandering limbs,
so is thought present to humans: for the same thing
is that which thinks, the nature of the limbs, in humans
in both each and every one: for the greater is thought.¹¹

The thought of mortal experience is not the same as being, and what is not being is nothing. The thought of mortals does not remain steadfast, is not replete with being, nor equal to itself from every side.¹² Being is altogether or not at all.¹³ As a duality of changeable, moveable, interacting forms, fire and night are fatally flawed. The mode of their operation in forming the visible world plunges their nature towards illusion. The visible world is a multiplicity of changeable forms, creating and being created, destroying and being destroyed. Mortal things change and the thought of mortals is changeable. This is the world of mortal existence. It is the way in which mortals understand what is. Mortals give names to the nameless. Their minds wander like the limbs of a body, unable to think what is unchanging. Thought, *understood as illusion*, as nothing, is something about the body: the nature of the limbs is that which thinks.

Within the experience of mortals, thought explains the visible world, but it does not reach the unchanging. Mortals who know only nothing wander two-

¹⁰ Fragment 8, lines 55–59.

¹¹ Fragment 16.

¹² See fragment 8, lines 30, 24, and 49.

¹³ Fragment 8, line 11.

headed, both deaf and blind, bedazzled and indiscriminating.¹⁴ Their explanations may form a correct, coherent theory of the visible world, but nevertheless they remain without truth. This coherency of explanation lies outside the absolute way in which being is defined. It is a physics of illusion rather than a metaphysics of truth, an empty psychology rather than the true nature of thought.

Any change or movement whatsoever is enough for necessity to revoke the status of being from something. The presence of the slightest discrepancy, the most minute flaw allows it to be claimed by absolute nothingness. But thought can stand in being. Thought is nothing only as far as it does not think being. When it does think being it is saved from oblivion. But in this way it is entirely reliant on being. It *is nothing* without it. Thought can only be the same as being, as what is pure and unchanging, and nothing else. It is not that any other definition of thought is merely false, merely incorrect. In any other definition, thought would not attain the conditions necessary for it to be anything at all; in this way it is nothing.

2. Heidegger

Parmenides would provide the basic orientation on thought that would be central to the later development of metaphysics: genuine thought is being only. This history of metaphysics is the history of thought's unity with being. Progressing in various directions, the concepts change, the stark duality of being and nothing loosens, enters more complex relations and hierarchies of levels, but the grounding form of being as absolute knowledge remains the defining feature.

In Heidegger there is an attempt to go beyond the history of metaphysics. Thought is not only being *and no more*, but we are *not yet* thinking at all. The meaning of this 'not yet' remains determined by being. It is being itself that determines in what way thought can approach it. At the current point in Western history, being has remained unthought because being itself has turned away.

Daß wir noch nicht denken, kommt vielmehr daher, daß dieses zu-Denkende selbst sich vom Menschen abwendet, langher schon abgewendet hat. ... Das, was uns eigentlich zu denken gibt, hat sich nicht irgendwann zu einer historisch datierbaren Zeit vom Menschen abgewendet, sondern: das eigentlich zu-Denkende hält sich von einsther in solcher Abwendung.

That we are not yet thinking stems from the fact that the thing itself that must be thought about turns away from man, has turned away long ago. ... That which really gives us food for thought did not turn away from man at some time or other which can be fixed in history—no, what really must be thought keeps itself turned away

¹⁴ Fragment 6, lines 6–7.

from man since the beginning.¹⁵

Thought in its fullest sense is not yet possible, but there are lower, less essential forms that happen nonetheless. Heidegger does not deny that people think, only that they think being itself. But the possibility of this genuine form of thought remains within humankind. We can think in the sense that we possess the possibility to do so, but this possibility alone is no guarantee that we are now capable of actually thinking.¹⁶ By thinking in some way, we remain related to what must be thought, but we are not capable of genuine thought as long as that which must be thought about withdraws.¹⁷ As things stand, this thought is unthinkable. No one at all is thinking: “Wir noch nicht denken; wir alle noch nicht, der Sprecher mit einbegriffen, er sogar zuerst.”—“We are not yet thinking; none of us, including me who speaks to you, me first of all”.¹⁸

This ‘not yet’ implies something to come. But Heidegger admits that we absolutely do not know whether it will come.¹⁹ We are not thinking, and we do not know if we ever will think. Thought as such is a surmise. But it remains a possibility, something we may prepare for whether it will ever arrive or not.

Wir denken aber noch nicht, insofern wir noch nicht in das dem Denken eigene, uns noch vorbehaltene Wesen gelangt sind. Wir sind noch nicht im Eigentlichen des Denkens. Das eigentliche Wesen des Denkens könnte sich nun aber gerade dort zeigen, wo es sich einmal entzogen hat, wenn wir nur auf diesen Entzug achten, wenn wir uns nur nicht, durch *die Logik* genarrt, darauf versteifen, schon längst zu wissen, was das Denken sei.

We still do not think inasmuch as we have not yet entered into the essential nature which is proper to thinking, and which is still reserved, withheld from us. We are not yet in the reality of thought. The real essence of thought might show itself, however, at that very point where it once withdrew, if only we will pay heed to this withdrawal, if only we will not insist, confused by logic, that we already know perfectly well what thinking is.²⁰

Entering early Greek thought is a preparation for that which is still to

¹⁵ GA8 (1951–52/2002) *Was heißt Denken?* Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 8. Translated by Grey, J. (1968) *What is Called Thinking?* New York, Harper & Row, p. 7. Translation altered.—In all quotations of Heidegger, minor alterations such as capitalisation will be done silently. Any other changes will be noted. All italics are in the original.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 5. English, p. 3.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 9. English, p. 7.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 17. English, p. 14. Translation altered.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 38. English, p. 35.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 50. English, p. 45. Translation altered.

come. To them being gave another history. In their understanding of truth as ἀλήθεια, the Greeks initially experienced the open of the clearing of beings. They had a more original awareness of that which has turned away from us, leaving only the scientific-technological manipulation of beings. As such, we cannot reach the full experience of the Greeks because we are outside the mode of experience proper to it.²¹ The difficulty of following the ancient thinkers is not merely textual, but resides in an unwillingness and incapacity foundational to our existence.²² Yet despite this, entering Greek thought is not impossible.²³ We are able to catch a glimpse of the beginning of history by following the directives that the word ἀλήθεια provides.²⁴

Parmenides does not appear in Heidegger's work as the originator of purely rational metaphysics; he appears in opposition to metaphysics as a thinker of the early Greek experience of being. Parmenides does not provide a stark logical deduction of the nature of being, but reveals an openness to the duality of presence and what is present. He does not understand thought as what must only be the same as the eternal form of an ideal object of rational perfection, but shows thought to be an awareness of the unfolding of this duality. It is not that mortals do not think because they miss the pure necessity of being; mortals only concern themselves with present things rather than hidden source of the presence of these things itself.

The meaning of χρῆ τὸ λέγειν τὸ νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι²⁵ is not that necessity dictates that we must say and think that being is, that we must remain on a path dictated by pure reason. In Heidegger's translation it becomes: "Es brauchet das Vorliegenlassen so (das) In-die-Acht-nehmen auch: Seiendes seiend."—"Useful is the letting-lie-before-us, so (the) taking-heed-of too: beings in being."²⁶ To be useful in this sense does not involve utilisation or manipulation; it is to allow something to be in its essence. Λέγειν is not the speech that must only follow reason; it refers to laying out, laying before. And it is not only the laying out of statements, but also of the landscape, the temple, city, and sky.²⁷ Νοεῖν is not the thought of abstract logic, but to be open to, to perceive, to take heed of in such a way that what is taken is left to be how it is.²⁸ Together λέγειν and νοεῖν are the fundamental elements of early Greek thinking. They belong together as

²¹ GA54 (1942–43/1982) *Parmenides*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 94. Translated by Schuwer, A. & Rojcewicz, R. (1992) *Parmenides*. Indiana, Indiana University Press, p. 64.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 12. English, p. 8.

²³ *Was heißt Denken?*, p. 230. English, p. 226.

²⁴ *Parmenides*, p. 199. English, p. 134.

²⁵ Fragment 6, line 1.

²⁶ *Was heißt Denken?*, p. 232. English, p. 228. Translation altered.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209. English, pp. 205–206.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 206. English, p. 203.

fundamental aspects of the early Greek experience: to let lie is to engage in taking heed of.²⁹ This thinking is directed towards ἐὸν ἔμμεναι: the being of beings. But understood in a Greek way, the being of beings becomes the presence of the present. What is present arises from unconcealment; its presence is the rising entry into what is unconcealed within unconcealment.³⁰ In the presence of what is present, ἀλήθεια, the disclosure of unconcealment in which beings arise, is that through which there is the laying out and taking heed of. It is the open that gives rise to that which is laid out for thought to think.

The meaning of τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι³¹ is not the essential unity between thinking and the precise nature of what being itself is, understood in a purely abstract form. There is no absolute necessity that requires thought to be only that which is in the highest way possible. To think being is to think the presence that arises within the open, to let beings occur in heeding the presence of unconcealment. If thought and being are the same, this means “that the essential nature of νοεῖν ... consists in its remaining focused on the presence of what is present. Ἐὸν, the presence of what is present, accordingly keeps and guards νοεῖν within itself as what belongs to it” (“daß das ... νοεῖν sein Wesen darin hat, in das Anwesen von Anwesendem eingewiesen zu bleiben. Das Ἐὸν, das Anwesen des Anwesenden, verwahrt demnach das νοεῖν bei sich und zwar als das zu ihm Gehörige”).³²

The nature of this belonging is concealed within the enigmatic key word τὸ αὐτὸ (the same). Hidden in this word is that which provides a link between the core elements of Parmenides’ thinking: thought as taking-heed-of and being as the twofold of presence and the present. Τὸ αὐτὸ “reigns as the unfolding of the twofold—an unfolding in the sense of disclosure. That which unfolds, and in unfolding reveals the twofold, allows taking-heed-of to get under way toward the gathering perception of the presencing of what is present” (“waltet ... als die Entfaltung der Zwiefalt im Sinne der Entbergung: das nämlich entbergend die Zwiefalt Entfaltende gewährt das in-die-Acht-Nehmen auf seinem Weg zum versammelnden Vernehmen des Anwesens von Anwesendem”).³³ Understood in this way, τὸ αὐτὸ is the unconcealment of the presence of the present; it is ἀλήθεια, the open which allows thought and being to belong together. As disclosure unconceals, it needs letting-lie-before and taking-heed-of if what is present is to ap-

²⁹ Ibid., p. 212. English, p. 209.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 240. English, p. 236.

³¹ Fragment 3.

³² *Was heißt Denken?*, p. 245. English, pp. 241–242.

