

**THE GROWING DESERT: NIHILISM AND METAPHYSICS
IN MARTIN HEIDEGGER'S THOUGHT**

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ABSTRACT

THE GROWING DESERT: NIHILISM AND METAPHYSICS IN HEIDEGGER'S THOUGHT

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In this study, we explore Heidegger's understanding of nihilism as the essential dimension of metaphysics, of metaphysical experience of Being, and in the following, we address his responses to it. Heidegger takes nihilism as rooted in the metaphysical way of thinking, hence metaphysics and nihilism standing in a primordial identity. Such metaphysical way of thinking as a framework in which Being is experienced and articulated, explicitly or implicitly in all areas of Western culture, from art to science, gives us the deep history or movement of Western tradition. Heidegger considers such movement to be presenting an ever growing threat, indeed as something to be consummated in the eeriest possibility of world history, that is, total destruction of human essence as an openness for the disclosure of Being. He points out to this underlying phenomenon with various designations: forgetfulness of Being, abandonment of Being, darkening of the world, *Gestell* and devastation are some of them. In this tradition, Being, from Plato and Aristotle onwards, becomes nothing at all, that is, excluded from any thoughtful consideration, reduced to a mere abstraction. Anything nihilistic, if fully delved into, would prove to conceal at its heart an alienation to the true sense of Being. Therefore, we need to develop a way of thinking outside the dominion of metaphysics, which should not only discover No-thing as the concealment dimension of Being, thus be deeply open to our finitude, but also learn to respond thoughtfully and thankfully to the gift of Being in, through and towards which we exist as human beings. Vis-a-vis the futural potentials of nihilism in this long end of Western history, the futural character of Heidegger's thinking, his search for a new way of thinking that would incipitate the other beginning, harbours a strange tension that is characteristic of his whole philosophy.

Keywords: Being, No-thing, nihilism, metaphysics, thinking, history of Being, *Gestell*, forgetfulness of Being, abandonment of Being, the other beginning, human essence.

ÖZ

BÜYÜYEN ÇÖL: HEIDEGGER DÜŞÜNCESİNDE NİHİLİZM VE METAFİZİK

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Bu çalışmada, Heidegger'in nihilizmi metafiziğin, metafiziksel Varlık deneyiminin, özsel boyutu olarak kavrayışını tetkik ediyor, ve akabinde, bu olguya Heidegger'in ne tür karşılıklar verdiğini ele alıyoruz. Heidegger nihilizmi metafiziksel düşünme biçimi içinde köklenmiş olarak düşünür, bu nedenledir ki metafizik ve nihilizm asli bir özdeşlik arzederler. Çerçevesi içerisinde Varlık'ın, açık veya örtük olarak, sanattan bilime, Batı kültürünün tüm sahalarında, deneyimlenip, ifadelendirildiği bu düşünme biçimi bize Batı geleneğinin derin tarihini ya da hareketini vermektedir. Heidegger bu hareketi giderek büyüyen bir tehdit olarak, gerçekte Batı tarihinin en tekinsiz olanağında, yani Varlık'ın tecellisi için bir açıklık alanı olarak insani özün mutlak imhasında, nihayete varacak bir şey olarak, telakki eder. Heidegger bu altta yatan olguya çeşitli isimlerle işaret eder: Varlık'ın unutulmuşluğu, Varlık'ın terketmişliği, dünyanın karanlıklaşması, *Gestell* ve mahvoluş bunlardan yalnızca bir kaçıdır. Bu gelenekte Varlık, Platon ve Aristo ile birlikte, bir hiç haline gelmekte, yani, her türlü derinliğine mütalaanın dışında bırakılmakta, sırf bir soyutlamaya indirgenmektedir. Nihilistik olan her şey yeterince derinliğine nüfuz edildiğinde Varlık'ın hakiki manasına bir yabancılaşmayı bağrında barındırdığı ortaya çıkar. Bu nedenle, sadece Hiçliği Varlık'ın gizlenme boyutu olarak keşfetmekle, ve böylece derin bir manada sonluluğumuza açık olmakla, kalmayan, aynı zamanda, içinde, sayesinde ve ona yönelik bir şekilde insan varlıkları olarak varoluş halinde bulunduğumuz Varlık hediyesine mütefekkirane ve müteşekkiraneye mükabele edecek, metafiziğinin hakimiyet alanı dışında bir düşünme biçimi geliştirmeliyiz. Batı tarihinin bu en uzun son evresinde, Nihilizmin geleceksel potansiyellerine karşılık olarak, Heidegger'in düşüncesinin geleceksel karakteri, O'nun öteki başlangıcı ibda edecek yeni bir düşünme biçimi arayışı, felsefesinin karakteristiği olan tuhaf bir gerilimi içinde saklamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Varlık, Hiçlik, nihilizm, metafizik, düşünme, Varlık tarihi, *Gestell*, Varlığın unutulmuşluğu, Varlığın terketmişliği, öteki başlangıç, insani öz.

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But, of course, responsibility for anything stated in the present study is mine alone.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Of selected works by Martin Heidegger

SZ *Sein und Zeit*. GA 2

BT *Being and Time* (translation by Macquarrie & Robinson)

GA *Gesamtausgabe* (1978-), followed by volume and page number

BW *Basic Writings*

VA *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. GA 7

IM *Introduction to Metaphysics*

EM *Einführung in die Metaphysik*. GA 40

HW *Holzwege*. GA 5

OBT *Off the Beaten Track*

PM *Pathmarks*

WM *Wegmarken*. GA 9

BP *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. GA 65

CP *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*

B *Besinnung*. GA 66

M *Mindfulness*

MN *Metaphysik und Nihilismus*. GA 67

N *Nietzsche* (followed by volume number)

DT *Discourse on Thinking*

EGT *Early Greek Thinking*

BQP *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected Problems of Logic*

PLT *Poetry Language Thought*

WCT *What is Called Thinking?*

EJ *Zur Ernst Jünger*. GA 90

EP *The End of Philosophy*

OL *On the Way to Language*

HC *Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*

SD *Zur Sache des Denkens*. GA 14.

AM *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1–3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force*

ID *Identität und Differenz*. GA 11

For full details of these titles, see the Bibliography.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) argues that nihilism today is the normal condition of mankind.¹ A terrifying statement. If Heidegger is right, we today breathe in the air of nihilism, stagger in the desert of meaninglessness. Even though one is rightly terrified with the associations of such an idea, one is virtually at a loss when one is asked to explain what is so troubling about nihilism. Indeed, do we really know what is so terrific about nihilism, or we are just afraid of something which we do not know what? This question, admittedly, assumes that an almost instinctive fear about nihilism is something that is genuinely human. I would even add that such a fear could be far more fundamental than any biological fear that senses a threat against survival. An animal shows its deepest reaction to preserve its life, whereas humans do the same thing when meaning is at stake, the ultimate instance of which, one might hold, is the threat of nihilism. Then it is never a groundless fear: so long as we are human, we will feel dread against the prospects of nihilism. But although one can easily, so I believe, see that the contemporary world is filled with nihilistic phenomena, it would be something else to claim that nihilism rules in it. For now, the latter which is Heidegger's claim above should be left open.

Yet nihilism remains, at the very least, a truly serious threat. This we can sense in every field of contemporary world provided that we can look at things with a basic human sensitivity, from within our human essence. However it is also a fact that today in the post-modern world, like all serious things, the threat of nihilism, too, seems to be banalized and diluted. The problem is not that it is not seen, but that it is acknowledged with indifference. Thus, today, as Carr points out, "the presence of nihilism evokes not terror but a yawn."² Does not this indicate that we remain increasingly kept off our human essence that is somehow to be understood in reference to an essential care for meaning and truth? If this is the case, that is, if we fail to show reactions proper to our human essence, then does not this fact itself point toward an added urgency of the threat? Thus I agree with Carr that "nihilism ... comes full circle as its crisis value diminishes, as it becomes accepted with an indifferent shrug."³ Heidegger, from his Nietzsche lectures on, characterizes this situation of the modern man in the face of nihilism as "the emergency of lack of emergency" (*Not der Notlosigkeit*).

¹ Martin Heidegger, "On the Question of Being" in *PM*, 297: *WM*, 393.

² Karen L. Carr. *The Banalization of Nihilism: Twentieth Century Responses to Meaninglessness* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), p. 7.

³ *The Banalization of Nihilism*, p. 10.

Perhaps, in this way, we play with the potentials of an indirect answer for our above preliminary question, (namely do we know what is so terrific about nihilism, or we are afraid, if we are at all, of something which we do not know what?): what is at stake with nihilism is the spectre of the bereavement of our human essence which is first of all an underlying concern for meaning and truth. This point is worth taking notice of as a tentative exploration before proceeding to Heidegger's treatment of nihilism.

But nihilism is in fact a very amorphous notion with rich nuances. If we take it as a profound danger against our relatedness to meaning, as we do above, there is the risk that we lose sight of its other living senses, its senses in practice. It has had many ramifications in various fields and jargons. *The Oxford Dictionary* (2008) lists, in total, 32 usages of the word nihilism. As a result, the word entails a considerable ambiguity. It would be quite anti-Wittgensteinian to seek a governing and essential sense for it, to subsume it under one central sense, thus overlooking the differences of sense at work in various contexts. Heidegger is here quite opposed to Wittgenstein in that he assumes that nihilism basically has one essential sense, as we will see. However one should not forget that the essential as Heidegger understands it must not be taken in the traditional manner, that is, in terms of *quidditas*. The essential shows itself not as generality but as the ownmost dimension of things. Furthermore, the essential is always marked by ambiguity and manifoldness. Then such ambiguity is not at bottom a linguistic matter to be dissected by means of a careful linguistic analysis, but something given to language in a connected way through a rich history of the disclosures of Being needing to be interpreted through a unitary focus on Being *as* Being, which is exactly what Heidegger does. Now nihilism has an essential sense (say, an inner logic) which binds together all uses of the word "nihilism" as well as all nihilistic phenomena. We will see how Heidegger justifies himself in coming up with an essential sense of nihilism and whether he responds successfully to the Wittgensteinian strictures.

Hence, provisionally, we note down the two interrelated points: (1) the ambiguity of the word "nihilism" (2) the complexity of the phenomenon of nihilism. As a matter of fact, the word rather than referring to an adopted philosophical position serves for the most part as a pejorative label that qualifies opposed views or doings with destructiveness or mere negativity. In addition to many other senses, such as loss of meaning, the rule of nothingness, denial of human values, rejection of authority, negation of shared notions, un-belief, despair, goallessness and revolt, nihilism is also associated with destructiveness, and destructiveness for its own sake. This is revealed in Nietzsche's following words: "Nihilism does not only

contemplate the “in vain!” nor is it merely the belief that everything deserves to perish: one helps to destroy.”⁴

Nihilism as a problem or phenomenon is, above all, a distinctively modern one. It may capture the characteristically modern experience that one fails in finding any comprehensive or underlying meaning in things. It is the problem of loss (or lack) of meaning which represents an unmistakable element of the whole modern mood. We so often hear such titles as search for meaning, the meaning of life, what is it all about?, the riddle of existence and so forth. Numerous books have been written on this subject. In no age in world history before modern times one can observe such a sharp preoccupation with meaning, in a negative or positive sense. This perhaps attests to the depth of the loss, to the radicality of the extent in which the meaninglessness threatens our lives. Perhaps, the most interesting thing about nihilism is that it is a matter more about facts than about propositions. However, we also know that there are some self-conscious nihilistic positions in philosophy, at least in the 20th century. Nietzsche’s is the point in case. Nietzsche understands his position as an active nihilism as opposed to the passive or incomplete nihilism of Western culture, that is, its cultural-spiritual-moral decrepitude. He summarizes the phenomenon of nihilism that has permeated into the western culture with the word; “God is dead”. Where the passive nihilist pretends that God (the whole of central values of western humanity) was not dead, Nietzsche welcomes the death of God, but does not stop here: he urges us to the more, namely radical revaluation of all these decrepit values through the key of will to power. Arguably, the death of God as a nihilistic condition is the defining moment of modernity. Julian Young suggests that all continental philosophy in the 20th century has been done in response to nihilism, to the death of God.⁵

Now, let us expand a bit more our surface description of nihilism. Nihilism is used to signify any position which says that the world is inherently devoid of sense, value and purpose and that human existence likewise has no genuine meaning and consequence. Karl Jaspers concisely states the sense which is immediately conveyed to us when we hear the word nihilism: “Everything we believe in has become hollow; everything is conditioned and relative; there is no ground, no absolute, no being in itself. Everything is questionable, nothing is true, everything is allowed.”⁶ This presents nihilism as a decisive phenomenon of our age. It also conceals the conviction that this should not have been so: there is a fundamental pathology about the modern world as a whole. Nihilism, one might hold, is this

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*, ed. W. Kaufmann, trans. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 18.

⁵ Julian Young. *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 4, 83.

⁶ Karl Jaspers. *Der Philosophische Glaube* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1958), p. 116. Quoted in Karsten Harries, *Infinity and Perspective* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), p. 12. Translation is Harries’.

pathology, i.e the state of meaninglessness as the defining state of the world. A nihilist is someone who is convinced that such state is *intrinsic* to the world. S/he would tend to dispense with meaning and truth, and seek a naturalistic interpretation of the world (as did Quine and Nietzsche, in different ways). If you, like Jaspers, or Heidegger in a different sense, identify it as a pathology of which we need to be saved, you believe that such state is a historical fact, not a fixed condition.

Donald Crosby in his book, *The Specter of the Absurd*⁷, sets out to specify five types of nihilism; political nihilism, moral nihilism, epistemological nihilism, cosmic nihilism, existential nihilism. In the following, for a short while, I propose to keep loyal to this categorization, bearing however in mind that these versions of nihilism coalesce in various ways into each other. In each of these designations, one basic attitude shows itself: namely, “total negation” of what has come to inform our basic “human assumptions”, reflected or unreflected. Then we might also suggest that nihilism consists in affirming the negative *per se*.

Thus, the essential, perhaps unconscious, positivity that pervades many of us in our way of taking things, is challenged, argued to be no more than a mere illusion. For example, epistemological nihilism involves a rejection of all knowledge claims. It is the view that nothing is actually known or knowable to us. Knowledge is just that word of childish optimism. There are no objective meanings or truths. The thing is that human mind radically incapable of apprehending in-itself facts has no touch with real entities, but plays instead only with what is called sensations, with “mere appearances” and out of will imposes uniformity upon them which thus has no objective basis. On account of this, Jacobi, for instance, who is probably the first philosopher to use the term “nihilism”, once had qualified Kant’s transcendental philosophy with nihilism.⁸ Here one should of course leave open whether Kantian epistemology amounts to an epistemological nihilism or not. However it remains a fact that Kant’s legacy has come to nourish many nihilistic conceptions of epistemology (e.g Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Mauthner, logical positivism). Versions of epistemological nihilism show a variety of positions ranging from radical subjectivism to radical scepticism and relativism.

Cosmic nihilism, on the other hand, refers to the belief that the world is nothing intelligible. It is an alien and hostile world, a stage of human misery, a cacophony of blind

⁷ Donald A. Crosby. *The Specter of the Absurd: Sources and Criticisms of Modern Nihilism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

⁸ See, especially, Paul Franks. “All or Nothing: Systematicity and Nihilism in Jacobi, Reinhold and Maimon.” In *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 95–116.

forces, that is, in the French biochemist Jacques Monod's words, an "uncaring emptiness"⁹. Indeed, for Schopenhauer, for example, this world is something demonic, little more than "worst of all possible worlds". He is convinced that life is not worth living. Thus he could emphatically assert that suicide is the best thing to do so as to be freed from the clutches of this cosmic evil. Moral nihilism claims that moral norms lack any true ground. It denies any moral sense to the world. A moral nihilist hence "sees no reason to submit his actions to any moral principle"¹⁰. The words, good and evil, are just human conventions. Morality is accordingly something we humans fabricate in various ways and for various purposes. For Nietzsche, who may be considered to be the chief representative of this kind of nihilism, morality is subservient to the interests of power. Political nihilism defends a rejection of all authority, all established institutions and political norms. In the 19th century Russia, it has evolved into a social and cultural movement in which one may find some important elements of the whole ideology of soviet communism.

Finally, existential nihilism sees absurdity at the very core of human life. Sartre expresses this in the following way: "Uncreated, without reason for being, without any connection with another being, being-in-itself is superfluous (*de trop*) for all eternity."¹¹ Somewhat echoing Kant, Nietzsche and Husserl, he believes that meaning is not in things themselves, but it is something we, subjects, must create through a radical jump of subjective freedom. This requires a constant fight against the meaninglessness as well as antagonism of things (other humans included: "Hell is- other people"¹²) which arouses an extreme feeling of disgust, what Sartre calls "nausea"¹³. Camus, perhaps the most exemplary instance of existential nihilism, following the lead of Sartre, argues that human existence is surrounded by "the absurd walls"¹⁴: "the Absurd is not in man ... nor in the world, but in their presence together."¹⁵ The absurd is not something surpassable: it is intrinsic and therefore definitive state of human life. The intrinsic meaninglessness of human existence is the sole evidence for a true awareness to base upon.¹⁶ But Sisyphus heroically accepts this knowing that life "will be lived all the better if it has no meaning"¹⁷ in the form of "an indifference to the

⁹ Jacques Monod. *Chance and Necessity: An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 161.

¹⁰ *The Specter of the Absurd*, p. 12.

¹¹ Jean-Paul Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*, trans. H. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 26.

¹² Jean-Paul Sartre. *No Exit and Three Other Plays*, trans. S. Gilbert (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 47.

¹³ A theme which Sartre has popularized with his novel of the same name: *Nausea*, trans. L. Alexander (New York: New Directions, 1964).

¹⁴ Albert Camus. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. J. O'Brien (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-38.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

future and a desire to use up everything that is given.”¹⁸ Thus, suffering becomes the hour of consciousness, and torture lucidity.¹⁹

Nihilism as indicated is a complex issue. To be sure, we here have no concern of discussing nihilistic doctrines in detail. Rather, after this quick glance at the general context of nihilism, we shall make it fully explicit that the goal of this study is to examine and elucidate aspects of Heidegger’s response to nihilism, to the death of God, to which a brief reference is already made above. In this way, however, we hope, this study may open a different perspective into the whole problem of nihilism, a perspective which we might gain from Heidegger’s insights into Being and nihilism. The first thing to see in this context is that Heidegger has in mind none of the above positions when he thinks about nihilism. For Heidegger, nihilism is about Being itself, and only for that reason, it is a supremely serious issue for us.

Put in rough terms, this has some implications. First of all, nihilism does *not* refer (1) to a doctrine, (2) to a moral phenomenon (say, an utter loss of moral sense) (3) to an epistemological condition (e.g extreme scepticism), (4) to a destructive political ideology or reality (anarchism or totalitarianism). Heidegger argues that nihilism is *the* history, and holds sway as and through *the* history. The history at issue is, needless to say, the Western history. More specifically, nihilism is the fundamental understanding of Being which distinguishes and determines Western history and tradition as a whole in which Being as such is forgotten, and forgotten Being, as a consequence, has withdrawn from human life, that is, in Heidegger’s words, abandoned beings. Hence, nihilism is an ontological paradigm in which the happening of Being itself has been lost, Being itself has been (as) nothing. This eclipse of Being has grown through history. The fundamental happening at the heart of human life, as the source of all meaningful presence of things, has ceased progressively to be question-worthy. Its claim and call needs to be responded with thoughtful reception, its truth needs to be sheltered in a thinking submitting, and thus corresponding to this truth, i.e in the open-endedness of questioning. The kind of understanding of Being which has dominated the Western tradition (beginning with Plato and ending in Nietzsche), on the contrary, has busied itself with the knowledge of beings (with their perception, representation, ratiocination, planning, organization, mastery and manipulation) as such and as a whole, not with how these beings are given/disclosed/opened to us such that they can become present to us meaningfully and we can engage with them with certain purposes.

The structure of this deep historical occurrence Heidegger grasps with the word, metaphysics, in which our essence, our receptivity for the sense (disclosure) of Being has

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 90.

grown alienated to the ownmost in Being, has grown inappropriate to its essence. Generally speaking, this is because the way of comportment towards Being which characterizes metaphysics is determined by two factors operating together 1) the precedence of beings 2) self-evidence of Being.²⁰ For metaphysics, Heidegger asserts, Being is nothing more than an abstraction.

Hence, nihilism is the hidden essence of metaphysics, and metaphysics is at bottom nihilism. It follows that for Heidegger, questioning nihilism entails questioning metaphysics. Heidegger maintains that so far as the Western tradition is concerned, metaphysics remains the paradigmatic way of thinking. In short, the essential dimension of nihilism must be sought in the metaphysical way of thinking itself. Furthermore, Heidegger associates metaphysical way of thinking with logic, social and natural sciences, epistemology, humanism, positivism and technology as its remote offsprings. In fine, all basic forms of modern life are inherently nihilistic i.e radically marked by the lack of “authentic meaning”. Then, we are compelled to ask: How can we make sense of the claim which asserts that modernity not in its this or that aspect but as a whole and in its historical depth is thoroughly nihilistic? We in this study devote considerable space for the exposition and elucidation of this claim (especially chapter 6 and 7).

Then, nihilism, most importantly, is not a kind of problem which arises out of propositions like the problem of external world, for instance: nihilism is always more than its explicit doctrines, more than any arguments adduced for it. Likewise one does not get outside nihilism simply because one has anti-nihilistic ideas. It rather relates to the historically structured concrete way in which human beings exist in the world, experiences and responds to it. It is thus a problem which involves human existence at the deepest level.

Consequently, we here in this study shall investigate Heidegger’s philosophical treatment of nihilism, which purports to unearth its essential source, its historical-ontological ground. We will problematize basic aspects of Heidegger’s “essential” approach to the problem. For one thing, Heidegger was unmatched in his philosophical sensitivity about the problem as the most distinguishing feature of our present age (as the “deep reality” of our time). For another the question of nihilism like a litmus may disclose the true import of Heidegger’s whole (ontological) thinking as a thinking about meaning and meaningful existence.²¹

²⁰ “Metaphysics as History of Being” in *EP*, 11.

²¹ As regards this point, Heidegger’s concern from the very outset is undeniable. In 1919, as early as eight years before *Being & Time* he writes: “The meaningful (*das Bedeutsame*)—that is what is primary, that is what is immediately in your face without any detour through some mental grasp of the thing. When you live in the world of first-hand experience, everything comes at you loaded with meaning, all over the place and all the time. Everything is embedded in a meaningful context, and that context is *what gives it meaning*.” See *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, GA 56/57 (Frankfurt am

Obviously, nihilism has to do with our defining meaning-relatedness and meaning-committed existence. Given that Heidegger saw the primary task of philosophy as thoughtful engagement with the disclosure of Being “in and through” language, as laying open an authentic space for meaning, for the truth of Being, for *a-letheia*, his characterisation of and answer to nihilism gains an intrinsic importance.

Encountering the question of nihilism

In Heidegger’s philosophy, the question of nihilism follows (almost directly and naturally) from the question about Being. Especially, with the 1930s, it forms the background against which the question of Being becomes fully meaningful. Heidegger took it quite seriously that we today live in the darkest age of the world history, in an extreme oblivion of “the essential”. The essential refers to Being itself in its truth and the way human essence is related to it in the sense of “belonging” to it. The question of nihilism as it is found in Heidegger brings the essential into focus in its world-historical occurrence (and the modern context being the concentration of the extreme possibilities of this occurrence as a non-occurrence- *Unwesen*- of Being itself) and involves the conviction that the essential is *virtually* lost to us, humans. How can we retrieve it? This requires us to assume a decisive confrontation with the question of nihilism, to turn in decisively and directly towards the question itself, thereby entering a dialogue with metaphysics and its tradition.²² But first how can we understand it? What does the question of nihilism say? In general terms, it requires that we think of nihilism in its essence, i.e in its radical and revealing link to the question of Being. The question of Being arises from Being’s being the ownmost matter of thinking as a fundamental need or emergency (*Not*). For Heidegger, the question-character of Being is the unique way we, humans, are able to approach it authentically. Furthermore, Being needs and demands this questioning and therefore lays claim on human entities, “who” are thrown standing t/here (*Dasein*), in the open site of this questioning. Heidegger holds that the question of Being itself grounds history and makes *Dasein* historical, because in response to questioning alone Being shows up *anfänglichlicherweise* (as a history-grounding beginning) and the way Being shows up in human understanding lies at the core of history. The dimension of our access to Being in the form of questioning invites the corresponding “occurrence” of Being (*Kehre*) as the historical dimension itself. We thus emphasize in this study the potentials of the question of Being as the question itself for going beyond the metaphysical way of thinking.

Main: Vittorio-Klostremann, 1987, 1999), p. 73. Quoted in Sheehan (2004), p. 12. Translation is Sheehan’s.

²² See, “On the Question of Being” in *PM*, 313-316.

On the other hand, the question of Being cannot be asked independently of the historical context. The question about Being “becomes a meditation on the provenance of our (Western) concealed history”²³. Thus, Heidegger understood the question of Being²⁴ also through the perspective of this question, explicit in one of the key texts of 1930s, *Introduction to Metaphysics* : “**How does it stand with Being?**”²⁵ In the nutshell, Heidegger’s answer to this question is nihilism: “What is going on with Being? With Being nothing is going on. And what if it is only in that nothing that the hitherto disguised essence of nihilism announces itself?”²⁶ Thus he insinuates that Being is reduced to “a mere word and its meaning a vapor”²⁷: Nihilism is the actuality of our age. And this, of course, with a vital historical sense. Nihilism is the modern “clearing” of Being, the final destination in the sequence of epochs of self-revelation (and self-concealment) of Being, that means in the history of Being. History, in the ontological sense, becomes a history of understandings of Being, of the forms of manifestation of Being at the free space (*das Freie, das Da, das Offene*) which is the human level. Understanding of Being is something like a destiny for an age: no individual human being can do anything about it except for raising fundamental questions concerning it and thinking in the guidance of these questions, (which remains always an authentic possibility, a liberating potential for Dasein). Heidegger argues that the general context of this understanding of Being in the case of Western history is metaphysics, which as such stands for the true nature of nihilism (*eigentliche Nihilismus*).²⁸ This is examined in detail, in chapter 3.

Yet this claim, certainly a fundamental item of Heidegger’s whole *seinsgeschichtlich* thinking, is obviously nebulous. To make his case, Heidegger, (as we shall see in Chapters 4, 5 and 6), while reading the historical texts of metaphysics, exerts extreme violence on virtually all basic concepts (metaphysics, nihilism, Being, history, truth and other related concepts) by interpreting them in entirely different senses. Heidegger is often accused of “redefining” things (which he calls a “necessary violence”) and at times so radically that this leaves little room for a minimum of “common-sense” (which, no wonder, he despises!). Are nihilism and metaphysics, above all, one of them? If so, is it possible that there may be found

²³ *IM*, 97: *EM*, 99. Heidegger argues in this lecture that such hidden history is the history of Being.

²⁴ Heidegger frequently formulates this question in this form: “why are there beings, rather than nothing?”. This question closes, *What is Metaphysics?* and opens *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

²⁵ “**Wie steht es um das Sein?**” *IM*, 35: *EM*, 36. The question is the preliminary question for a treatment of the fundamental one, namely, “Why are there beings, rather than nothing?”. Both questions frequently recur in the text and form its focus.

²⁶ Nietzsche’s Word: “God is Dead” in *OBT*, 193: “Wie ist es mit dem Sein? Mit dem Sein ist es nichts. Wie, wenn darin erst das bisher verhüllte Wesen des Nihilismus sich ankündigte?” “Nietzsches Wort “Gott ist Tod”” in *HW*, 259.

²⁷ *IM*, 40: *EM*, 40.

²⁸ “Die Metaphysik als solche ist der eigentliche Nihilismus”, *MN*, 216, 210, 211. All translations from *MN* (*Metaphysik und Nihilismus*) are mine.

something essential in such violence? To assess this, we need to elucidate carefully Heidegger's thesis stated above on the connection between metaphysics and nihilism, by critically examining the directly relevant notions as well as the whole context and development of Heidegger's insights about it. This is especially treated in chapter 3.

