

# **danse sur glace**

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**Abstract:** This text explores the interfacing of philosophy and poetry as encounter with alterity—language engaging theme and rupture.

**Keywords:** hermeneutics, subjectivity, analysis, language, interface

## **PART 1: On Plato's Expulsion of the Poets**

### **#1**

he said  
I want to make love to you  
tonight

and his body spoke the truth

but his lips  
sealed

names

### **#2 analytic continuation**

'I know the truth.'

'you say i know when i know you assume  
and you assume too much'

'I am equations.  
Surfaces defined.'

'and i am your em-  
bedding space'

'Words!'

(carved  
(in stone certainties)  
she is armless  
intuition and he  
is artificially  
intelligent)

#3 dangerous language at the café sophie

                                june sun  
relentless as the innocent  
                                questions  
                                she asked

*words*  
*floating in air*

*settling*  
*on the table*

*settling*  
*on the concrete*

*settling*  
*in the shadow of a flower*  
*bed*

*lying*                        *there*

when she looked back  
into his eyes  
she sensed his focus

                                detaching

as if he no longer recognized  
his own voice

#### #4 on the death of descartes

thought-I  
therefore  
thought I

and vainly I  
formed

from clay and fire

sculptured  
cultured

a thought machine

man-  
i-  
festing

hidden idolatry  
adultery

the dual godhead  
diabolically

revealing

the spirit of truth

*is*

not thought

## #5 barren tree

maybe  
she  
is imagined

in the space  
where once the last blossom  
*is*

is imagined

may be

## #6 as glass

faint smell of leather

beer bottle  
pressed  
against his blue jeans

eyes of a deer  
eyes of a man

watching  
waiting  
wanting

to feel himself  
in her

in him

knowing  
unknowing

## #7 facticity

Our apologies for taking so long in coming to a decision regarding your submission, "On Plato's Expulsion of the Poets." I regret to report that we are unable to use it. The decision was made after considerable discussion and review by our editors.

Your submission raised unique questions that didn't allow for our usual review process. We normally do not have to deal with poetry submissions. While we do not stipulate in our submission requirements that papers have to be written in prose, it is the customary practice in the discipline that they are so written. We did submit your manuscript to a poet for review and received a very favorable response. We also inquired with our Board as to the feasibility of philosophical poetry submissions. There were a range of responses but for the most part unfavorable. Some believed that as a practical matter it would be too difficult to find suitably qualified referees for such submissions. Others opposed such submissions on principle.

We appreciate your interest in *Metaphilosophy* and regret that we do not have better news to report.

With best wishes,

Editor

[Private Communication, 1997]

## PART II: Reading Heidegger

### Introduction

*"Man speaks."*

With these words, Heidegger opens the text *Language*.

*"Man speaks. We speak ..."*

In this opening is a doubling.

*"We speak when we are awake and we speak in our dreams."*

In the double opening are two awarenesses.

In the two awarenesses, suppose we say: *"This is what is brought to text."*

Heidegger's *Language* presents as a study in contrapuntal form [Heidegger 1975]. On the surface he offers a philosophical discourse about language in which he embeds a poem. Within the workings, however, the discourse engages the poem and the poem gives itself over to the conceptual movement of the discourse. The poem *informs* the discourse and the discourse *gives meaning* to the poem. The effect is striking. The poem is drawn towards a univocal, discursive representation of Heidegger's thinking while the discourse is opened poetically by the way in which words are unfixed and put forth. This is the dance.

Here, I attempt to engage Heidegger's text, *Language*, in a manner that parallels his engagement of Trakl's poem. I treat his writing poetically, focusing on conceptual movement and form. The reading follows the traces of four callings. In doing this, the conventional notion of "articulating Heidegger's meaning" is deferred to an open space:

"To discuss *Language*, to place it, means to bring to its place of being not so much *Language* as ourselves: our own gathering into the appropriation."

[Heidegger 1975, 190]

This is also the dance.