³³ *Moirā (Parmenides VIII, 34–41)*. In: GA7 (1952/2000) *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 241 (first edition pagination). Translated as *Moirā (Parmenides VIII, 34–41)*. In: Krell, D.F. & Capuzzi, F.A. (1984) *Early Greek Thinking*. New York, Harper & Row, p. 95.

pear, and this need binds thinking to its belonging-together with the duality of presence and what is present.³⁴

This belonging together of thought and being is further developed where *Μοῖρα* is introduced as the fate that binds being to be whole and unmoved, because nothing else is or will be: ἐπεὶ τό γε Μοῖρ' ἐπέδησεν οὔλον ἀκίνητόν τ' ἔμμεναι.³⁵ This does not mean that fate, as an absolute and pure necessity, has bound the abstract definition of being in place. *Μοῖρα* appears as the destiny of being, that which unfolds the duality and has bound it to totality and immobility, from which and in which the presencing of what is present comes to pass.³⁶ This destiny is the history of the duality. It is that which remains as the hidden source of the way in which the present appears. It is that which allows mortals to see only the present, that which allows the thought of mortals to wander among changeable things without attention to the still light which emanates from within the duality, the saying in which presencing unfolds.³⁷ Within this destiny there is hidden that towards which thinking concerns itself, that which is concealed from the duality: non-being (μη̄ ε̄όν).³⁸ Thinking concerns itself with the concealed within unconcealment, the λήθη within ἀλήθεια.

These readings require that the foundations of all philology are exposed as a sham.³⁹ They require that the usual translations, formulated according to standard dictionary definitions, are seen as acts of violence and cruelty to the underlying hidden meaning.⁴⁰ In such translations we fail to see the bond between language and its hidden essence within the history of being.⁴¹ We fail to understand that they themselves are grounded in a history unknown to them. We fail to realise that the Greek thinkers understood being within an entirely different epoch of history.

The original openness of ἀλήθεια, experienced as the hidden source of the duality of presence and what is present, was the beginning of history itself, a first beginning. Yet the early Greeks did not fathom the open entirely. As they only saw being as presence, they did not experience its full temporal scope.⁴² Nor did

³⁴ Ibid., p. 243 (first edition pagination). English, p. 96.

³⁵ Fragment 8, lines 37–38.

³⁶ *Moria*, p. 244 (first edition pagination). English, p. 97.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 247 (first edition pagination). English, p. 100.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 248 (first edition pagination). English, p. 100.

³⁹ *Was heißt Denken?*, p. 202. English, p. 200.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 199. English, p. 196.

⁴¹ *Der Spruch des Anaximander*. In: GA5 (1946/1977) *Holzwege*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 302 (first edition pagination). Translated as *Anaximander's Saying*. In: Young, J & Haynes, K. (2002) *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 247.

⁴² Heidegger's movement beyond the category of presence only reaches so far; the absent itself remains outside: "Was »weg« ist, ist verschwunden, abwesend. Was weg ist, ist in

the open become an explicit area of focus. Being essentially occurred as ἀλήθεια in the beginning, but it was not fully interrogated in its ground. For this reason, the unconcealed itself came to priority and subsequently entered into the domain of perception, allowing the progression from visibility to ἰδέα, to οὐσία, to ἐντελέχεια.⁴³ From the unconcealment of presence, vision superseded the hidden core of ἀλήθεια towards new conceptions focusing only on the being of beings. From within this progression, the hidden meaning of the early Greek thinkers, the meaning that began to be lost by the time of Plato and Aristotle, would vanish in the later development of Western philosophy.

The attempt to enter the Greek experience of being is a preparation to begin thinking. In the Greeks the future of the West is surmised.⁴⁴ Ἀλήθεια understood as the open provides a sign of that wherein another history might occur. Thinking in the first beginning of the early Greek thinkers was not formed on the basis of the representational grasping that would later dominate Western history; their thinking was the genuine apprehension of what lay before them in unconcealment. But these Greek thinkers did not stand in the clearing of the appropriating event.⁴⁵ Beyond the Greek understanding of being as the disclosure of presence, beyond the way that being essentially occurred at the beginning of Western history, there is “the full essential occurrence of the temporal-spatial abyss and thus of truth” (“die volle Wesung des zeit-räumlichen Abgrundes und somit der Wahrheit”).⁴⁶ This is what turns away from us. It is what we now prepare for. The coming of this moment relates essentially to the past but fundamentally belongs to the future. It is the end of being’s oblivion, the end of history itself. It is what Heidegger describes as the other beginning, essentially different from the first beginning which began with the Greeks. The other beginning is

gewisser Weise nicht mehr; es ist vernichtet.”—“What is gone away has disappeared, is absent; what is gone away is, in a certain manner, no more, it is destroyed.” (*Parmenides*, p. 92. English, p. 62.) The absent is, then, entirely reliant on the present: “Das ungegenwärtig Anwesende ist das Abwesende. Als dieses bleibt es wesensmäßig auf das gegenwärtig Anwesende bezogen, insofern es entweder in die Gegend der Unverborgenheit hervorkommt oder aus ihr weggeht.”—“The unpresently present is the absent. As such, it remains essentially related to the presently present, insofar as it either comes forth into the region of unconcealment or withdraws from it.” (*Der Spruch des Anaximander*, p. 320 (first edition pagination). English, p. 261.)

⁴³ See GA71 (1941–42/2009) *Das Ereignis*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 15 and p. 19. Translated by Rojcewicz, R. (2013) *The Event*. Indiana, Indiana University Press, p. 9 and p. 12.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163. English, p. 139.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55. English, pp. 43–44.

⁴⁶ GA65 (1936–38/1989) *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 32. Translated by Rojcewicz, R. & Vallega-Neu, D. (2012) *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Indiana, Indiana University Press, p. 28.

being itself as an event; the event is the other beginning.⁴⁷ The other beginning is also the beginning of thought.

The abyss is the withdrawal. The withdrawal is being itself. The history of its self-removal is the history of being. “Das Sein entzieht sich, indem es sich in das Seiende entbirgt. Dergestalt hält das Sein mit seiner Wahrheit an sich. ... Das frühe Zeichen des Ansiehhaltens ist die ἄ-λήθεια.”—“By revealing itself in the being, being withdraws. In this way, being, with its truth, keeps to itself. ... Its early sign is the ἄ-λήθεια.”⁴⁸ For being to be what it is, the abyss must remain an abyss. It cannot become another object. If it did so, it would thereby lose itself *as being*. The difference between being itself and beings, previously forgotten, becomes foundational to the entire project. Being is not a being. In this way, from the point of view of beings, it is nothing.⁴⁹ In this way, it has lain invisible, unapprehended. This is why being itself is not taken seriously. The abyss is not openly manifest; we fail to see the plight of being itself as a task.⁵⁰ We fail to hear being; we fail to respond to it in language. Being “is” not; being *essentially occurs*. Yet this *is more* (seiender) than any being.⁵¹ Moreover, from the point of view of being itself, *being is and beings are not*. “Die volle Wesung des Seyns in der Wahrheit des Ereignisses läßt erkennen, daß das Seyn und nur das Seyn *ist* und daß das Seiende *nicht* ist. Mit diesem Wissen vom Seyn erreicht das Denken erst die Spur des anderen Anfangs im Übergang aus der Metaphysik.”—“The full essential occurrence of being in the truth of the event allows the recognition that being and only being *is* and that beings are *not*. With this knowledge of being, thinking first attains the trace of the other beginning in the transition from metaphysics.”⁵²

The other beginning is described as when being no longer conclusively withdraws itself, but “this withdrawal, as refusal, becomes the first truth and the other beginning of history” (“dieser Entzug als die Verweigerung zur ersten Wahrheit und zum anderen Anfang der Geschichte wird”).⁵³ *When refusal be-*

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 58. English, p. 47.

⁴⁸ *Der Spruch des Anaximander*, p. 311 (first edition pagination). English, p. 254.

⁴⁹ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 246. English, p. 193.

⁵⁰ *Überlegungen IV*. In: GA94 (1931–38/2014) *Überlegungen II–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 100 (Heidegger’s pagination). Translated as *Ponderings IV*. In: Rojcewicz, R. (2016) *Ponderings II–VI (Black Notebooks 1931–1938)*. Indiana, Indiana University Press, p. 212.

⁵¹ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 266. English, p. 209.

⁵² Ibid., p. 472. English, p. 372. The archaic spelling ‘being’ (‘Seyn’) differentiates being itself, being as the abyssal open, as opposed to metaphysical being which designates the *being* of beings. This distinction mirrors the one in the early Greek first beginning between ἀλήθεια and the presence of the present. It is the equivalent of the Greek distinction as found in the transition towards the other beginning.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 91. English, p. 73.

comes the first truth: when there are no longer any more signs of being's withdrawal, only the withdrawal itself; when refusal takes over from machination as the defining experience of humanity.

Being is nothing, an abyss. There is only the withdrawal itself, but this is not to be understood as a limitation. We may surmise that the refusal of being is "*the first and highest gift of being, indeed its primordially essential occurrence itself*" ("*die erste höchste Schenkung des Seyns, ja dessen anfängliche Wesung selbst ist*").⁵⁴ Being is withdrawn, and there is no solution, no other side to this withdrawal, nothing beyond it in which being would not be withdrawn at all. Being "is" in its highest and most fundamental sense withdrawn. But another self-concealment is possible: a self-concealment that is "the unconcealment of the refusal; it is the allowance to belong in the strangeness of another beginning" ("*das Entbergen der Verweigerung, das Zugehörenlassen in das Befremdliche eines anderen Anfangs*").⁵⁵

Thinking in the other beginning is a response to being. But being is silent in its withdrawal. For this reason genuine thinking is "in itself *sigetic*, precisely bearing silence in the most explicit mindfulness" ("*in sich sigetisch, in der ausdrücklichsten Besinnung gerade erschweigend*").⁵⁶ Language is grounded in the silence of being. And it is from within this silence that it must think if it is to think at all. "Dem Denken bleibt nur das einfachste Sagen des schlichtesten Bildes in reinster Verschweigung. Der künftige erste Denker muß dieses vermögen."—"To thinking there remains only the simplest saying of the plainest image in pure reticence. The future first thinker must be capable of that."⁵⁷ Thinking must enter another form; it must find itself redefined, in a new relationship to language. Yet silence does not form its final mode. We enter into dialogue with the silence of being and bring this dialogue into language. Both silence and language proper may belong to the event of the other beginning.⁵⁸

That which alluded metaphysics, that which is completely closed off in science and technology, might some day show itself as the ultimate truth of history. Without this distant possible event, an event whose coming we may never be certain of, thought is inaccessible to itself. We do not yet know the fullest truth of being. Heidegger's philosophical explorations do not confirm what thought is. They remain preparations towards something unknown. The other beginning remains a surmise: "only very little speaking 'of the event' is possible here in this thought that is making a beginning. What is said is questioned and thought in the 'interplay' between the first and the other beginning" ("*nur ein Geringes*

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 241. English, p. 190.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 58. English, p. 47. Translation altered.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 72. English, p. 58.

⁵⁸ There will be more on this below (section 3A, pp. 19–20).

kann hier in diesem anfänglichen Denken »vom Ereignis« gesagt werden. Was gesagt wird, ist gefragt und gedacht im »Zuspiel« des ersten und des anderen Anfangs zueinander”).⁵⁹

We are neither thinking nor do we truly know what thought is. There is only the possibility of another beginning in which thought might become possible.