Hence, in this connection, unfolds our problematique: What is the precise nature of nihilism in Heidegger's sense? Why is metaphysics fundamentally nihilistic? That is, how can we interpret Heidegger's argument that nihilism is the hidden essence of metaphysics? After all, What kind of thinking is metaphysics? (Why is it the source of all evil!?) How does it as a way of thinking actively determine and ground the whole western history? If so, does not this entail a problem of historical idealism here? How is it that modernity is the culmination of nihilism? What is the central importance of this claim for the whole context of Heidegger's philosophy of Being? What does Heidegger mean by the very connotation "nihilism"? Certainly, not the standard (or surface) conception of nihilism, which is not difficult to understand, but, as stated above, its underlying level. Then the question can be re-phrased also this way: What is the underlying meaning and reality of nihilism?, What is the nihilistic comportment towards the world in its essence as conceived by Heidegger?

Accordingly, our investigation attempts to examine the problem of nihilism and the dimensions of its connection to (or identity with) metaphysics in Heidegger's thought. As indicated, nihilism, one of the leitmotives of Heidegger's thinking from the 1930s on, occupies a crucial place in Heidegger's ontological thinking. Heidegger's discussion of the problem is inextricably intertwined with his sole engagement, thinking of Being (and thereby with the discussions of metaphysics, history, truth, Nietzsche, technology, humanism and thinking, to name just a few). So much so that when you inverse the coin, the question of Being, you have the question of nihilism: Both actually point to the same level of *seinsgeschichtlich* thinking of the truth of Being. It, admittedly, follows an intricate path. Accordingly, Heidegger's reasons for conceiving of nihilism (i.e of Being in its default), as having metaphysical ground and origin, can be clarified adequately, if we pay heed to such path, and the transformations therein.

Naturally, we begin with *Being & Time* (chapter 2) where one can detect the very "back-ground" of the problem of nihilism and its defining way of thinking, metaphysics, in Heidegger's thought. One, however, should note that nihilism and metaphysics in their connection do not yet arise as explicit problems in *Being & Time*. But there is a direct way to it, namely, discussions of fallenness (*Verfallen*), everydayness (*Alltäglichkeit*), they (*Das Man*), authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*), resolution (*Entschlossenheit*), temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*), death (*Tod*), being-toward-death (*Sein-zum-Tod*), theoretical attitude etc. We now investigate certain themes in *Being & Time*, which provide the background for Heidegger's later turn to

the questions of metaphysics, nihilism, truth, thinking and history and thus for our above questions.

The focus of the analysis

It should be made clear beforehand that what is offered here is far from being an exhaustive investigation of this topic. Evidently, there are various possible ways to deal with it. So we chose one angle to approach our problem and embarked on developing out its potentials. Our angle departs from the dominant themes of second division of *Being and Time*, namely fallenness, forgetfulness of Being and inauthenticity, as informing theoretical attitude, thus as the background of Heidegger's discussion of metaphysics. The question of Nothing reveals the whole essence of metaphysics as a presence-centred disclosure of Being in which authentic possibilities of unconcealment of Being are systematically covered over. This actually amounts to covering up Being itself, that is, to nihilism in Heidegger's sense. This presence-centred temporal disclosure of Being is a historically determined occurrence already established in Plato's and Aristotle's thought: metaphysics from this late Greek age onwards is the history (*Geschichte*) and destiny (*Geschick*) of Western humanity, and unfolds its essence in ever increasing intensity of the loss of Being and of the hegemony of entitative vision. The history of Being is the history in which all potentials of nihilism come out to inform the overall mechanic of metaphysical representation: it is a history of growing danger. This history of Being is characterized by an onto-theo-logical constitution. Even Nietzsche's thought is an onto-theo-logy, indeed its extreme expression. Nietzsche's metaphysics of "will to power" as the ultimate manifestation of subjectivistic metaphysics or metaphysics of will beginning with Descartes is an end of metaphysics, that is, a stage of consummation in which all possibilities of metaphysics and nihilism are exhausted. It provides an ultimate justification for (i.e it grounds) the technological revelation of the world in which nihilism gets full rein, the world and the things are reduced to a one-dimensional totality, are projected in an uttermost poverty, i.e in the key of maintaining-enhancing power. Will to power (*Wille zur Macht*) is the decisive ontological paradigm in which beings can be released unconditionally into the projection of machination (*Machenschaft*).

As a self-critique, our angle leaves out other possible viewpoints into the topic. For example, it is also possible to elaborate the issue of nihilism by examining Heidegger's discussion of Hölderlin, art, poetry and language. Another fertile path would be an investigation into Heidegger's studies on German idealism (Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Hölderlin) and the battle therein against subjectivism. A study exclusively devoted to Heidegger's explorations into Nietzsche, too, would be quite revealing, as would later

Heidegger's meditations on technology, dwelling and *Gelassenheit*. Our angle which focuses on the history of being, spanning through theoretical attitude (chapter 2), the question of *nihil* (chapter 3), the onset of metaphysics (chapter 4), onto-theo-logy (chapter 5), up to Nietzsche (chapter 6) and technology (chapter 7), exploits references to the above aspects sometimes in detail, but sometimes only sparingly.

Besides, in our inquiry, a synoptic view on "the whole" of Heidegger is the constant element of the process in which our topic is discussed. So we needed to touch on many aspects of Heidegger's thought, we needed to pass evaluations on various Heideggerian themes, and this often, as is required, in a summary fashion. This has at least two reasons. Firstly, for Heidegger philosophy is a unitary venture: there is no division of labour, no compartments, no classification, no hierarchy, no specialisation here. Everything in Heidegger, therefore is intimately connected with one another. This is not out of the systematicity of his thinking (which is not the case at all). This, Heidegger might say, results from the unitary essence of a thinking entrusted itself to the question of Being and issuing from this core dimension like a flower belonging to and rising forth from its *own* soil. Thinking that undertakes its belongingness to Being is essentially poi(e)tic. Secondly, the question of nihilism and metaphysics bears almost on all sides of Heidegger's problematique, since nihilism and metaphysics in their identity is the basic manner in which Being happens to the historical humanity as the essence of this historicity itself. In other words, as far as history of Western tradition is concerned, Being *is* as its essential withdrawal, as *its* default, i.e as metaphysics/ nihilism.

CHAPTER 2

FORGETFULNESS OF BEING, OF DEATH, AND OF NOTHING: FALLENNESS AND INAUTHENTICITY

The main task of this chapter is to unearth “the back-ground of Heidegger’s nihilism debate”, which, I suggest, is found in *Being & Time*, namely in the discussion of “fallenness” (*Verfallen*), which is, in turn, connected with other themes such as *In-der-Welt-sein*, *Dasein*, *Existenz*, *Eigentlichkeit*, *Mitsein*, *Befindlichkeit*, *Angst*, *Endlichkeit*, *Tod* etc. Fallenness, i.e. evasion from *Nichtigkeit*, (Nothingness, or finitude, *Sein zum Tode*, the call of conscience etc.) as one’s essence has some significant connections with metaphysics’ flight from *das Nichts*: in both cases, nihilism is rooted in missing the *nihil* (variously designatable as absence, concealment, nothing, finitude, mortality) as the hidden source of all meaning/disclosure, and as the inner character of the arena (world) into which *Dasein* is thrown.

The *nihil* is the *telos* (end) of human existence. To be human, to be *Dasein*, i.e. to be determined by an understanding of Being, means also to understand this radical fact, i.e. one’s finitude. But to understand it is one thing, and to self-consciously appropriate it just another. To appropriate finitude (or the *nihil*) as one’s essential moment means to let oneself be determined (*bestimmt*) by its impact, and to acknowledge that to be *Dasein* is to be *Schuldigsein* (“lack-in-being”²⁹), “to be the basis of a nothingness” (“*Grundsein einer Nichtigkeit*”³⁰). *Dasein*’s essence, *Nichtigkeit*, reveals *Dasein* an ineluctably unfinished project, as an unbridgable ontological lack. But it is precisely because of this inner reality of *Dasein* that *Dasein* is the site (*Da*) for the disclosure of meaning (of Being). However, for the highest possibility in this regard, namely a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of Being as such (fundamental ontology), the *nihil* at the heart of *Dasein*’s being needs to be

²⁹ *Schuldigsein* is translated as “lack-in-Being”, instead of its literal translation, “Being-guilty”, for it refers to the point that *Dasein* remains ontologically incomplete which is something structural. This translation belongs to Thomas Sheehan and Corinne Painter. See, “Choosing one’s fate: a re-reading of *SEIN UND ZEIT* §74” *Research in Phenomenology*, XXVIII (1999), 63-83. This interpretation, I think rightly, takes into consideration Heidegger’s insistent use of the term “*Mangel*” in this context, as in the following: “Denn auch hier wird die Schuld notwendig noch als *Mangel* bestimmt, als Fehlen von etwas, was sein soll und kann.” *SZ*, 283.

³⁰ *SZ*, 283.

actively owned. The reverse case, forgetting the *nihil*, corresponds to absorption in presence (fallenness) in Dasein's everyday life and to the domination of "theory" (taking Being in terms of generality, as "the most general of generalities"³¹, i.e in terms of presence-at-hand, i.e metaphysics) in philosophy. Now the only way to make sense of this is to move through Heidegger's trajectory as a whole in *Being & Time*. Let us see.³²

As is well-known, *Being & Time*, Heidegger's *magnus opus*, deals with the question of Being: it is devoted to the clarification of the meaning of Being through an ontological inquiry into Dasein (the kind of entity we, humans are). The question of Being, it seems, remains Heidegger's sole question, the stirring ground of his thinking, from the beginning to the end. It is important enough to note that for Heidegger it is the uniquely significant question not only for all philosophy (theory), but for human existence (practice) as well. It is radically urgent that we find a fundamental answer to this question. Unfortunately, the Western philosophical tradition has no satisfactory understanding of this essential matter of thinking, Being, which precludes raising it as a question. Raising the question about Being, this uniquely fundamental question of philosophy and of human existence, preserves its pre-eminence for Heidegger up to his latest philosophical reflections. Then, a methodological reminder, in advance: it is quite essential that we keep in mind the radicality and fundamentalness of this question for Heidegger's whole thought when the matter of an adequate reading of his works, especially of *Being & Time*, arises.

Heidegger's aim in raising the question of Being in *Being & Time* is to surmount the oblivion concerning Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*) which characterizes the Western intellectual tradition from the ground up. Later in the 1930s, as we will see, Heidegger begins to identify this forgetfulness of Being itself as the very ground of nihilism. The very first sentence in the "Introduction" of *Being & Time* reads this: "This question (i.e *the question of Being*) has today been forgotten."³³ Because such forgetting is central to the nature of metaphysics in Heidegger's sense, it can provide us crucial clues about the way in which Heidegger's interpretation of nihilism develops. Though the theme of forgetfulness of Being comes to full prominence from the 1930s on, it was, without a doubt, the guiding agenda of *Being & Time*.

³¹ "allgemeinste Allgemeinheiten", *SZ*, 9: *BT*, 29.

³² As many readers noted, *Being and Time* is not a uniform unfoldment of an argument but proceeds in a spiral movement (hermeneutical circle): Heidegger, in many occasions in the course of his writing, reconsiders, revises or subtly transforms his theses. My analysis of *Being and Time* focuses more on the division 2 (especially, §§ 45-71) where, I think, one can find a more ripened discussion of certain fundamental themes such as fallenness, authenticity, resoluteness, decision, *Angst*, finitude, temporality, death, *Sein zum Tode*, guilt, and *Nichtigkeit*. These are the concepts which I argue refer to the principal background, found in *Being and Time*, of Heidegger's later discussion of metaphysics. In this context, then, it is also possible to detect the roots of Heidegger's understanding of nihilism, namely, (to Heidegger's own acceptance in later writings), in the discussion of "fallenness" as the fundamental instance of forgetfulness of Being.

³³ *SZ*, 2: *BT* 21. See also, *SZ*, 21: *BT*, 42.

In *Being & Time*, the pervasive phenomenon of *Seinsvergessenheit* is identified with *Verfallen* which refers to Dasein's inauthentic everydayness i.e. averageness (*Durchschnittlichkeit*). *Being & Time* then interprets *Seinsvergessenheit* at two interrelated levels,³⁴ namely 1) as ineluctably inherent in our Being-in-the-world: in being forgetful of his own (*eigentlich*) self, Dasein is *ordinarily* forgetful of Being 2) as underlying the Western philosophical tradition in which ontological difference is not understood and the question of Being lost.³⁵ What remains essentially overlooked at both levels, Heidegger argues, is simply one thing: temporal constitution of Dasein as radical mortality, a moment appropriation of which is key for authentic "meaning". For death is the eventual and inescapable nothingness of Dasein, radical mortality is a way of comportment on the part of Dasein towards its radical fact, "nothingness". All meaning is shot through this comportment (*verhalten sich*) towards nothingness. Why is this so? What are the implications of this assertion with respect to the forgetfulness of Being in its twofold sense? How can this claim be understood? And how is this related to Heidegger's debate on nihilism and metaphysics? In view of these questions, let us discuss the whole logic of Heidegger's movement concerning the key aspects of "fallenness" in *Being & Time*.³⁶

First, a general sense of what fundamental ontology is might be helpful for our inquiry. Fundamental ontology aims at explicating the understanding of Being (*Seinsverständnis*) which characterizes Dasein's ways of being as a practical existence. It is fundamental because it will clarify, in general and at the most fundamental level, the meaning of Being (*Sinn von Sein*) which sciences do not problematise but simply take for granted. A specific field of science, say biology, is rooted in a specific ontology (which Heidegger calls "regional ontology"), i.e. moves within a basic understanding of "what it means to be" (for biological entities), even though such understanding is never brought to full reflective clarity. Obviously, this is not something sciences can be expected to undertake, because sciences by nature are ontic, not ontological: even though they move with ontological presuppositions (in the form of a tacit and implicit understanding of Being), they are unable to explicitly deal with, bring into consideration and thematise these assumptions:

³⁴ For an interesting discussion of the context of the forgetfulness of Being, see, Dorothea Frede, "The Question of Being: Heidegger's Project" in *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 57-63.

³⁵ This for Heidegger invites a twofold task (*Doppelaufgabe*), namely exporing on the one hand the fallenness of everydayness, and on the other hand, deconstructing the Western metaphysical tradition informed by this fallenness. See, *SZ*, 15-27, § 5 . Die ontologische Analytik des Daseins als Freilegung des Horizontes für eine Interpretation des Sinnes von Sein überhaupt, § 6. Die Aufgabe einer Destruktion der Geschichte der Ontologie

³⁶ Certainly, for such an attempt we do not need an exhaustive survey of *Being & Time*, which is already prevented by the scope of our study. We thus only seek to bring out key points relevant to our hypothesis presented above.

they are exclusively focused on the behaviors of their respective entities.³⁷

The project of fundamental ontology takes it that when Dasein's characteristic constitutive understanding of Being is fully explicated, it will be the essential ontological ground, upon which regional ontologies will be able to elucidate ontological content of the basic concepts pertaining to their fields of science, in reference to which they in turn can carry out their reflective activities self-consciously, that is, in complete ontological-conceptual transparency. Thus in *Being & Time*, an ambitious foundational role is assigned for philosophy as fundamental ontology. Fundamental ontology, to repeat, is an attempt at explicating understanding of Being, (found in human being on an implicit, non-thematic, vague, pre-reflective and pre-ontological basis) into a fully reflective, thematic, clear and ontological knowledge that would provide a definite answer to the question about Being, and thereby lay an ultimate foundation for all sciences.

Thus *Being & Time* is interested in the fundamental meaning of Being through a "phenomenological analysis of the basic structures of human existence" (called "*Daseinsanalytik*"). It is not basically a phenomenology of everyday human life, or an existentialist manifesto, or interpretation of transcendental conditions of intelligibility, or a philosophical anthropology. Although all these things can be found, in some way, in *Being & Time*, they certainly do not correspond to the central issue of *Being & Time*, namely a transcendental search for the meaning of Being given to human understanding as a pre-theoretical and worldly level of disclosure of meaning, as the openness for the disclosedness of Being (i.e truth). Its goal is transcendental knowledge. Consider, for example, this crucial passage:

Being, as the basic theme of philosophy, is no class or genus of the entities; yet it pertains to every entity. Its 'universality' is to be sought higher up. Being and the structure of Being lie beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess. *Being is the transcendens pure and simple.* And the transcendence of Dasein's Being is distinctive in that it implies the possibility and the necessity of the most radical *individuation*. Every disclosure of Being as the *transcendens* is the *transcendental* knowledge. *Phenomenological truth (disclosedness of Being) is veritas transcendentalis.*³⁸

³⁷ See, *SZ*, § 3. Der ontologische Vorrang der Seinsfrage, § 4. Der ontische Vorrang der Seinsfrage, § 10. Die Abgrenzung der Daseinsanalytik gegen Anthropologie, Psychologie und Biologie.

³⁸ *BT*, §7. The Phenomenological Method of Investigation, 62: "Das Sein als Grundthema der Philosophie ist keine Gattung eines Seienden, und doch betrifft es jedes Seiende. Seine »Universalität« ist höher zu suchen. Sein und Seinsstruktur liegen über jedes Seiende und jede mögliche seiende Bestimmtheit eines Seienden hinaus. *Sein ist das transcendens schlechthin.* Die Transzendenz des Seins des Daseins ist eine ausgezeichnete, sofern in ihr die Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit der radikalsten *Individuation* liegt. Jede Erschließung von Sein als des transcendens ist

Fundamental ontology takes up a forgotten venture, the clarification of the meaning of Being for which human being (Dasein) serves the function of “point of access”³⁹ to Being. Hence it deals with human being not as an end in itself but only to the extent that it is a point of access, a receptivity, to Being. Man is a point of access to Being in that man taken in its essence is an understanding of Being, exists in and through an understanding of Being. Fundamental ontology aims at explicating such implicit understanding of Being on the basis of which we are humans. Only in explicating such implicit understanding of Being Dasein has, the meaning of Being is articulated into a full ontological account. In this sense, fundamental ontology is essentially explicatory: it avoids theorization and remains a descriptive phenomenology of Dasein’s ways of Being. This requires an investigation into the kind of Being that characterizes Dasein, namely existence. (Thus, Dasein is the kind of entity we are and existence the kind of being we have). Dasein exists in a world, hence such existence happens within the context of the structural totality of the world and as dependent on such context. This is to say that Dasein is not an isolated entity, not consciousness, not subject, not ego or the like: Dasein’s essence (i.e existence) lies beyond all immanence. Dasein is “in the first place and mostly” (*zunächst und zumeist* ⁴⁰) an engaged practical agent factually and socially situated in the world and not thinkable or possible apart from such world.

Thus, to be a human being means to be situated in a contextual totality (of, in the first place, pre-theoretical, practical references), that is, in the world. Such world in which humans find themselves situated (or “thrown”) in some way cannot be conceived as something additional, secondary, posterior or external to human beings: it is something “essential” to being human (against Descartes). We operate in this world of practices with *an* (pre-theoretical) understanding of Being, i.e with a paradigm of what it means to be, in the light of which beings are *already* disclosed to us as relevant to our practices, hence having some sense. This world is a world of meanings in which Dasein is, typically, found absorbed. Meanings in the first place and mostly are finite practical meanings structured within a practical-referential nexus, i.e as Dasein’s understanding of Being. Dasein’s understanding of beings in its implicit (i.e pre-reflective, vague) everyday form is a practical understanding which does not involve (and allow) a subject-object model, that is, consciousness or cognition. Heidegger calls Dasein’s this essentially practical existence happening in a world

transzendente Erkenntnis. *Phänomenologische Wahrheit (Erschlossenheit von Sein) ist veritas transcendentalis.*” SZ, §7. Die phänomenologische Method der Untersuchung, 38.

³⁹ The term, “point of access”, belongs to William Blattner. See *Heidegger’s Being and Time* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 168.

⁴⁰ *Zunächst und zumeist* is one of the key phrases in *Being & Time*. Macquarrie and Robinson render it as “proximally and for the most part”. This remains vague, I think. The sense of “in the first place/instance” is crucial to it. I prefer then the expression “in the first place and mostly”.

of finite practical meanings, “Being-in-the-world”. For *Being & Time*, all forms of cognition are parasitical on practice, i.e on Being-in-the-world.⁴¹

Being-in-the-world, as the way Dasein exists, is a key expression in *Being & Time*. As indicated, it refers to practice, not in abstract, but in its concrete back-ground (as a referential totality of practical meanings). Dasein exists in the world in the first place with a practical understanding of beings. For Heidegger, we have an understanding of beings (in this world of practice) only through the key of our understanding of Being, that is, only through our key understanding of what it means to be. Such understanding shows itself first and foremost as the prior disclosedness of world so that we can deal with beings within it. Our relation and access to the world is one of disclosure, and not consciousness or cognition (as opposed to the way to which the Western philosophical tradition is committed) which in turn rests on such disclosure.

This a priori disclosure of Being as understanding of Being (hence as the essence of Dasein) is something Heidegger appropriates from Husserl’s notion of “categorical intuition”. Whenever we perceive an entity (that is, anything which makes difference), this happens in the transcendental horizon of the intuition of Being, which necessarily accompanies perception and lights up the entity perceived. Being, as Kant argues, is not a “real predicate”, not something found in the entity one perceives, but a transcendental horizon in the light of which beings as beings enter into the space of vision. For Heidegger, ontology is the study of such transcendental horizon as understanding of Being which is the whole content and structure of human understanding. That is, in contradistinction to Aristotle and other Western metaphysicians, ontology is an exploration of human understanding of Being which pre-structures (i.e opens in a certain way, as such and as a whole) the entities we deal with (act upon, cognize, perceive, etc).

This reveals three points to be considered, in turn. First, for fundamental ontology which seeks to articulate the meaning of Being from our implicit and practical understanding of Being, it is not entities themselves but Being itself which is the focus of interest. As a matter of fact, the Western philosophical tradition has focused on entities as entities, understood Being in terms of entities, to the exclusion of Being as Being (as disclosed in Dasein, in our understanding of Being, which opens entities for Dasein). In other words, the tradition of thinking into which we have been born has gone oblivious to the ontological difference (the essential difference between Being and beings) and thereby lost sight of the pre-eminence of Being (that is, has taken Being as though it were a being). Now Heidegger’s question of Being wants to transform the Western ontological tradition which has been lost

⁴¹ See SZ, § 13. Die Exemplifizierung des In-Seins an einem fundierten Modus. Das Welterkennen, 59-63.

in the entities and blind to the core issue (Being itself), and thereby got alien to our essential relation to meaning (i.e pre-theoretical disclosure of Being).⁴² Besides, insofar as we are human through an understanding of Being as our constitutive relatedness to Being, Being is with us, (that is, it discloses/ opens/ lights up entities to us as a structured unity within human understanding) no matter we are forgetful about it (in our typical fallenness, “average everydayness”). The task is to recollect/explicate/thematise our pre-ontological understanding of Being (say, our relatedness to Being) by way of exploring our understanding of Being as it is exhibited in various forms of our practical experience in everyday life (hence, fundamental ontology as phenomenology of everyday life).

Secondly, things make sense to us only within a practical context which rests on an implicit ontological presupposition, that is, on an understanding of “what it means for beings to be” which we find before ourselves as a prior disclosedness of beings, *before* any engagement with beings. The disclosure of beings (including ourselves) is always guided and governed by this pre-theoretical understanding of Being, the latter being in Heidegger’s sense ‘a priori’ (as indicated), i.e prior to the former. In other words, it is a fundamental insight of *Being & Time* that beings are never given to us, to our understanding, with immediate and absolute (naked, pure, universal) meanings which they own: the contrary assumption which informs all western metaphysical tradition from Plato up to now, is in fact nothing more than an illusion. We have access to beings through the world as the a priori disclosure of Being, as the basis of intelligibility. All entities thus conceived do not have immediate, universal or timeless essences, but always in the first place become available to us as world-mediated, as practically disclosed (i.e pre-sententially pre-interpreted) within the space of our back-ground pre-reflective ontological assumptions (world). In short, the whatness and howness of entities are “determined” transcendently by an a priori happening, the disclosure of Being. This is what Heidegger means when he writes “Being is that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood”⁴³. The realm of such happening (understanding, disclosure) is the openness called Dasein, i.e we, human beings.

Thirdly, in relation to the second point, we do not have a pure (substantial, detached, isolated, autonomous or worldless) understanding or consciousness at all: human understanding is always an understanding of Being (against Kant and later Husserl). This is simply what Dasein is, namely *Da* (the open site) for the disclosure of *Sein* (Being) as world (of meanings). As opposed to the modern subjectivism (philosophers like Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Hume, Kant etc) which tends to view human understanding (mind) as a self-

⁴² See SZ, § 6 Die Aufgabe einer Destruktion der Geschichte der Ontologie, 19-27.

⁴³ SZ, 6: BT, 26.

contained or world-independent cognitive mechanism, Heidegger wants to emphasize the ineliminable centrality of the world for the basic constitution of Dasein situated in an already disclosed and familiar space of meaning in which to encounter other people and things.⁴⁴ Human understanding is basically an (implicit, underlying) understanding of Being, a disclosive openness suitable for and fulfilled by the disclosure of Being through the key of which entities are opened as keyed (i.e. as understood, disclosed). Here Heidegger is partly appropriating Aristotle's theory of mind. Aristotle considers *psyche* as the malleable space (i.e. suited to be shaped by the shape of the entity perceived) receptive for the occurrence of *aletheia* (i.e. for the sense disclosed thereby).⁴⁵ We, humans, are direct receivers of such understanding of Being and Being is, correspondingly, the source of meaning. Through an understanding of Being we are what we are, human beings and through opening beings (meaning) for us, Being is what it is, a priori source (*Wesen*) of meaning.

Another significant point which follows is that without Dasein such disclosure is not possible at all. In the language of later Heidegger, Being needs Dasein and Dasein is a tool for the disclosure of Being. Put in the plain language, man is that entity in which alone meaning happens. In *Being & Time*, as suggested, the structure of Dasein is shown to be "Being-in-the-world". Being-in-the-world, in turn, is, to use T. Sheehan's designation, "the a priori engagement with meaning"⁴⁶. Our existence happens as an "a priori engagement with meaning". The inner character of such engagement is identified as care or mattering (*Sorge*). To be a human being means to care about one's own Being and about other people (*Fürsorge*) with whom we share our world. In caring about my own Being I care about others as well: the two are inseparable, because Dasein is not an autonomous agent, but happens to be a part of a broader framework of Being-together-with-other-people (*Mitsein*), which is an *Existenzial*, that is, one of the equiprimordial aspects of Dasein's ontological constitution.⁴⁷ Other things also matter to me either as ready-to-hand entities or present-at-hand entities, because Being-in-the-world entails Being-amidst-entities (another *Existenzial*).

W. Blattner singles out 4 points from *Being & Time* concerning existence (which is supposed to be Dasein's essence).⁴⁸

- (1) Dasein's Being is in each case mine (*Jemeinigkeit*).
- (2) Dasein comports itself towards its own Being.
- (3) Dasein is delivered over to its own Being.
- (4) Being is at issue for Dasein.

⁴⁴ As Heidegger writes: "Das Dasein ist zunächst und zumeist von seiner Welt benommen", SZ, 113.

⁴⁵ See, especially, *De Anima*, 417a, 418a and 424a.

⁴⁶ Thomas Sheehan, "Martin Heidegger", 2004, unpublished manuscript, p. 55.

⁴⁷ See SZ, 54.

⁴⁸ William Blattner. *Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 41.

Existence whose inner character is care or mattering (*Sorge*) is a future-oriented phenomenon. The temporal mode “future” thoroughly marks “the openness” (*Da*) which constitutes Dasein. Existence (ek-sistence) then means standing “out”, with understanding and care, into future possibilities of Being. It deeply “matters” for me who I am which in turn means who I am to-be (*zu-sein*). Taking the four points (above) together, to be human being is to confront the question of who-ness of one’s Being. Dasein answers this question basically not through reflection, but through living into its future (i.e by existing), that is, through a projected interpretation of our Being (*zu-sein*) into its future possibilities. Hence, Dasein understands its Being (is self-disclosed) always in terms of its possibilities to be.