## The first calling

*The first calling has already been called.  
The first calling calls things. What is posited, defined, placed.  
The first calling is grounded.*

Where Heidegger begins. With things. Things in the world, things in the poem, things in philosophical thought. He begins from within an existing tradition and, for him, the first calling, which calls things, is the call in which this tradition is grounded:

“In the language of philosophy both things-in-themselves and things that appear, all beings that in any way are, are called things.”  
[Heidegger 1993, 147]

Where Heidegger begins.

To ask *where* Heidegger begins already implies a *space*. Things and space arrive together. He calls this "the place of arrival": "a presence sheltered in an absence".

Where Heidegger begins. The summoning of the place of arrival and things. Trakl's poem.

“Window with falling snow is arrayed  
Long tolls the vesper bell.  
The house is provided well,  
The table is for many laid”

[Trakl in Heidegger 1975]

The poem summons. Heidegger summons. We summon.

Heidegger sees in the poem the calling of things into a presence sheltered in an absence. This is his reading of the poem.

But what is happening *through the poem* as a representation of things-in-the-world is also happening *in the word-things* that constitute the poem. So, with Heidegger's reading, the poem describes "a presence sheltered in an absence" that is filled with world-things [the house] while at the same time Heidegger describes "a presence sheltered in an absence" that is filled with image-things [poem].

The calling has yet another layer. *Heidegger's text* as a conceptual piece is invoking "a presence sheltered in an absence" that is filled with concept-things. *CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE*.

*Here begins.* In a house of things. Already divided, differentiated, named. A familiar space. Near. Disclosed. Illuminated.

Imagine. The poetic image of a house on a winter evening. Darkness has come. The house is illuminated from within. Outside, snow is falling from the sky, faintly reflecting the light through the window. A church bell rings from the darkness.

*There begins.* Outside the house. In the world. The fourfold unity

"The poem describes a winter evening. The first stanza describes what is happening outside: snowfall, and the ringing of the vesper bell. The things outside touch the things inside the human homestead. The snow falls on the window. The ringing of the bell enters into every house. Within, everything is well provided and the table is set."

[Heidegger 1975, 196]

Here *We* begin. With things named.

Poem, house, winter, snow, words, language, philosophy

There *He* begins. In the naming call.

"The speaking names the winter evening time. What is this naming? Does it merely deck out the imaginable familiar objects and events - snow, bell, window, falling, ringing - with words of a language. No. This naming does not hand out titles, it does not apply terms, but it calls into the word. The naming calls."

[Heidegger 1975, 198]

Here *Heidegger* begins. In conceptual discourse.

"The universal that holds for each thing is called its essence or nature. To represent what holds universally is, according to prevalent views, the basic feature of thought ... This lecture, too, seems to attempt something of that kind."

[Heidegger 1975, 189-90 (deletion and ellipsis added)]

There *I* begin. Poetically.

the apparition of a face on the corner of the street  
drawing pain from the silence with eyes that recede and recede

if only ...  
and to look  
and to bear the dance  
                  in the still  
                  in the still  
the dance in the still of the I

## The second calling

*The second calling is before the first  
The second calling brings the dance: movement, unfixing, ungrounding.  
The second calling is the [nameless] abyss*