*

What does it mean to say that whether we can think at all depends on being? What does it mean if we are not yet doing anything that truly warrants the name thought?

We are not yet thinking. The ‘not’ signifies the denial of thought; the ‘yet’ signifies the suggestion that thought could be on its way. Heidegger asks whether the idea that we are not yet thinking involves the promotion of nihilism. But, he continues: “Das mit Bedacht gesagte »noch nicht« deutet darauf, daß wir ... zum Denken schon unterwegs sind. ... Unsere Behauptung bringt demnach einen Lichtblick in die Verdüsterung, die nicht nur von irgendwoher auf der Welt zu lasten scheint, sondern von den Menschen fast herbeigezerrt wird.”—“The words ‘not yet’, spoken thoughtfully, suggest that we are already on our way towards thinking. ... Our assertion, then, casts a bright ray of hope into that obfuscation which seems not only to oppress the world from somewhere, but which men are almost dragging in by force.”⁶⁰ As opposed to the true nihilism that only speaks of the decline of our age, of the sickness of modernity, the ‘not yet’ gives hope for something futural. But this hope is not merely grounded in subjectivity. To say that we are not yet thinking is neither pessimistic nor optimistic; it does not involve feelings of despair, nor does it imply the quick comfort of artificially hopeful prospects for the best.⁶¹ Thought, in its fullest meaning, has not and will not happen until it thinks being within the event of the other beginning. The implication of the ‘not yet’ rests entirely on being. We can prepare ourselves to receive, but thought will only come—if it comes at all—when being gives it to us.

The idea of waiting becomes both an attack on modern impatience and an aspect of the preparations of thought on its way towards being. We do not wait for something, nor for nothing, but for that which answers pure waiting.⁶² What

⁵⁹ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 7. English, p. 8.

⁶⁰ *Was heißt Denken?*, pp. 31–32. English, p. 30. Translation altered.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33. English, p. 31.

⁶² *Abendgespräch in einem Kriegsgefangenenlager*. In: GA77 (1944–45/1995) *Feldweg-Gespräche*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 217. Translated as *Evening Conversation*. In: Davis, B.W. (2010) *Country Path Conversations*. Indiana, Indiana University Press, p. 140.

we wait for is not a situation determined only by beings, a change in fortune, nor a pure nothingness. We wait for the other beginning. But waiting does not achieve anything. From the viewpoint of beings, genuine knowledge is useless and has no value.⁶³ Thinking being has no result, no effect; it satisfies its essence only in that it is.⁶⁴ The preparations for the other beginning are not like those of our everyday concerns regarding beings. To wait for the other beginning is not a necessity in the usual sense. To wait for the other beginning involves the necessity of the unnecessary.⁶⁵

But the necessity (Notwendigkeit) of thinking being is rooted in a plight (Not).⁶⁶ This plight is something that belongs to the truth of being itself. It is the plight of the abandonment of beings by being, the plight of being turning away from us. It remains unseen and unnoticed, but in its true nature it is that which awakens us to the possibility of the other beginning. “Am ursprünglichsten ist sie Not in der Nötigung zu der Notwendigkeit der höchsten Möglichkeiten, auf deren Wegen der Mensch schaffend—gründend über sich hinaus und in den Grund des Seienden zurückgeht.”—“In its most original sense, it is plight in the compelling toward the necessity of the highest possibilities, on whose paths human beings, in a creative and grounding way, go beyond themselves and back into the ground of beings.”⁶⁷ Understood as the ground of history itself, this plight can compel humanity towards a new form of thought, a form which is something completely other to the modern, calculative thinking that merely represents beings in order to dominate them. We do not pursue but wait for thinking. It is not something that we can make happen. The preparations for the other beginning require no force. “Warten ist ... das Kommenlassen.”—“Waiting is letting come.”⁶⁸

We are not yet thinking; this means that thought has been placed so high that it remains out of reach. As such it involves no modesty. To wait for the other beginning is to wait for the highest goal of humanity. To seek being is the one and only goal of history.⁶⁹

What did it mean to Heidegger to be the one who understood the end of history, the highest possible moment of all humanity? What did it mean to him that the other beginning could belong to the German people? “Wie aber, wenn dasjenige geschichtliche Menschentum, das gleich den Griechen zum Dichten

⁶³ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 396. English, p. 314.

⁶⁴ *Brief über den »Humanismus«*. In: GA9 (1946/1976) *Wegmarken*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 188 (first edition pagination). Translated as *Letter on “Humanism”*. In: McNeill, W. ed. (1998) *Pathmarks*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 272.

⁶⁵ *Abendgespräch in einem Kriegsgefangenenlager*, p. 234. English, p. 153.

⁶⁶ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 45. English, p. 37.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46. English, p. 38.

⁶⁸ *Abendgespräch in einem Kriegsgefangenenlager*, p. 217. English, p. 141.

⁶⁹ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 17. English, p. 16.

und Denken berufen ist, das deutsche, wie aber, wenn dieses zuerst die Stimme des Seins vernehmen muß!“—“What if German humanity is that historical humanity which, like the Greek, is called upon to poetise and think, and what if this German humanity must first perceive the voice of being!”⁷⁰ What if in becoming those who wait, the German people first become German?⁷¹

We wait for something that makes no difference. But for Heidegger it is still the end of history, still the highest destiny of a nation, of humanity itself. We wait for thinking to begin. We wait for a world-historical question to be answered: *Was heißt Denken?*

3. Thought and Being

A

Parmenides and Heidegger are the two most extreme examples of the way being has dominated thought in the history of philosophy. In their pursuit of being, the former creates a world in which nothing other than pure absolute being can be at all, the latter one in which we are not yet thinking until being itself turns towards us. In Parmenides there is the beginning of a silent struggle for thought in its relation to being, a struggle that is further developed by the history of Western metaphysics, that Heidegger pushes to new levels.

In thinking them together, two related structural forms of domination become apparent. Both create an essential restriction to being. Both give different but related visions of thought's domination by being. But to see this we cannot read Parmenides in the Heideggerian way. Parmenides can speak through Heidegger's voice of the truth of being, of the open in which the presence of what is present is inscribed. Through Heidegger's voice Parmenides can speak in unison with Heidegger. But the Presocratic fragments may speak in many voices. In speaking alongside Heidegger, Parmenides can also speak of another form of dominance, a dominance not of the openness of being itself but of purely abstract being. They may speak together of an opposing yet mutual opposition towards all thought that does not think being. They may speak together of the same in which the otherness of thought, the difference and independence of thought from being, is lost.

In Parmenides there is literally nothing other than being, nothing other than what is unchanging, eternal, ungenerated, and deathless. This is the basis

⁷⁰ *Parmenides*, p. 250. English, p. 167. This quote is taken from the addendum, a draft that was not included in the lectures.

⁷¹ *Abendgespräch in einem Kriegsgefangenenlager*, p. 235. English, p. 153.—There are numerous studies on the full extent and critique of Heidegger's nationalism. For example: *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual*, Volume 5 (2015). Available from: <https://heidegger-circle.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Gatherings2015.pdf>

of the unique character of Parmenides' dominance of being over thought. The nature of this dominance is that thought and being are the same, i.e. precisely the same in such a way that any difference reduces thought to nothingness. This stark duality of what is and what is not forms the ground of Parmenides' philosophy and the basis of his understanding of thought. The pure necessity of this distinction guides what is done to thought as it enters Parmenides' thinking.

Thought is the same as being. It is not that being is merely thought, but that thought only is as far as it thinks being. As soon as thought turns from being, it is lost to nothingness. In Parmenides being is the necessary. It is by virtue of thought's ability to think the necessary that allows it to think being. The necessary is what is; it is being. It is being's own necessity that defines what thought must think if it is to think in truth. Necessity is beyond any specific instances of actual human thought. To think what is necessary is not to create, but to think the a priori apodictic truth that remains beyond any instance of actualisation. *It is a priori*; it comes before thought. Thought finds the necessary, it finds being, and as it does so it finds the meaning of what it is to think. As thought finds being it finds itself. Being is the only place in which thought can find itself. Anything else is merely nameless.

Thought gives to being its attention; thought sees being within itself thereby bringing it into presence. Thought becomes what is true but only as what is being. From the viewpoint of thought, being restricts what it is. It defines thought according to a model of itself. But in Parmenides such evaluations collapse. Being is both the absolute beginning and the absolute end; within this boundary any considerations of thought beyond eternal being are nullified. Thought can only enter as far as it is the same as being. Its role is defined by it. There is no meaning of being only necessity; there is no value only pure logic. The flux of meaning and valuation itself determines both as nothingness. But Parmenides is not nihilistic in a modern sense: he says that being is, and this alone is. What makes thought nothing is not a lack of sense, a hopelessness; what makes thought nothing is the idea of a pure eternity, an eternity that is understood as graspable by thought in such a way that thought thereby saves itself.

Just as change and movement are nothing, so is the thought that changes and moves. All thinking in its connecting and development, the diversity of its continuation and chaotic movements—all of these are nothing. Thought only is as long as it is fixed on the unchanging, eternal principles of what is. Everything else is merely mortal, nameless. Being "is not lacking: if it were, it would lack everything" (ἔστι γὰρ οὐκ ἐπιδευές· ἐὼν δ' ἄν παντὸς ἐδεῖτο).⁷² But thought can become something by thinking being because being is thinkable. The connec-

⁷² Fragment 8, line 33.

tion between thought and being is absolute; anything else would be nothing. The happening of human thought can reflect the purely eternal. In the movement of human thought the unmoveable can be found. Being is visible in thinking, “steadfastly present to thought” (νόω παρρόντα βεβαίως).⁷³ Here the senses are entirely abandoned; this vision must dismantle any habits that the visible world has imposed on it. Within thinking there is seen in the purest abstraction the purity of what is in the highest possible sense. Thought then becomes what it is: being.

In Heidegger there remains an essential relationship between thought and being, though radically reconfigured. Da-sein, the essence of the human, belongs to the essential occurrence of being itself. With the latter, thinking in the other beginning finds itself in unity. The following sequences illustrate this:

Die Wesung des Seyns ist “das Er-eignis, jenen Gegenschwung von Seyn und Da-sein, in dem beide nicht vorhandene Pole sind, sondern die reine Erschwingung selbst.”—The essential occurrence of beyng is “the appropriating event, that oscillation between beyng and Da-sein in which the two are not objectively present poles but are the pure coming to be of the oscillation itself.”⁷⁴

“Da-sein ist das Beständnis der Wesung der Wahrheit des Seyns.”—“Da-sein is the enduring of the essential occurrence of the truth of beyng.”⁷⁵

“Im denkerischen Wissen ist der Entwurf nicht das Vorläufige *für* anderes, sondern das Einzige und Letzte und deshalb Seltenste, was in sich west als gegründete Wahrheit des Seyns.”—“In thoughtful knowledge, the projection is not a preliminary *for* something else; instead, it is the unique, the last, and thus the rarest, which in itself essentially occurs as the grounded truth of beyng.”⁷⁶

Indem die Wesung des Ereignisses selbst sprechen lassen, “das Denken ein Denken des Seyns bleibe, das nicht über das Seyn aussagt, sondern es sagt in einem Sagen, das zum Er-sagten gehört.”—By letting the essential occurrence of the event speak for itself, “thinking would remain a thinking of beyng which does not talk *about* beyng but, instead, says beyng in a saying that belongs to what is opened up in the saying.”⁷⁷

The human being, understood as Da-sein, belongs to the essential occurrence of

⁷³ Fragment 4, line 1.