But there is an ultimate possibility to be for Dasein and in virtue of being ultimate it determines (the weight and value of) all other possibilities, that is, Dasein’s all other possibilities to be are revealed in its light. What is it? Heidegger answers: death (*Tod*). However, even though Dasein exists basically in a possibility/future-oriented way, understands death as the end of everything and necessarily comports itself towards death, this comportment needs not be a determination to hold oneself open to it, but one of burying it over in one’s daily life. Accordingly, Dasein tends to forget (evade) its ultimate, utter and inextricable possibility, death. This forgetfulness of death which marks Dasein’s everyday life and makes it into an averageness, Heidegger calls falling (*Verfallen*) and the reverse case, the resolution to appropriate one’s death, means Dasein’s freedom (basically as “freedom towards death”⁴⁹) i.e Dasein’s choosing her ownness/ truth, her true self (authenticity). Let us examine a bit closer this phenomenon of “fallenness” and see in a better light what lies behind it, namely one’s escape from death, and the implications involved therein.

Being-with (*Mitsein*) normally (but not necessarily) entails subjection by *Das Man*, that is, an almost blind immersion in the social world, in the public realm. *Das Man* is the anonymous identity, the way everyone does, the whole normativity of social life, the manner appropriate in a given context, the others that control me quite naturally by sight among others, the tastes which are popular in the market, the social pressure one feels in one’s knees etc. Dasein “first and foremost” (*zunächst und zumeist*) remains as constructed by *das Man* and as subject to its normativity (or normal-ity), thus alien to its own self (“furthest ontologically from its own self”⁵⁰). As far as we are entrapped and lost in the public world, in the world of *das Man*, we are simply “anyone”, devoid of all intrinsic worth as unique/ authentic individuals. Ordinarily, in the sweeping machinery of this world in which we are born caught up with, we remain continually subject to the imposition of an ‘anonymous

⁴⁹ *SZ*, 266.

⁵⁰ “ontologisch das Fernste”, *SZ*, 15.

identity' (i.e anyone), to which we *normally* yield, which means we begin by adopting not our true self but an anonymous self.⁵¹ For *Being & Time*, however, Dasein is that entity for whom, as indicated, its being remains as issue, an issue to confront, a beenness (*Gewesenheit*) to take up: it is not simply that Dasein is able to become its true self, but that it needs becoming its true self.

Dasein is absorbed not only in the social world of *das Man*, of other Daseins, but also in the practical and familiar world of agency in which entities show up either as relevant to and useful for our practices (ready-to-hand, *zuhanden*) or as irrelevant things which are merely present there (present-at-hand, *vorhanden*) without any (practical) significance (yet). In this situation of absorbedness, we are *ordinarily* (in the first place and mostly) so focused on beings, on what is present *to us* that we grow unable to mind how they are given *to us*, i.e the light of Being behind the presence of beings as its enabling condition (*Wesen*). We are heedless of how they *can* appear meaningfully to us, of the fact that they are opened to us by a prior dimension, and that things appear in a light which do not belong to them and which cannot be reduced to them. This oblivion concerning Being is perfectly commensurate with Dasein's fallen self-understanding. Then the question of Being, by which Dasein is to bring into focus the fundamental fact that the source of meaning of beings lies beyond them, is not a theoretical question, a question of disinterested reflection, but a matter of emergency for Dasein's own Being. Hence, it is this absorbedness into world which defines Dasein's fallenness.⁵²

In short, fallenness basically means fallenness upon beings (*im Ganzen*, as a whole), in which we are submerged in a life of doing and acting (in our engagements) in the everyday world (*Alltäglichkeit*) and bound by the standards of *das Man*. What is at stake with this fallenness? Heidegger's answer: our true self and simultaneously the meaning of Being. Indeed, in *Being & Time*, our becoming our true being, our essence⁵³, and our capacity to face the question of the meaning of Being presents a crucial interconnectedness. And for the possibility of both, it seems, Dasein has to overcome its fallenness.

Heidegger believes that it is always possible, though rare, that Dasein can emerge out of this fallenness and open eyes to what is really at stake with its Being. However, this cannot be achieved with any sort of disengaged reflection or theorization. It only comes through a certain mood (*Angst*) which "frees" Dasein to experience the "radical finitude" which is its essence. I shall explain.

⁵¹ See, SZ, § 27 Das alltägliche Selbstsein und das Man, 126-130.

⁵² See SZ, Das alltägliche Sein des Da und das Verfallen des Daseins, 166-180.

⁵³ This Heidegger expresses in several places with Pindar's motto, "become what you are" ("werde, was du bist!"), BT, 186: SZ, 145.

As suggested above, (1) Dasein understands itself (that is, is self-disclosed) always in terms of its possibilities to be. (2) The ultimate possibility to-be for Dasein (who is itself an entity of possibility) is death. It is an ultimate possibility, which means it is one's ownmost and uttermost possibility.⁵⁴ It is characteristic for Dasein's average everydayness that it escapes death out of fallenness. But there are moments in life in which Dasein comes face to face with the phenomenon of death as the most extreme possibility, as the limit to its being. Thus experienced death reveals itself as the definitive sense of possibility for Dasein. From this definitive sense of possibility as death, an experience of the authentic time follows in which Dasein comes to have the *possibility* to embrace "temporality" (*Zeitlichkeit*) placed in the center of its existence. This disclosure of death can shatter the mindlessness and conformism of fallenness, liberate oneself from the illusions of Das Man.⁵⁵ Because such disclosure happens through the impact of a specific mood, namely *Angst*, one should say something about Heidegger's analysis of *Befindlichkeit* (disposedness, or moodiness).

Disposedness is an *existenzial* (like understanding, discourse, being-in, being-with, truth etc.), that is, one of the equiprimordial aspects of Being-in-the-world (of Dasein's essence) as existence.⁵⁶ This is to say that there is no disclosure independent of mood. In the language of tradition, no mood-independent perception of things is possible. Disclosedness of the world already entails disposedness as the way things matter to us. Because such mattering is essential to us without which human essence (i.e existence as Being-in-the-world) is unthinkable, we would always be or find ourselves in a certain mood (*Stimmung*): though we can change it in some qualified sense, we cannot be without one. We are mostly and basically passive to the occurrence of a mood in us. We do not create it, rather we find ourselves within it (hence, *Befindlichkeit*). So as far as moods are concerned, human beings are passive. We have already seen that Dasein is delivered over to its Being (we did not and could not determine or form it). This implies a radical passivity. Passivity here must be taken in the sense of "disclosivity". To say, in this context, that man is a passive being is to say that to be a Dasein is to be disclosive of Being, to be determined by a disclosive attunement towards Being. Consequently, import of things are disclosed to us "in the first place", not through any sort of cognitive engagement but in the occurrence of certain moods.⁵⁷

Angst is such a mood. Its importance consists in its disclosing Dasein's ultimate, extreme and therefore ownmost possibility, that is, death. *Angst* is the disclosure of death as a threat.⁵⁸ The discourse which follows such disclosure is not the idle talk which marks Dasein's inauthentic self (*das Man*), but what Heidegger calls "conscience". *Angst* activates

⁵⁴ See SZ, 250.

⁵⁵ See SZ, 265-266.

⁵⁶ See SZ, 133.

⁵⁷ See SZ, § 29 Das Da-sein als Befindlichkeit, 134-140.

⁵⁸ See SZ, 265-266.

the call of conscience which is actually the call of nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*) as Dasein's inevitable nothingness. Death has its force, its "import" for us, in intimating nothingness, that is, complete annihilation of our 'Being'. In the moment of *Angst* Dasein experiences "dread" before nothing as shattering all entitative standards of fallenness. If *Angst* as dread before nothing discloses death, Dasein's extreme, defining and ownmost possibility, the import of things (above all, of possibilities) now appears in the light of mortality, i.e in the light of the eventual nothingness associated with death. In this sense, the fact that I am thrown into the world actually means that I am thrown into a movement determined from the outset by a *telos* which is death, nihilation of my being and that my being belongs to such movement culminating in nothingness. By becoming aware of its radical finitude through the impact of *Angst*, Dasein becomes "self-aware finitude", that is, understands itself as belonging to such "mortal movement", to what Heidegger calls *Sein zum Tode*.⁵⁹

Consequently, fallenness in all its ways grounds in an avoidance of the radical fact that we are *Sein zum Tode*, that is, in the process of dying, in a mortal movement, hence have been dying, the event of death being only its last moment. The process of living is equally a process of dying: When we live, we actually, like a sinking ship, sink into death. The *telos* of death which is the defining point of our existence is what gives meaning to our ways of being in the world. In short, "to be is to enact dying."⁶⁰ That we have been dying, a fact which we (fallen selves) mostly choose to flee in subtle ways⁶¹, means that we are already thrown into the arena of Nothing.

On the other hand, because *Angst* is *the* extreme experience (the limit situation) of which Dasein is by its very constitution (e.g. *Sein zum Tode*) susceptible, it brings Dasein before a radical decision about its own Being, for which entities (*Seiende*) can, in no way, function as a point of reference. In *Angst* our Being becomes a question for us just as an equipment commands attention as salient when it no longer functions in the usual way. Normally, an equipment goes unnoticed but in a breakdown situation in which it no longer renders the expected function, it comes to have in our eyes a salience, that is, a full presence. By the same token, *Angst* is our breakdown situation through which our heretofore unowned, unnoticed self becomes questionable for us, rises into prominence.⁶²

⁵⁹ See SZ, § 51, 252-255.

⁶⁰ Thomas Sheehan. "Das Gewesen" in *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy and Desire*, ed. B. Babich (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995), p. 159.

⁶¹ "sich das Dasein zunächst und zumeist das eigenste Sein zum Tode, flüchtig vor ihm, verdeckt." SZ, 251.

⁶² See SZ, § 40 Die Grundbefindlichkeit der Angst als eine ausgezeichnete Erschlossenheit des Daseins, 184-191.

Angst is the nihilistic moment in the sense that in *Angst* “the world has the character of completely lacking significance”⁶³. But it urges one for something of authentic significance, i.e taking up one’s own self, one’s ownmost Being. In other words, nihilism inherent in the mood of *Angst* is actually a positive occurrence through which the world as the totality of entities-within-the-world and as the public world of *Das Man* (the social world) is pushed into insignificance and one’s Dasein, one’s own Being as point of access to Being itself comes to be the whole matter. In this sense, *Angst* is simultaneously both alienating (from *das Man*) and authenticating (pulling one to one’s own being and equally to Being itself) in a reciprocal sense.

Accordingly, *Angst*, the disclosure of Dasein’s ground as nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*, i.e radical finitude), poses for Dasein the existential challenge, which it cannot simply overlook. To confront this existential challenge involves making decision about the matter of ultimate significance for one’s life, that is, about one’s own Being (viz. about one’s what-it-means-to-be). The challenge is then whether one is to appropriate one’s essence, which is “radical finitude” (or mortality, *Nichtigkeit*, *Sein zum Tode*) or is to flee from it to the averageness of everyday existence (to submit to the hegemony of *Das Man*) and to “disown”⁶⁴ itself. It requires resolution to accept the absoluteness of death and own, accordingly, one’s essence as would-be-nothing (would-be-dead), hence as already-nothing. Dasein’s essence is Dasein’s alreadyness/beenness (*Gewesenheit*) which is nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*) identified with finitude/death.

This resolution to assume one’s radical finitude is connected to two simultaneous and inextricable phenomena: Dasein’s authentic experience of time and Dasein’s authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*). Both of them amount to Dasein’s overcoming forgetfulness of nothing (death) by appropriating it, which in turn has crucial implications for the question of Being. Let us first examine the former.

Heidegger in his ontological pursuit is, from the very outset, motivated by a conviction; the question about Being (whose answer as we have seen lies in Dasein) intrinsically involves time as its transcendental horizon, because understanding of Being is temporally structured.⁶⁵ All ontological structures that inform Being-in-the-world are at

⁶³ *SZ*, 186; *BT*, 231.

⁶⁴ The term “disown” belongs to William Blattner. Blattner uses three interconnected terms (unown, own, disown) to interpret Heidegger’s discussion of *Eigentlichkeit*. According to this, we in the first place have an unowned self, that is, have a self-understanding as provided by *das Man*. Faced the existential challenge of *Angst*, we either become resolute to “own” our own self or “disown” it, that is, flee from this burden to the inauthentic ways of fallenness. See *Heidegger’s Being and Time*, pp. 127-130.

⁶⁵ See *SZ*, 41; *BT*, 65.

bottom temporal structures.⁶⁶ Likewise, the source of mattering is rooted in temporality. Mattering (*Sorge*) in all its ways, forms and modes is suffused with temporality, determined by an internal temporal structure. Dasein is that entity for whom time deeply matters such that for whom significance means time. It should be added that no matter we are aware of it or not, (and actually we are hardly aware of it in the Western tradition) our understanding of Being and its interpretation (philosophy) happens in the guiding (transcendental) framework of a temporal disclosure. In the theory-dominated Western ontological tradition (that is, in “metaphysics” as the history of Being, as Heidegger comes to call from 1930s on), this temporal disclosure has grown alienated to the primordial disclosure of time as finitude.⁶⁷

The issue of what kind of temporal disclosure has underlied and guided the Western interpretation of Being (i.e metaphysics) will be discussed below. But prior to this, I think, our experience of time as based on finitude (whether owned or not) needs some further exegesis, for it is essential for *Being & Time* that finitude (*Endlichkeit*), as *Nichtigkeit* activated as a vital force in our lives through the anticipation (*Vorlaufen*) of death, is responsible for all meaning of beings, and its appropriation for all authentic meaning, including above all the meaning of Being. Then, let us briefly discuss Heidegger’s account of finitude.

First of all, mattering (*Sorge*) as the most concrete character of existence is something thoroughly temporal. That is to say, mattering is essentially a mattering of time. Time matters for us because our experience shows us that everything ends (including most importantly our life). Our life and experience are trapped in a radical finitude, in the anticipation of eventual nothingness. As Heidegger writes:

In the structure of thrownness, as in that of projection, there lies essentially a nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*). This nothingness is the ground for the possibility of *inauthentic* Dasein in its fallenness; and as fallenness every *inauthentic* Dasein factually is. *Mattering itself, in its very essence, is permeated with nothingness through and through.* Thus mattering—Dasein’s Being—means, as thrown projection, Being-the-ground of a nothingness (and this Being-the-ground is itself

⁶⁶ Here is Heidegger’s appropriation of Kant, which is, I suppose, mediated by Dilthey. Dilthey fills the Kantian idea of consciousness with a historical sense: categories of understanding are historical. Heidegger takes this in the sense that the categories of understanding are historical only in virtue of being determined by temporality. Of course, Heidegger, unlike Kant, could not perceive human understanding as an isolated, substantial mechanism or thing, but a disclosive capacity defined by (ontological) intentionality, that is, not *Verstand* but *Seinsverstaendnis*. This amounts to saying that Kant’s categories of understanding are Heidegger’s essential aspects of “understanding of Being” (of Dasein, being-in-the-world) which he calls “existenzials”, which are basically temporal structures.

⁶⁷ See SZ, § 65 Die Zeitlichkeit als der ontologische Sinn der Sorge, 323-331.

null). And this means: *Dasein is as such guilty*, if our formally existential definition of “guilt” as Being-the-basis of a nothingness is indeed correct.⁶⁸

Then *Nichtigkeit* (as anticipated absence) is the most vital phenomenon for *Dasein*: it is the basis of “thrownness” (which is *Dasein*’s a priori), of mattering (i.e. of the being of *Dasein*), of “the absolute impossibility of *Dasein*”⁶⁹. *Dasein* and thus happening of meaning is not possible apart from *Dasein*’s temporal comportment (in the form of projective future-orientedness) towards *Nichtigkeit*. Time could matter only in the face of utter importance that *Nichtigkeit* represents as our end. “Primordial time is *endlich*”⁷⁰, i.e. end-based.

Even Aristotle’s before and after (time is “a number of motion with respect to the before and after”⁷¹) is intelligible in the light of the simple intuition that something ends in reference to which before and after can be ascertained. Our awareness of the fact that things end underlies all our relation to time. We “hurry” because we have limited time in a given context. Any acting or doing has a certain indispensable relationship to time: it is informed by the concern to complete (*vollenden*) in the desired time. We “concentrate” on things we do in order to finish appropriately and successfully. In doing this, we have to carry out a right relation to time. Depending on the context, we have to use our time in view of its limitedness. At each moment of our life (even in the most insignificant ones), we pay a special attention for “(right) timing”, because doing something when the time is over simply misses the point. In one crucial sense, “attention” means keenness with respect to the flow of time. Patience means waiting for the right moment. Here all point with our concentration on time derives from the existence of an end to everything we encounter and experience. Every human activity is thus a temporally structured process determined in view of end-points such that a sharp awareness of the sense of time is essential to carry out it. For example, if you carry out a musical performance, you cannot violate subtle amounts of intervals between tones: a musical performance rests on a keenly structured temporal flow. This can be generalised for the whole human life: significance and time are inseparable.

⁶⁸ BT, 331 (translation slightly altered): “In der Struktur der Geworfenheit sowohl wie in der des Entwurfs liegt wesentlich eine Nichtigkeit. Und sie ist der Grund für die Möglichkeit der Nichtigkeit des *uneigentlichen Daseins* im Verfallen, als welches es je schon immer faktisch ist. *Die Sorge selbst ist in ihrem Wesen durch und durch von Nichtigkeit durchsetzt*. Die Sorge – das Sein des *Daseins* – besagt demnach als geworfener Entwurf: Das (nichtige) Grund-sein einer Nichtigkeit. Und das bedeutet: *Das Dasein ist als solches schuldig*, wenn anders die formale existentielle Bestimmung der Schuld als Grundsein einer Nichtigkeit zurecht besteht.” SZ, 285.

⁶⁹ SZ, 329.

⁷⁰ SZ, 331. Here “finite” is a very poor translation for “endlich”. The word, “end-based” seems a better alternative.

⁷¹ Aristotle. *Physics*, IV.11(219b), in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2 vols. Sachs translates this crucial remark of *Physics*: “whenever there is a before and an after, then we say there is time, for this is time: a number of motion fitting along the before-and-after.” See Joe Sachs. *Aristotle’s Physics: A Guided Study* (New Brunswick, London: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 122.

Consequently, because of an intricate web of finitude in which we find ourselves, each moment is unique and important. Hence, we always find ourselves given end-points in time to which we need to respect. We always do things in a temporally conditioned (i.e. finite) context. We move with a marked concern about the end. This finitude, the fact that things somehow end at some point, is inseparable from human experience and awareness in general. In short, our immediate awareness of time (before theorising about the time in the physical processes) is an awareness of finitude.⁷²

Why do we lead a temporally conditioned or structured life, i.e. a life with a strict eye on the end-points? Why is time the only thing which is not substitutable? Simply because we understand that we are mortal, have a limited lifetime. Thus the ultimate framework of finitude and thereby of time is the plain fact (unavoidable and absolute) that I will die some day. If the fact that things end has any importance for me it is because I am mortal. As I will die some day, I find myself in an irreversible and inexorable process towards the ultimate end, my non-being, death. As indicated above, if this mortal movement (Dasein's hidden truth, *Sein zum Tode*) is explicitly owned, Dasein comes to actively define itself and its whole orientation to life from within this mortal process. Things get significance out of this mortal framework. Each moment gets its ultimate significance only in the face of death I am getting closer each moment. If I were eternal, I would not care about time, that is, I would be indifferent toward a given end-point. In that case, nothing would be urgent or significant. Exactly because finitude renders time an irrepeatable flow, an insubstitutable passage, dates and moments become unique and thereby get their full significance and gravity for me.

As argued above, it is finitude (as taken in its ultimate horizon, "mortality") which makes my "relation to time" possible. Eternity then would mean virtually "timelessness" for me: even though some kind of time would continue existing in the physical processes in nature, neither would I find it of the slightest value to be attentive and observant about time, nor would I attempt to calculate, measure or record it. (Least of all, I would attempt to theorize about its nature). In this case, my relation to time would collapse (and with this, Heidegger would say, my whole human essence⁷³). My mortality gives the temporal framework of my existence within which things get their significance and value for me. That

⁷² For the place of finitude in Heidegger's analysis of time, see, especially, SZ, § § 79, 80, 81.

⁷³ In an article dating 1942, Heidegger expresses this point quite clearly: "...This could happen only if life as such were to become a "technically" producible artifact. However, at that very moment there would also no longer be such a thing as health, any more than there would be birth and death. Sometimes it seems as if modern humanity is rushing headlong toward this goal of *producing itself technologically*. If humanity achieves this, it will have exploded itself, i.e., *its essence qua subjectivity*, into thin air, into a region where the absolutely meaningless is valued as the one and only "meaning" and where preserving this value appears as the human "domination" of the globe." "On the Essence and Concept of *Physis* in Aristotle's *Physics*, B 1." in *PM*, 257.

means, it provides me with a matrix of meaning in which all my concerns make sense and are interconnected. All kind of matters (even the most sterile theoretical ones) for humans are meaningless, if they are cut off the (ultimate yet mostly hidden) context of death.

For Heidegger, the failure of Western philosophical tradition consists in not being cognizant of time as the horizon of all interpretation of Being. Insofar as original time is disclosed to us in terms of finitude, a proper understanding of Being requires that we choose temporality as a specific horizon for an investigation of Being. In this tradition, on the contrary, a present-based conception of time has been decisive. The phenomenon of time is virtually passed over in favor of the timelessness of eternal now. Thus, the original (i.e. pre-theoretical, prior and basic) sense of time as finitude and mortal movement has never been pondered, and least of all appropriated, as the basis one comes to do philosophy and as the basis Being/meaning is disclosed to us. This is, as indicated, quite important since any form of thinking necessarily happens in the transcendental framework of a temporal understanding, which informs my understanding of “what it means to be” for entities (including myself). Then if we are to take up the question of Being and develop an ontology in the proper sense, then we are to take up the authentic temporality, the finitude, as its basis (transcendental framework). Accordingly, the question of Being must re-experience the fundamental ontological role of time as the very framework of understanding/thinking and acting which remains obscured (understood dimly in terms of finitude our present practical purposes are subject to) in everyday experience and which remains completely overlooked in the Western philosophical discourse.

Not surprisingly, in taking time as the general parameter of the question about Being, Heidegger keeps himself carefully at a distance from the traditional conception of time filled with unquestioned ontological presuppositions. This traditional conception of time which is shaped up by Plato and Aristotle, is actually the time of “theory” (“*theoria*” which is itself, *Being & Time* argues, something derivative: the time intrinsic to *theoria*, to Greek view of Being, is held to be *aei on*, nunc stans, the eternal now⁷⁴, an issue more pointed and prominent in later writings) against which Heidegger emphasizes the time of practice (of Being-in-the-world) which is the primordial disclosure of time to us as an index of finitude (Temporality). The time of theory as formulated by Aristotle involves five closely interrelated notions⁷⁵: 1- the standpoint of the present as in itself constant 2- the standpoint of eternity, as total changelessness, constancy and thus timelessness 3- time as a standard flow through which mind measures or numbers the process of change or motion (*kinesis*) each entity is subject to 4- a calculative (i.e cognitive) approach to time which forgets the pre-

⁷⁴ Also, see SZ, 427.

⁷⁵ See, especially, SZ, 420-422.

cognitional ground of time (finitude), when Aristotle argues that time requires a mind which can count. 5- Consequently, time as the chronological succession of homogenous now points.⁷⁶ It looks at things, as Spinoza would have it, *sub specie aeternatis*.⁷⁷ Theory to be theory needs such a horizon of time. Traditional philosophies from Plato (time as the mimic of eternity) to Nietzsche (eternal recurrence of the same), thus departs above all from a distorted perception of our primordial experience of time. Consequently, we are born to a theory-dominated ontological tradition, which is to say, we are situated in a tradition which has forgotten the essential sense of time (finitude) and thus Being itself.

The time of theory, of “atemporal seeing” directed towards “atemporal essences” is simply derivative from Dasein’s finitude precisely in the same sense theory (cognition) itself is parasitical on practice (on Being-in-the-world). Accordingly, as pointed out, the primordial sense of time is temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) (as it “pre-reflectively” informs human existence, human understanding, Being-in-the-world). The idea of time as temporality takes time as an index of finitude, an index of Dasein’s mortal becoming. If this mortal becoming is actively seen and taken up, it turns into a “self-aware finitude”⁷⁸ thereby disclosing to Dasein an authentic self-understanding. (Hence, it appears that three things are strictly interconnected: the authentic temporality, authentic self-understanding, authentic access to Being.) So, it is identified with finitude and mortality as Dasein’s experience of time *zunächst und zumeist*, whether explicit or not (i.e whether owned or not). The morale is that each moment is unique: Dasein belongs to a temporal space which is essentially irrevocable. Hence, *Da* of Dasein also means the open of the moment, for Dasein (as different from theory, i.e from metaphysics and the sciences) experiences time, in the first place, not as “a continuously lasting succession of pure nows”⁷⁹, but in terms of the occurrence of “distinct” moments, distinct, I mean, for their significations with respect to Dasein’s future/possibility orientedness, which Heidegger calls *Datierbarkeit*.⁸⁰ In fine, Dasein reveals itself as a temporal structure and Dasein’s all ways of being (including above all understanding of Being) are marked up by an inherent temporal structure.

Let us recapitulate the methodological significance of authenticity, *Angst* and finitude (in sum, of *nihil*) for fundamental ontology, for a clarification of the meaning of Being. Heidegger’s question had been something like this (upon discovering that Dasein

⁷⁶ For these points, cf. Aristotle. *Physics*, Book 4, Chapters 10-14.

⁷⁷ Spinoza maintains “It is in the nature of reason to perceive things in the light of eternity (*sub quadam specie aeternatis*)” and “the essence of any particular thing ... therefore must be conceived without any relation to time, in the light of eternity”. Part 2, Proposition 44, corollary 2, *Ethics*, in *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley, ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002) .

⁷⁸ Thomas Sheehan, “Martin Heidegger”, 2004, unpublished manuscript, p. 20.

⁷⁹ “einer kontinuierlich währenden Abfolge der puren »jetzt«”, *SZ*, 409.

⁸⁰ See *SZ*, 407-409.

is/exists in the openness of disclosedness of Being, already “understands” Being, already has truth-character): How could the disclosedness of Dasein be made into an ontologically revealing understanding? As suggested, the world is disclosed to Dasein and Dasein is self-disclosed always in a “futural” way, that is, in terms of its possibilities to be. If Dasein is self-disclosed in terms of its ultimate, extreme and ownmost possibility to be, i.e. death, Dasein becomes self-disclosed in the highest ontological sense. It takes resolution to face up to one’s death and live accordingly. Only when Dasein is resolute (*ent-schlossen*) in the face of death/nothing, Dasein becomes self-disclosed (*erschlossen*) in the authentic/highest sense and his understanding of Being self-transparent, i.e. authentic and thus ontologically revealing. How does Dasein become resolute (*entschlossen*)? Dasein becomes resolute only when it shows resolution to appropriate its death, i.e. only when it becomes fully open to its death as its ownmost possibility, that is, its own reality as *Sein zum Tode* (Being-towards death). When Dasein via resolution appropriates itself as mortal becoming and its fact as *Sein zum Tode*, Dasein becomes self-aware finitude. Resoluteness to appropriate one’s mortality yields Dasein its authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*), its own self, its own identity; it makes Dasein open to its own reality, to itself as unique possibility for Being (*Seinkönnen*), for death alone is the “individuating” (viz. authenticating) principle of Dasein.⁸¹ Accordingly, Dasein becomes mortal openness, and whereby its own essence i.e. truly disclosive of Being. Then, the methodological aspect is clear: authenticity attained by resolute (*entschlossen*, literally unlocked, which would in turn imply, “no longer locked by the chains of *das Man*”) Dasein’s appropriation of its death (certain and ultimate, yet indefinite, possibility for me) as its ownmost possibility, under the impact of *Angst*, thus achieved authenticity would provide a clear view of Dasein’s own Being to itself. Dasein, being-questional (“*Fraglichsein*”⁸²), thanks to its constitutive understanding (something irreducible and fundamental, implicit and vague) of Being, could accomplish fundamental ontology only on the basis of such authentic disclosure of Being as one’s authenticity. Therefore, authenticity i.e. ontological self-transparency based on Dasein’s truth character is the very condition of the possibility of fundamental ontology, that is, of all philosophy.⁸³

Forgetfulness of Being in philosophy (metaphysics or theory) as part of the forgetfulness of Being in everyday life (fallenness, inauthentic self) marked by absorption in Beings “as a whole” and the hegemony of *Das Man* has followed because philosophy has escaped from its basis, namely the finitude of man and of all ways of disclosure of Being

⁸¹ *BT*, 308: *SZ*, 263.