The stage has been set. More accurately, Trakl's poem has been *situated*. The house in the poem represents the place of things, which is familiar and which is our starting point. The "presence sheltered in an absence". Outside the house is darkness, which Heidegger calls "world" and which we have yet to discover. The image of a "house of things" and a "world of darkness" is helpful to differentiate the idea of "things" and the idea of "world". However, this is not really the case, neither in Trakl's poem nor in Heidegger's reading of that poem. The boundary between things and world is more open and diffuse. There are "things" outside the house (such as the snow) and the "world" participates in things inside the house (such as the sound of the vesper bell). This "openness" of the house is a central feature of the image, as we will see later. Inside the house, we begin with things. It is tempting to define what we mean by things using traditional concepts like "bearer of traits", "unity of manifold sensations", or "formed matter" [Heidegger 1993, 156]. *Definition* is important in thinking of things. Usually to speak and think of a thing is to speak in terms of an idea of the thing, which is defined, more or less, and which is distinguished properly from other ideas [Heidegger 1975, 190]. In this way of speaking, things and ideas of things are rather well defined, separated, distinguishable and the extent to which there is a lack of definition is considered to be problematic and in need of fixing. In this way we conceive a "world" of ideas as things which can be manipulated and this manipulation of idea-things is what passes for thought, much in the same manner as we perceive our "world" as filled with things which are separate, identifiable and available for manipulation; we perceive and conceive things and ideas. We do not, however, perceive or conceive "world". This way of speaking and thinking is "grounded". It is based upon an implicit sense of the thingliness of things, which we might call an *EXCLUDED INITIATIVE* [Frye 1990a, 12]. An unknown assumption about "world" which structures thinking about things and ideas but is not itself thought. Perhaps "assumption" is not the right word here. But the sense remains that traditional thinking about things is *analytic* and follows a certain structure of representation and we might consider this in the image of the house as full of light, revealing the things in the house, while outside, in the world, it is dark and unknown. Let's return to the poem. This time we imagine differently. Outside there is light, spilling from the windows of the house and perhaps coming from elsewhere beyond the house. There are things in the house and things in the world and the boundary is more permeable, less defined. There is still a sense of sheltering but the edges are diffuse, like the range of visibility through the snow. And in this sheltered light the things gather to themselves. "The snowfall brings men under the sky that is darkening into night. The tolling of the evening bell brings them as mortals before the divine. House and table join mortals to the earth. The things that were named, thus called, gather to themselves sky and earth, mortals and divinities" [Heidegger 1975, 199]. In this sheltered light, the things gather to themselves a unity. But not a unity as a

thing is one, rather a unity that is fourfold. "The things let the fourfold of the four stay with them. This gathering, assembling, letting-stay is the thinging of things. The unitary fourfold of sky and earth, mortals and divinities, which is stayed in the thinging of things, we call—the world" [Heidegger 1975, 199]. Through the poem we are led, by Heidegger, to a different image of the sheltering. Things are no longer just things-in-themselves. Things *thing*, and in thinging they gesture world. World becomes a unitary fourfold, a one that can only be represented as a gathering of a primal fourfold, united in their being toward one another [Heidegger 1975, 199]. The fourfold unity of the world is like the primal elements: air, earth, fire and water. Things have an essential openness to bearing world and world interpenetrates things without being contained by things. Things gesture world in which they abide, but world is not a thing. World is *nothing*. It is nothing in the sense that it is *not-a-thing*. World *worlds* and in *worlding* it grants presence to things. World is not a thing-among-things. World is not a noun. World is movement. World is verb. World is abyss. But this abyss is neither empty, nor nothingness, nor murky confusion. World is nameless. We cannot speak of world as we speak of things. But we can *trace* the movements of world. We trace these movements through the things, through the thinging of things, through the gesture of things, through the gathering, assembling, letting stay of things. The thinging of things brings the worlding of world. Yet, this thinging and worlding is all quite strange. Let's return to the poem. The second stanza reads:

"Wandering ones, more than a few,  
Come to the door on darksome courses.  
Golden blooms the tree of graces  
Drawing up the earth's cool dew"

[Trakl in Heidegger 1975]

Now we enter, so to speak, into world. The poem *worlds*. The poem brings forth images as things, not things-in-themselves, but things-in-the-poem. The image-things gather, assemble, let stay the poem. The poem is not the images in the poem. The images in the poem do not contain the poem. The poem gives presence to the images. The images defer themselves to the unity of the poem. So it is also with *world* and things. *World* defers itself, grants place to things. Things, in their essence, give themselves over to bearing *world*. This movement is traced, gestured in the poem. This movement is also traced, gestured in Heidegger's *Language*. Gesturing, tracing. The images are figured, the language is figured, thinking is figured. Worlding, tracing, figuring. This is the second calling. The calling of *world*. Worlding, tracing figuring. "Suddenly they name something wholly different" [Heidegger 1975, 201]. "The word 'world' is no longer used in the metaphysical sense" [Heidegger 1975, 201]. The poem calls forth *metaphor*. Gesturing is called in the image of the "tree of graces. Its sound blossoming, harbors the fruit that falls to us unearned—holy, saving, loving towards mortals. In the golden-blossoming tree there prevail earth and sky, divinities and mortals. Their unitary fourfold is the world" [Heidegger 1975, 201]. Gesturing, figuring, tracing. The boundary of things is blurred. The house is house, is place, is language, is philosophy, is self, is poem. The world is not