⁷⁴ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, pp. 286–287. English, p. 225.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 311. English, p. 246. Beständnis (enduring) is meant here as continuity rather than a psychological withstanding.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 447. English, p. 352.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 472. English, p. 371.

being. It's not that the human being merely *is* as a being but, *transformed as Da-sein*, essentially occurs with being itself. The two are of the same nature to this extent. Thinking in the other beginning is projected by being itself. In this way, saying being does not speak about something over against it; being, Da-sein, and the thought of the latter about the former are unified within the sphere of essential occurrence. It is not that being, thought, and Da-sein are identical, but they all belong within the essential occurrence of being itself as essential aspects of its structure. Together they compose a structure of unity rather than one of separated difference, allowing thought to think being itself in an essential sense. In this way thought and being are the same.

The most accessible examples of concepts which belong within the truth of being are found in the fundamental thinkers of the first beginning. In the history of metaphysics there are the words "of" being, whose authors were never able to bring their origin into view. Heraclitus's λόγος, Plato's ἰδέα, Aristotle's ἐνέργεια, Leibniz's monas, Kant's "I think" as "freedom", Schelling's "identity", Hegel's "concept", and Nietzsche's "eternal return":

all say the same: being. They do not make "propositional statements" about being as if being were an object that is set aside. Being itself is said; raised to the "word" as what is said; the word which here is not a random expression in language, but is being itself that has become truth (clearing).

sagen dasselbe: das Sein. Sie sagen nicht »Sätze« darüber aus, als sei dies ein weggestellter Gegenstand. Das Sein selbst ist gesagt, als Gesagtes ins »Wort« gehoben, welches Wort aber hier nicht ein beliebiger sprachlicher Ausdruck, sondern das zur Wahrheit (Lichtung) gewordene Seyn selbst ist.⁷⁸

The history of being is the history of thinking. In its withdrawal, being gives itself as beings; the basic forms of this giving are expressed in the development of Western philosophy. These essential thinkers respond, without clarity over the source, to the truth of being. Being essentially occurred as that which is represented in thought; these thinkers understood representational thinking to be its highest form. Metaphysics is not an error but "the history of the distorted essence of being, a distorted essence which is itself ungrounded in its truth" ("die Geschichte des Unwesens des Seins, das selbst in seiner Wahrheit ungegründet").⁷⁹ Even these essential thinkers were not yet thinking. They were only thinking as far as being hides itself in beings. Even in ἀλήθεια the full spatio-temporal abyss of being hides itself in an openness that consists only of the un-

⁷⁸ GA66 (1938–39/1997) *Besinnung*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 299. Translated by Emad, P. & Kalary, T. (2006) *Mindfulness*. London, Continuum, p. 267.

⁷⁹ *Das Ereignis*, p. 139. English, p. 119.

concealment of presence.

In the other beginning, the word of being is the event itself. “Das Ereignis ist das anfängliche Wort, weil seine Zueignung (als die einzige An-eignung des Menschenwesens in die Wahrheit des Seyns) das Wesen des Menschen auf die Wahrheit des Seyns stimmt.”—“The event is the inceptual word, because its arrogation (as the unique adoption of the human being into the truth of beyng) disposes the human essence to the truth of beyng.”⁸⁰ But this word of being is soundless. It does not have the property of meaning or sense because, “as the self-arrogating clearing of beyng, the word first becomes the ground of the subsequent formation of ‘word meanings’ and ‘word sounds’” (“als die sich zueignende Lichtung des Seyns [das Wort] erst der Grund wird für die nachmalige Bildung von »Wortbedeutungen« und »Wortlauten«”).⁸¹ The ground of language is the speechlessness of the essential occurrence of being. This speechlessness is a sign.⁸² And out of this there arises the full complexity of language, its vocables and their cases and inflections.⁸³

From this ground, genuine philosophical thought can first attempt to find the way of being into language:

In diesem Zwischenbereich [d. h. im Übergang von der Metaphysik zum anderen Anfang], wo der Sprachgebrauch der Metaphysik noch überall herrscht und gleichwohl aus anfänglicher Erfahrung das Wort des Seyns gesagt werden muß, ist der Versuch gewagt, in der Mitteilung einiger Leitworte vom Seyn (Vorlesung S.S. 41) den Bezug zum Seyn in seiner weitesten Spanne der ereignishaften Gegenwendigkeit zu erlangen. ... Diejenigen Worte [d. h. die Leitworte vom Seyn], die zunächst nur zu sagen scheinen, wie der Mensch das Sein auffaßt, d. h. »versteht« und »vergißt«, sagen in Wahrheit von der Art, wie die Wahrheit des Seyns in ihrem kehrigen Wesen den Menschen sich er-eignet.

In this bridging domain [i.e. in the transition from metaphysics to the other beginning], where the metaphysical use of language still thoroughly dominates, and where the word of beyng must nevertheless be said on the basis of inceptual experience, the attempt is being ventured, through the communication of a few key words of beyng (lecture course, s. s. 41), to attain the relation to beyng in its broadest span of the event-related counter-turning. ... Those words [i.e. the key words of beyng], which at first seem to express only the way being is comprehended by the human being, i.e. “understood” and “forgotten,” in reality express the way the truth of beyng, taking that truth in its turning essence, appropriates the human being.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 170–171. English, p. 145.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 171. English, pp. 145–146.

⁸² Ibid., p. 172. English, p. 146.

⁸³ Ibid. English, p. 147.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 174–175. English, p. 148.—The lecture course Heidegger refers to is: GA51

These key words that Heidegger is first attempting to uncover, within a transition to another beginning that is still only surmised, are attempted expressions from within the belonging of the human being to being itself. Heidegger describes them as “*instructions for mindfulness* upon what comes to light when we have a proper eye for what we can do without” (“*Anweisungen zur Besinnung auf jenes, was ans Licht kommt, wenn wir das rechte Auge haben für das, was wir entbehren können*”).⁸⁵ They are found when we have “the courage to look around the domain of the difference between beings and being and simply to recognize what prevails here” (“den Mut ... im Bereich der Unterscheidung des Seienden und des Seins umzusehen und einfach anzuerkennen, was hier waltet”).⁸⁶

In the event of the other beginning, the thoughtful word would be the dictum (Spruch), which is “the breaking of the silence of the appropriated clearing” (“Bruch des Schweigens der ereigneten Lichtung”).⁸⁷ If we can say that, in bringing being into language, the silence is broken *from within being itself*, i.e. not as a destructive separation but as a breakage that belongs within their unity, perhaps we can say that a sound now belongs to being. Perhaps we can say that the voice of being then becomes audible, becomes knowledge in the highest sense.

There is no longer the metaphysical, representational thought which sees being as an object the same as itself. Instead thought sees itself as belonging to the essential occurrence of the open. Although it is transformed, although in its new form it is by necessity hidden from the history of metaphysics, a history that only questions beings in their being, although it is only in the other beginning that we could ever see the full unity, Heidegger does not do away with the basic metaphysical principle that thought and being are the same. It is not that we simply reduce Heidegger’s philosophy to metaphysics as he understands it, i.e. to a focus purely on beings. We can accept that the meaning of being is transformed, but nevertheless there remains a fundamental feature of the general metaphysical project: that thought and being are related in an essential sense.

We see this in Heidegger’s use of Aristotle’s classical phrase, itself foundational to metaphysics, that like is known only by like. Here the phrase is mirrored in making the point that being itself is philosophical; philosophy is the

(1941/1991) *Grundbegriffe*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann. Translated by Aylesworth, G.E. (1993) *Basic Concepts*. Indiana, Indiana University Press.

⁸⁵ *Grundbegriffe*, p. 77. English, p. 64. Translation altered.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Translation altered.—The key words are: surplus (Überfluß), uniqueness (Einzigkeit), concealment (Verbergung), origin (Ursprung), abyssal ground (Abgrund), reticence (Verschweigung), re-membrance (Er-innerung), and liberation (Befreiung). (*Ibid.*, p. 68. English, p. 57. Translation altered.)

⁸⁷ *Das Ereignis*, p. 263. English, p. 227.

imageless saying of being. “Gleiches wird nur durch Gleiches in die Lichtung seines Wesens gehoben.”—“Only through the like is the like raised to the clearing of its essence.”⁸⁸ Only through philosophy, because being is philosophical, can humans raise themselves into the clearing to which being belongs. Only in this way can humans find themselves essentially grounded in being itself.

This involves a repetition, also radically redefined, of the metaphysical concept of the unconditioned. In metaphysical thinking, the thought of the subject is the pure thought that is unconditionally the same as the transcendent essence of all objects, the absolute thought that is the nature of the absolute itself. But Heidegger denies that this is the way towards truly unconditioned thinking. “Erst *dieses* Denken des Seyns ist wahrhaft un-bedingt, d. h. nicht bedingt und bestimmt durch ein Bedingtes außerhalb seiner und des von ihm zu Denkenden, sondern *einzig* bestimmt durch das in ihm zu Denkende, durch das Seyn selbst.”—“Only *this* thinking of beyng is truly un-conditioned, i.e. not conditioned and determined by something conditioned which lies outside of it and outside of what is to be thought by it, but instead determined *uniquely* by what in it is to be thought, by beyng itself.”⁸⁹ Being is transformed, the human being is transformed, thought is transformed, but the relation of sameness remains between them. The project of finding a thought that belongs in itself to an unconditioned relationship with being remains.

In both Parmenides and Heidegger, thought is the same as being but in radically different ways. In Parmenides the unity of thought and being is pure and absolute: any difference between the two reduces thought to nothing. In Heidegger thought is the same as being as far as the happening of thought belongs to the essential occurrence of being itself, as far as this essential occurrence involves thought. Thought is not identical with being; it is not identical with that which hides itself, which sends history. But thought belongs to the open; its nature is that of the essential occurrence that is the open of being. In this sense thought is the same as being. And this is all thought can be, whether it is aware of it or not. With an awareness of its nature, it turns itself toward the open, preparing itself for the other beginning. Without an awareness of its nature, it merely engages with beings, unaware of the difference between being and beings, unaware of the true historical nature of how things appear as present.

The meaning of this similarity between Parmenides and Heidegger is that this is the basis on which thought is dominated by being in both. Being and thought are the same; for Parmenides and Heidegger this is all thought can be. Thought is being, and being is thinkable. But to make being thinkable, is this not

⁸⁸ *Besinnung*, p. 64. English, p. 53. Translation altered.—See also *ibid.*, p. 48. English, p. 39.

⁸⁹ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 462. English, p. 363.

in fact a domination of being by thought?