⁸² Martin Heidegger. *Der Begriff der Zeit*, GA 64 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), p. 125.

⁸³ This point is brilliantly elucidated by Steven G. Crowell in his article “Heidegger’s Phenomenology and the Question of Being” in *Husserl, Heidegger and the Space of Meaning: Paths toward Transcendental Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), pp. 203-214.

(death, absence, nothingness). And the result is the inauthenticity of thinking (theory, the Western ontological tradition, metaphysics). Thinking then has degenerated into curiosity (*Neu-gierigkeit*, literally “avidity for the new”) viz. “desire for seeing” in which “seeing” is an end in itself. Heidegger interprets such desire for seeing in terms of Dasein’s fallenness in the present and in the world of public normativity (*das Man*). It is rootless, stays nowhere, seeks no comprehension.⁸⁴ In one of his works, *Basic Questions of Philosophy*⁸⁵ dating one decade after *Being & Time*, Heidegger discusses more fully this degeneration of thinking intimated in *Being & Time*. He argues there that wonder (*Thaumazein*) that characterised the greatness of Greek beginning (*An-fang*) had been the *Grundstimmung* of the early Greek thinkers like Heraclitus and Parmenides. For early Greek thinkers under the spell of wonder, that which is the most usual for an ordinary mind, namely, *Seienden im Sein* has become the most unusual, the most thought provoking thing. But with Plato onwards, it has given way to curiosity, an insatiable search for the new, for the unusual that forgets the most unusual fact that “beings are”. In curiosity one is overwhelmed by beings (and correlatively, by the present, the inauthentic disclosure of time) whereas in wonder, one is overwhelmed by the emergence of Being as a question (and correlatively, by the authentic disclosure of time, finitude). In the former case, one typically ‘staggers’. For Heidegger, such staggering with entities in the form of curiosity has incipated metaphysics and informed its offsprings (sciences) and now has been the normal condition of the Western humanity. As we will see, this is actually the deep meaning of nihilism in its historical trajectory.⁸⁶

If the standpoint of Dasein’s radical finitude (Dasein’s underlying movement towards death, *Sein zum Tode*, as the authentic dimension of time) does not become the ultimate moment of thinking, thinking becomes easily submitted to the perspective of the present, in which, Heidegger argues, entities do not appear in their primordial sense, but only, as correlative with the fallenness/ inauthenticity of Dasein, i.e as beings in “constant presence” (*ständige Anwesenheit*). Time as the transcendental horizon of all understanding of Being serves as the (hidden) optic of thinking. It can be argued that Heidegger’s whole ontological position stems from paying full and privileged attention to time. Authentic time, that is, temporality, is principally given in one’s mortal openness, in *Sein zum Tode*, since it is the final possibility of Dasein, death, which first opens time for Dasein. For Heidegger, death which is identified with nothing opens for Dasein authentic future possibilities of Being, thereby one becomes more attentive and responsive to the moment, with the proviso

⁸⁴ See, *SZ*, § 36 Die Neugier, 170-173.

⁸⁵ Martin Heidegger. *Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte “Probleme” der “Logik.”*, GA 45 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992). This work is translated into English by Richard Rojcewicz and Andre Schuwer as *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected “Problems” of “Logic”* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

⁸⁶ See, *IM*, 217-218; *EM*, 211-212.

that one's response to death is not one of "escape", but one of "appropriation" that yields "resoluteness" (*ent-schlossenheit*, literally "un-lockedness") for Dasein. Another way of saying this is that Dasein is key to ontological-phenomenological truth (*Wahrheit*) only and only if it is itself un-locked (*ent-schlossen*) by the impact of death (the appropriative anticipation of eventual Nothingness). As a result, Being is disclosed and beings are encountered in the open space (*Da*) of Dasein in the primordial sense, thanks to the impact of finitude as a sort of presence nothingness exercises.

Metaphysics in *Being & Time* does not convey the (say "negative") sense it begins to convey in Heidegger's works following shortly after *Being & Time* such as *What is Metaphysics?*, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, let alone the explicit nihilistic sense that comes to bear its stamp on Heidegger's thinking with 1935s on (presumably, with his Nietzsche lectures on). Even though it is associated with traditional philosophy, metaphysics *as such* possesses a respectful position in *Being & Time*. Yet the latter sense indicated above, though not identified as metaphysics yet, nonetheless has its primal form there: it appears in Heidegger's critique of "theoretical attitude", indeed a crucial aspect of *Being & Time*.⁸⁷ Theoretical attitude (*theorein* of the Greeks as firmly connected with Plato's "seeing", *idein*) stems from the inauthenticity of Dasein. It positions in "the present", is absorbed in "presence", seeks a pure, uninvolved look at things, posits universal and invariant nature (what-ness, quiddity) for beings, and inherent in all this, it forgets the source of intelligibility of beings (i.e Being itself), that is, what makes beings intelligible or meaningful "in the first place". Why? Because seeing of *theoria* is from its very beginning on (in Plato) is blind to *Nichtigkeit* (nothingness, absence, finitude), to its essential involvement in the disclosure of Being, in Dasein's a priori-engagement with meaning. It forgets the fundamental fact about Dasein, Dasein's finitude. Theoretical position, therefore, involves a drastic reduction of the experience of time, and thus of Being.⁸⁸ As we stated in the beginning of this chapter, Dasein's appropriation of its radical mortality is the moment key to "authentic meaning". Theoretical reflection by its very constitution is not capable for this; rather it renders inevitably the meaning of Being empty, de-vitalizes Being. Since theoretical attitude lacks an authentic involvement with time and Being, and whereby with meaning, and rather engages itself with elaborating dead (i.e time-free) constructs (abstractions), it is inherently not only a meaningless engagement, an engagement that has no true potential to offer meaning for our life, but it is also poisonous to the authentic disclosure of meaning. After *Being & Time*, the

⁸⁷ See, especially, *SZ*, §69b.

⁸⁸ Richard Beardsworth calls attention to the reduction of the experience of time in the context of modernity. He writes "the logics of modernity require a reduction of the experience of time." See "Practices of Procrastination," *Parallax* 5, 1 (1999), 11. As will be clear in the following chapters, what Beardsworth calls "logics of modernity", Heidegger calls metaphysics, and argues that it is historically grounded in Plato's and Aristotle's theoretical experience of Being.

critique of theoretical attitude gives way to a critique of metaphysics the decisive step of which comes when Heidegger finally, in the mid-1930s, identifies its essence as “nihilism”, a situation of radical emergency (*Not*) that makes increasingly urgent the need of raising the question of Being.

As a result, one can note that Heidegger’s encounter with the question of the essence of nihilism, from the mid-1930s on, has its roots in the issue of forgetfulness of Being, which is central to *Being and Time*, indeed “the fundamental experience (*Grunderfahrung*) of *Being and Time*”⁸⁹. Forgetfulness of Being is the characteristic feature of “the history in which with Being itself nothing is”⁹⁰, that is, nihilism prevails. Then Heidegger describes the essence of nihilism in *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* (1946) which sheds light on the background of this problem found in *Being and Time*.

The essence of nihilism is the self-concealment of Being itself, stemming from out of the Being of beings, in the manner of forgetfulness of Being in its truth.⁹¹

As part of this forgetfulness of Being which constitutes the essence of nihilism, the difference between Being and beings, too, goes forgotten. Therefore, it is important to note that forgetfulness of Being is inseparable from the forgetfulness of ontological difference, both, in their belonging-together, refer to the being-historical sense of nihilism. As indicated, forgetfulness of Being means fallenness (i.e fallenness on or absorbedness in beings) and inauthenticity of Dasein. The aspects of forgetfulness of Being and the ensuing fallenness, which we have tried to elucidate above, provide us a framework to appropriately situate Heidegger’s debate concerning nihilism and its metaphysical essence. Fallenness which is presented to us as a fundamental aspect of “average everydayness” in *Being and Time* becomes, in Heidegger’s middle and later work, the basic condition of western history and tradition, that is, what informs metaphysics. Fallenness as “fallenness upon beings”⁹² is at bottom what characterizes the forgetfulness of Being, and equally, of ontological difference, and consequently, of the questionworthiness (*Fragwürdigkeit*) of Being.

It is clear from *Being and Time* that Heidegger understands fallenness and forgetfulness of Being not as moral phenomena. Therefore, nihilism is by no means a moral issue, but something deeper; namely, an issue about our understanding of Being, or the manner in which Being presences, and beings make sense, and in the light of which we, humans can first see something as morally appropriate or inappropriate, and act accordingly. Indeed, from Heidegger’s perspective, morality is a derivative issue, derivative from

⁸⁹ MN, 264, 267.

⁹⁰ MN, 221.

⁹¹ MN, 265: “*Das Wesen des Nihilismus* ist die aus dem Sein des Seienden her kommende Verbergung des Seins selbst in der Weise der Vergessenheit des Seins in seiner Wahrheit.”

⁹² MN, 265.

metaphysics, as far as Western tradition is concerned. It follows that with moral measures, conceptions and projects, we are in no way able to overcome nihilism or metaphysics, because the cultivation of a moral life itself depends on the kind of understanding of Being we have, or we are given. Only an ontological reflection appropriate to Being itself can open a space in which we can discover and lead a truly moral life, which later Heidegger conceives in terms of “dwelling” (as the original sense of *ethos*) originating from a thoughtful neighborhood with Being. Just as we need to set aside all metaphysical forms of thinking, we need to break free from the moral theorizing metaphysics involves, and learn to think in a completely different way, in a way which corresponds to Being itself. Roughly put, as opposed to metaphysics, we need a thinking which does not go against Being, but comes from Being itself. It belongs (*gehört*) to Being as “a hearing (*Gehör*) for the voice (*Stimme*) of Being”⁹³ and thus as determined (*gestimmt*) by Being itself.

Thus Heidegger believes that a proper encounter with nihilism entails pondering about the essence of metaphysics, and discovering the original and essential sense of thinking. But it also entails an understanding of nothingness or Nothing (*Nichtigkeit, Nichts*), and our relation to it. As the word itself makes it clear, the question of nihilism is related to nothing, *Nichts, nihil*. And this relation, one can claim, is essential to nihilism. But throughout the history of philosophy/ metaphysics, nothing has not been seriously thought about, still less understood. It has been driven outside a thoughtful questioning, and therefore, Heidegger would say, we remained largely removed from the possibility of attempting thoughtful questioning itself. As we will examine in chapter 3, this flight from nothing which characterizes metaphysics, actually belongs to the same context of metaphysics’s forgetfulness of Being itself. In *Being and Time*, as we saw, Heidegger presents it as part of evasion from appropriating finitude, *Sein zum Tode*, that is, as part of a forgetfulness of death, death as “the shrine of nothing”⁹⁴. In other words, fallenness buries over finitude, our radical and defining fact, and involves a constant denial of that which is *not* a being, No-thing, thus fostering a forgetfulness of No-thing in which nihilism finds shelter and grows. Heidegger’s account implies that in so far as we lack an essential understanding of that which *is not*, i.e of No-thing, we cannot get beyond nihilism at all.

To balance out, forgetfulness of Being is thus synonymous with the forgetfulness of nothing (finitude/ death). This conclusion, one of the striking results of *Being & Time*, will inform much of Heidegger’s subsequent writings and pave the way for his concentration on nihilism and metaphysics. Hence, forgetfulness of Being, forgetfulness of death and forgetfulness of nothing are, respectively, the intimately connected aspects of what one

⁹³ *MN*, 265.

⁹⁴ “Das Ding”, in *VA*, 180.

might call the metaphysical (read, inauthentic) experience of Being which in Heidegger's view ends up as nihilism. Nihilism grows out of the forgetfulness of Being, and, paradoxically, out of the forgetfulness of nothing, that is, of traditional metaphysics' heedlessness for the "nihil". The results of *Being & Time* point toward the necessity of a radical critique of metaphysics in its history, which determines our present understanding of Being. Forgetfulness of Being which is described in *Being & Time* as the cross-cultural and a-historical structure of Dasein both in everyday life and in philosophy (theoretical reflection, *theoria*) is now seen as the consequence of a deep history, of the metaphysical past of the West. Therefore, the history of philosophy (i.e metaphysics) needs to be "deconstructed" (*abbauen*) to ascertain what is hidden about Being in the various stages of its history. If metaphysics is that kind of thinking which covers over Being as a question, thereby makes us deprived of authentic meaning to be attained out of such questioning, then it is necessary to adopt a standpoint that can effectively call into question this entity-centred thinking. In this context, the standpoint of *die Wichtigkeit* of *Being & Time* as Dasein's *telos* (finitude/death), and thus its basis and essence, loses prominence and gives way to *das Nichts* of "What is Metaphysics?", which is Being itself as "concealed". This is part of the shift of focus in Heidegger's thought from *Daseinsanalytik* to *Geschichte des Seyns*, the full implications of which concerning the connections between nihilism and metaphysics are to be taken up in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3

NOTHING, METAPHYSICS, NIHILISM

The principal goal of this chapter is to interconnect and interlocate the three issues in Heidegger's thought, namely 1) the question of Nothing⁹⁵ (*das Nichts*), 2) the question of metaphysics 3) the question of nihilism, on the basis of the overarching question, the question of Being. This points toward the phase Heidegger's thought has entered after *Being & Time*. Roughly put, one significant change draws attention: Heidegger abandons existential analysis (*Daseinsanalytik*, the focus of *Being & Time*) in favor of a growing interest in history and metaphysics (as the history of Being). A talk of the meaning (of Being, of human existence) is replaced by a talk of the truth of Being (*Wahrheit des Seins*), while metaphysics is viewed as the historically intensifying eclipse of this truth. In this sense, metaphysics is nihilism deeply effective in the Western history as a tradition starting with the late Greek age. Nihilism means that it is not the truth of Being but the truth of beings that rules (in human comportment towards Being) and does that as a history in which the question of Being is never truly raised, never realised in its emergency (*Not*). *Being and Time*, as an attempt at raising and awakening the question of Being, was Heidegger says a necessary step on the way to a thinking of that truth of Being.

However, if all forms of disclosure of Being are essentially historical⁹⁶, and Being in such history is determined by metaphysics as something sunk in oblivion (*Vergessenheit*), then the question of Being must be set in focus as an encounter with metaphysics, primarily as a history (tradition). For this, one needed to transform the questioning developed in *Being and Time*. Thus Heidegger comes to realise that the question of Being can best be understood and posed by situating it in an ontologically conceived historical context, the historical context of Western ontological texts. Actually this was nothing more than the radicalization of the project of *Destruktion* in *Being and Time*.⁹⁷ Indeed, Heidegger's thought after *Being and Time* can be interpreted as an investigation into and confrontation with metaphysics itself, and, to that same extent, with nihilism itself.

⁹⁵ Heidegger's word is *das Nichts*. To distinguish *das Nichts* from *die Nichtigkeit*, which is quite important in *Being & Time*, we will render the former as "Nothing" (with the uppercase) and the latter as "nothingness". Nothing is related to Being itself and must in each case be understood in relation to Being itself, while nothingness refers to (in *Being & Time*) finitude and the ontological lack which is the essential ground of all ways of Being for Dasein. Sometimes I will use "nihil" to designate both.

⁹⁶ See SZ, § 72, § 73, § 74.

⁹⁷ See SZ, § 6.

Initially, metaphysics is viewed basically in a Kantian way, i.e as a general condition of being human, as a “transcendental” happening in Dasein. From the 1930s onwards, more specifically with *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), history gains foreground in the interpretation of metaphysics (as informed with some Spenglerian pessimism, then prevalent in the German intellectual circles). Metaphysics becomes the key word, say, revealing the mysteries of Western decline (*Untergang des Abendlandes*). It signifies the Western ontological paradigm which guides shifting historical epochs (as shifting understandings of Being) in each of which “fallenness” gets increasingly intensified. Now, Heidegger’s opposition to metaphysics is so radical and decisive that it characterizes his middle and later philosophy. Historical impact of metaphysics on humanity happens in such a way that it drives away all authentic possibilities of meaning. This is because its horizon is thoroughly guided by an emptied and dead (abstract, ossified) Being which in turn is responsible for the Western life as a life devoid of meaning and decision. Put another way, metaphysics is nihilistic. Nihilism is the inner attitude, the hidden horizon of metaphysical interpretation of Being. Nihilism then emerges as a basically historical question, indeed the defining question of Western ontological tradition.

As stated in the first chapter, critique of “theoretical attitude” (*theoretische Verhalten*) in *Being & Time* gives rise to a deepening critique of metaphysics in the wake of such inquiries as “What is Metaphysics?” (1929), “On the Essence of Ground” (1929), *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (1929-30), “On the Essence of Truth” (1930, published in 1942), *On the Essence of Truth: On Plato’s Cave Allegory and the Theaetetus* (1931-32). As we know from *Being & Time*, “Theoretical viewpoint” as such is the source of confused problems (e.g the problem of external world) and of the forgottenness of Being in the Western tradition in that it remains blind to the disclosedness of Being (hence, misses the phenomenon of the world, the finitude of Dasein, the primordial sense of truth) but focuses exclusively on beings already lighted up thanks to such disclosedness. It takes all entities as *vorhanden* (present-at-hand), that is, “merely standing there” shorn of all practical/temporal/existential significance. Put in the idiomatic of early Heidegger (who is heavily influenced by Dilthey), it de-vitalizes life, i.e decontextualizes Being-in-the-world. It is an inauthentic/fallen interpretation of Being.

To understand the transition from theoretical viewpoint to metaphysics, one should view metaphysics as the theoretical viewpoint wholly historicalized, i.e determined with a historical content and structure, which Heidegger takes in the sense, determined by the Greek experience of Being that is crystallized in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Enchanted by the presence of beings, Greeks have been lost in a presence-centred vision on entities and forgot the a priori happening which made such presence possible, namely the disclosure of

Being itself. If (1) such a priori happening is a temporal phenomenon, (2) Dasein is a temporally structured openness (*Da*) for it, (3) finitude and mortality as *Sein zum Tode* is the ground of temporality, and (4) such ground (finitude) is actually the abyss of ground (*Ab-grund*) in Dasein, then all presence of entities is bound up with an anticipation of absence (non-being, nothingness) as temporalizing Dasein: Dasein by standing in the *Ab-grund*, by being an entity of *Ab-grund*, by virtue of its “uncanniness”, is related to meaning, makes sense of things. *Da* actually proves to be the site of *Ab-grund* and only by way of this it is the site of transcendence.⁹⁸ *Ab-grund* is determined (*bestimmt*) by the voice (*Stimme*) of Nothing which manifests itself in the mood (*Stimmung*), *Angst* as Dasein’s most disclosive and thus distinguished relation to Being. The role of “nihil” (as Nothing/absence) is essential for any form of presence of entities. As *Being & Time* suggests, if it is embraced by an act of resolution (“*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*”), authentic meanings and possibilities are opened for humans.⁹⁹

Accordingly, metaphysics, the fallen interpretation of Being, forgets “*nihil*” at the heart of human life and of the disclosure of Being, and gets absorbed in the presentness of entities (*Anwesenheit*), i.e in the given/disclosed entities, and never questions how they are *already* disclosed in the first instance, i.e how we can have an understanding of what it means to be in the first place, as prior to and essential for our engagement with entities. Heidegger suggests that bringing the *nihil* to the light is, however, capable of revealing such question. “*Nihil*” has two mutually corresponding aspects in Heidegger 1) as *Nichtigkeit* (i.e nothingness): it belongs to Dasein and signifies the essential ground in which Dasein finds itself as a thrown but never accomplishable project, viz. finitude and ontological lack as clarified in *Being & Time*. To say that nothingness is the essential ground of all ways of Being for Dasein is simply to say that Dasein is groundless (abysmal, *abgründig*). *Nichtigkeit* thus refers to the groundlessness of Da-sein. 2) as *Nichts* (i.e Nothing): it belongs to Being itself. Nothing stands for the concealment dimension of Being: it is not simple negativity, but Being itself as No-thing, that is, nothing entitative. *Nichtigkeit* is an occurrence, a disclosure of Being as *Nichts*. Such occurrence is basic for all meaning and possibility for Dasein without, yet, providing any ground or certainty. To appropriate *nihil* then means two corresponding phenomena 1) to own one’s essence (authentic Dasein, ontologically transparent understanding of Being) 2) to come to a position of an appropriate thinking of Being (to take up the question of Being in *Being & Time* and *Introduction to Metaphysics*, for instance, or to enter Ereignis in *Contributions to Philosophy: From Enowning*, or to overcome metaphysics). Thus, facing up to *nihil* and embracing it as a

⁹⁸ For the theme of *Ab-grund*, transcendence and Dasein, see Heidegger’s treatise “Vom Wesen des Grundes” in *WM*, 123-175: “On the Essence of Ground” (1929) in *PM*, 97-135.

⁹⁹ *SZ*, 262-267, 302-310.

radical concern of thinking, taken both together, amounts to overcoming nihilism as the inner truth of metaphysics, of the history of Being, which has culminated in the modern “epoche”.

It follows that, for Heidegger, Nothing offers a revealing perspective to delve into the inner character of metaphysics and to expose its marked tendency to “congeal” Being. Indeed, metaphysics has come about when the Greek thinking has congealed Being in theory, in the steel net of concepts, that is, has experienced it as “constant presence” (*beständige Anwesenheit*). For ossifying Being, exclusion of Nothing plays a specially functional role. Because in doing so, temporal character of Being (*a-letheia*) becomes ruled out. Heidegger’s basic position, thus, seems to amount roughly to this claim: nihilism is rooted in the metaphysical omission of Nothing from thinking. If and only if Nothing becomes an explicit matter for thinking again, then Being in its fundamental difference from beings (ontological difference) can be brought into the area of thinking, only then there may arise the possibility of an authentic path from it beyond entities to Being itself.

After this rather general presentation of our thesis in this chapter, let us provide a fuller characterization of Nothing (*das Nichts*) and metaphysics chiefly on the basis of the texts (1) “Was Ist Metaphysik?” (1929), “Nachwort zu “Was ist Metaphysik”” (1943) and “Einleitung zu “Was ist Metaphysik”” (1949), (2) *Introduction To Metaphysics* (1935), and then examine the spectre of nihilism deeply pervaded in these texts, in the light of the article, “On the Question of Being” (1955) which is written in a dialogue with Ernst Jünger’s ideas on nihilism.

In the provocative lecture, “What is Metaphysics?”, Heidegger moves with many of the theses made in *Being & Time* concerning *Angst*, *Befindlichkeit*, death, *Dasein*. However it is no longer the nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*) of *Being & Time* as finitude of *Dasein* that is in the fore-ground. Rather Heidegger now dwells on the discourse of *das Nichts* (Nothing) conceived as Being itself as “concealed”. This is consonant with Heidegger’s growing concentration on the *Sache selbst*, Being itself. Heidegger in his philosophical itinerary has ventured many “paths” to such core issue of thinking, and for him the “path-character” of (non-theoretical, transformational) experience of ontological thinking is more essential than mere ideas formulated about Being (hence the motto of Heidegger’s *Gesammtausgabe*, “*Wege, nicht Werke*”). In “What is Metaphysics?”, Heidegger attempts at a thinking of Being via the route of Nothing.

First of all, Heidegger’s phenomenology of Nothing in “What is Metaphysics?” draws upon and expands on his analysis of finitude in *Being & Time*. According to Heidegger, *Dasein*’s belonging to *Sein-zum-Tode* already means *Dasein*’s intimate connection with Nothing, *Dasein*’s “thrownness” (read, existence) into “the arena of Nothing” (read, *Da*). Thus while *Dasein* escapes from death and remains insensitive to his

movement toward death in its average everydayness in which it is sunk into the world of *Das Man*, Dasein actually avoids facing Nothing.¹⁰⁰ When, here and there, at rare moments, Dasein experiences the terror of nothing, it lives *Angst* (essential anxiety, or dread). *Angst* is Dasein's ontologically most revealing attunement or disposedness (*Befindlichkeit*) in the world, because it is informed by the pure seriousness of the terror of Nothing. *Angst* demands "decision" to be made about one's existence, a decision which would be decisive for one's future projection in the light of which things would appear in their proper weight (i.e. authentically). This contrasts with the indecision ("staggering") of fallenness. Normally and ordinarily, Dasein is in "fallenness", i.e. sticks to the manifestness of beings while forgetting the source of such manifestness (that is, the revelation of Being itself). Being becomes an issue for Dasein only in the face of Nothing/death; only when Dasein becomes "aware" of its inherent finitude, Dasein questions the meaning of Being: the question, "what is it all about?", becomes pressing. But this fundamental experience does not (and cannot) come through rational reflection of any sort (through distantiated contemplation, that is, metaphysics), but through "basic moods" (*Grundstimmungen*) such as *Angst*, boredom, wonder. Among them, *Angst* is distinguished in that it reveals Nothing, that is, it is *the* mood of death, in which what is other than beings comes to attention. Nothing, thus as No-thing (i.e. nothing entitative), belongs to Being, to what is *other* than beings (ontological difference). Heidegger writes, "The Nothing is not just the source of the counterconcept of *beings*; rather, it primordially belongs to the essence of Being itself."¹⁰¹ One may well conclude Nothing (and its mood, *Angst*) is finitude put into work.

As discussed above, Dasein, concretely taken, is this temporality itself: time (as temporality) lies at the core of Dasein's own Being. "More primordial than man is the finitude of Dasein in him."¹⁰² This implies that Dasein's experience of Being, i.e. disclosure of Being at the openness (*Da*) of Dasein, remains temporal, that is, finite. Because Being is simply *not*, without its relation to Dasein, Being itself too is marked by finitude. This is another way of saying that Being is not constant presence (not *Ousia*, not *Seiendheit*, in contradistinction to the whole Western tradition), but finite disclosure. And this is the case because Dasein is first and foremost a "thrownness" into the realm of Nothing. The pre-theoretical impact of Nothing in the mood of *Angst* reveals to Dasein the unfamiliar dimension of Being and the fact that there is more to Being than simple presence. Dasein is drawn beyond the presence, happens as transcending the present. This happening (transcendence as Dasein's transcending the present) is Dasein's essence: Dasein's

¹⁰⁰ For Heidegger's detailed treatment of *Das Man*, see *SZ*, §§ 27, 35.

¹⁰¹ *WM*, 115 (translation mine): "Das Nichts gibt nicht erst den Gegenbegriff zum *Seienden* her, sondern gehört ursprünglich zum Wesen des Seins selbst."

¹⁰² "Ursprünglicher als der Mensch ist die Endlichkeit des Daseins in ihm". *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1991), p. 229.

transcending what is present in such a way that it lives into a future/ possibility-oriented disclosure of meanings (i.e existence) means its transcendence *towards* the absent. The background of all forms of presence, of appearance of things is the hidden and unfamiliar dimension, absence or No-thing¹⁰³. Insofar as Dasein exists (i.e ek-sists), Dasein remains related to such back-ground of presence, to the realm of No-thing, which Heidegger calls, in “What is Metaphysics?”, *Hineingehaltenheit in das Nichts*¹⁰⁴. On the basis of this alone Dasein is allowed to engage with the presence of entities. Then temporality is a dynamic relationship, say a symbiosis of presence and absence occurring in the “*Da*” of Dasein. All disclosure of Being, all presence points towards a primordial (i.e prior and basic) “closedness”, a primordial absence. This way of taking things brings to focus the absential dimension of Being as something vital to it. It is this “primordial closedness” (or hiddenness) which is the actual sense of *das Nichts* in Heidegger. In the article *Nachwort zu “Was Ist Metaphysik?”* (1943) Heidegger writes “The Nothing, as other than beings, is the veil of Being.”¹⁰⁵. In this sense, Nothing is already an indispensable dimension of the emergence of meaning, that is, of human life, while its appropriation is imperative when it comes to the possibility of an authentically meaningful human life determined by an authentic sense of Being (i.e primordial togetherness of Being and Nothing). Metaphysics is in one sense an obviation of Nothing and nihilism the resulting loss of Nothing.