## The third calling

*The third calling is immanent.*  
*The third calling unites and divides.*  
*The third calling is striving.*

In the first calling things come from world. In the second, world comes through things. "These two modes of bidding are different but not separated" [Heidegger 1975, 202]. World defers presence to things, things defer essence to world. In the first calling comes division, definition, extraction. In the second calling comes merging, blurring, holism. World and things penetrate each other, permeating the *middle* between them. The middle divides and unites, world and things. The middle *relates*. "The middle of the two is intimacy ... the intimacy of world and thing is not a fusion. Intimacy obtains only where the intimate—world and thing—divides itself cleanly and remains separated. In the midst of the two, in the between of world and thing, in their *inter*, division prevails: a *dif-ference*" [Heidegger 1975, 202].

Let's begin with the division in dif-ference. Through division, things come to presence as things separate from world and from each other. The separation is a boundary. The boundary is distinct, like a line. Let's use the symbolism of the *Book of Changes* to represent this boundary [I Ching, 722]:



Through the boundary comes *differentiation*. Things become distinct. Separate. *Things-in-themselves* which are different from other things. Particulate. Things are things by means of the boundaries. The boundaries are limits, measure, definition. In the boundary between things, there is no thing. *Nothing*. The difference is the *nothing* that separates things. There is nothing but things. Through the difference come *things-in-themselves*. The self of each thing-in-itself is constructed from the selves of the other things-in-themselves. From the *others*. But the others is not world. World is the others *and nothing*. The self of each thing-in-itself is *constructed*. There is structure. Things are secured as *things-in-themselves* by the structure. Through the structure things can be *compared*. Through comparison comes *not*. Through *not* comes *possibility*. Now we have moved beyond things, into *nothing*. Let's return to things and structure. Let's bring back with us "not". What is "not"? *Not is the boundary as a solid line that separates without joining*. The structure of things manifests through not. Not is at the edge of things. Not is a logical operator. Not is at the edge of things-as-ideas. *Statements* about things. Assertions. Not is binary. Not brings the *law of the excluded middle*:

"For any statement A, either A or not-A must be true and the other must be false."

[Weisstein]

From this structure comes a *form* of thinking. This form of thinking is decisive, clear, empowered. *CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE*. Conceptual discourse excels in presenting an idea and "distinguishing this idea properly from other ideas" [Heidegger 1975, 190]. But it wants when thinking near the boundaries of ideas. Why? Because "not" *defines* what we mean by "is" in representing world through a structure of statements. "Not" *limits* what we mean by "is" in representing world through a structure of statements. Truth works through "not". But "not" is *limiting*. Thinking encounters a barrier. *The boundary as a solid line that separates without joining*. Meaning eludes thinking. Thinking encounters *nothing* as *lack*. Thought becomes uncharacteristic, off-putting, "out of tune". *Absurd* [Sartre 1994].

In *Language*, Heidegger is trying to penetrate this barrier. Let's return to things and world and the division in dif-ference. Through division, things come to presence as things separate from world and from each other. Separation is *spatial*. Separation is like the space between objects. The division of dif-ference brings *space*. Space is the between of objects. An emptiness. A clearing. Space is like the between of objects in the room. The between of objects in the room is a *metaphor* for what we mean by space. The division in dif-ference brings *metaphorical space*. An opening.



A metaphor is "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable" [Oxford Dictionary]. In metaphor things are brought together linguistically in an implied comparison. "Comparison" is not the right word here. The relation in metaphor is more intimate. In its most common form, the metaphor is a statement of identity of the type "A is B", where A and B are said to be the same thing, although they remain two different things [Frye 1990a, 71]. Metaphors work in the dif-ference between things, in the space between things.

"... in metaphors of the type 'A is B' the 'is' is not really a predicate at all. The real function of the 'is' in 'Joseph is a fruitful bough' is to annihilate the space between the 'Joseph' who is there, on our left as it were, and the 'bough' which is there, on our right, and place them in a world where everything is 'here' ."