Heidegger makes this point in relation to metaphysics, which he claims “always means domination of being that is determined by thinking as representing, a domination whose truth is ungrounded” (“sagt hier stets: die in ihrer Wahrheit grundlose Herrschaft des aus dem Denken als Vorstellen bestimmten Seins”).⁹⁰ Being is dominated by thought because thought grasps it in representations. The pure metaphysical object is an object of reason rather than being in its own fullest essence.

In Parmenides’ own mind, however, being *precedes* all things, all objects, all finite human thinking. He would not conceive his own thought to be a guideline towards the way in which being is defined. It is the definition of being that defines thought.

The main example in Heidegger is Hegel’s absolute idea. Here self-knowledge becomes the highest form of being, i.e. the knowledge of the ‘I’ seeing itself as the absolute reality of the other.⁹¹ But like in Parmenides, Hegel himself, within his own understanding of his own work, would not contemplate that thought dominates being. Being in its highest sense is God as he is before the creation of nature and finite thought. God is the absolute idea as subject, being both in and for itself. This concept precedes thinking and is discovered through the epistemic journey of spirit in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. The absolute idea proves to be the truth of thought. In other words, genuine thought is only possible in the form of absolute knowing. From the point of view of the metaphysical thinker, being determines thought. This is the epistemic presupposition that guides the entire project: thinking finds being and thinks being as it is in truth.

To understand the nature of this determination, we cannot flatten these various positions into a single philosophical viewpoint. To see these unique forms of dominance, we must remain within the original meaning of the way that thought was understood. The point about thought dominating being requires Heidegger to reinterpret the history of metaphysics in terms of a single, hidden essence that the metaphysicians themselves were unaware of. It requires subordinating the history of metaphysics to the Heideggerian history of being. In this the understanding of thought integral to the metaphysical project is transformed, is shifted to another level below a new concept of thought understood as that which belongs to the essential occurrence of being as the event. Metaphysical thought becomes, not a genuine reflection of the highest possible being, but a reflection of being’s distorted essence, a distortion that allows thought to dominate being in representing it conceptually, altering the structural form of how

⁹⁰ *Besinnung*, p. 25. English, p. 19.

⁹¹ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 199. English, p. 156.

being relates to thought.

When Heidegger makes this point about thought dominating being in metaphysics, thinking in the other beginning cannot be accused of the same. The question is asked whether the appropriation of the human being to Da-sein means that being is determined in the direction of humanity. His answer is: “Nein!—denn die Er-eignung in das Da-sein ist in sich schon Über-eignung in das Seyn.”—“Not at all, since the appropriation of Da-sein is in itself already a consignment to beyng.”⁹² *Being appropriates Da-sein*: this is a basic premise in the philosophy of Heidegger. It’s not that being precedes the human (being needs Da-sein in order to essentially occur), but, like the a priori nature of being in Parmenides and Hegel, this direction of ownership sets the form of the relationship between thought and being. In both the history of metaphysics and in Heidegger, thought is dominated by being. In both it is the definition of being that is decisive.

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The key difference is between their two concepts of being: for Parmenides the pure, necessary object abstractly totalised, for Heidegger being itself as the open. Arising from this a range of opposing directions are pursued: pure reason and responding to the essential occurrence of being; the awareness of pure necessity and abiding within being’s reticent refusal; correctness and errancy;⁹³ the complete and final truth and the inexhaustibly thinkable;⁹⁴ a pure univocity and the plurivocity of being.⁹⁵

There are moments in Heidegger where his understanding of thought is expressed in a quasi-Parmenidean form, where the choice for thought is between thinking being or nothing: Only in the event can “thinking stand before the decision either to become the inventive thinking of beyng or to be nothing at all” (“Denken steht vor der Entscheidung: Er-denken des Seyns zu werden oder nichts mehr zu sein”).⁹⁶ From Parmenides’ viewpoint, however, Heidegger’s thought in the other beginning is nothing. Eternity does not withdraw; it is not an abyss. It does not have a history of any kind. Parmenides represents the pure beginning of philosophy where no concessions have been made in any way whatsoever. Pure thought has not yet become battle-scarred by scepticism and critique. It remains simple and pure. Eternity is eternally present to the thought that thinks it. Human access begins via divine instruction, but there is no negat-

⁹² *Besinnung*, p. 163. English, p. 141. Translation altered.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 112 and p. 259. English, pp. 93–94 and p. 229.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 220. English, p. 194.

⁹⁵ *Das Ereignis*, p. 294. English, p. 255.

⁹⁶ *Besinnung*, p. 308. English, p. 275. Translation altered.

ivity, no struggle, no potentially endless history of oblivion that stands in our way.

In Heidegger such a history is the essence of being itself, a history hidden within the open of present experience. In Parmenides' terms, this is a realm of mortals, a realm of illusion. The history of being would show no more than another dimension of the change integral to illusion, a dimension that shows no more than that such a history falls short of eternal being and thereby remains nothing. Heidegger makes the point that the clearing of being outlasts any calculative eternity,⁹⁷ but he cannot say that his concept of being is unchanging. Because being itself essentially remains historical,⁹⁸ the stark differentiation between being and nothing would claim it for nothingness.

Despite the differences between the two, there remains a core similarity in that the relationship between thought and being appears as one of sameness. From this viewpoint, the differences are like dimensions that span the two, creating different shapes around the same basic orientation on thought. Although the nature of thought and being has been transformed, there still remains the same essential form of structural unity. This unity is the dominating form of the relationship between being and thought. In both, being is what has absorbed thought into its very essence. This is a movement of thought into being that forms the core of what is done to thought in the philosophies of Parmenides and Heidegger. Within such a movement, thought becomes defined by and subordinate to being. It is where being delimits thought, where thought condenses into a relationship of sameness towards being and all other possibilities are denied. Thought's otherness to being is lost. It no longer has anything that belongs to itself; it only is what belongs to being.

Thought loses its independence, but it is saved from pure nothingness. This removal from nothing is the reliance on and domination by being. Being saves thought from nothingness, but thought must now continue as being and nothing else. Thought is not denied; it is not *mere* being, an illusion whose only reality is purely physical in nature. Thought is *the same as* being. There is thought, but it is being and no more.

The 'not yet', however, creates a temporal-structural divide within this core similarity. In Heidegger thought is not yet the same as being. This relationship of sameness is not currently possible; it remains a surmise, something futural. The other beginning remains unknown and unknowable: "Wir ... wissen weder Art und Augenblick des Zulezt der Geschichte noch gar sein anfängliches Wesen."—"We know ... neither the character nor the moment of the ultimate end of

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 12. English, p. 8.

⁹⁸ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 55. English, p. 45.

history and certainly not its primordial essence.”⁹⁹

In Heidegger being cannot be intuited as an object. There is no possible vision of being as a pure entity beyond ordinary experience, no form that can be grasped in pure thinking. Being’s essence is to be withdrawn, and even this withdrawal itself remains inaccessible. In Parmenides’ poem we are led into truth, and when we arrive we can see it for ourselves. The poem gives us the truth in full immediacy. It does not merely surmise it; it shows the truth in its fullest completion. In Parmenides the truth is something found not something sought, something here rather than merely prepared for. If thought enters the pathway of the goddess, the goal of thinking is attained. The goddess gives the truth complete, as a whole; we receive being through the goddess’s guidance. In Heidegger, however, it is doubtful whether even the gods themselves have access to being at all.¹⁰⁰

In Parmenides the dominance over thought is eternal; in Heidegger it is futural. Thought is still dominated essentially as it was in Parmenides; what’s been added is the dimension of time. As thought prepares for the other beginning, it must realise the limitations of its current form; it must realise that it is not yet thinking. All that thought may aim for is the preparation to encounter itself as it encounters being in the other beginning. The absence of the other beginning does not produce an independence of thought in its relation towards being. Being continues to define it completely. This is the unique character of Heidegger’s dominance of being over thought; this is the character found in the ‘not yet’. In Heidegger there is truth, but it is not yet here; that which gives truth has not yet done so.

Heidegger cannot overcome metaphysics by positing another metaphysical truth in opposition to the vast diversity of all others. He cannot simply posit another present being, accessible to pure thought, in opposition to other beings. “Das Denken überwindet die Metaphysik nicht, indem es sie, noch höher hinaufsteigend, übersteigt und irgendwohin aufhebt, sondern indem es zurücksteigt in die Nähe des Nächsten.”—“Thinking does not overcome metaphysics by climbing still higher, surmounting it, transcending it somehow or other; thinking overcomes metaphysics by climbing back down into the nearness of the nearest.”¹⁰¹ The claim that we are not yet thinking has nothing to do with the metaphysical question of the being of beings. It relates to being itself, to the question of when being will turn towards us. Metaphysics believes that it already thinks, that thought is already accessible to the pure mind. Heidegger attempts to bring this to a close. In line with the remit of its questioning, the other beginning is

⁹⁹ *Parmenides*, p. 202. English, p. 136.

¹⁰⁰ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 7. English, p. 8.

¹⁰¹ *Brief über den »Humanismus«*, p. 182 (first edition pagination). English, p. 268.

unknown to metaphysics. We are not yet thinking at all. To not yet think is a doctrine that belongs in the interplay between the first and other beginnings. It implies both the complete end of metaphysics and the beginning of a new history.

‘We are not yet thinking’ means *there is no thought*. Heidegger follows Parmenides in defining thought in terms of being, in only allowing thought a sense as far as it belongs to being. What Heidegger and Parmenides do to thought is not identical, but they belong together within the same basic understanding. They both reveal a singular nature of thought, expressed in two different ways. In both, thought can only thank being for its status. Yet Heidegger must overcome metaphysics. Heidegger must not say that thought has found the eternal, unconditioned being. In this way thought loses the last line that kept it from oblivion. It’s only hope is the future of the other beginning. But could thought reaffirm itself without the other beginning? Or is the ‘not yet’ insurmountable? We could never know for certain that the other beginning will never happen. It is always just there, indefinite, futural. In Heidegger’s philosophy a deadlock is reached: the ‘not yet’ cannot be escaped apart from within the other beginning itself.

In Heidegger’s will to go beyond metaphysics, in his explorations beyond the basic concepts of philosophy, he creates an unthinkable thought. Thought is denied, sacrificed even, for the sake of the other beginning. In doing so it is transformed into something inaccessible to all, to even the most profound ‘thinkers’, to the Greeks, even to Heidegger himself.

In his will to overcome metaphysics, Heidegger abandons all thought to an impossible concept of itself, to a surmised other beginning. “Mit einem Schlag ist dann alles bisherige Denken in die Ohnmacht geworfen.”—“With one stroke, all previous thinking is then consigned to impotence.”¹⁰² In remembering being we must forget thought.