Accordingly, Heidegger identifies Nothing as the primordial concealedness of Being. The idiom of concealment (*Verbergung/Verborgenheit*) and unconcealment (*Unverbergung/Unverborgenheit*) of Being bears its stamp on Heidegger’s writings from 1930 on, simultaneously with his critique of metaphysics (as Western ontological tradition). It seems that Heidegger radicalizes the implications of the conception of truth (*Wahrheit* as *A-letheia*) developed in *Being & Time*¹⁰⁶, with the essays like “On the Essence of Truth” (1930), “The Essence of Truth: Plato’s Cave Allegory and the Theaetetus” (1931-32) which he cites in some later works as turning points in his thinking. From beginning to end, Heidegger’s meditations on truth is an inseparable element of his meditations on Being and his encounter with metaphysics. Thus, in the writings belonging to his middle and late period, Heidegger often identifies metaphysics and nihilism as the destruction (*Zerstören, Verstören*) of *A-letheia* in theoretical reflection, for theory has no sense of the radical mystery essential to *A-*

¹⁰³ This unfamiliar dimension, this realm of strangeness and hiddenness Heidegger calls variously in various texts: No-thing (*Nichts*, in “*Was ist Metaphysik?*”), abyss (*Ab-grund*, in “*Vom Wesen des Grundes*”), earth (*Erd*, in “*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*”), concealment (*Verborgenheit*, especially in “*Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*”), expropriation (*Enteignis*, in the *Beiträge*).

¹⁰⁴ “What is Metaphysics?” in *PM*, 82-96. Another valuable translation is “Reading Heidegger’s “What is Metaphysics?”” *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, I (2001), trans T. Sheehan.

¹⁰⁵ “Postscript to “What is Metaphysics.”” Trans. W. McNeill in *PM*, 238.

¹⁰⁶ *SZ*, § 44. Dasein, Erschlossenheit und Wahrheit, 212-230.

letheia. We will see, in the due course of our study, how the loss of the radical mystery of Being due to the sway of metaphysics, is fundamental to nihilism, how *A-letheia* (truth as such, the truth of Being) gives way to *homoiosis* (the ontic truth, correspondance, correctness). Taken literally, *Aletheia* means unhiddenness as well as becoming aware of something which has previously gone unnoticed. This literal sense guides Heidegger in his binding up truth and Being. To have a glimpse of the phenomenon of *Aletheia* in Heidegger's thought, let us briefly examine his account of truth in *Being & Time* and its deepening in the two significant articles mentioned above, for without taking Heidegger's idea of truth into account, his critique of metaphysics is simply not understandable, and thus his thesis concerning nihilism.

Truth in the primordial sense is the disclosedness of the world (world of finite and practical meanings) with which we are immediately/ practically familiar. In fact, Heidegger uses four key expressions in the same context; the disclosedness of the world (*Erschlossenheit der Welt*), the disclosedness of Dasein (*Erschlossenheit des Daseins*), the disclosedness or manifestness of entities (*Erschlossenheit des Seiende* or *Offenbarkeit des Seiende*) and disclosedness of Being (*Erschlossenheit von Sein*). It is however the last one which is of pivotal significance for Heidegger's account of truth. I shall briefly explain.

The basis of intelligibility for anything Dasein does is an already disclosed world as the immediately accessible space of background meanings and assumptions which underlies and makes possible Dasein's all sorts of engagement with entities. Only in virtue of being situated, in an ineliminable way, in a world, i.e in a world of back-ground meanings and assumptions, Dasein can encounter other entities as meaningful (or not) and make assertions about them. Such world is a holistic, unitary space of practical/existential meanings. No assertion can make sense in complete isolation, i.e as free from a disclosed world, but presupposes it, in subtle ways, for its truth. Therefore, Heidegger considers the idea of truth logic works with (that is, truth as the truth of assertions) as derivative truth which he names "mere correctness" (*Richtigkeit*), because it depends on an already disclosed world as the framework of everyday intelligibility which should in turn, as indicated, be credited as the primordial sense of truth. This is the result of radically bringing together and thinking together Being and truth. So, the true context of clarifying the essence of truth is neither logic (the level of assertions) nor epistemology (the level of subjectivity), but ontology (the phenomenological level of disclosure of Being). Consider, for instance, this revealing passage:

Being – not beings – “is given/ there”, only in so far as truth is. And truth *is* only in so far as and as long as Dasein is (Und sie *ist* nur, sofern und solange Dasein ist).
Being and truth “are” equally primordial. What does it mean that Being “is”, where

Being is to be distinguished from all beings? One can ask this concretely only if the meaning of Being and the full scope of the understanding of Being have been fundamentally clarified. Only then can one also analyze primordially what belongs to the concept of a science of *Being as such*, and to its possibilities and its variations. And in delimiting this research and its truth, both the research as an uncovering of *entities* and its truth must be ontologically defined.¹⁰⁷

Insofar as disclosedness of world means disclosedness of Dasein, Dasein is the disclosive entity, the loci of truth, of *A-letheia* (as indicated above) such that truth “*ist nur, sofern und solange Dasein ist*”. In the writings written on Truth in its fundamental relation to Being (e.g. “On the Essence of Truth”, “On the Essence of Truth: Plato’s Cave Allegory and the Theaetetus”, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”) Heidegger more and more focuses on *A-letheia* in its literal sense i.e. as unhiddenness or unconcealedness. Its non-literal sense (i.e. truth as correctness) represents only the rupture from the essence of truth, the oblivion from the original (*ursprünglich*) belonging together of Being (*Sein*) and truth (*Wahrheit*) which pre-Socratics had experienced in some degree.¹⁰⁸

As we noted above, the disclosedness or unconcealedness of Being (*Unverborgenheit des Seins*) is the principal focus of Heidegger’s understanding of truth. This sense alone refers to *A-letheia*, the essence of truth, and makes other senses possible. Unconcealment of Being first opens a world of meaning for Dasein in which entities are manifested in this or that way and Dasein is disclosed to itself within a certain self-understanding. As Heidegger notes in “Vom Wesen des Grundes”, “Unveiledness of Being first makes possible the manifestness of beings.”¹⁰⁹ The former, i.e. *A-letheia*, refers to ontological truth, while the latter can be named as ontic truth. Ontological truth is the essence (*Wesen*) of truth in the sense that it makes possible the latter. *Aletheia*, ontological truth, unveiledness of Being itself is what Heidegger, in “On the Essence of Truth”, calls the truth of Being (*Wahrheit des Seins*) and takes later on as the sole matter of thinking. Without a proper inkling into the import of this theme for Heidegger’s thinking, his work after *Being & Time*, i.e. his critique of metaphysics, remains simply not understandable. Metaphysics remains outside the possibility of an experience of the truth of Being for various reasons. One of them is the understanding of truth that guides implicitly the ontological focus of metaphysics in its approach to beings: it covers up the truth of Being. This understanding of truth is based on ontic truth, (i.e. on the manifestness of beings) by tacitly presupposing that

¹⁰⁷ *SZ*, 230; *BT*, 272-273. (translation altered).

¹⁰⁸ *SZ*, 196.

¹⁰⁹ “On the Essence of Ground”, in *PM*, 103: “Enthülltheit des Seins ermöglicht erst Offenbarkeit von seiendem.” “Vom Wesen des Grundes” in *WM*, 131.

truth is a matter of propositions that succeed in corresponding to entities. It takes the derivative sense of truth (correctness) as truth *itself*.

This prepares Heidegger's attack on Western (or degenerated Greek) logical notion of truth as *Richtigkeit* which he takes in the sense of "correctness of representations" (*Richtigkeit des Vorstellens*). The latter is actually the metaphysical notion of truth, that is, has arisen, in the late Greek age, in particular in the thought of Plato, out of a metaphysical (i.e. fallen/ inauthentic) experience of Being as Being of beings (*idea* and *ousia*), rather than as Being itself. Because metaphysics is an entity (or presence) centred thinking, Being comes to attention only as Being of beings (as presentness, *Seiendheit*, *Ousia*) and the only thing thinking is supposed to do is a correct representation of entities, that is, forming a correspondance (*homoiosis*, *adaequatio*) between mind (*psyche*) and entities. What is more, if it is a matter of re-presenting the entities, this can be done only through the perspective of now ("the present") in which future becomes not-yet-present and past no-longer-present. This amounts to the collapse of the "original temporal structure" (temporality) with metaphysics, and with this, the possibility of authentic meaning. By contrast, temporality is at work in the essential sense of truth, *Aletheia*. *Aletheia* then, as opposed to metaphysics, is the moment of authentic meaning.

Heidegger argues that the original Greek experience of Being and thereby of truth, is keenly revealed in the literal sense of this word, *a-letheia*: Being, coming to presence, as an event of *Aletheia*, shines forth from its prior absence, which is not mere absence but really its "self-concealment."¹¹⁰ Every manifestation or presencing of beings as such and as a whole rests on and issues from the prior dimension of revelation of Being itself, which, yet, in favor of the manifestness of these beings, conceals itself. So this concealing-unconcealing movement of Being, as *A-letheia*, as conditioning all coming to presence and withdrawing from presence on the part of entities, is perfectly proper to Being: Being itself remains intrinsically a mystery, and the happening of this mystery (*A-letheia*) is central to all ways of our making sense of things (i.e. meaning). Besides *A-letheia*, as the truth of Being, grounds the true character of time as temporality. In the *Contributions*, Heidegger interprets *A-letheia*, the concealing-unconcealing movement of Being, as an interplay (*Zuspiel*) and the world as its arena. Early Greeks (in particular, Parmenides and Heraclitus) had some awareness of this absential dimension of Being and its coming to presence from there in an interplay, in a counter-movement (*Zuspiel*).¹¹¹

Truth and Nothing, hence, are connected: it is this absential dimension of Being (*lethe*, the primordial hiddenness) which is what Heidegger means by the word, *das Nichts*

¹¹⁰ Hence, Heidegger's hyphenation *A-letheia* to stress the *lethe* dimension as indispensable. We, therefore, write it hyphenated to indicate this point.

¹¹¹ See, especially, *BP*, 169.

(Nothing) and which Heidegger, in the light of ontological difference, urges us to bring into the area of thinking, to make a question for thinking, as an indispensable part of a thinking about Being itself. Being forgetful of the ontological difference and preoccupied with beings, metaphysics (the sovereignty of intellect, *Verstand* or *ratio*) flees from *Nihil*, whereas the sort of thinking Heidegger urges us to undertake appropriates the ontological difference and, simultaneously, the Nothing as belonging to Being itself.

Man belongs to “Nothing”, because man is the *Da*, the loci of truth (dis-closedness), the open space for the happening of unconcealment as an emergence from concealment, from the dimension of No-thing. Heidegger, in this connection, holds that concealment is the heart of unconcealment and the concealing-unconcealing interplay of Being is the very truth of Being itself. Genuine Nothing as concealment is a happening (*nichten*) at the heart of Being. Let us take three different remarks on Nothing from three different works:

Nothing is neither negative nor is it a “goal”; rather, it is the innermost trembling (*Erzitterung*) of Being itself, and therefore more real (*seiender*) than any entity (*Seiende*).¹¹²

Being (*Seyn*) is Nothing.

The Nothing nullifies (*nichtet*). Nullifying refuses every explanation of entities with respect to entities. Refusal however grants the clearing (*Lichtung*) within which entities can go in and out, can be manifested and concealed as entities.

The Nothing inspires dread (*ent-setzt*). And this dread out of entities and away from every appeal to them is the original (*anfänglich*) attuning (*Stimmen*) through which human beings (and the gods) are *determined*.¹¹³

Das Nichts als die Absenz der Präsenz Abbruch tut (*nichtet*), ohne sie jemals vernichten. Insofern das Nichts “nichtet”, bestätigt es sich vielmehr als eine ausgezeichnete Präsenz, verschleiert es sich als diese selbst.¹¹⁴

That is to say, the happening of Nothing (*Nichten des Nichts*) is, as suggested above, the event of Dasein’s transcendence, Dasein’s going beyond all beings which constitutes its essence. But it is this going beyond beings which makes the room, in the first place, for the revelation of beings. Entities have no basis in themselves, are simply groundless. Entities rise into presence, into the level of sense through Dasein’s transcendence which is made

¹¹² *BP*, 266.

¹¹³ Martin Heidegger. *Geschichte des Seyns*, GA 69, 168.

¹¹⁴ “Zur Seinsfrage” in *WM*, 402-403: “Nothing is absence that interrupts presence and thus ‘nullifies’ (*nichtet*) it. Insofar as Nothing ‘nullifies’, it confirms itself as a distinctive presence, veiling itself as such presence.” “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 304. (translation slightly altered.)

possible by *Ent-setzung*, by the retreat of the entitative ground beneath Dasein's feet, i.e by the happening of Nothing as a happening of concealment at the heart of Being.

Nothing, consequently, has an ontological privilege because of its "disconcerting" power for a thinking absorbed in beings. Once more, the above quotation brings to attention the essential reciprocity between Being and Dasein which Heidegger, in an interview¹¹⁵, emphasizes as the chief trait of his philosophy: the fundamental happening in Being itself (that is, the happening of Nothing, *nichten*, as the innermost trembling of Being itself) corresponds to a distinguishing ontological happening in Dasein as *Angst*. Nothing, as the cause of essential anxiety (*Angst*), shatters our usual and paradigmatic, unquestioned and unreflected understanding of Being as "permanence in presence". Therefore it has a very authentic potential to call attention to the true essence, i.e truth, of Being as the inseparable twofold of concealing-revealing counter-movement.

There is again a crucial kinship between death and nothing for "death is the shrine of the nothing"¹¹⁶, a dimension where the presence giving (*wesend*) force of concealment dwells. "Death as the shrine of Nothing is the harbour of Being."¹¹⁷ As a result, it seems Heidegger's talk of Nothing fits together with his talk of authenticity and its methodological significance in *Being & Time*. Accordingly, appropriative anticipation of death/Nothing (rather than mere anticipation) is of supreme ontological significance in that it is "individuating"/ "authenticating" for Dasein by way of dissolving Dasein's *Verfallen* (absorption in *das Man*, supremacy of the standpoint of the present, self-evidence of the beings). No-thing which determines Dasein's *Angst* thus reveals the groundlessness of beings and uproots the self-evidence of the constant presence (of Being of entities). With the experience of No-thing, as *Angst*, one is freed from the yoke of beings and comes to an awareness that beings do not have any real ground in themselves, thereby are unable to provide any assurance and foundation for human life. And it is exactly here that metaphysics, as the Western way of thinking, becomes questionable in its whole essence.

Nothing (*das Nichts*) in Heidegger's sense, as suggested, refers to the primordial hiddenness of Being, the unfamiliar absence dimension which reveals itself in the mood of *Angst* itself and which lies at the heart of all unconcealment (presence) of Being. Nothing in this sense, that is, in its true sense and not in the entitative sense (as pure nullity) metaphysics attributes to it, deserves special respect. But "respecting nothing" as Richard

¹¹⁵ "The fundamental thought of my thinking is precisely that Being, or the manifestation of Being, needs human beings and that, vice versa, human beings are only human beings if they are standing in the manifestation of Being." "Martin Heidegger in Conversation," in *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers*, eds. Günter Neske and Emil Kettering, trans. Lisa Harries (New York: Paragon House, 1990), p. 82.

¹¹⁶ "Das Ding" in *VA*, 180.

¹¹⁷ "Der Tod ist als der Schrein des Nichts das Gebirg des Seins." "Das Ding" in *VA*, 180.

Polt puts it, “does not mean falling prey to nihilism, but allowing Dasein and Being (*Seyn*) to come into their own”¹¹⁸. Admittedly, it might sound nihilistic to welcome Nothing into the area of thoughtful questioning. (Not surprisingly, many have accused the basic position of “What is Metaphysics?” of nihilism.) For Heidegger, however, just the reverse is the case: it is antidote to the disguised hegemony of nihilism in metaphysics, to the underlying indifference to Being as a question of thinking. This involves, however, a direct and thinkerly (*denkerische*) encounter with the question of nothing. By contrast, metaphysics avoids seeing *nihil* in the face and precisely hereby it becomes the source (*Wesen*) of nihilism. Once, Heidegger intimates, a thinking directly encounters Nothing and experiences it as an explicit matter, it can no longer stay metaphysical, cannot rest on the presence of beings as self-evident and final, but gets drawn to the essential happening of Nothing as Being itself. In that case alone the question of Being shows up as a supremely authentic question. The question of Being and the question of Nothing belong together, are radically inseparable in such a way that in this belonging-together thinking is restored to its original, non-metaphysical essence as a thinking which not merely furnishes propositions but experiences (that is, experiences Being itself as a-letheia, i.e in its truth). Indeed, for Heidegger, Being and Nothing are the same.

“Pure Being and pure Nothing are therefore the same”. This proposition of Hegel’s (*Science of Logic*, Book I: Werke, vol. III, p.74) is correct.¹¹⁹

Here “sameness” (*Selbigkeit*), however, does not connote simple identity as it does in metaphysics. Rather as Heidegger tries to show in some of his discussions on Parmenides and Hegel, “sameness” in its primordial (i.e pre-metaphysical) sense means “belonging together” (*Zusammengehören*). Roughly put, two things belong together when they are bound up with one another, are radically inseparable. This implies that once you discard one of the two same things, the other one can no longer remain *itself*, i.e recedes into insignificance, triviality, forgottenness, in short, into “unbeing”. By the same token, if Nothing is dismissed or trivialised by thinking, as is typically done by metaphysics, then Being, too, is driven into unbeing, no longer presences in its original essence, i.e as Being *itself*. The result is: “from its beginning to its completion, the propositions of metaphysics have been strangely involved in a persistent confusion of beings and Being”¹²⁰. Nihilism then appears to be a historically entrenched failure in Western culture, a failure in recognizing this

¹¹⁸ Richard Polt. “The Question of Nothing,” in *A Companion To Heidegger’s Introduction To Metaphysics*, ed. R. Polt and G. Fried (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 60.

¹¹⁹ “What is Metaphysics?”, in *PM*, 94. See, also, *B*, 282-283. Heidegger states this in many other places, as well.

¹²⁰ “Introduction to “What is Metaphysics?””, in *PM*, 281.

sameness (belonging together, radical inseparability) of Being and Nothing. Nihilism means that Being is no longer *itself*, forced into unbeing, into a nil-status, into a mere “Being of beings”. Let us briefly discuss some aspects of this phenomenon as examined in *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

As we pointed out at the outset, the late Greek philosophical experience of Being (Plato and Aristotle) has understood Being as “constant presence”, and such experience has been decisive for the Western ontological tradition. One of Heidegger’s most important works, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), revolves around this thesis. Heidegger distinguishes between the pre-socratic, (early or original) Greek age and the late Greek age. The former refers to the age of original Greek experience of Being exemplified in such thinkers as Anaximander, Parmenides and Heraclitus and the poets like Homer, Sophocles, Pindar. The latter stands for the degeneration of this original Greek spirit initiated by Plato and Aristotle and progressively intensified in Roman, Christian and Modern periods. This might sound some form of idealism: ideas shape up history. Actually, there is a quasi-Hegelian sense to Heidegger’s attempt at thinking history and philosophy intrinsically connected through an inner ontological bond. The inner structure of the Western history can be seen through the philosophical utterances of major thinkers (from Plato up to Nietzsche) and such history is essentially a history of the Western paradigms of understanding of Being. In fact, one can suggest, there is only one paradigm, namely the understanding of Being as “constant presence”: others are simply variations from this paradigm as its hardened forms (epoche). Early Greeks had a sense of the disclosure of Being as basing on and springing from a former hiddenness such that they named such experience with the word, *Aletheia*. This was a fundamental experience for the whole motivation of Heraclitus’ thinking, for instance: with extreme wonder, once, he is reported to have uttered “*Physis* loves to hide”¹²¹. *Physis* could be rendered as the happening of “coming to light”, “standing in the light”, “emerging”, “shining”, “radiation”, “coming to presence”, “presencing” etc. *Logos*, on the other hand, refers to the language dimension of the same phenomenon. It was Being as coming to language (or to lingual presence), the essential disclosure behind language, and as such “the foundation of language” and therewith the human essence. While early Greeks preceived the inner essence of this coming to presence in its intrinsic finitude, as resided in, issuing from and withdrawing into a more primordial and constitutive concealedness/ absence/ unintelligibility/ closedness, i.e as *A-letheia*, the post-socratic philosophers tended to treat such coming to presence as permanently standing in presence, as abiding in presence, (i.e as idea and ousia: the former designates such standing in presence in terms of the look/

¹²¹ “*Physis kryptesthai philei*”, Heraclitus, fragment 123.

vision¹²² and the latter in terms of endurance/already-there-ness or presence at hand¹²³). For Heidegger, with Plato and Aristotle, Greek (Western) experience of Being has been alienated to *Aletheia*: it has taken the shape of metaphysics which has determined the Western history (i.e the Western historical experience of Being) as a whole up to the present.

Accordingly, to repeat, Heidegger is convinced that deep structure of Western history is metaphysics. In “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”¹²⁴, Heidegger attempts to explore the dimensions of the degeneration of *Aletheia* and the outbreak of metaphysics in Plato. Heidegger contends that metaphysics is motivated by a drive to “see”. But “seeing”, like cognition, is derivative: it rests on the manifestness of beings, which becomes in turn possible on the basis of unhiddenness of Being, i.e *aletheia*. Metaphysics has come about as the domination of seeing in the light *aletheia* itself has granted and this happened in the thought of Plato. With Plato, thinking has turned into “seeing” (*idein*), a seeing which is instinctively and in a peculiar disengaged attitude directed toward the truly real (*idea*), i.e what is permanent in presence, and thereby outside of change and time.¹²⁵ Truth has become a matter of seeing (*idein*) of the visible form (*idea*), a matter of “clarity and constancy of insight into essence”¹²⁶. Seeing of the seen (*idein* of the *idea*) is fulfilled in “correct vision” which is correspondance (*homoiosis*) between seeing (as apprehending/*noein* and asserting/*legein*) and what is seen (*idea*, essence). *Aletheia* (as well as *lethe*, i.e hiddenness of Being) is lost to thinking, in favor of *homoiosis*. With the loss of (un)hiddenness, truth is no more understood in relation to the real sense of *A-letheia* (as concealing-unconcealing play of Being), but as *homoiosis* that is, as belonging to correct vision (thus to mind) and not to Being itself, even though the word (*Aletheia*) is still retained, and even though in this word still echoes the original Greek experience (i.e *physis*) as “emergence of the hidden into unhiddenness, where unhiddenness itself, as revealing, constitutes the fundamental trait of Being present”¹²⁷. The words like *Physis*, *Aletheia*, *Logos* which had been the revelations of the original Greek wonder of Being have also been distorted through mistranslation in the process of the consolidation of metaphysical tradition. *Physis* has become *natura* (nature), *Aletheia* *veritas* (correctness), and *Logos* *assertio* (statement). And such distortion is a unitary phenomenon in which the structure of metaphysics has come about and been put into work in Roman, Christian and modern frameworks. All this has already taken place in the full scope of Plato’s “epochal” thought, the rest was, with Whitehead, inserting footnotes to

¹²² *IM*, 192-193; *EM*, 189-190. “... and the look, in turn, presents the being’s whatness” (... Aussehen, dieses jedoch praesentiert ... das Was.) *IM*, 193; *EM*, 190.

¹²³ “Vorhandenheit”, *EM*, 201.

¹²⁴ This article, published in 1942, is Heidegger says, actually written in 1930 and presents in a summary form Heidegger’s meditations on truth in the late 1920s.

¹²⁵ Martin Heidegger. “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”, trans. Thomas Sheehan, in *PM*, 155-182.

¹²⁶ “Plato’s Doctrine”, 229.

¹²⁷ “Plato’s Doctrine”, 234.

this philosophy. In sum, “The transformation of *physis* and *logos* into idea and assertion has its inner ground in a transformation of the essence of truth as unconcealment into truth as correctness.”¹²⁸

Accordingly metaphysics has come about as a shift of focus from aletheia (truth of Being) to correctness or correspondance (truth of beings), and the latter, metaphysics, as having its fate already decided in the former (more on this in chapter 3). *A-letheia* then names the beginning, indeed the lost beginning of Western history, in which Being occurs to early Greek humanity as *physis*. A beginning (*Anfang*) is the focal and vital moment of a history as a momentous happening (*Geschehen*) of Being. Being happens in the sense of *Wesen*: Being is *not*, but rather *west*. Beginnings are thus original (*anfaenglich*) and essential (*wesentlich*). History (*Geschichte*) in its original level, i.e in terms of beginnings, alone can be adequately understood. A beginning in turn belongs to a leap (*Sprung*) and takes its all movement from this leap as a primordial (*urspruenglich*) happening of Being itself. A beginning as a leap thus is momentous but as such short-lived. The Greek beginning as Heidegger reads it, as indicated, is marked by an understanding of Being as *Physis*, which was pre-metaphysical. Its short life among the early Greeks is quite commensurate with the long process of decline its degenerated form, constant presence (*idea/ ousia*), has entailed.¹²⁹ Falling progressively outside this Greek beginning, the Western tradition, by necessity, has been a history of living out the (fallen/inauthentic/metaphysical) possibilities inherent in the degeneration of this beginning, thus determined by the onset (*Fortgehen*) of metaphysical understanding of Being (in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle) as “constant presence”, from the ground up.

In this connection, “understanding of Being” must be conceived in the sense of *Being & Time*: it is not a formulated theory but a tacit framework embedded in our practical engagements. It is not an explicit ontology but the implicit ontology which in being more radical and essential than the former guides it from the beginning to the end. It is not a said doctrine but the unsaid dimension, the space of background assumptions. As the unsaid of a thinker’s thinking it determines the whole focus of, the governing center of, the said in this thinking. If beings are seen only as beings and Being is resorted to only as Being of beings, beings themselves become the whole thing, and thereby become stripped of the meaning

¹²⁸ *IM*, 203; *EM*, 198.

¹²⁹ Let us, in advance, note that Heidegger’s cult of the (presocratic) Greeks has, largely, not been supported by historical material. However, Heidegger’s overall point in approaching Greeks might be of a different kind. About this, I agree with Julian Young, when he remarks: “What is really important about Heidegger’s Greeks is that they represent a possible *future*, not that they represent an actual past... remarks of the form ‘The Greeks did such-and-such’ are always translatable into statements of the form ‘We could become a community who do such-and-such’ ”. *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 201.

dimension (of the prior disclosedness of themselves thanks to the happening of Being in the openness of Dasein). Beings become neutral, objective entities suitable for the exercise of *theoria*. Then, the matter for thinking becomes one of capturing the unchanging blueprint, the atemporal structure that governs the presence of entities and explains the intelligibility of things first and for all under a total system. All this becomes possible on the basis of an understanding of Being as “constant presence”. In this understanding, Being is already disclosed as permanence in presence, but such disclosure remains outside the scope of metaphysics which contends itself with what it gives, that is, the entities standing in presence. Metaphysics in this sense “forgets” the source, but nonetheless remains dependent on its gift, the unconcealed entities. Metaphysics signifies this experience of Being and thus the inner (i.e ontological) character of the Western history as history of forgetfulness of Being.

Now, to connect this to the topic of Nothing again, Heidegger holds (in the articles written as introduction and afterword to “What is Metaphysics?”) that metaphysics’ defining focus on presence (of entities) is in perfect agreement with its flight from Nothing, from the “not” of beings, from the absential dimension of Being. As Pöggeler puts it “Nothing is excluded by metaphysics with the tacit objective of assuring the constancy of Being”¹³⁰. If metaphysical thinking (that is, representation or “the domination of thinking as ratio in the sense of understanding as well as reason”¹³¹) is exclusively focused upon the Being of beings as “constant presence”, then for it nothing can come into view only as “constant absence”, as something totally negative, as sheer non-Being. For Heidegger, as we have already indicated, “Nothing is not *nihil negativum*”. Nothing rather belongs to the concealment of Being as the withdrawal (*Entzug*) of presencing. As absential dimension of presence, it is the veil of Being. Moreover, such concealment (*Verborgenheit*) of Being which conditions all presence (i.e presentness of entities to human understanding) is also sheltering (*Bergende*) in which Being keeps itself in its true character, in its radical mystery as proper to it.¹³²

Metaphysics is the hegemony of intellect, *Verstand* or reason, whereas the question of Being can neither be addressed nor be appreciated so far as thinking remains determined by the confines of reason. We can surmise, already from *Being & Time*, the derivative character of reason (of cognition, of theory). Through the question of Nothing, the authority of logic, and therewith, the authority of reason becomes shattered. As we have seen the horizon of the question of Nothing lights up the question of Being. Because the way Being is

¹³⁰ Otto Pöggeler. *Martin Heidegger’s Path of Thinking*, trans. D. Magurshak and S. Barber (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1987), p. 162.