[Frye 1990b, 118]

Metaphor is an assertion that is not an assertion. That is to say, an assertion that is not of the type governed by the law of the excluded middle. Metaphor is removal from such assertions. Metaphor dissolves the boundaries, bringing together relations, associations, figurations outside the structure. In language, this happens by freeing up the relation between words as signifiers and what they signify [Frye 1990b, 108-15]. Ambivalence, ambiguity, *resonance*. Freeing up the relation between the expression of ideas and what they express. A different form of thinking emerges. Flowing, unfixing, ungrounding. Clarity, sharpness, precision are deferred to images, associations, patterns.

*POETIC RESONANCE*. It is thinking and it is not thinking. Whereas the dividing of conceptual discourse brings separateness definition essence, the uniting of poetic resonance brings sameness identification *belonging*. This *belonging* is a different relatedness than "being-with". In "being-with", each is separate. In belonging, there is identifying, merging, joining in dif-ference. Heidegger writes:

"We stubbornly misunderstand this prevailing *belonging* together of man and Being as long as we represent everything only in categories and mediations, be it with or without dialectic. Then we always find only connections that are established either in terms of Being or in terms of man, and that present belonging together of man and Being as an intertwining.

"We do not as yet enter the domain of *belonging* together. How can such an entry come about? By our moving away from the attitude of representational thinking. This move is a leap in the sense of a spring. The spring leaps away, away from the habitual idea of man as the rational animal who in modern times has become a subject for his objects. Simultaneously the spring also leaps away from Being. But Being, since the beginning of Western thought, has been interpreted as the ground in which every being as such is grounded.

"Where does the spring go that springs away from the ground? Into an abyss? Yes, as long as we only represent the spring in the horizon of metaphysical thinking. No insofar as we spring and let go."

[Heidegger 1969, 32]

*"... man meets what exists and becomes as what is over against him, always simply a single being and each thing simply as being ... nothing is present for him except this one being, but it implicates the whole world ... these meetings are not organized to make the world, but each is a sign of world-order ... the world which appears to you in this way is unreliable, for it takes on a continually new appearance ... it has no density, for everything in it penetrates everything else; no duration, for it comes even when it is not summoned and vanishes even when it is tightly held ... it*

*comes, and comes to bring you out ... it is your present; only while you have it do you have the present ... you can make it into an object for yourself, to experience and to use; you must continually do this—and as you do it you have no more present ... you cannot make yourself understood with others concerning it, you are alone with it ... but it teaches you to meet others ... it leads you away to the Thou in which the parallel lines of relations meet."*

[Buber 1958, 32-33 (deletions and ellipses added)]

The line opens



## dispersion

as light scatters through morning mist  
all is subtly born  
in shape and form alone

a loon calls  
through the grey  
dream of the blood moon

dream related  
to the architecture of water

the sound of this paddle  
dipping beneath the surface

blurred  
echoes  
echoing

in the beginning  
I am

*I am  
in the beginning*

*echoing  
echoes  
blurred*

*dipping beneath the surface  
sound of this paddle*

*to the architecture of water  
dream related*

*of the blood moon  
through the grey  
a loon call*

*in shape and form alone  
all is borne  
as light scatters*

## l'inconnu

last night  
i wrestled with a man  
unseen  
untouched by light  
whose subtle bondage  
manifested  
in resistance

that night fragmented memory

and as i struggled  
he matched my strength  
measure for measure  
grinding me into the concrete  
while all about us  
faces gathered  
from the shadows

voices in the dark

last night  
i wrestled with a man  
unseen  
untouched by light  
and where i held him  
there  
against my skin  
was a surface of darkness  
strangely revealed

*Relating Connecting Merging Love Excess Risking Threatening Annihilating*

Here is the chora.

The chora is the semiotic [Kristeva 1986, 89-136]. Drives and energies, rhythms and patterns. The chora is process, temporal, changing. The chora is body, unconscious. Ordering, separating, departure.

The chora brings *birth*.