B

To overcome metaphysics Heidegger must sacrifice thought. But what does this mean? Surmising the other beginning, a beginning that we do not know whether it will or will not come, nullifies thought as we now have it. Thought fails in the ground of its own definition. It collapses under the force of its own newly found meaning. In Heidegger thought does not currently exist. It is merely a supposition, an end, a goal for the future. Thought is left hanging, null and void, on the meaning of Heidegger’s ‘not yet’. The abstract meaning thought is permitted

¹⁰² *Überlegungen V*. In: GA94 (1931–38/2014) *Überlegungen II–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 152 (Heidegger’s pagination). Translated as *Ponderings V*. In: Rojcewicz, R. (2016) *Ponderings II–VI (Black Notebooks 1931–1938)*. Indiana, Indiana University Press, p. 299.

under metaphysics, the last possible meaning it can have under their systems, Heidegger takes away. Thought becomes meaningless. *We are not yet thinking.*

What is thought subordinated to in Heidegger? What process does it enter in order to be reduced to nothing? In what movements does it become curtailed?

If we conceive of the phenomenological concept of the open, not in terms of consciousness or the existential constitution of human Dasein, but as that which is radically other than any being, we see how it cannot be experienced directly as what it is in itself. Consciousness is visible, open to experience as we now have it; it is grounded in a being, i.e. the human being. Being itself is beyond this. The open of being is not a being; it remains nothing from any standard point of view.

To get closer to being itself, we start to look, not towards things, but towards the time-space in which things appear, before any scientific or abstract conceptual representation, the opening of the presence of anything whatsoever, the 'there is' itself of things. We attempt to remove ourselves from calculation, planning, from worldly concerns, from the comprehension of any object whatsoever. We find the basis of being's withdrawal: it is a nothing that we are not even aware of. It is a hidden nothing, a hidden withdrawal. It does not rest on beings in any way. Instead it turns us towards understanding the open as the groundless withdrawn abyss of being itself.

In experience being itself remains obscure and is strangely absent from the philosophical tradition. It remains obscure, but we can make this obscurity a fundamental aspect of it. This aspect operates on the concept in a positive way; the outcome is that the withdrawal becomes the essence of the open. To this concept a new possibility of history suggests itself: the unconcealment of the withdrawal as such. We think through the concept of the withdrawal and create a possibility for it: another beginning in which it becomes experienced directly. In this structural movement, the relationship between being and beings turns around: being, now apparently a pure nothingness, becomes apprehended as the unconcealment of refusal; beings, now familiar, become nothing.¹⁰³ The concept of the other beginning is developed by turning this axis, by conceiving another history through shifting the basic meaning of the difference between beings and being itself. As the relationship between the two becomes the polar opposite of their current status, the basic ideas of the other beginning become visible.

This beginning can be given an absolute value as the highest possible goal, the end of history itself. Heidegger is looking for something completely other,

¹⁰³ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 472. English, p. 372.—See also GA69 (1938–40/1998) *Die Geschichte des Seyns*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 144. Translated by McNeill, W. & Powell, J. (2015) *The History of Beyng*. Indiana, Indiana University Press, p. 123: "Alles und Jedes an dem liegt, daß das Seyn ist und das Seiende »nicht« »ist«."—"Everything rides on the fact that beyng is and beings 'are' 'not'."

something untouched by the previous history of philosophy. It is not enough that the open was innocently missed, arbitrarily overlooked. This overlooking must be due to an essential abandonment of beings by being. To overcome metaphysics, beings must be overcome. To do this the open cannot be understood on the basis of a particular being, the human being to which beings are present. It must be something surmised, something older, more fundamental, a hidden source for the happening of all things that reaches the highest possible historical destiny.

This is the specific development in which thought becomes subordinated to being in the philosophy of Heidegger. Thought becomes lost; it becomes something that we cannot yet do because of the obscurity of the hidden essence of the open. Thought becomes inaccessible because the refusal of being is inaccessible, because that which is fundamentally other to any being is never experienced at this present time. Thought is lost because the refusal cannot be found. Thought becomes something surmised because the other beginning is something uncertain.

Thought remains inoperative throughout this development. It does not feature as a guiding idea. The concept of being itself is the guideline. It determines the way in which thought is nothing, the way in which thought becomes inaccessible.

In his private notebooks, Heidegger aims to justify the idea of an unthinkable concept of thought: “Will das Denken im anderen Anfang, das fragend die Gründung der Wahrheit des Seyns versucht, das *Unmögliche*? Doch was wäre noch an wahrhaft Seiendem, wenn *dieses* Wollen nicht mehr wäre? Das Mögliche wollen—ist das noch *wollen*?”—“Thinking in the other beginning, thinking which in questioning seeks the founding of the truth of being—does this thinking want the *impossible*? Yet what would in truth become of beings if *this* volition were no more? To want the possible—is that still a *wanting*?”¹⁰⁴ Beings take precedence over thought. What would become of beings is emphasised over what would become of thought. Thought becomes subordinate to a will to go beyond the possible, beyond beings, beyond metaphysics.

Elsewhere in the notebooks: “Wenn ... das Fragen nach dem Seyn ein Irrtum wäre? Doch selbst dann müßten solche sein, die ihn aushalten, damit dem Seienden sein Recht auch noch durch diese überflüssige Vergeblichkeit bestätigt werde.”—“What if ... the questioning of being were an error? Yet even then there would have to be those who endure the error, so that beings could be confirmed in their rights, even through this otiose futility.”¹⁰⁵ For the rights of beings

¹⁰⁴ *Überlegungen V*, p. 17 (Heidegger's pagination). English, p. 237.

¹⁰⁵ *Überlegungen VI*. In: GA94 (1931–38/2014) *Überlegungen II–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, pp. 104–105 (Heidegger's pagination). Translated as *Ponderings VI*. In: Rojcewicz, R. (2016) *Ponderings II–VI (Black Notebooks 1931–1938)*. Indiana, Indiana University Press, p. 355.

we lose thought. Even if the necessity of the question of being is illusory, the attempt for beings to be confirmed in their rights is worth pursuing. Yet thought is left in nothingness, forever unsure of the uncertain, futural moment of another beginning. Beings are the priority. Even though the final aim is to go beyond beings, even though they will be seen as nothing in the other beginning, in doing so they find their ground and most fundamental essence as they occur in the essential occurrence of being itself.¹⁰⁶ The project is for beings to become nothing and thought to begin for the first time. But the possibility of this transformation requires that thought, in all of its current forms, must first be reduced to nothingness.

“Nichts ist dem gewöhnlichen Denken fremder und verdächtiger als der Schritt in das *Ungeschützte*, weil da—nach der üblichen Rechnung—nur mit Verlusten gerechnet werden kann.”—“To ordinary thinking, nothing is more alien and suspect than the step into the *unguarded*, because there—according to the usual reckoning—one can only count on losses.”¹⁰⁷ In defining thought as nothing, in dominating it with a concept of being, we do not only lose thought but also its unexplored and unknown possibilities. These are possibilities that we are not fundamentally barred from, that are hidden but not essentially beyond our reach. To thinking there can still belong development, other avenues for thought to reach into, without the need to deny its previous forms and history. These avenues are more than mere possessions we wish to hold on to. They are explorations towards new understandings of thought and their historical, structural basis. To begin this we require a possible concept of thought, not one that prevents every kind of thinking from seeing itself as genuine, that hinders any progress whatsoever, that withholds thought from thinking by means of its very definition.

*

We must of course say that thought in some way *is*. But must we admit that it can only be dominated by being? Can we allow ourselves to follow Heidegger in saying that we are not yet thinking? Is there a project of regaining thought, of seeing thought provide itself with a meaning of its own? Is it possible for thought to define its relation to being? But what does it mean to return to thought? Without the dominance of being, do we only enter a merely personal psychology?

¹⁰⁶ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 255. English, p. 201.—Elsewhere: “Im anderen Anfang wird alles Seiende dem Seyn geopfert, und von da aus erhält erst das Seiende als solches seine Wahrheit.”—“In the other beginning, all beings are sacrificed up to being, and only from there do beings as such receive their truth.” (Ibid., p. 230. English, p. 181.)

¹⁰⁷ *Überlegungen VI*, p. 14 (Heidegger’s pagination). English, p. 312.

The current status of thought is shown by Heidegger to be at the mercy of a long history of representational thinking.

Wir bewegen uns, was das Denken betrifft, im Raum einer Überlieferung von zweieinhalb Jahrtausenden. Wir dürfen darum nicht meinen, es genüge, daß einer sich nur in seiner Vorstellungswelt bewege und diese zum Ausdruck bringe. Denn diese Ausdruckswelt ist durchsetzt von blindlings übernommenen und nicht mehr durchdachten Vorstellungen und Begriffen. Wie soll dieses verwirrte Vorstellen ein Denken heißen, selbst wenn es sich noch so schöpferisch gebärdet?

As concerns thinking, we are living in the domain of a two and a half thousand year old tradition. Accordingly, we must not imagine it to be enough for any man merely to inhabit the world of his own representational ideas, and to express only them. For the world of this expression is shot through with blindly adopted and unexamined ideas and concepts. How could this confused manner of forming ideas be called thinking, however loudly it may claim to be creative?¹⁰⁸

Thought is free to think being, but as soon as it merely thinks itself it is the prisoner of unexamined ideas. But isn't the reflection on thought itself a re-examination of the ideas and concepts within it? If we can remain focused on thought's happening, would this not heighten our awareness of not only the ideas and concepts within thinking, but also their movements and structural interactions? Why would the speculative thinker of being be less inclined towards unexamined ideas? Why would understanding thought only in terms of an essential union with being be any less attached to a two and a half thousand year old tradition, be any less liable to the operations of creation?

But thinking is nothing creative in Heidegger. "Das Denken sagt das Diktat der Wahrheit des Seins."—"Thinking says what the truth of being dictates."¹⁰⁹ "Der Weg des Erdenkens wird, je echter er Weg zum Seyn ist, um so unbedingter vom Seyn selbst be-stimmt."—"The more genuinely the way of inventive thinking is a way to beyng, the more unconditionally is it determined by beyng itself."¹¹⁰ Inventive thought is redefined here, not as that which creates from within itself but as that which responds to being as the open. Its creativity is the way in which it listens to and articulates being. There is nothing else to think for: "any essential thinking solely thinks for the sake of *beyng*" ("jegliches wesentliche Denken einzig umwillen des *Seyns* denkt").¹¹¹ We cannot allow thought to understand itself independently. Thought as such can only be determined by

¹⁰⁸ *Was heißt Denken?*, p. 235. English, p. 231. Translation altered.

¹⁰⁹ *Der Spruch des Anaximander*, p. 303 (first edition pagination). English, p. 247.

¹¹⁰ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 86. English, p. 69.

¹¹¹ *Besinnung*, p. 42. English, p. 33. Translation altered.

being. We must “leave entirely to being itself the disposing-determining power in the essential characterisation of thinking” (“ganz dem Seyn selbst die stimmend-bestimmende Macht in der Wesenskennzeichnung des Denkens ... zu lassen”).¹¹²

In the passage about unexamined ideas and concepts, Heidegger presents his own vision of the movements of thought which are independent from thinking being. This vision is defined and structured, however, not only by a vision of thought itself, but also by the requirements of his own philosophy. We can listen to being, but we cannot listen to thought. The former is the truth, the latter deception. For thinking being to be the highest possible moment of history, it must be immeasurably higher than thinking in any normal sense. There is no interest in allowing thought to speak in its own name, no interest in thought affirming for itself its own position in relation to being. We can only allow being to speak to thought; otherwise thought is trapped in deceptive traditions of thinking. Without thinking being, thought cannot think genuinely at all.