¹³¹ “... die Herrschaft des Denkens als ratio (als Verstand sowohl wie als Vernunft)”, *EM*, 187.

¹³² As we will discuss it below more fully in relation to nihilism, (to Heidegger’s insistence that “Metaphysik ist eigentliche Nihilismus”), this refers to the radical mystery of Being as the truth of Being.

(i.e becomes accessible to Dasein, happens in the openness of Dasein¹³³) is captured by the phenomenon and word of *A-letheia* (the original and inseparable belonging together of concealment –lethe- and unconcealment-alethe- of Being), the question of Nothing is a natural component of and a basic occurrence in the question of Being. Accordingly, reason is entity-centred, i.e takes the presence of beings for granted, which are lighted up by a transcendental happening of an understanding of Being (which is actually a “happening of transcendence” as the essence of Dasein, i.e as Dasein’s intrinsic relatedness to Being and to its disclosure as the disclosure of meaning) and never questions the general ontological framework of the disclosedness of beings. For reason, Being itself never appears in the horizon of questioning. It is in this sense the true form of metaphysics. It is therefore opposed to thinking as thinking of Being. But this opposition is not to be taken in the sense of mere contrariness. It is much more than that. This opposition means the historically entrenched obstructiveness of reason for the occurrence of thinking, for the emergence of the question of Being. As Heidegger writes at the end of the article “Nietzsche’s Word “God is Dead””

Thinking does not begin until we have come to know that the reason that has been extolled for centuries is the most stubborn adversary of thinking.¹³⁴

And, Heidegger’s account suggests, as far as reason is the adversary of thinking, it is part of nihilism.

In keeping with what is said about understanding of Being, metaphysics and reason above, metaphysics seems to rest on, what I would call, a “totalitarian vision of reality”. This even entails repercussions at the socio-political level, for example: totalitarian ideologies and regimes of our modern age (from communism to national socialism, including liberalism or liberal democracies¹³⁵), their social engineering policies, total organizing drives, boundless violence (which Heidegger certainly deemed as the revelations of nihilism inherent in metaphysics) have been all disclosed in, guided by, a certain understanding of Being that is alien to the truth of Being, which is precisely the core problem for Heidegger. Against this, we need to (and can only do) take Being into the area of questioning in the light of ontological difference. Metaphysics is not only entirely incapable and inappropriate to this

¹³³ For this happening, indeed the basic happening which opens and grounds history, Heidegger uses the verb, *west* (the third singular of *Wesen*). We cannot say Being *is* because Being is not a being. Instead Heidegger says Being essentially happens (*Sein west*). I use “is” above only provisionally.

¹³⁴ “Nietzsche’s Word “God is Dead””, in *OBT*, 199.

¹³⁵ For Heidegger’s treatment of liberalism as metaphysical, and a critique of this position, see, the article by Richard Polt, “Metaphysical Liberalism in Heidegger’s *Beiträge*”, in *Heidegger Reexamined*, vol.3, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 209-234.

end, but it also blocks the way to it by blocking the primordial bond between Being and Dasein. As Heidegger writes:

Fast scheint es, als sei die Metaphysik durch die Art, wie sie das Seiende denkt, dahin gewiesen, ohne ihr Wissen die Schranke zu sein, die dem Menschen den anfänglichen Bezug des Seins zum Menschenwesen verwehrt.¹³⁶

In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger suggests that we should venture such questioning through the fundamental metaphysical question, namely “Why are there Beings at all, and why not far rather Nothing”¹³⁷ (Leibniz’s question) which exposes the inseparability and belonging together of the question of Being and the question of Nothing. However, in the following works such as *Contributions to Philosophy*, *Besinnung* and *Metaphysik und Nihilismus*, Heidegger comes to see that *die metaphysische Grundfrage* also belongs to metaphysics in taking the question of Being as a question about ground, an ontic question (viz. why-question), that is, via the path of beings: something more radical is required, namely, directly focusing on the question of truth of Being itself in its primordial bond with Dasein (the happening of such questioning thinking itself Heidegger would come to call *Ereignis* in the *Contributions*). But the way to such fundamental question can be undertaken through first posing another question (the preliminary question), that is, questioning the understanding of Being which we ourselves currently have: how does it stand with Being? The preliminary question, Heidegger holds, reveals the inner character of the kind of understanding of Being we currently have as nihilism. Recognizing such nihilism is the first step towards overcoming it, towards questioning the understanding of Being which currently determines the way we make sense of things. The preliminary question, “How does it stand with Being?” involves, in turn, the question of “how it stands with our Dasein in history, of whether we stand in history or merely stagger”¹³⁸. “Staggering” is another metaphor for the historical fallenness of the Western humanity, for its sunkness in a deeply rooted alienation to Being, i.e. for nihilism. It implies loss of direction, goal and sense, i.e. a state without decision. And Heidegger goes on “seen metaphysically, **we are staggering**. Everywhere we are underway amid beings, and yet we no longer know how it stands with Being”¹³⁹. This is intrinsically nihilism, because Being itself becomes a matter of triviality for it, an empty and indeterminate word, something already self-evident hence

¹³⁶ “Einleitung zu:”Was ist Metaphysik?“ in *WM*, 370. “It almost seems the case that metaphysics, because of the way in which it thinks of beings, becomes unknowingly the barrier that refuses human beings the primordial relation of Being to the human essence.” In “Introduction to “What is Metaphysics?“”, *PM*, 281. (translation altered.)

¹³⁷ “Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts”. With this question, Heidegger closes “What is Metaphysics?” and opens *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

¹³⁸ *IM*, 217; *EM*, 211.

¹³⁹ *IM*, 217; *EM*, 211.

needing no further inquiry, a philosophically uninteresting abstraction, an issue of pointless confusion which can be removed only when one deals with Being in a logical manner i.e. as the copula (“is”) of assertions. “merely to chase after beings in the midst of the oblivion of Being- that is nihilism.”¹⁴⁰ For Heidegger, Indeed this is nihilism in the most basic sense. It is even the ground of what Nietzsche attacks as nihilism in his book, *The Will to Power*.¹⁴¹ It is the actual character of the Western understanding of Being, that is, of “the concept of Being that has been accepted up to now”¹⁴². With nihilism, “what is at stake is nothing less than a determination of Being-human that springs from the essence of Being (*physis*) that is to be opened up”¹⁴³. The metaphysical view of Being as nihilism itself rests on counterposing “Being and thought”, in which an objectifying and reifying relation to Being prevails, whereas the task Heidegger urges should be one of bringing together “Being and time”, in such a way that the latter serves as the explicit perspective (as temporality) for approaching the former.¹⁴⁴ Heidegger closes *Introduction to Metaphysics* by referring to the scientific ideal as eclipsing the question of Being. Scientific ideal is a derivative of metaphysical interpretation of Being. From its very inception on, metaphysics remains determined by physics, the degeneration of *physis* into *hypokeimenon*, (the underlying, the already-there) and into *ousia*, “in the sense of abiding in presence”, or “being stably present” (“im Sinne der beständigen Anwesenung”¹⁴⁵) as well as by logic (the degeneration of *logos* into *kategoria*, assertion). Actually, logic and physics as the true form of metaphysics are intimately connected: the latter has arisen from the secession of *logos* from *physis*. Ironically enough, metaphysics has never been *ta meta ta physika*, that which goes beyond the entities.

As a consequence, Heidegger’s account suggests that metaphysics is nihilism at the deepest level, that is, in its basic comportment towards Being. In metaphysics Being counts for nothing: metaphysics does not take Being as such as an explicit matter, rather when it seems to speak of Being it actually speaks of Being of beings, not of Being *itself*. Metaphysics is structured from the very outset as a quest for the *knowledge* of entities, as a “will to knowledge”¹⁴⁶, whereas Being itself is no object for knowledge, nothing representable, nothing suitable for the cognitive mastery. Metaphysics is structurally blind to Being. Being thus expelled from the area of thinking leaves the knowledge driven enterprise

¹⁴⁰ “In der Vergessenheit des Seins nur das Seiende betreiben -das ist Nihilismus.” *IM*, 217; *EM*, 212.

¹⁴¹ “Der so verstandene Nihilismus ist erst der *Grund* für jenen Nihilismus, den *Nietzsche* im ersten Buch des »Willens zur Macht« herausgestellt hat.” *IM*, 217; *EM*, 212.

¹⁴² *IM*, 218; *EM*, 213.

¹⁴³ “...es dabei um nichts Geringeres geht als um eine aus dem zu eröffnenden Wesen des Seins (*physis*) entspringende Bestimmung des Menschseins.” *EM*, 213-214; *IM*, 219.

¹⁴⁴ See, *IM*, 230-231; *EM*, 214-215.

¹⁴⁵ “Vom Wesen und Begriff der *Physis*, Aristoteles, *Physik* B, 1”, in *WM*, 266.

¹⁴⁶ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 296; *WM*, 393. In point of fact, Heidegger views “will to knowledge” as an aspect of “will to power” (*Wille zur Macht*), in reference to Nietzsche with whom metaphysics becomes a fulfilled nihilism. More on this below in Chapter 6.

of metaphysics without any possibility of authentic meaning. Thus Being (and equally meaning) abandons humanity in its forgetful/ fallen/staggering ways with entities and entities emptied: the world is darkened. This is the theme of “darkening of the world” and of “abandonment of Being” (*Seinsverlassenheit*) which are simply metaphors for the phenomenon of nihilism. In the article “On the Question of Being”, Heidegger argues that nihilism today is “the normal condition of humankind”¹⁴⁷. We need to enter into a critical encounter with the essence of nihilism which requires we question in depth “the metaphysical position of the human being”¹⁴⁸. In response to Jünger, Heidegger sees “the totalitarian character of work” in the modern world as a manifestation of nihilism and in origin metaphysical. As suggested above, this is part of the “totalitarian vision of reality” inherent in metaphysics (“reality” itself, from the Medieval *realitas*, namely “thingliness”, is a thoroughly metaphysical concept indicative of a thinking whose sole aim is conquering things or entities.)

Nihilism, the actuality of metaphysics is consummated in the modern world, thus prevailing in many diverse and hidden forms. The fact that it is consummated makes it unrecognizable, a “condition of normality” in which it hides “unusually broad” potentials for the modern mankind. This is above all the condition of extreme danger, in the vicinity of which perhaps lying the possibility of the sudden emergence of a “planetary catastrophe”¹⁴⁹. Hence nihilism is not a modern phenomenon at all, but modernity represents its culmination, its most dangerous consummate stage. Rather as the essence of metaphysics, it is as old as metaphysics itself. Nihilism is rooted in the history (*Geschichte*) of Being (in the Greek beginning) in which Being discloses/destines/sends (*schickt*) itself as a destiny (*Geschick*), as an understanding of Being which reveals entities but in favor of such revelation keeps itself concealed. Accordingly, nihilism is rooted in such concealment which makes entity-focused understanding of Being almost self-evident, thus quite easy for humanity to succumb to. Metaphysics is the general name for the various forms of such sending/destining. Nihilism prevails as our understanding of Being, as a certain unconcealment of Being in which Being remains totally veiled to historical humanity. Heidegger writes: “... the essence of nihilism is nothing nihilistic, and that Nothing is detracted from the ancient worthiness of metaphysics by the fact that its own essence shelters nihilism within it.”¹⁵⁰ Remember that Nothing refers to the concealment dimension of Being, that is, Being itself as concealed. “Being and Nothing are not given alongside one another. The one employs the other in a kinship whose

¹⁴⁷ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 296: *WM*, 393.

¹⁴⁸ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 296: *WM*, 393.

¹⁴⁹ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 297: *WM*, 394.

¹⁵⁰ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 313: *WM*, 414.

essential fullness we have as yet scarcely pondered.”¹⁵¹ The possibility that we may some day come to a position to put directly into question the essence of metaphysics and of nihilism, and to assume thereby a critical encounter with this twin phenomenon (a moment which is key to the shattering of their disguised hegemony) rests on our rediscovering the primordial kinship between Being and Nothing. “The *essence* of the nothing, in its former kinship with ‘Being,’ can arrive and be accommodated among us mortals.”¹⁵² So the question of Nothing and the question of nihilism are inseparable. And they both point toward “a path that leads to a discussion of the essence of Being (*Wesen des Seins*).”¹⁵³

Yet such path is prevented by the historical domination of metaphysics especially as the basic way in which our essential relation to “language” is determined. Then one fundamental route to the overcoming of metaphysics and nihilism is through a transformation of our essential relation to language, through finding appropriate saying (appropriate to Being), that is, through retrieving the original essence of *logos* which “the logic and dialectic that come from metaphysics are never able to experience.”¹⁵⁴

Heidegger as a consequence comes to think that metaphysics as the entity-centred thinking is the inner reality of nihilism in which Being becomes nothing (loses all significance) while beings become everything. “Meaningful” existence for Dasein is systematically obstructed by the historical domination of metaphysics. One should remember (1) that meaning (*Sinn*) is actually another name for the disclosure of Being and strictly speaking, Being is the meaning dimension¹⁵⁵ and (2) that metaphysics blocks the essential/primordial bond between Being and Dasein. (Neither Being nor Dasein is independent: Being needs Dasein to be *itself* and Dasein needs Being to be itself. Then the bond between the two is an essential one, i.e enable them become their essence. The happening of such bond Heidegger would call *Ereignis*) Heidegger insists that meaning is not something to be found accessible in an entity-focused thinking like metaphysics. Nor can it be found in sciences or in any sort of logically oriented thinking for they belong to the essence of metaphysics, issue (historically) from the metaphysical understanding of Being and continue its obliviousness even more thoroughly. Therefore, sciences (including logic and mathematics) are only the parts of the nihilistic picture. They could be possible only when Being is metaphysically determined, only when it is fixed and degraded into “constant presence”.

¹⁵¹ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 317: *WM*, 419: “Sein and Nichts gibt es nicht nebeneinander. Eines verwendet sich für das Andere in einer Verwandtschaft, deren Wesensfülle wir noch kaum bedacht haben”, “Zur Seinsfrage”, in *WM*, 419.

¹⁵² “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 310: *WM*, 410.

¹⁵³ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 306: *WM*, 405.

¹⁵⁴ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 309: *WM*, 409.

¹⁵⁵ See *SZ*, § 32, § 44, § 65.

Metaphysics, as the perspective of the present and as the (disinterested) “seeing” of beings in “constant presence”, is focused on beings *as* beings, thereby remaining blind to Being dimension in whose light first it encounters beings and can transcend (*übersteigen*) them. Even though metaphysics occurs as this transcending of beings by Being itself, metaphysics is prevented to ever experience this occurrence of transcendence, i.e. its own essence.¹⁵⁶ Being, while giving the presence of metaphysics (i.e. the presence which it takes for granted), itself remains hidden to it. For the very simple reason; the counter-movement of temporality, as the concealing-unconcealing play of Being and thus the absential dimension of Being (No-thing), lies beyond the scope of metaphysical representation, beyond thing-oriented ways of thinking. Consequently, metaphysics comes to have four inseparable and intervoven elements; thinking as seeing in the sense of representation, Being as constant presence, truth as correspondance and time as the present.

Determined by such structure (as indicated above), metaphysics has given rise to three interconnected forms of thinking: (1) representational form, which is driven to make entities permanently “present” to the seeing belonging to the mind, which is in turn “immediately presented to itself in introspection”¹⁵⁷, (2) objectifying form, which takes beings as objects to be known by an objective, disengaged, distantiated knower, i.e. on the basis of subject-object relation and (3) calculative form, which is oriented to deal with beings to be mathematically determined with the ultimate end of guaranteeing cognitive mastery over them and thereby making them objects of unbounded exploitation.

From now on, Heidegger’s basic argument that nihilism consists in the essence (*Wesen*) of metaphysics (i.e. metaphysics in its historical-essential unfolding, as history of Being) turns Heidegger’s attention to an archeology of nihilism (an archeo-logy, or *Destruktion*, to use Heidegger’s word in *Being and Time*, which is simultanously motivated to unearth “the possibilities of thinking” hidden in the Western metaphysical tradition) in his attempt at exploring large-scale world-historical dimensions of metaphysics, the origin and epochs of *Seinsgeschichte*. Let us see what kind of thing is this *Seinsgeschichte* as *Verfallsgeschichte*.

¹⁵⁶ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 319: “... der Metaphysik verwehrt, als Metaphysik jemals ihr Wesen zu erfahren”, “Zur Seinsfrage”, in *WM*, 422.

¹⁵⁷ A point made by Charles B. Guignon, “Introduction” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 6.

CHAPTER 4

MOMENTS OF NIHILISM: BETWEEN THE HISTORY OF BEING AND THE OTHER BEGINNING

The objective of this chapter is to critically examine the twin phenomena, nihilism and metaphysics, as the history of Being, i.e. in their “historical” roots and moments. We will primarily rest on works from the war period, what is called Heidegger’s “secret writings”. These mainly include 1) *Contributions to Philosophy: from Ereignis* 2) *Mindfulness* 3) *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* 4) *Geschichte des Seyns*. “The history of Being” is one of the basic themes in Heidegger’s later philosophy. As noted in chapter 2, Heidegger’s encounter with metaphysics evolves from his critique of theory (*Theorie*) or “theoretical attitude” taken up in *Being & Time* and in some earlier works¹⁵⁸ (under the influence of Dilthey and Kierkegaard). A phenomenological elucidation of metaphysical way of thinking, which Heidegger carries out till early 1930s¹⁵⁹, grows out of taking “theoretical attitude” in the overall context of the key texts of Western metaphysical tradition. Here Heidegger’s chief concern in all this is to find “non-theoretical” ontological avenues for the sole question of his thinking, the question of Being. Thus the question of Being involves the problem of history

¹⁵⁸ These are Heidegger’s Marburg lectures such as:

Plato’s Sophist (1924), trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena (1925), trans. T. Kiesel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985).

The Basic Problems of Phenomenology (1927), trans. A. Hofstadter (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982).

¹⁵⁹ The following works can be cited:

The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic (1928), trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

Aristotle’s Metaphysics 1–3: *On the Essence and Actuality of Force* (1931), trans. W. Brogan and P. Warnek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet (1931) (GA 34). (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1988).

The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude (1930), trans. W. McNeill and N. Walker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995).

“On the Essence of Ground” (1929), trans. W. McNeill, in *PM*.

Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (1929), trans. R. Taft, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990).

“What is Metaphysics?” (1929), trans. D.F. Krell, in *PM*.

as the problem of tradition. Now, the full expression of this historically based approach to the question of Being is found in his formulating metaphysics as the history of Being in the mid-1930s. Because metaphysical interpretation of Being moves with an underlying nihilism, with an abstract, empty and dead Being (in the words of tradition, indeterminately general, trivial, self-evident, familiar, permanent) presupposed implicitly without further questioning, the history of Being gives us the moments of historical nihilism, of the loss of authentic meaning of Being. In this chapter, we discuss some aspects of this phenomenon. First, we inquire the issue of how Heidegger thinks together history and thinking, which is, I believe, central to the topic of the history of Being, in its connection with metaphysics and nihilism. Then we discuss, on this basis, certain dimensions of the history of Being such as *Seinsvergessenheit* (forgottenness of Being) and *Seinsverlassenheit* (abandonment of Being), the darkening of the world, the flight of gods and *Verblendung* (blinding) which are, as we will see, metaphors Heidegger employs to describe nihilism at work, that is, as a historical movement. Meanwhile we clarify in passing some key notions in Heidegger's thinking such as *Ereignis*, *Geschick*, *Lichtung*, *Anfang*, *Sprung*, *Wesen*, *Kehre* which are essential in Heidegger's discussion of overcoming the history of Being (i.e metaphysics and nihilism).

First of all, we should note that Heidegger seems to proceed from the standard (or "surface") meaning of nihilism to its deep meaning in an attempt to uncover its essential (that is, metaphysical) dimension. Its standard definition can be roughly put something like this: human life lacks meaning and value and world is inherently devoid of any genuine sense. Indeed, Heidegger thinks, this is *factually* the case at present but only as a "present perfect", as a historical outcome, as following from an underlying historical dimension in which Being (the source of meaning) has been emptied out ('essentially' forgotten), and humanity has grown oblivious to the essence (*Wesen*) of Being, i.e to what is "ownmost" to Being, to its truth, and thereby to his own essence as "the open" for the unveiling of Being. But Heidegger retains hopes, as we will see, that it is possible that humanity can step outside this historical entrapment in nihilism and the possibility of this occurrence lies exclusively in the realm of "essential (*wesentliche*) thinking as an *Ereignis* of Being"¹⁶⁰. This stepping outside the realm of nihilism would be the overcoming of the history of Being via the dawn of another beginning (*Anfang*). Then the history of Being is the historical form of the unfolding of a beginning which has not been an adequate experience of Being itself. One step further from the essential level of the leap of beginning lies its derivative level of movement or "staggering" in which what is essential to this beginning is increasingly consumed in favor of immersion in what this beginning opens up, i.e (disclosed) entities. The latter level, as indicated, corresponds to metaphysics and nihilism.

¹⁶⁰ "Nachwort zu "Was ist Metaphysik?" in *WM*, 308.

In short, it is of extreme importance that nihilism, for Heidegger, is a historical movement. And it is so as the historical unfolding of metaphysics. In this sense, nihilism lies in “the deep history” of the West and understandable only as the inner framework of this history. Hence Heidegger’s concise statement: “Das Wesen des Nihilismus ist die Geschichte, in der es mit dem Sein selbst nichts ist.”¹⁶¹ To put it differently, the source of nihilism is the history of Being in which metaphysics thinks and makes nothing of Being itself. This also makes it clear that nihilism is not a contemporary condition: it has a history and indeed is effective *through* this historical soil in which we are situated. The history of Being as nihilism thus captures this point. Likewise, the history of Being is the history of metaphysics, that is, the history of fallen/ inauthentic/ staggering understandings of Being. One can say it is the “history of fallenness” (*Verfallsgeschichte*).

Let us first give, very roughly, the summary points of the two foregoing chapters which would make it easier to make sense of the discussion of the history of Being as a historical background of nihilism that we will undertake in this chapter. That is, in brief: (1) inauthenticity of metaphysical thinking (2) its consequent inability to take up the question of Being (3) its concentration on beings as beings in terms of their “constant presence” (4) The present as its temporal/ transcendental horizon, inherent guide of thinking (5) Its evasion from the finitude of human being, from Nothing, and therefore from No-thing (i.e. “not of beings”) so as to assure the permanence of Being: metaphysics remains in its essence a constant negation of death and Nothing and a heedless absorption into the self-evidence of beings (6) Its blindness to the truth of Being as concealing-unconcealing temporal interplay that occurs in and needs the open space of human-Being, *Da* of Dasein (7) hence nihilism (nil-status of nothing, triviality of Being and correlatively forgetfulness of Being) as its hidden essence. In this context, Heidegger holds that nihilism as the history of Being (the historical unfolding of metaphysics) is the ontological essence and the historical ground of the Western tradition.

I think the best way to delve into the history of Being as the nihilistic ground of Western tradition, as a history of growing loss of meaning is to ascertain the ontological connections between history and thinking in Heidegger’s thought. This involves the inseparability of Heidegger’s archeology (i.e. the way Heidegger approaches to the fate of the first beginning, the metaphysical tradition, namely *Destruktion*) and eschatology (reflecting towards the other beginning, the only true future as the identification of *Seyn*, Ereignis, *Anfang*, history and thinking). If the former concerns the historical drama of the human being engaged in the mechanic of nihilism, in the forms of effacement of Being, in Being’s ceasing to happen authentically in our thinking engagement with the world, in growing

¹⁶¹ MN, 206.

impoverisation of the horizon in which we make sense of things, then the latter deals with the decisive leap outside it as the essential happening of Being *itself* (by using the human essence) in which is concentrated (i.e found and thereby founded) all the event-ual meaning and consequence of the following history.

Heidegger, from the 1930s on, explores the way Being shows up historically and as the essential level of history. This is part of Heidegger's project, *Destruktion* of Western metaphysics. *Destruktion* is not a negative project, i.e not a project motivated to demolish metaphysics as a discipline and a tradition, but an attempt at discovering the possibilities of thinking and saying which have remained hidden in the various moments or layers of this metaphysical tradition. Yet it remains that metaphysical way of thinking (that is, unthinking) needs to be given way or at least rehabilitated (*verwinden*), by taking up the basic happening in metaphysics which makes metaphysics possible, namely "Being's transcending (*Übersteigen*) of beings"¹⁶². That is to say, the unconcealedness of Being (*A-letheia*, the truth of Being) grants the space of vision (presence) and the unconcealed (present) entities in presence for the seeing of metaphysics, but metaphysics in each case fails to ponder this happening (*Wesung*) as its source (*Wesen*).

One should see that Heidegger's engagement with nihilism corresponds to the radicalization of his critique of metaphysics, the basic aspect of his later philosophy. It is first in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935) that we see a sharp and comprehensive critique of metaphysics. But even in this work, (both through the guiding question and the preliminary question) Heidegger understands "Being as such" (*Sein als solche*) not in distinction from "Being of beings" (*Sein des Seienden*) and is mainly interested in offering his own interpretation of the latter while criticizing the western tradition for approaching it with an implicit prejudice, namely taking it as "constant presence". With the *Contributions* (1936), we can observe that Heidegger attempts to directly think of "Being itself" (with the language of the *Contributions*, take a leap into the essential realm of Being itself) by distinguishing it from "Being of beings", the latter corresponding now to the revealedness/givenness of beings, which is itself, in turn, given by Being itself as a fundamental happening, *Ereignis*. Heidegger takes this fundamental happening as *Seyn*¹⁶³ and what it gives, Being of beings, *Sein* which is "prior givenness" or sense/understanding of Being in the light of which beings are opened/ understood/ disclosed in a unified way (*im Ganze*). In order to indicate this

¹⁶² "On the Question of Being" in *PM*, 315: "Überstieg des Seins über das Seiende", "Zur Seinsfrage" in *WM*, 417.

¹⁶³ There is no undisputed translation of *Seyn* into English (as is the case with many words of Heidegger's philosophy). Be-ing, beyng, or Being (uppercase) are the most known. Emad/Maly, translators of the *Contributions*, and Emad/Kalary, the translators of the *Mindfulness*, render it as be-ing. I will designate it in several ways. I will use Be-ing or sometimes simply leave untranslated (as *Seyn*). Besides, when I say "Being *itself*", "Being as such", "Being in its truth", "Being in its own essence", I simply mean *Seyn*.

point, Heidegger uses, for a long time, (presumably between 1936 and 1945) the word *Seyn* in distinction from *Sein*. However, *Sein* (Being of beings, determinate or patterned givenness of beings) is not to be confused with the metaphysically conceived Being, i.e. Beingness (*ousia, realitas, Seiendheit*) which is a *specific* understanding of Being, (of this phenomenon of *Sein*) which has determined Western intellectual tradition.

The key phrase that perhaps sums up the *Contributions* is the phrase: “*Seyn* west als Ereignis”¹⁶⁴. Some elucidation of this expression may throw considerable light on critical aspects of the *Contributions*, which is I believe necessary for the purposes of our study undertaken here. *Seyn* is briefly explained above. It is “the fundamental happening of giving Being of beings (*Sein*)”, that is, “the patterned givenness of beings”¹⁶⁵ as R. Polt designates it. Metaphysics understands this patterned givenness of Beings, but comes to presuppose that “the patterns are eternal”¹⁶⁶. It never asks “how the patterned givenness of beings ... is itself given to us”¹⁶⁷ which is Heidegger’s question (in *Being & Time* and the works thereafter), i.e. the question which Heidegger tries to articulate but never concretely answers in these works. In the *Contributions*, however, Heidegger attempts to answer this question directly by way of an interpretation of “*Wesen*” not as *quidditas* (*essentia*, universality) but as “what is ownmost” to something, which its forgotten root meaning in German suggests. At the same time, its verb form (*wesen*) means “happen”. Heidegger takes it as a happening in the ownmost manner, as an essential happening. Such fundamental giving (*Seyn*) is then “the occurrence” in the most essential sense of “occurrence” itself. We employ here “is”, but actually, as already indicated above, *Seyn* is not. Only an entity is. Being itself, on the contrary, *west*, i.e. essentially happens, a happening which gives the givenness of things, sets a paradigm in which they are understood, so to speak, sets the whatness of entities for an age.