In the chora, thinking is rhythms, tracings, patterns. The thinking before thinking. Ephemeral. Elusive. Changing.

In the chora, poetic resonance dissolves boundaries, threatens structures, unfixes thought. The place of creation. The receptive. Dynamic. Pregnant with thought. Thoughts that are not thought. Intimated. Suggested. Ordered, gathered, patterned. Formed.

*New.*

New through the rupture. The boundary. The *thetic* [Kristeva 1986, 99].

The chora threatens the structure of thought. The thetic boundary separates the semiotic from the structure. Posits thought. Fixes Thought. Manifests thought. Thoughts and chora. Things and world.

*Here we begin.* Positing a thesis of the text.

THE EXCLUDED INITIATIVE OF CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE FORMS IN POETIC  
RESONANCE. THIS *MEANS* PLATO'S EXPULSION OF THE POETS.

NAMELY, HIMSELF.

## **The forth calling**

*The forth calling is undisclosed.  
The forth calling is silent. The still point.  
The forth calling is transcendent. Return*

“Window with falling snow is arrayed  
Long tolls the vesper bell.  
The house is provided well,  
The table is for many laid.

“Wandering ones, more than a few,  
Come to the door on darksome courses.  
Golden blooms the tree of graces  
Drawing up the earth's cool dew.

“Wanderer quietly steps within;  
Pain has turned the threshold to stone.  
There lie, in limpid brightness shown,  
Upon the table bread and wine.”

[Trakl in Heidegger 1975]

Now the house is church; the bread and wine, sacraments; the tree of graces, Life

Now a quiet winter evening

### **PART III: Contemplation in two voices for piano and flute**

*"The spirit of the valley never dies.  
It is called the mystic female.  
The door of the mystic female  
is the root of heaven and earth.*

*"Continuously, continuously,  
it seems to remain.  
Draw upon it  
and it serves you with ease"*

*[Tao Te Ching VI]*

"All science is the search for unity hidden in likenesses ... The scientist looks for order in the appearance of nature by exploring such likenesses. For order does not display itself of itself; if it can be said to be there at all it is not there for the mere looking. There is no way of pointing a finger or a camera at it; order must be discovered and, in a deep sense, it must be created. What we see, as we see it, is mere disorder ... We re-make nature by the act of discovery, in the poem or in the theorem"

[Bronowski 1956, 23;24;32 (ellipses and deletions added)]

*"Looked at but cannot be seen —  
that is called the invisible.  
Listened to but cannot be heard —  
that is called the inaudible.  
Grasped at but cannot be touched —  
that is call the intangible.  
These three elude all our inquires  
and hence blend and become one.*

*"Not by its rising is there light,  
nor by its setting is there darkness.  
Unceasing, continuous,  
it cannot be defined,  
and reverts again to the realm of nothingness"*

*[Tao Te Ching XIV]*

“2.21 A picture agrees with reality or fails to agree; it is correct or incorrect, true or false.

“2.22 What a picture represents it represents independently of its truth or falsity, by means of its pictorial form.

“2.221 What a picture represents is its sense.

“2.222 The agreement or disagreement of its sense with reality constitutes its truth or falsity.

“2.223 In order to tell whether a picture is true or false we must compare it with reality.

“2.224 It is impossible to tell from the picture alone whether it is true or false.

“2.225 There are no pictures that are true a priori.

“3. A logical picture of facts is a thought.”

[Wittgenstein 1977, 10]

*“The changes is a book  
from which one may not hold aloof.  
Its tao is forever changing —  
alteration, movement without rest,  
flowing through the six empty places;  
rising and sinking without fixed law,  
firm and yielding transform each other.  
They cannot be confined within a rule;  
it is only change that is at work here.*

...

*First take up the words,  
ponder their meaning,  
then the fixed rules reveal themselves.  
But if you are not the right man,  
the meaning will not manifest itself to you.”*

[The Great Treatise II: VIII, I Ching]

“6.54 My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way:  
anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as  
nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up  
beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder  
after he has climbed up it.)  
He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see  
the world aright.

“7. What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence”  
[Wittgenstein 1977, 74]

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