These deceptive traditions have created a situation in which thought has degraded beings. Heidegger’s position towards beings is to save them from thought. It is to let beings be, the *Gelassenheit* towards things. Without any form of calculative abstraction, beings are released from the modern will to dominate towards seeing them as what they are within the open. In the modern world, thought is the aggressor and beings as a whole are the victim. Modern science is “always a technical attack on a being” (“immer ein technischer Angriff auf das Seiende”).¹¹³ Its aim is to master beings, to act upon and make use of them, to produce effects. Science always goes beyond, always surpasses a being as what it is in itself. But this approach is not merely a contingent historical development; calculative thought is grounded in the history of being. From the truth of being in modern times, there has arisen the entire situation of the dominance of technology and the modes of thinking that belong to it.

Perhaps we may ask whether what science does to beings is actually less destructive than what being does to thought. Science creates mathematical objects from beings, based purely on the possibilities of measurement, but being reduces thought to nothing. Science may posit that a being only is when it has been calculated, that an entity only exists when it has been proven, but the proof is not a distant, potentially impossible moment, essentially foreign to all knowledge about beings up until then. Science only sees beings under the form of its own system, but being must deny thought, must deny that we are thinking at all, if it wants to conceive from itself another beginning. In this there is no more than an uncertain promise. But does this future sacrifice more than the scientific

¹¹² *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 459. English, p. 361.

¹¹³ *Parmenides*, p. 5. English, p. 4.

reduction of the truth of things to the abstract and merely physical world?

For Heidegger the choice is clear. The dominance of scientific thought is the greatest danger that the modern world faces, the danger above all others.

Es droht im anbrechenden Atomzeitalter eine weit größere Gefahr [als Atomkrieg]. ... Er [d. h. diese Satz] gilt insofern, als die im Atomzeitalter anrollende Revolution der Technik den Menschen auf eine Weise fesseln, behexen, blenden und verblenden könnte, daß eines Tages das rechnende Denken *als das einzige* in Geltung und Übung bliebe. ... Dann hätte der Mensch sein Eigenstes, daß er nämlich ein nachdenkendes Wesen ist, verleugnet und weggeworfen.

In this dawning atomic age a far greater danger [than nuclear war] threatens. ... This assertion is valid in the sense that the approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practised *as the only* way of thinking. ... Then man would have denied and thrown away his own special nature—that he is a meditative being.¹¹⁴

What is the nature of this problem, apparently worse than nuclear war? The problem is an all-encompassing dominance of a single form of thought: scientific reason. Looking beyond the extraordinary magnitude of this claim, perhaps we may read into this a resilience within thought against it being defined by only one of its myriad forms. If the danger is that calculative thinking becomes accepted and practised as the only way of thinking, why must we only have one other true way to think? Why must we restrict ourselves to being *as the only genuine* thought? Can we not see the problem here as a focus on one aspect of thought, the creation from within modernity of a thought singularity, a single point that suffocates all other thinking? But why must another singular thought take its place? Why must we replace the dominance of scientific reason with the dominance of thinking being? If there are several possible forms of thought, is the problem a structural movement that restricts thought to a single essence, to a singular dominant form?

The point for Heidegger is that in not thinking being we lose our essential nature. Since ancient Greece, particularly within the Aristotelian tradition, humanity has been known as the ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, the animal with language and thought. But where does the necessity come from that this thought, the thought that makes us the animal that we are, must be focused only on being?

¹¹⁴ *Gelassenheit*. In: GA16 (1955/2000) *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, pp. 528–529. Translated as *Memorial Address*. In: Anderson, J.M. & Freund, E.H. (1966) *Discourse on Thinking*. New York, Harper & Row, p. 56.

Heidegger tells us that the original meaning of this definition of humanity is that man is “the being that emerges from itself, emerges in such a way that in this emerging (φύσις), and for it, it has the word. In the word, the being we call man comports itself to beings as a whole, in the midst of which man himself is” (“dasjenige von sich selbst her aufgehende Seiende, das dergestalt aufgeht, daß es in diesem Aufgehen (φύσις) und für den Aufgang das Wort hat. Im Wort verhält sich das Seiende, das wir den Menschen nennen, zum Seienden im Ganzen, inmitten dessen der Mensch er selbst ist”).¹¹⁵ ζῶον is not the biological animal, but the living being who is determined by emergence and self-opening.¹¹⁶ Λόγος is not the representation of rational thought, but that which allows disclosure and concealment to appear.¹¹⁷ Φύσις is not the abstract concept of nature, but the emergence of beings in the world. To emerge into beings as a whole with the word is to enter ἀλήθεια, which is the foundational, more inceptual ground of φύσις.¹¹⁸

But what prevents a reinterpretation of Aristotle’s phrase? What stops us from turning not towards being but towards thought? Can we go back to Aristotle? Can we look at the Aristotelian contexts in which this statement arose?¹¹⁹

For Heidegger this definition of the human essence goes beyond Aristotle. In one of Heidegger’s dialogues, a ‘scholar’ suggests that, because we lack the sources to establish who it was that first expressed it, we may never illuminate its origin.¹²⁰ So it belongs not to Aristotle at all, but perhaps to some thinker from an earlier period, the period of Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides. Or perhaps it is even older, as old as the definition of humans as mortals in the earliest examples of Western literature, because both are equally originary.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ *Parmenides*, p. 100. English, p. 68.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100. English, p. 67.

¹¹⁸ *Das Ereignis*, p. 14. English, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, *Politics* Book I (1253a 9–10): λόγον δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζῴων (“man is the only animal who has the gift of speech”). In: Barnes, J. ed. (1984) *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 2*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, p. 1988.

¹²⁰ *Ein Gespräch selbsttritt auf einem Feldweg*. In: GA77 (1944–45/1995) *Feldweg-Gespräche*. Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, p. 103. Translated as *A Triadic Conversation*. In: Davis, B.W. (2010) *Country Path Conversations*. Indiana, Indiana University Press, p. 66.

¹²¹ *Abendgespräch in einem Kriegsgefangenenlager*, p. 225. English, p. 146.—The same idea is expressed elsewhere but much more subtly. In the *Parmenides* lectures there is a distinction between Greek antiquity, to which the original meaning of ζῶον λόγον ἔχον belongs, and the later Greek, Roman, and modern times in which this meaning was transformed. (*Parmenides*, p. 100. English, p. 68.) It is clear that Aristotle belongs to the latter rather than the former: “Bei Platon und Aristoteles, die den Beginn der Metaphysik sagen, wird das Wort zum λόγος im Sinne der Aussage.”—“With Plato and Aristotle, who speak the beginning of metaphysics, the word becomes λόγος in the sense of assertion.”

As irrefutable as it is unverifiable, the hidden origin of the definition of humanity as ζῶον λόγον ἔχον allows the phrase to be consumed by Heidegger's overall interpretation of early Greek thought. In doing so, this newly defined classical definition becomes a ground for Heidegger's essence of humanity. This essence then becomes not something merely invented but rooted in the earliest moments of the first beginning. This definition places humanity into a relationship, one defined through the human possibility of having the word, with what emerges within the open of ἀλήθεια. When humans first become humans, they do so by being drawn to what withdraws.¹²² The essence of humanity, although forgotten long ago, is to relate to being in an essential sense. Being requires humanity. The essence of the human is to care for being. Being wants to be thought, tended, and cared for according to its own essential nature.¹²³ "Das eigenste »Sein« des Menschen ist ... gegründet in eine Zugehörigkeit zur Wahrheit des Seins als solchen ... weil das Wesen des Seins als solchen, nicht das des Menschen, in sich den Zuruf an den Menschen als den zur Geschichte ihn bestimmenden enthält."—"The most proper 'being' of humans is ... grounded in a belonging to the truth of being as such ... because the essence of being as such, not the essence of the human being, contains in itself a call to humans, as a call destining them to history."¹²⁴

To find our essence is to be dominated by being. "Die Er-eignung bestimmt den Menschen zum Eigentum des Seyns."—"The ap-propriation destines the human being to be the property of beyng."¹²⁵ Through this determination we become no longer a *being* but *Da-sein*, a unity with the essential occurrence of being itself. The less humans are beings, the less we remain focused on ourselves as beings, the nearer we come to being.¹²⁶ If beings are and being is nothing, to become human is to become nothing: "Das Seyn umso eher leuchtet, je weniger »seiend« der Mensch ist. Der Mensch müßte *nichtsein* können, um die Wahrheit des Seyns zu fassen."—"Beyng is illuminated all the more, the less fully the human being is 'a being'. The human being must be able *not* to be, in order to grasp the truth of beyng."¹²⁷ But from the viewpoint of the other beginning, the one who thinks being is.¹²⁸ This is not a departure from what it is to be human, but what has previously been understood as the meaning of humanity was based on a merely distorted essence of being. In truth, humans 'are' humans only as far

(Ibid., p. 113. English, p. 77.)

¹²² *Was heißt Denken?*, p. 11. English, p. 9.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 125. English, p. 121.

¹²⁴ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 51. English, p. 42.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 263. English, p. 207.

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp. 170–171. English, p. 134.

¹²⁷ *Überlegungen VI*, p. 92 (Heidegger's pagination). English, p. 348.

¹²⁸ *Besinnung*, p. 220. English, p. 194.

as they are grounded in Da-sein.¹²⁹ We are not yet thinking; we are not yet even human.

Heidegger avoids understanding the history of being as a mere reflection of the development of human ideas. It must be nothing human, and as such the essence of the human, of thought, and of language, are all grounded beyond the human as well. The development of human ideas, of culture, of creation are thereby degraded. If we cannot measure the essence of the human according to work and achievement, “one day the whole of modern humanity, together with its much extolled ‘creative’ achievements, will surely collapse in the emptiness of its rebellious self-oblivion” (“müßte eines Tages das gesamte neuzeitliche Menschentum, seine vielgepriesenen »schöpferischen« Leistungen miteinbegriffen, in der Leere seiner aufständischen Selbstvergessenheit zusammenstürzen”).¹³⁰ Today we fail to contemplate the importance of thinking being; we can only reside in and affirm the shallow pools of lived experiences.¹³¹ Without the other beginning, we are left only with an experience that is nothing in itself, a thought that is nothing in itself, a humanity that is nothing in itself.

In Heidegger this nothingness is the structural ground that our true freedom differentiates itself from, a freedom dependent on the defining ideas of the other beginning. But this dominance of being is understood as freedom in its highest sense.

Das Geheiß, das unser Wesen dem Denken anbefiehlt, ist auch kein Zwang. Das Geheiß bringt unser Wesen ins Freie und dies so entschieden, daß Jenes, was uns in das Denken ruft, allererst Freiheit des Freien gibt, damit menschlich Freies darin wohnen kann. Das anfängliche Wesen der Freiheit verbirgt sich im Geheiß, das den Sterblichen das Bedenklichste zu denken gibt. Die Freiheit ist darum niemals etwas nur Menschliches.