Metaphysics from Plato onwards, takes this paradigm, this unitary field of import of things as something fixed, ultimate and absolute, thus ending up as a hunting for the “a priori structures of reality”. Heidegger draws attention to its character as a historically/temporally given horizon by an event of giving prior to and beyond it. Metaphysics fixates this horizon of intelligibility into a level of “universal/ atemporal structures of reality” by a move to make entities constantly and totally intelligible, to lay siege to and gain control of entities. This siege to entities is the very horizon of intelligibility of metaphysics.¹⁶⁸ This is to say that metaphysics is ontically-driven, i.e. essentially physics. Metaphysics thus is nihilism, one-

¹⁶⁴ BP, 30, 256.

¹⁶⁵ Richard Polt. *The Emergency of Being* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 57, 58, 59.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 55.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 57.

¹⁶⁸ As will be explored in chapter 7, it is technology.

dimensional revelation of beings, secession of them from their belonging to the dimension of *mannigfaltigkeit* of Being itself, from their Being/meaning source. Nihilism is the impoverishment of the world in which “the most extra-ordinary (Being itself)”¹⁶⁹ has no place (*Da*) at all. Indeed, the matter for Heidegger as far as the historical invasion and closure of nihilism is concerned, is grounding a site in which Being itself (the extra-ordinary, the extra-ontical) can essentially happen, i.e. “house” in accordance with its essence. Accordingly, the matter is directing ourselves in the area of thinking beyond entities toward the event, the happening of Being ahead the presence of these beings, a directing which allows such happening be itself, be owned. This implies that though *Seyn* always gives the meaningful presence of beings to us, the crucial thing about it remains unfulfilled, that is, its call remains unresponded, that is, this “giving” remains unowned. The point then ultimately is to have a responsive attitude toward this giving, to appropriate it, and thereby prepare Ereignis. Ereignis, the core issue of the *Contributions*, and the complete opposite of nihilism, is a happening of the grounding of the (above-mentioned) site, *Da*, the human essence (*Eigentum*) as the site of the truth (*a-letheia*, unconcealment) of Being itself. This is already announced in the full pronunciation of Ereignis: *das Ereignis der Daggründung*, i.e. the appropriating event of the grounding of the open site (*Da*)¹⁷⁰.

This happening of Being itself, of which whether we are heedless or not, whether essential (*wesentlich*) or not, whether owned or not, gives us the difference between Being and non-Being that we “understand” in the first instance. This difference is what Heidegger means by *Sein*, or “Being of beings”. As the key expression, *Seyn west als Ereignis*, suggests, Heidegger ultimately answers the question (how can we have this difference? How is givenness of beings itself given?) by asserting that it is given to us through the fundamental happening itself which he, as indicated, calls Ereignis (event of appropriation or “happening of owndom”¹⁷¹). Thus Being itself is *not*, rather it *west* (essentially happens), and the name of this happening which is ground-breaking, history-opening, is Ereignis, the happening of owndom. Heidegger’s account intimates that *Wesen* (both as a verb and as a noun) bring together 4 moments in relation to a thinking of Being: taking place, giving, owndom, moment-ousness, that is: (1) happening in the sense of “taking place” or “breaking ground” (2) which gives the Being of Beings (*Sein*) (3) and in which “what is one’s ownmost” (*Wesen*) takes place (4) as marked by suddenness/ momentousness.

Then *Seyn* means Ereignis. Ereignis is the happening of owndom in which Being and man are brought into their “own” (*eigen*) i.e. *Seyn* and *Da-sein* (read, *Eigentlichkeit*), thinking becomes thinking of Being, i.e. its own essence (*wesentlich*) and we have authentic/essential

¹⁶⁹ CP, 77: “in Wahrheit das Seyn das Ungewöhnlichste ist...” BP, 110.

¹⁷⁰ CP, 174; BP, 247.

¹⁷¹ CP, 320.

meanings of things opened by such happening, as opposed to the metaphysical wasteland/desert of meaninglessness (*Ver-wüstung* ¹⁷²). It is in this sense that Ereignis is the truly historical happening, indeed the true sense of history. Besides by asserting that *Sein* is not, but “essentially happens”, Heidegger also attributes an appropriate(d) dynamism to *Seyn*, (as opposed to the statism of the metaphysical preconceptions), a dynamism which must actually be interpreted as historicity (*Geschichlichkeit*) as simultaneous (as always) with the historicity of Da-sein. Many of Heidegger’s points made in the *Contributions* imply that Ereignis has never happened, and humanity so far has never been historical. Ereignis then can be interpreted as a unique/founding happening that would launch the other beginning (*Anfang*) and humanity who “until now was never historical yet”¹⁷³ would thereby enter the real level of history, for the first time. In fact, *Anfang* and *Ereignis*, and thus *Seyn* are identical. But Ereignis is essentially something that can be achieved in thinking and as thinking. Then Heidegger speaks of a sort of event in/of thinking that re-sets radically all the standards. So Ereignis as a founding, unique hapenning is not momentary, but momentous: it would hold sway (*wesen*) in the other beginning throughout, as the essential memory (*Gedächtnis*), identity (*Eigentum*) of the consequent history. Heidegger argues that Ereignis would hold sway as a rupture in time-space: it would give its *own* time-space, a new, radically different experience of time (temporality itself) and disclosure of space (Da-sein’s *own* spatiality, the truth of *Da*). However it should be indicated that Ereignis, the essential happening of *Seyn*, and thereby of thinking/history remains a possibility (and in Heidegger the ultimate sense of possibility), yet the only possibility that can save humanity¹⁷⁴: it is unpredictable and contingent, and as such needs the decision and participation of humans. We have said nihilism is a historical movement, a falling movement away from Being, away from the authentic (*eigentlich*) and essential (*wesentlich*) realm of the happening of meaning to which man belongs by virtue of its essence (Da-sein) but of which man has fallen outside due to a historically rooted captivation in the blindness of metaphysics to an essential experience (thinking) of Being. Then for Heidegger, Ereignis is the only possibility to overthrow the domination of metaphysics (the history of Being) and to institute man’s essential relation to Being as a thoughtful ek-sistence, as the proper sense of the historical. This I will come again after having elaborated some pre-requisite points (such as thinking and history, abandonment of Being, will, the other beginning).

The thinking that corresponds to Ereignis is what Heidegger calls *Erdenken*. Ereignis would have taken place as the leap of essential thinking, *Erdenken*. *Erdenken* is a thinking of Being which is itself an essential happening of Being, i.e Ereignis. To think of

¹⁷² See *MN*, 143-150.

¹⁷³ *CP*, 346.

¹⁷⁴ *CP*, 40.

Being through *itself*, as Heidegger attempts in the *Contributions*, and not any longer through an analysis of Dasein and in reference to Being of beings is to think of *a-letheia* (i.e the truth of Being as concealing-unconcealing temporal interplay), a thinking which happens in the form of an encounter (*Auseinandersetzung*) with the essential thinkers of Western tradition (what Heidegger calls *Seynsgeschichtliches Denken*, which is actually another name for *Destruktion*) i.e with an eye on the way in which Being unconceals or takes place in different epochs of history in response to historical Dasein. *Destruktion* thus is doubly motivated: namely (1) unmasking the nihilistic elements in the deepest metaphysical comportment toward Being in its historical moments—as a thinking which is not only structurally closed to a proper (*eigentlich*) disclosure of Being, to an appropriate thinking of Being, but also the chief hindrance towards it. (2) discovering untravelled paths, unused potentials, undervalued insights found in this tradition, for a thinking of Being. This required a return to the beginning, that is, to the origin of this tradition. And this beginning as the origin (*Ursprung*), as the initial upsurge of a historical world was something which had been achieved as the leap (*Sprung*) of thinking.

According to this, the pre-Socratic Greek thinking was the great beginning (*Anfang*) and source (*Wesen*) of the Western history in which Greeks have experienced the prior givenness beyond entities, Being of beings as meaningful presencing (*physis*, unconcealment) and this found impressive expression in all aspects of Greek life, but it could not attain Ereignis, that is, the early Greeks could not raise the proper question of Being: how is this prior givenness itself given? Heidegger's claim here is that thinking of Being has fundamental relevance to history, and indeed lies at its core. Heidegger states "Thinking is not inactivity, but rather it is in itself the way of acting that stands in dialogue with the destiny of the world."¹⁷⁵ To understand the historical place of nihilism as metaphysics, as a horizon of intelligibility, as a world and beginning (*Anfang*) as "world turning", we should understand the central role of thinking for history. The above quotation implies that thinking is part of the history, and indeed this in the deepest sense. As opposed to the shallow (but widespread and rooted) claim that thinking is not activity in the true sense (when you are thinking, you are actually not doing anything concrete), it is the historical activity *par excellence*. We tend to view thinking as inactivity, because we are accustomed (through metaphysical tradition) to conceive of activity in terms of an active subject acting over a passive object. This paradigm of subject-object model (which is, for Heidegger, purely derivative, a metaphysical construct) keeps us from experiencing thinking in its fundamental relation to Being, in its taking part in the happening of Being, and thus in its essential role in history where Being takes place. In thinking alone, destiny of the world, i.e history, is

¹⁷⁵ "Only a God Can Save Us", trans. Maria P. Alter and John D. Caputo in *HC*, 110.

decided. Real change in things comes from the silent power of thinking. Note that this position stands diametrically opposed to Marx, for instance, (who recognizes at worst no historical importance and at best a secondary role, to thinking) when he says in “Theses on Feuerbach”: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it.”¹⁷⁶ Heidegger, on the contrary, sees no capacity in noisy revolutionism for a real change in history (that is, for a liberation from nihilism): as we will see, “the crossing unto the other beginning (is) the stillest occurrence”¹⁷⁷ prepared by thoughtful questioning.

For Heidegger, the historical structures and the ontological structures stand in mutual inclusion. Already in *Being & Time*, we see that the ontological structures are basically temporal and that Dasein’s temporality makes it historical and opens the space of history (i.e. of meaning, disclosure, or world).¹⁷⁸ Heidegger makes this claim more concrete by contending that past comes from future, that is, historical action issues from Dasein’s future-oriented (i.e. ek-sistential) constitution which is instantiated in “decisions”.¹⁷⁹ Any form of disclosure of Being, any happening of meaning, that is, any happening of Being’s relation to Dasein is historical, in the same sense it is temporal. One should also notice that Heidegger interprets history from the standpoint of the centrality of Being in its relation to Dasein, not from the centrality of human being. History is the site of happening where Being’s relation to Dasein is at stake: it can neither be understood in terms of the mysterious executions of a super entity (e.g. the Christian God, Hegelian *Geist*) nor in terms of autonomy of human being, nor in terms of a determinism of material factors or of ideas. These are all ontic views of history in which the phenomenon that history is in the first place opened for a people on the basis of an unconcealedness of Being is overlooked. Unconcealedness of Being is a founding event (*Ereignis*), but as indicated, neither Being nor human being can be deemed as isolated elements¹⁸⁰. Any unconcealment of Being to happen essentially *braucht* (which means both “needs” and “uses”) the open site (Dasein) which is human being in its essence¹⁸¹ and human being has its “own essence” in appropriating its *Da* as the site of the manifestation of Being, i.e. in “turning towards” Being (which Heidegger calls *Kehre*). Accordingly, Being opens up a historical space, a historical world only with the participation of humans. What is more, Being happens or unconceals essentially as a historical “world”

¹⁷⁶ Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, thesis 11, in *The German Ideology*, ed. and trans. Christopher J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 123.

¹⁷⁷ *M*, 81.

¹⁷⁸ See SZ, § 74. Die Grundverfassung der Geschichtlichkeit. See also, SZ, 332-333. Heidegger writes: “Wie Geschichte möglicher *Gegenstand* der Historie werden kann, das läßt sich nur aus der Seinsart des Geschichtlichen, aus der Geschichtlichkeit und ihrer Verwurzelung in der Zeitlichkeit entnehmen”, 375.

¹⁷⁹ See SZ, 228, 248, 259.

¹⁸⁰ See “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 307-308 and *CP*, 216-228.

¹⁸¹ See “The Anaximander Fragment”, in *EGT*, 52-55.

and makes it possible that beings are disclosed in a certain way, i.e gives a manifestness of beings.

As a result, Being is not some entity or level above or outside history, rather it happens in history and as history. However, this happening needs Dasein, that is, the *Da* of Dasein (the essence of human being as the open site, the moment site, the event site for Being): *Da* of Dasein is the very site of history. Then so far as nihilism as a historical movement is concerned, the principal matter relates to our human response to and comportment towards Being. But Heidegger's account implies that human comportment towards Being too is a historically structured phenomenon into which we are born and grown. Actually nihilism, the metaphysical desert (*Wüste*) of meaninglessness, prevails in correlation to this comportment itself. Therefore there is no practical cure available for overcoming it. Everything we set out to do to defeat nihilism and to gain authentic meaning (what Heidegger calls "neighborhood of Being") into our lives is determined by this historical framework of metaphysics, i.e throws back to the ground of nihilism in which we stand. With willful operations we might come to conquer and manipulate beings, but no willful enterprise can master Being itself.

In this connection, Heidegger's account, considered as a whole including the very latest writings, suggests that the only thing humans can do is to work in the sense of "thinking" in the direction of a preparedness which would invite a founding happening of Being itself in the form of a new beginning (*Anfang*), for in a true beginning alone Being unconceals in a ground-breaking key to humanity and the already-existing frame of references (read, metaphysics) is broken up. Therefore everything lies in the leap of a beginning (*Anfang*) as the essential moment of history from which what comes later "derives" all the movement it has.

Here is the place to say more concretely a few words about the issue of beginning in its relation to metaphysics and nihilism. Heidegger's word is *Anfang* which should not be confused with *Beginn* which also means beginning, but any sort of beginning and usually the ordinary and inauthentic ones. *Anfang* as opposed to *Beginn* is a radical, ground-breaking or extra-ordinary beginning which sets anew all standards, all frames of reference for a people. It is a paradigm-setting beginning. Heidegger writes "Whatever is great can only begin great"¹⁸². A great beginning is fatefully short-lived. So was the great beginning of Greeks (as *erstes Anfang*) which opened the historical space of the West, inaugurated the Western paradigm of Being, i.e metaphysics. Hence Heidegger speaks of "der Fortgang der ersten Anfangs in der Beginn der Metaphysik"¹⁸³, as the beginning of an end, of a long process of

¹⁸² *IM*, 16; *EM*, 18. Also "Only the small begins small... the great begins great". *IM*, 17; *EM*, 18.

¹⁸³ "vanishing of the first beginning with the onset of metaphysics" *MN*, 151.

the phases of decline (i.e of the history of Being). The Greek beginning had been great and momentous in that in it thinking had been a thinking of Being, i.e determined by a wonder of unconcealment of Being: it was not metaphysical yet. As discussed in Chapter 3, for the early Greeks, Being unconcealed as *Physis*, which meant *in-sich-Stehen* in the sense of *Entstehen*. It can be understood as “emerging standing” or “shining coming to presence, to standing”. This sense of “standing” was perceived by Parmenides and Heraclitus within the structure of *a-letheia*, i.e coming to unconcealment, to the open, from concealment and standing there for “a while” (temporality dimension). Yet it is this sense of “standing” which later was hardened into *Beständigkeit* (stability, permanence) as *idea* and *ousia*. Simultaneously, thinking (with Plato onwards) ceased to be something responsive to the emergence of Being, something arising in response to the arising of Being, something happening for the sake of unconcealment of Being. Instead it degenerated into (detached) “seeing” as part of Being’s turning into permanent presence, as something lying “constantly” in view, something at the disposal of thinking, with the temporal enclosure, the present (temporality dimension, i.e finitude of disclosure, is forgotten). Metaphysics, as a way of thinking on Plato’s line, is the very structure of increasing degeneration away from the beginning i.e of the Western tradition. And the hidden essence of metaphysics is, Heidegger claims, as suggested, the deep meaning of nihilism. “Epochs” of the history of Being away from the first beginning of the Greeks are epochs of metaphysics- forms of nihilism- caught in the key concepts of great thinkers from Plato up to Nietzsche. Heidegger believes that essential thinkers have no choice, but articulate Being the way it shows up in the thinker’s own particular “epoch”. An epoch is fundamentally caught up in the *Grundstellung* (basic position) of an essential thinker.¹⁸⁴

We said that the beginning of Western history is the pre-socratic Greek age, the momentous happening of Being as *physis*; what comes after a beginning is historically derivative, thus a process of fading away (losing) of the essential. This historically derivative time-span is characterised and governed by metaphysics; it is the history of Being, i.e the history of shifting structures of understanding of Being in which Being is understood in reference to beings, (i.e as the Being of beings) and not in its own essence. In this case, Being does not unconceal authentically/ primordially, that is, in its own truth in human existence (viz. human life lacks authentic meanings) but in correlation with fallen (entity-absorbed) ways of humans. Let us remember that Being is simply *not* without its relation to human essence, *Da-sein*, that is, *Da* for *Sein*: Being needs human essence and human essence belongs to Being. *Da* signifies “the free space” required for Being, that is, for its happening/

¹⁸⁴ For a critical discussion of this neo-Hegelian element in Heidegger’s thought, see Herman Philipse’s *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 272-290.

unconcealment. Being is, that is, happens (*west*), only in this *Da*, which is human essence, a site that needs to be “grounded” through the counter-resonance (*Gegenschwung*) of Being (needing) and human being (belonging).¹⁸⁵ Such grounding must not, however, be understood in a metaphysical manner, i.e. as laying absolute foundations. Rather it is enabling *Da* as *das Freie* to be what it already is, viz. keeping it free for the revelation of authentic significance, setting it released for receiving fresh possibilities of happening of importance.

It follows that one cannot have an adequate understanding of human essence through any ontic or anthropological (metaphysical/scientific) research. We should see not only that all ontic human phenomena fail to exhaust human essence, but also that essence itself must be understood in a completely different light. Because Heidegger conceives of essence (*Wesen*) in terms of the historical unconcealment of Being, that is, in terms of “the way” Being unconceals itself historically, he, as opposed to the dominant tendency in metaphysics, cannot view it to be an atemporal nature found in things. Hence Heidegger writes in various places “the essence of metaphysics is not metaphysical”, “the essence of nihilism is not nihilistic”, “the essence of technology is not technological” etc. Accordingly, human essence is not some atemporal entitative what-ness (*quidditas*), but a historical site for the unconcealment of Being, thus a historically changable phenomenon. This implies that whenever the basic way (the key, the paradigm) in which Being unconceals itself to historical humanity changes, human essence does also change. Because this change happens in response to the underlying human comportment toward Being, Being sends (*schickt*) itself, that is, discloses to historical humanity as an understanding of Being in correlation to that comportment. Any epoch in history is the result of such a change. To be sure, it implies a certain sense of determination: in an epoch Being unconceals in such a way that it determines human understanding, i.e. way of making sense of things, of the disclosedness of beings (and above all, self-disclosedness of humans). This character of history Heidegger wants to capture with the notion, “destiny”, that is, that an understanding of Being “sent” by Being “destines” a whole historical age (*Geschichte als eine Geschick*). So, the history of Being must be conceived of in terms of destinings of Being itself. Destiny (*Geschick*) refers to the paradigmatic determination of an epoch by an understanding of Being, as a certain inauthentic disclosure of Being to a fallen humanity.

Destiny of Being (*Geschick des Seyns*) is considered by Heidegger in all of its etymological implications. In German, *schicken* means send, dispatch, and *Geschick* reveals destiny as “gathering” (implied by *Ge-*) of all sendings. Thus history of Being, in sum, is the totality of all destinings (i.e. “sendings”) of Being. Each “epoch” of Being is a certain

¹⁸⁵ CP, 177; BP, 251.

destining of Being. In fact, the word “Epoche” (period of history) lays bare this fact: it literally means keeping-to-itself, holding-itself-back, suspending. Holding itself back, Being leaves humanity with the Being of beings, with fallen/inauthentic sense of beings, and this withdrawal of Being defines the whole character of the age (hence Epoche) in which Being is forgotten. Accordingly, Being’s keeping-to-itself (i.e concealedness) arises in the form of epoches, in which Being itself, while manifesting entities in a certain way, remains essentially hidden, and concomitantly such ages of world history are basically marked by errancy (*Irre*), i.e oblivion of truth of Being. Errancy becomes “the space in which history unfolds”¹⁸⁶.

Now Epoche are the epochs of history of Being in which Being is increasingly lost, and accordingly in each one of them nihilism shows itself as a form of “forgetting” the fundamental happening (Being itself) which gives (unconceals) entities to us as such and as a whole. Metaphysics then is the consequent “specific structure of thinking” forgetfully absorbed in entities (i.e entity-focused way of thinking, which is really, for Heidegger, “unthinking”).

Indeed, metaphysics is nihilism proper, because as far as metaphysics goes, the highest, that is, Being itself as the source of meaning in life is not “live” in thinking (and thereby in life), not an explicit/appropriated matter, assuming that thinking (not to be confused with its derivative modes such as theorization, cognition, ratiocination) is the core level of life for humans. The way in which disclosure of beings happens *for* humans, i.e the way in which humans understand and make sense of things entails the way in which humans ek-sist, i.e *act* in the concrete situations of life. In this case, our action is guided and determined by the “lack” of Being (and, equally, of meaning), for it directly follows from Heidegger’s basic position (inseparability of meaning and Being) that a life (thinking) without Being (its authentic sense, its authentic disclosure, that is, as *itself*) is a life without (authentic) meaning. We have Being but in its inauthentic unconcealments, not in its own truth, (i.e as epoche, destinings of history of Being). We have thinking but in its degenerated, derivative, Being-alienated forms (i.e as metaphysics), not in its essential (*wesentlich*) happening, not as the event (*Ereignis*) of Being. We have meanings but as parts of a central meaninglessness (nihilism). We may trace, in rough summary, the interpenetrated moments of the phenomenon of nihilism as follows:

(1) fallenness (upon Beings, upon the present, upon presentness, upon the manifest and simultaneously alienating to/ losing/ forgetting, respectively, *ta physika* of *physis*, finitude, presencing, a-letheia) (2) forgetfulness of Being, the very source (*Wesen*) of the “meaning”

¹⁸⁶ “The Anaximander Fragment” in *EGT*, 26. Of course, by history here Heidegger means “history of Being”.

of beings, which Heidegger takes also as the forgetfulness of the ontological difference (3) correspondingly, Being's self-disclosure, commensurate with such oblivion, only as the Being of beings, and this as Beingness (*Seiendheit*, *ousia*, *realitas*, in short, metaphysically conceived Being), and never in its primordial essence, that is, in its truth (*Wahrheit*). (4) The more we become sunk into beings the more we grow heedless of their meaning dimension, the source of meaning, the light of Being, in which alone beings appear to us. Though beings continue to unconceal in such light- our understanding of Being- such light does not let them unconceal in their "ownness", for such light does not allow Being itself to unconceal in its ownness. This also critically entails the ownness of man (*Eigentlichkeit* in *Being & Time*, but a transformed understanding of *Da-sein* as well as *Ereignis*, in middle and later writings).

These interpenetrated moments give us the "original structure" (*Wesen*, essence, source and origin) of metaphysics which, according to Heidegger, governs metaphysics, the history of Being, from its beginning in the wake of the Greek beginning (first beginning) up to its end (culmination) in the modern technological "epoche". Now let us briefly explain the historically successive moments of metaphysics, destinings of Being, as the growing hegemony of nihilism, which have issued from and already determined by this original structure of metaphysics. This will show us more concretely nihilism in movement. Heidegger's story stretches from Plato (original metaphysics/ nihilism) to Nietzsche and modern technology (fulfilled metaphysics/ nihilism) of course assuming that everything (the Western tradition!) has started with the upsurge of Greek beginning (*erstes Anfang*).

- (1) *Idea* or *eidos*, i.e. atemporalizing/ essencizing Being (in Plato's thought)
- (2) *Ousia* as *energeia* i.e. congealing/reifying Being: two moments a- Being as an individual entity (with essential and accidental properties) which is "permanently present there" b- and ultimately Being as the entitative cause and ground of all beings, as *theos*, the supreme entity, (Aristotle)
- (3) *Actualitas*, i.e. *Deus*, as *actus purus*, the creator God of created beings (reifying Being consolidated in the Christian theology)
- (4) Object-ness for the representing mind, for the self-certain knowing subject who is constantly present to itself, i.e. objectifying Being (in early modern philosophy, e.g. Descartes; mathematical physics as the paradigm of ontological interpretation)
- (5) Subject-ness as an absolute ego or *Geist*, i.e. subjectifying Being (in Hegel, as the paramount expression of human/subject-centred interpretation of Being)
- (6) Quantifiability for a calculative thinking, i.e. quantifying Being (in science as calculative understanding of Being)

- (7) Will in the sense of “labour”, i.e production-based understanding of Being (in Marx, who understands Being in the light of production, beings as subject to production, i.e as products/ goods, nature as subject to transformative production of labor, as something to be subjugated)
- (8) Will for willing beings i.e willifying/ humanizing Being (Nietzsche; world, totality of beings, the arena and object of the assertion of “will to power” as the essence of *Übermensch*, *Übermensch* as the recognition and accomplishment of essential *animalitas* in man, animality corresponding to sensuality, the ultimate elementality in nature)
- (9) *Gestell* i.e technologizing Being (Being as the stockpile of infinitely reconfigurable, interchangeable and manipulatable resource/material (*Bestand*) for extracting ever more “power”).¹⁸⁷

The above picture also entails, alongside it, “the total destruction of the essence of truth”¹⁸⁸ fully appearing in the final phase of the history of Being. Put in chronological order: *aletheia* (the first beginning) – *homoiosis* (degeneration in the late Greek age, Plato and Aristotle) – *adaequatio* (Christian theology) – *certitudo* (Descartes) – *exactitude* (modern science) – *Gerechtigkeit* (justice set by and for power, Nietzsche). What marks the destruction of *aletheia* is in each case an understanding of truth as something mind-dependent.¹⁸⁹

Consequently, it follows from Heidegger’s account that our modern age (the modern “epoche”) represents the culmination of the history of Being and becomes the extreme expression of nihilism i.e as the ultimate Epoche in which Being reveals itself as the framework of “power-driven quest after beings”. Beings come to the space of vision, are lighted or unconcealed, only as correlative to the extreme withdrawal of Being itself. This “extreme withdrawal of Being” Heidegger, in the *Contributions* and in some later writings, calls abandonment of Being (*Seinsverlassenheit*). Being has abandoned humanity: nihilism prevails in its darkest, most extreme form in the modern world. Given that metaphysics has exhausted all its possibilities (i.e destinings) throughout the history of Being, the next step waiting humanity, Heidegger intimates, would be necessarily one of two things: either (1) humanity would awaken to the other beginning (*Anfang*) as the advent of Being *itself* and foster a thinking preparedness for this possibility as participants of its “taking place” or (2)

¹⁸⁷ Here I summarized the moments of Heidegger’s history of Being. For detail, see, among others, *MN*, 24, 37, 100-103, 153; “Metaphysics as History of Being” in *EP*, 1-49; “Sketches for a History of Being” in *EP*, 55-74.

¹⁸⁸ *MN*, 34.

¹⁸⁹ See, *MN*, 34-35, 43, 156-157.

destruction of human essence (*Lichtung*) would be inescapable (if, before this, “a sudden global catastrophe”¹⁹⁰ does not wipe out the earth).