The call which commends our essence to thought, is not a constraining force. The call sets our essence free, so decisively that only the calling which calls on us to think establishes the free scope of freedom in which free human nature may abide. The primordial essence of freedom keeps itself concealed in the calling by which it is given to mortal man to think what is most thought provoking. Freedom, therefore, is never something merely human.¹³²

The true nature of freedom is itself withdrawn. It is inaccessible, hidden, and fundamentally unknown. To become free, humanity must be transformed.

¹²⁹ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 318. English, p. 252.

¹³⁰ *Ein Gespräch selbsttritt auf einem Feldweg*, p. 71. English, p. 45.

¹³¹ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 19. English, p. 17.

¹³² *Was heißt Denken?*, p. 137. English, pp. 132–133. Translation altered.

“Besinnung ist ... die Befreiung von der »Freiheit« des »Subjektums«, der in sich eingerollten Vermenschung des Menschen.”—“Mindfulness means ... becoming free from the ‘freedom’ of the ‘subject’, from the self-entangled humanisation of man.”¹³³ To become free is to escape from the purely anthropological basis of human nature as a subject. True freedom is entirely reliant on being. But it is the uniquely human freedom because to be that which is determined by being is the true way in which human freedom is defined; it must be so in order to find its place in the structural transformation of the other beginning, a transformation that involves an escape from the modern concept of the subject, a transformation that involves the dehumanisation (Entmenschung) of humanity.¹³⁴ The essence of the human is nothing human; the essence of thought is not thought itself.

But what is the nature of this requirement that the essence of humanity is nothing human? In what sense does this drive beyond the merely human subject find confirmation? In what way is dehumanisation necessary? In the same dialogue mentioned above, there is the following exchange between a scientist, who represents modern thought, and a guide, who represents Heidegger’s philosophy:

Der Forscher: “Mir ist es jedenfalls unerfindlich, daß das Wesen des Menschen je gefunden werden soll, indem man vom Menschen wegblickt.” Der Weise: “Mir ist das auch unerfindlich; darum suche ich darüber Klarheit zu erlangen, inwiefern dies möglich oder vielleicht gar nötig ist.”

Scientist: “It is to me incomprehensible that the essence of the human could ever be found by looking away from the human.” Guide: “It is incomprehensible to me as well; and so I seek to attain clarity about the extent to which this is possible or even necessary.”¹³⁵

If this is a surmise without any textual basis in the history of philosophy, if the drive beyond the human on the basis of a re-imagined essence of humanity is an error, is it possible that the pursuit of another beginning is a dead-end for thought? Is it possible that humanity contains nothing that would destine it towards the ultimate end of history?

But this is never verified. There is nothing to be discovered about the human being that would confirm either way. Within the context of Heidegger’s philosophy, the ‘not yet’ remains inescapable: “no thinking of being, no philosophy, could ever be verified by ‘facts’, i.e. by beings. To make itself understandable is suicide for philosophy” (“jedes Denken des Seins, alle Philosophie, nie bestätigt werden kann durch die »Tatsachen«, d. h. durch das Seiende. Das Sich-

¹³³ *Besinnung*, p. 48. English, p. 40. Translation altered.

¹³⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 210. English, p. 186.

¹³⁵ *Ein Gespräch selbstdritt auf einem Feldweg*, p. 105. English, p. 68.

verständlichmachen ist der Selbstmord der Philosophie”).¹³⁶ The only possible ‘verification’ is the other beginning itself. Yet in what way does this present a solid basis? “*In die Zukunft vor- und hineindenken, ohne von ihr jemals einen Widerklang erfahren zu können; das scheint auf bloße Willkür hinauszuführen—und dennoch: hier gibt ein höheres Gesetz die Weisung, der Ursprung selbst.*”—“*To think ahead and into the future, without ever being able to experience it resounding—that seems to lead to sheer arbitrariness; and yet directive here is a higher law, the origin itself.*”¹³⁷

The other beginning appears as an arbitrary invention if the origin, i.e. being itself, is not presupposed. But for a mere scepticism to enter at this point is neither interesting nor important. A mere scepticism does not enter thought in order to understand the possible directions within, in order to raise thought to new levels. Scepticism must be for a purpose if it aims to be operative within structural developments. It must be operative to allow thought into the other areas, the struggles of thinking, the exploration of avenues, and the operation of its movements. If scepticism is what’s needed to open the full dimensions of thought, we must be sceptical. This is not merely a pure opposition but an opening of new territories, a release of thought’s movement from the bonds in which it has been placed in the history of philosophy.

What is there within Heidegger’s own definition of the essence of the human that prevents an alternative view? What is there to stop the formation of a unity that would encompass and ground the understanding of thought found in both Heidegger and Parmenides? What if this unity could promote rather than restrict the directions of thought’s possible development? If thought is the unique feature of humanity, are we doing it justice by restricting its scope? Do we fail to grasp the full range of its purposes when it becomes closed off in another beginning, inaccessible by its very definition, grounded in a speculative, historical concept of the essence of the human? Without this image of human nature in view, is there a form in which thought can find another freedom, another unity? If the essence of the human is to think, are we not destroying this essence all the more when we claim that thought has not yet begun?

C

We have seen how thought is understood in Parmenides’ and Heidegger’s own thinking. In both, for thought to be anything at all, it must be the same as being. Parmenides restricts thought by defining it in terms of a strict definition of the fullest possible concept of being—changeless, eternal, and unmoving. In Heidegger the restriction is based on being understood as the open and the future

¹³⁶ *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, p. 435. English, pp. 343–344.

¹³⁷ *Überlegungen IV*, p. 61 (Heidegger’s pagination). English, p. 190.

possibility of the open revealing itself, the event of the other beginning.

Their paths are different, but they remain related in the structural formation of singular concepts of thought based on being. They both create thought singularities in which all other possibilities of thought are denied. These other possibilities occur in both Parmenides and Heidegger, but they are said to be essentially nothing. If a singular understanding of thought is regarded as absolute, the exploration of all other forms of thought's relation to being becomes essentially meaningless. Parmenides prevents such a movement as all directions that lead away from being as the pure rational object are nothing; likewise in Heidegger, except the barrier has become the other beginning. These structures of domination define how the multiplicity of forms of thought are reduced to one. The starkness of the Parmenidean distinction between being and nothing forms the gate through which only a strictly defined conception of thought may enter. Any difference to being in any way whatsoever results in it being discarded. In Heidegger the entrance of thought in its fullest sense is not yet possible. It relies on a gate that is not yet open, a conception of thought that is impossible at the current time.

In the history of philosophy, thought has been covered over by being. The question 'what has philosophy done to thought?' remains unanswered. Thought is always subordinate to being. Being dominates thought by making it the same as itself. The differences between thought and being are lost. Forms of thought are denied on the basis of their independence from being. The possibility of understanding these differences, of creating new differences on the basis of thought rather than on the basis of thought's domination by being, remains hidden.

Under the fullest weight of being, thought cannot find its own image; it can only find an image of itself *as an image of being*. It can only be said to be what it is through the voice of being. It can only be visible by virtue of being's visibility. But why should we not manipulate and dominate thought? Why should we not be utterly uncompromising towards it? Is this necessary for thought to fulfil its highest potential? If we are to move away from understanding thought as the same as being, do we lose thought to an arbitrary subjectivity?

We are not advocating a merely personal thought, amassed with its own problems and setbacks. In its independence from being, thought may not only limit itself to something purely subjective, the merely personal thought of a single individual. Unrestricted to problem solving, to a pre-existing set of pathological conditions, there is a conception of thought that reaches beyond its relation to being in order to explore itself, to be led into exploring the operations of thought in their generality, to become not something other to thought but to become thought itself. This is thought as it stands in the world independently

from concepts belonging to another nature. It is where thought sees itself in an understanding that is guided by itself only.

But is this diversity necessary? How can thought guard against simply disappearing into itself through a pure opposition to being? How can it avoid becoming another thought singularity? How can it remain connected to being without being determining the movement among its full range of possibilities?

Thought itself can take another step, a movement in which it finds itself grounded in the historical actuality of thought in general. This conception of thought reaches towards an opening of the possibilities of thought's relation to being. From an initial opposition between thought itself and thought understood as the same as being, they can find themselves together within a structural unity. Both from within the independence of thought itself and from the dominance of thought and being's essential unity, a step can be made towards this structure, towards seeing the way in which understandings of thought coexist.

To raise the question of the full possibilities of thought's relation towards being, we require, not a history of being, but a history of thought. This history needs to be mapped as a whole, its dimensions understood independently from being as well as in relation to it, rather than only under the terms of its definition. New, previously unseen forms, aspects, and features will arise, unknown to the pursuit of being itself. A wholly new structure will emerge, engaging with but not restricted to the singularity that defines thought as the same as being and no more.

The history of being forgets thought. It sees no significance in what else thought might be other than being, other than itself. But this new structure promotes both the remembrance of thought and of being. It contains within itself a possible unity of thought which resists domination from only one of its aspects. It will be manifest in its entirety as a unity diverse within itself, a unity not only of the same but also of difference. This unity will be a ground that includes moments in which thought and being are essentially the same and others where they are essentially independent from each other. It will ground the unity of Parmenides' and Heidegger's thought within a wider image. The differences in their positions will be held together as possible dimensions of the unity of thought and being in general; their similarity will be held alongside other forms of thought that may contradict their understanding but can stand together nonetheless. The aim is not to open one path for thought to follow, a definitive one, one that matters above all else, a path on which thought is dominated by being. The aim is to open the doors of multiple understandings of thought as a unity, as a structure in which these forms may show and develop their own nature without the necessity of one determining all others.

The exploration of this unity will also involve the development of other

forms of thought's freedom. In the multiple relationships between thought and being, differing positions towards freedom will arise. Each relationship will show its own unique possibilities of freedom, or its own way in which freedom is curtailed. Yet, as thought traverses these relations, a movement is created in which a new dimension of thought's freedom becomes visible. This movement will be understood as the creation of the space in which a unifying dimension of thought's freedom becomes possible. It is the area in which thought may move when it is not dominated by being in an absolute sense. It allows a dimension of thought's freedom that cannot be found as long as being dominates thought. This dimension will belong to the highest unity in which thought can determine its relation to being. This is another freedom of thought that happens as this unity becomes conceptualised, distinct from any other singular form of thought's freedom. In none of these, however, may thought ever find a pure and complete freedom, but it would not deny itself on that basis. These are possibilities of freedom that are manifest only as glimpses within thought's ongoing struggle.

A return to thought is one in which the possibilities of its self-understanding are opened. To do this thought must be repositioned in its relation towards being. It must find itself within a new structure, beyond any singular pathway that dominates it. It must find a new ground into which thought reaches the forms of understanding that define it. Thought can relate to being without the dominance of the latter residing over it. For this it must begin the development of a unity that grounds the full range of thought's relations to being and the dimensions that traverse this range as its structure.