Thus Heidegger writes “Directed toward the other beginning, nihilism must be grasped more fundamentally as the essential consequence of the abandonment of Being”.¹⁹¹

Abandonment of Being is a pervasive theme in Heidegger’s later writings (especially during the war!). As indicated, it must be understood actually as a metaphor (among some other metaphors) for nihilism. The abandonment of Being (on the part of Being itself) and forgottenness of Being (on the part of humanity) refer to one another, are correlative phenomena. However, the former is the ground in which the latter prevails.¹⁹² Heidegger indicates this: “Man dwells in the abandonment of Being. And the manner of this dwelling is forgetfulness of Being.”¹⁹³ And this is the essential way modern man dwells in the world (*neuzeitliche Wesensaufenthalt*). This Heidegger characterizes also as *Planetarismus* (cosmopolitanism) and *Idiotismus* (idiotism, in the sense of striving for one’s *idion*, one’s own, by sticking to the levelling-down standards of *das Man*): the two phenomena (again metaphors for nihilism) correspond to one another. Heidegger here means to draw attention to the nihilistic character of the global standardization and ordering (*Massenordnung*) which is at work in the modern world and to which not only things but also, concomitantly, humans are subject.¹⁹⁴

Machination, lived experience (i.e. consumptionism), science, values, political ideologies (e.g. communism and capitalism), worldviews, are all manifestations of the modern nihilism, of the abandonment of Being. Let us take a crucial passage from the *Contributions*.

Being has so thoroughly abandoned beings and submitted them to machination and “lived experience” that those illusive attempts at rescuing Western culture and all “culture-oriented politics” must necessarily become the most insidious and thus the highest form of nihilism. And that is a process that is not connected to individual humans and their actions and doctrines but rather merely pushes forth what is ownmost to nihilism into the purest form granted to it.¹⁹⁵

How could attempts at rescuing Western culture contribute only to the exacerbation of its plight (i.e. nihilism, in Heidegger’s sense) and become its highest expressions? The

¹⁹⁰ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 297.

¹⁹¹ *CP*, 96.

¹⁹² *CP*, 80.

¹⁹³ “Der Mensch halt sich auf in der Seinsverlassenheit. Und die Weise des Sichaufhaltens ist die Seinsvergessenheit.” *Über den Anfang* (GA 70), ed. Paola-Ludovika Coriando (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 2005), p. 34.

¹⁹⁴ See *Über den Anfang*, pp. 33-35.

¹⁹⁵ *CP*, 97-98.

main problem here I think concerns “will”. In *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* Heidegger notes

Wenn das Sein “Wille” ist ...

Durch die volle Entfaltung dieses Wenn-Satzes lässt sich das Wesen der neuzeitlichen Metaphysik darstellen.¹⁹⁶

Forgetting the essential matter, namely the Western understanding of Being that reigns in Western relation to Being, people superficially assume that political or cultural will to work to certain ends is enough to solve the problems. Nihilism, the root problem, however cannot be overcome through any sort of will-based attempts (e.g. cultural, political, religious enterprises), because precisely in the self-assertion of will itself, there remains no room for the happening of Being *as* itself. Will occupies and takes over the whole domain of human essence (*Da*) in a power-driven context so as to get and use this power for a preconceived “good”. Will is power-committed in its comportment towards Being, a comportment which happens at the core of all willing, whereas Being itself simply eludes all power. Being of beings (i.e. the horizon of intelligibility) then reveals (i.e. destines) in a will-based key, “world ... is allowed to be only will”¹⁹⁷ in which entities (above all humans) appear as objects of will.

We fail to bring Being *itself* into the area of a fundamental questioning, which is, as far as Western tradition is concerned, what is truly at stake. Instead we run zealously to ontic projects for preconceived goods. We are not aware that our action and doing is guided and determined by the historically set and operative understanding of Being, namely nihilism at work in its final form in the modern epoch. Then we unbeknownst contribute to the historical movement of nihilism through our willful (i.e. heedless) practical projects. This is so, insofar as we do not raise thoughtfully the fundamental question (namely how are things given to us meaningfully such that we at once understand what it means to be something, including ourselves, prior to all sorts of engagements with things?) which puts immediately in question both us and our all preconceptions about things. The question of Being alone opens the authentic and radical path of thinking and can develop an awareness concerning our historical-ontological situation (nihilism). As a result, what makes nihilism most insidious and extreme is a lack of awareness on the part of us, humans that we are too part of the historical movement of nihilism so far as we remain outside of a fundamental thinking (questioning of, attentiveness and relatedness to) appropriate to Being *itself*. This kind of thinking (essential thinking, which Heidegger, as indicated, in the *Contributions*, calls

¹⁹⁶ *MN*, 159.

¹⁹⁷ “Why Poets?” in *OBT*, 221.

*Erdenken*¹⁹⁸ it follows, is never will-driven (as opposed to its derivative, inauthentic, metaphysical modes e.g representation, theorization, calculation, planning etc) but rather it is Being-drawn, as Heidegger suggests in *What Calls for Thinking?*

In fine, domination of will corresponds to the centrality of human being and to the lack of Being, that is, to its abandonment, thus to the tragedy of meaninglessness underlying the western/modern forms of life. The issue of will in Heidegger is complex and has far-reaching implications concerning nihilism (for short, abounding of will=abandoning of Being) which Heidegger elaborates in his discussions of Nietzsche. For this reason, we postpone a more detailed examination of will to chapter 5 (in relation to Nietzsche) in which we will again need to take up it.

Abandonment of Being prevails as the refusal of Being, a refusal to show up not as itself, but rather as Beingness, i.e metaphysically. In this way, refusal (*Verweigerung*) conceals the very concealedness of Being.¹⁹⁹ Let us take a remark from *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* and think about it.

Erste Erfahrung der Vergessenheit des Seins: daß das *Seyn* als Verweigerung west;
darin die Lichtung der *Seinsverlassenheit*; das *Ende* der Metaphysik; *die völlige*
*Verstörung des Wesens der Wahrheit.*²⁰⁰

First, as indicated, in these years Heidegger has different uses of *Sein* and *Seyn*: the former refers specifically to Being of beings, to Being which in the way it is understood opens up an arena of corresponding meaningfulness, while the latter means to say Being itself,²⁰¹ the fundamental happening which gives an understanding of Being (*Sein*) to humanity, while itself ultimately remaining veiled. Heidegger thinks that it is the task of thinking to appropriate such veiledness, but due to nihilism, concealedness itself has remained concealed in the history of Being. Nihilism happens as “refusal” on the part of Being itself (*Seyn*) whereby humans forget that things are given (understood, disclosed) to them through *an* unconcealedness of Being (*Sein*). The “end of metaphysics” is not its stopping or result, but its consummate and extreme age in which humans have no care of thinking concerning Being.²⁰² This carelessness and indifference to the meaning of Being of beings (*Sein*) and its corresponding dimension, meaningless beings, beings as “neutral objects”, as empty of Being dimension (*Seinsverlassenheit*) becomes “the context of the accessibility of meaning” (*Lichtung*) in which Being refuses to happen (*wesen*) in the form of

¹⁹⁸ See, especially, *CP*, 38-48 and 321-327.

¹⁹⁹ *MN*, 20.

²⁰⁰ *MN*, 34.

²⁰¹ This Heidegger explicitly indicates in a later text, in his letter to W. Richardson (1962): “das Sein als solches (das Seyn).” “Brief an Pater William J. Richardson” in *ID*, 148-149.

²⁰² For an interpretation of end (*Ende*) as having two senses, see *BQP*, 114-115.

disclosing authentic meanings. This is more basically the forgottenness and the corresponding debasing (*ungründung*) of a-letheia as the truth of Being (*Seyn*) for “everything lies in the debasing of aletheia, which happens in the refusal of concealedness of Being (*Verweigerung der verborgenen des Seyns*).”²⁰³

Abandonment of Being is the situation of utmost emergency (or distress, *die Not*) in that metaphysical comportment towards Being lacks above all a sense of emergency and the necessity of decision it involves. Because for metaphysics entities alone are decisive, it is unable to experience the radical emergency inherent in Being’s relation to man, the radically emergent character of Being’s address to man. That is why Heidegger designates this blindness of metaphysics to emergency as “*die Not der Notlosigkeit*”, i.e the emergency of lack of emergency²⁰⁴: nihilism lies precisely there where humans are cut off from the urgency, the decision-character of their relatedness to Being, from the emergent/distressing/critical claim of Being, from an awareness of themselves as “crisis”, as thrown into the realm of irreducible emergency and need of decision about Being itself and thereby about themselves. This phrase, *Not der Notlosigkeit*, too, then is another metaphor for nihilism, but as its latest manifestation in which we are today entrapped. For this reason, it is “the other emergency that is, ... *our* emergency”²⁰⁵: in history we alone, the late moderns, Heidegger asserts, do not experience the distressing of emergency, and just this constitutes the (unfelt) desolation of modernity. Because emergency as “the moment of truth” (crisis) reveals the true gravity and difference of things, it is the moment of meaning, which is, in turn, closed to nihilism as the situation of lack of emergency. This complete lack of emergency marks the fundamental mood of nihilism for which things emerge essentially in an un-emergentness, in a flat and homogenous space of repeatability, that is, in emptiness and one-dimensionalized dullness (i.e obviousness, ordinariness, neutralness, standardness, objectness, materiality, usability, replacability etc.) and thus call for no question and no thinking (and no meaning) going beyond themselves. Heidegger writes:

Everything has become calculable and consequently everything is understandable. There are no longer any limits to our domination over beings, if only our will is great enough and constant enough. Everything becomes obvious without any impenetrable depths, and this transparency derives from luminosity in which the eye of knowledge is dazzled to the verge of blindness... beings strut as beings and yet are abandoned by Being. The nearly unacknowledged need (Not) arising from the abandonment by Being becomes compelling in the basic disposition of terror. One can no longer be struck by the miracle of beings: that they are. For, quite to the

²⁰³ *MN*, 43.

²⁰⁴ *CP*, 8, 75, 87, 168.

²⁰⁵ *BQP*, 169, also, 175-6.

contrary, this has become obvious long ago. And it is a gapping abyss that beings, apparently closer to reality than ever before, can be taken for all that is, while Being and the truth of Being are forgotten.²⁰⁶

Abandonment of Being, “the Being-historical sway/essence (*Wesen*) of nihilism”²⁰⁷, and thus the consequent nihilism announce themselves in several ways: below are the main ones.

- (1) Total insensitivity to what is ambiguous, for everything is supposed to be uniformly understandable: what is ambiguous is pointless.
- (2) Idolizing the given, but not posing the giving as a question
- (3) Deeply-seated interest in values, ideas and worldviews
- (4) Highest decisions related to tradition and cultural matters (such as Christianity) are not encountered in the depth they require, but simply left untouched.
- (5) Blindness to the essential (*wesentlich*) connection between art and truth (i.e. art creates a site where truth abides): instead consuming and producing artworks as objects of lived-experiences (*Erlebnisse*).
- (6) Lack of questioning the not of beings (Nothing), and of interest in the uniqueness and finitude of Being itself.
- (7) Mania for entitative correctness and indifference to the historical space of intelligibility (*Irre*, in the case of Western tradition) in which all correctness is decided.
- (8) Evading mindfulness; flight into ordinary events
- (9) Mania for activity and aversion for stillness.
- (10) Domination of technicity (machination)²⁰⁸ and historiography (calculating future from the past)²⁰⁹.
- (11) Acceleration, calculation and the claim of massiveness.²¹⁰

Heidegger speaks of numerous symptoms of nihilism of which we could cite only some prominent ones above. However the point is to see the central phenomenon from which, if we may say, “symptoms” issue. The central phenomenon, so far as Western tradition is concerned, as we argued, is nihilism in terms of its concrete expressions in human life and metaphysics as the structure of thinking and understanding in it. Heidegger has built several times the same sentence: “Die Metaphysik als solche ist der eigentliche

²⁰⁶ *BQP*, 169.

²⁰⁷ *MN*, 147.

²⁰⁸ *MN*, 148-150.

²⁰⁹ *MN*, 148.

²¹⁰ See *CP*, 82-3. See also the whole chapter, “Echo”, 75-114 and *MN*, 148.

Nihilismus.”²¹¹ This also means nihilism in its own essence is metaphysical for Heidegger’s very next sentence is this: “Das Wesen des Nihilismus *ist* geschichtlich als die Metaphysik”²¹². Hence we can safely take nihilism and metaphysics as the same phenomenon, as ultimately identical, at least in Heidegger’s sense of identity, that is, not simple identity but a primordial “belonging together”. In this sense, one can discern at least one nuance: nihilism designates the un-essence (*Unwesen*) of the concrete comportment towards Being and beings whereas metaphysics names the formal structure of this relation. When someone qualifies something as nihilistic (as Heidegger does in many places) we are immediately conveyed a concrete sense (nothingness, senselessness, destructiveness, emptiness etc), and when we qualify something as metaphysical, it is clear that we refer to a “form” of thinking or understanding. But in both cases of course philosophical analysis can do important job to elucidate what is ultimately meant i.e what is the underlying meaning of the word “nihilistic” in all its aspects? Or what are the basic elements of this way of thinking called metaphysics? In Heidegger’s case, I think, answers fit together: nihilism essentially in-forms metaphysics and metaphysics operates as the structured perspective of this happening. Without its nihilistic essence, (i.e without inessential disclosure of Beings, i.e without non-essence of Being) metaphysics would not take effect and cease to be there. Perhaps we should say that nihilism and metaphysics are one and the same phenomenon seen and named from different angles.

This might sound somewhat abstract. So some sort of recapitulation is aptly needed here to refocus our inquiry via organizing our findings more concretely. Metaphysics is an understanding of Being, not deliberately or occasionally chosen (and relinquishable at will) type of thinking: our relation to Being, i.e our human essence, is metaphysical (ever since the onset of metaphysics in the late Greek age). Given Heidegger’s idea of *Seinsverstaendnis* this points toward two actually synonymous phenomena: (1) Beings are revealed to (disclosed, understood by) us metaphysically (2) our thinking and understanding is determined by the metaphysical disclosure of Being (i.e of *Sein*, of the horizon of intelligibility). As we discussed in some detail, in metaphysics the horizon of intelligibility becomes Beingness (*Seiendheit*): “Metaphysics thinks entities as entities, and this necessarily out of Being (*Sein*). But it does not think Being itself (*Sein selbst*). In so far as metaphysics from out of Being thinks entity, it does not think Being (as Being) (itself)”²¹³. And this is not a static condition, but something historically established by the occurrence of the first beginning as the opening moment of the historical world of the Western tradition: metaphysics and nihilism are the thrusts from a historical beginning still echoing from afar

²¹¹ “Metaphysics as such is the actual nihilism.” *MN*, 216, 210, 211, 510.

²¹² “The essence of nihilism occurs historically as metaphysics.” *MN*, 210.

²¹³ *MN*, 213.

and still determining the various derivative forms of movements (growing phases of decline, destinings of Being) a-way from it. Metaphysics accordingly in the long history of Being (past as well as to come) gets increasingly intensified, its blindness hardened, and in its last (and the longest) age, the modern age, all its essential possibilities are decisively gathered into work.

Metaphysics as an understanding of Being is a clearing (*Lichtung*) of Being, i.e the free space which Being *braucht* (needs and uses) in order to happen, i.e *wesen*, (un)conceal, a happening which brings beings into light, into presence, into space of meaning, and a happening which requires human participation. The term, *Lichtung*, is Heidegger's metaphor (inspired from the image of a clearing in the forest) to more concretely describe *Da*, the human essence as open site and space of meaning. *Lichtung*, our essence, the clearing in which we stand and dwell (mostly thoughtlessly, inessentially) is not possessed by us, but something granted to us by Being, and thus ultimately belonging to Being. It is not a static condition, (not *essentia* of the tradition) but a historically (i.e ontologically) changable givenness. Our essence is given to us by Being itself and only for its own usage as free space, as the essential space of meaning, as the space of its essential happening (*Wesung des Seyns*). This is the meaning of Heidegger's assertion that "that (human) essence is nothing human"²¹⁴. We could be essential, i.e authentic individuals, only when our essence becomes "an appropriate(d) openness" (by contrast with the characteristic "unappropriate(d) openness" of everydayness) to the unconcealment (truth) of Being itself, only when we abandon *us* (our inauthentic everyday selves) for the sake of Being itself (that is, to *aletheia*, to the happening of truth of Being itself, to *Ereignis*) which gives us, in turn, what is ownmost to us, our true essence (*Eigentlichkeit*). Human essence as the openness in which we stand (*Da, Lichtung*) is the unique site where meaning is disclosed, Being happens.

This suggests that nihilism, too, is a *Lichtung*, but a *Lichtung* where non-essence of Being and thus Untruth (as total loss of *aletheia*) prevails: this free space of Being as the space of the disclosure of meaning and truth becomes a big and dark vacuum with the bleak absence (abandonment) of Being. Nihilism indeed is the vacuum of meaning as history in which "with Being nothing is"²¹⁵. Being is withdrawn from the essential dimension (meaning) of beings, from there where it belongs to, and cut off from their sun beings no longer radiate, no longer appear in a meaningful presence bestowed by the unconcealment of Being. Meanings now occur through a field (*Lichtung*) occupied by the fundamental absence of Being, by the darkness abandoned Being has left behind, i.e through a core meaninglessness. This can be stated as the simultaneity of some crucial phenomena: beings

²¹⁴ *NI* IV, 232-233. (paranthesis added.)

²¹⁵ *MN*, 216, 221.

do not rise into radiation as beings of Being itself; we are blind to meaning; Being is far away from us; we think not at all; we are away from our essence; we remain homeless; truth is not as a matter of ultimate decision, but of an incessant calculation. For without Being, everything is nothing, including above all human beings. This Heidegger calls, as already explained, abandonment of Being (as refusal), the Being-historical essence of nihilism.

By taking the role of Being (its “abandoning/ privative role”) as absolutely central to the whole matter of nihilism, Heidegger also calls attention to the point that the true essence of nihilism cannot be experienced by metaphysics as such, inasmuch as metaphysics is conditioned by a man-centred and ontically-driven preconception of Being. Nihilism cannot be understood in its full gravity by any metaphysical form of thinking, and without a doubt by its extreme, fulfilled form, namely, in Nietzsche’s philosophy, which is fundamentally antipathetic to the question of Being, even though this philosophy first brought it to the center of philosophical agenda. Some even think that nihilism is distinctively a Nietzschean problem. And it might seem that Heidegger just refers to a problem in Nietzsche’s philosophy when he speaks of nihilism. Admittedly, Nietzsche is the first philosopher to pose the question of nihilism as the essential question of Western tradition and of philosophy, and Heidegger follows in the footsteps of Nietzsche in this regard, i.e. in seeing it as lying in the historical roots of the whole culture. However, as Heidegger understands it, nihilism is a more fundamental problem in his thought than it was in Nietzsche (and a problem understood in a fundamentally different way than Nietzsche) such that his version of nihilism includes Nietzsche’s whole attempt at overcoming nihilism itself (i.e. revaluing all values in the light of will to power) into the historical scheme of nihilism (as presented above) as its extreme manifestation (*Ende*), as heralding the last destining of Being. Nietzsche is silent about the ground of nihilism (i.e. abandonment of Being)²¹⁶ and this necessarily results from the essential metaphysical position in which Nietzsche has found himself hearing “the call to reflect on the essence of a planetary domination”²¹⁷.

Still, it was Nietzsche, who articulated in philosophical terms the problem itself, i.e. nihilism and its formal dimension, namely metaphysics, yet being thoroughly stuck into anthropologism, he failed to comprehend its being-historical sources, that is, he “thinks it metaphysically (and so)... does not think its essence”²¹⁸. Freed from the grip of metaphysical tradition thanks to a granted dwelling in the essential realm of poetry, Hölderlin, by contrast, brought the same experience to poetic saying more insightfully; “flight of the gods” which insinuates that in the flight of meanings of things, something more than human activity is involved. For Heidegger, Hölderlin’s poetry rests on a poetic/ prophetic experience of the

²¹⁶ *CP*, 83.

²¹⁷ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 321.

²¹⁸ *MN*, 261.

emergency of the present (read nihilism) as a mourning for the fled gods (read the first beginning) and “waiting” for the last (divine) god (read the other beginning) to come. We know that Hölderlin deeply affected Heidegger’s confrontation with nihilism including Heidegger’s decisive position about overcoming nihilism: “waiting” (*Warten*) i.e. a willless, thoughtful, questioning, dwelling, poetic comportment towards Being itself (which we shortly presented above and will discuss in the due course in chapter 7). To return to the expression, “flight of the gods”, the poetic grasp of nihilism. It means that beings as beings of Being have gone from human life and experience. “Gods” here does not mean to express any neo-paganistic inspiration. Rather it refers to “authentic meanings” that had kindly nourished the authentic life of the Greeks, as radiating from the radiating happening (*physis*) of Being, as “arising from out of the truth of Being itself (*Seyn*)”²¹⁹. In Heidegger’s sense, it refers to the collapse of *aletheia* and the beginning (*Beginn*) of metaphysics as history and destiny of Being. Nihilism is the void that fled gods have left behind, a void which is cultivated by metaphysics!²²⁰ Such void makes the world a dark place, a darkness of meaning, for no matter how much metaphysics and its offsprings (all fields of knowledge) cultivate a passion for the knowledge of entities, a mania for the standards of precision, a clarity for the sight into objects, this ends up only contributing to the essential matter (i.e. Being itself) staying in the dark. This knowledge serves ultimately for the struggle of power over the domination of the world, for the destruction of the earth, since the darkened world could appear now as no more than the arena of blind force. Metaphysics has nothing to do with a decisive meaning and measure in the earth. At best, it sets values for a world of nihilism, nails down “the rules of hell”²²¹. Hence, Heidegger’s provocative phrase, “the darkening of the world”²²² (or its Nietzschean counterpart, “*von ihrer Sonne losgekettete Erde*”²²³).

Heidegger also exploits the metaphor of blinding (*Verblindung*) to refer to the normal condition of mankind, nihilism.²²⁴ In the sway of metaphysics, “everything gets stiffened into an unknowable blinding”²²⁵. Because Being happens (*west*) only in Being-there (*Da-sein*), only when this “there” is actually freed and opened for its occurrence, only when “there” is a room for posing its question, for listening to its silent call, it is simply withdrawn otherwise. To say it differently, in the abandonment of Being and concomitantly

²¹⁹ *M*, 209.

²²⁰ See, “Die Zeit des Weltbildes”, in *HW*, 76-77.

²²¹ The name of an album (2008) by a famous heavy metal band, *Black Sabbath*. Music perhaps no less than poetry feels the nihilism of the age, and reveals its demands.

²²² *IM*, 40, 47, 52; *EM*, 41, 48, 53. So, “Gefahr der Weltverdüsterung”, a recurrent theme in Heidegger, refers to the very danger of nihilism.

²²³ *MN*, 185.

²²⁴ “Seinsverlassenheit des Seienden—Vergessenheit des *Seyns*—Verblindung”, *MN*, 7; see also, *MN*, 90; *CP*, 78; *BQP*, 179.

²²⁵ *MN*, 56.

in the forgottenness of Being, *Seyn* comes to pass as withdrawal (but this too is not experienced due to *Notlosigkeit*). The more we rush on entities, the more we become blind to their meaning dimension (*Sein*), the more we take for granted their “givenness”, the more we forget the utmost question-worthiness of Being, the more we lose what is distinctive to us (i.e. *Da-sein*, openness for the happening of Being), and the more we succumb to the blindness and dullness of instinctuality (animality).²²⁶ And the result is the blinding absence of Being (*Seyn*).

On the other hand, wherever Heidegger engages with a critique of metaphysics, he is simultaneously concerned to explore the ways thinking could break out of the historical net of metaphysics. The most fundamental path, I think a careful reading would reveal, departs from “the question of Being” as such. The question of Being is that unique question which demands our whole essence drawn in it, that is, demands us “risk our *own* attempt”²²⁷ at it, as Polt nicely puts. Otherwise one is simply denied to enter its realm. And Being essentially happens only there where the question of Being is actually asked, where the address of Being is actually heard. The question of Being is the question concerning the givenness of Being (*Sein*, our horizon of intelligibility) which, say as an optic, gives (discloses) entities (including ourselves) to us in a certain light, but which is itself given by the event of Being (*Seyn*). Hence the question of Being when taken up puts us (our self-understanding, our wholeness) radically into question, makes it a matter of emergency or crisis. Ereignis, the other beginning, would take place only in an appropriate(d) openness of thinking the question of Being alone is capable to open up. In short, Ereignis is a happening in the realm of the question of Being.

Because *Ereignis* is not one *Epoche* among others in the history of Being, it points up to an absolutely new beginning in which Being would hold sway (*wesen*) in our lives as a fundamental happening, that is, in its ownness (*Wesen*). Hence Heidegger believes that Ereignis as the event of other beginning, the happening of ownness, would institute the history itself, break the true ground of history as the occurrence of the essence of Being as an ultimately fundamental moment of all the consequent future. As suggested, with Ereignis alone true history would begin, history in its essential sense would take start and become rooted. The relevance of this to nihilism is easily understandable. Heidegger’s account

²²⁶ See, especially, *M*, 239-240; *B*, 270-271. The spectre of the destruction of man’s essence, *Da-sein*, and its dissolving into animality is part of the spectre of nihilism. Heidegger’s critique of metaphysical definition of man as *animal rationale* reflects his belief that metaphysics has no understanding whatsoever of man’s essential difference from the animal. But the worst is that metaphysical abstraction on the *essentia* of man, that is, metaphysical dissociation of man from Being, not only hinders a proper sort of reflection on man’s essence, but also leads to the effacement of such essential difference, that is, to afore-mentioned danger. This is touched upon in chapter 4, 5 and 6.

²²⁷ R. Polt. *The Emergency of Being*, p. 60 .

suggests that only with such an event (“waited” to happen in an unpredictable future) nihilism could be overcome; otherwise never! I shall explain a bit more.

Nihilism is about our deepest attitude towards Being, about the deepest/essential way we are related to the happening of Being (as its very “participants” or “receivers”), about the fundamental manner in which we are thinking and taking beings. Though this comportment is the nearest and the most immediate to us, it firstly and mostly (*zunächst und zumeist*) goes unnoticed for at least two reasons: (1) in our average everydayness, we typically do not go beyond the entities as they are “given” to us, and (2) it eludes conceptual forms of thinking. This comportment stands in need of being an appropriative or appropriate(d) openness to Being, i.e. in need of being explicated²²⁸ instead of being merely an oblivious (inauthentic, unowned, fallen) openness in which we are receiving the gift of Being (i.e. unconcealed entities as a whole) but fail to care about its source (that is, fail to think/ thank), namely the fundamental happening of Being itself, *Seyn*. To be an appropriative openness to Being means to explicitly take up Being as the essential matter for our human life, for thinking. It means to be up to the fundamental happening whereby unified presence of entities (*Sein*) is granted to us in a unified space of meaning in which we dwell, whereby we can receive a sense of what it means to be and not to be. Appropriative openness is, above all, openness to mystery, to the radical mystery of Being which is the truth of Being (*Wahrheit, a-letheia*, (un)concealment). If it takes place, it lets Being unconceal in its “ownness”, a happening which concomitantly brings us (and all entities) into our “ownness”, into what is ownmost to us. Consequently, we would come to understand and be related to ourselves in reference to the disclosure of Being, to the happening of meaning: we would be decisively disclosed to ourselves as an openness where Being takes place. Things in this case would not appear to me simply as representable or calculable, but radiate (in) the light of Being itself. As we have seen, this whole happening Heidegger calls Ereignis as the true name of the fundamental giving event behind the givenness of beings. Through Ereignis, through thinking of *Seyn*, through “turning towards” it (*Kehre*), metaphysics and equally the history of Being would be got out of the way (of history, *par excellence*). Nihilism then leaves the scene where Ereignis takes place.

This we might be tempted to qualify as prophetic, or somewhat messianic. Heidegger qualifies it as “eschatological” (from Greek *eskhatos*, last). If “Being itself is inherently eschatological”²²⁹, the above ideas seem to be less strange. At the very least, Heidegger wants to show that this is the single horizon (as possibility, way and hope)

²²⁸ Thus “the act of explication” in Heidegger, I propose, can be best conceived as getting clear about what is essentially in us and belongs to us, as “appropriation”. *Eigens* normally means “explicitly”, but it is related to *eigen* which basically means “own”. Ereignis comes from *ereignen* (both appropriate and occur) as its verbal noun. *Ereignen* in turn is a verbal conjunction of *eigen*.

²²⁹ “The Anaximander Fragment” in *EGT*, 18.

towards exiting the game (nihilism and metaphysics).²³⁰ Perhaps Ereignis would never come and the last remnants of *Lichtung*, too, would completely die out in the course: humanity would yield to animality or, before this, a sudden global catastrophe would end everything. But if Ereignis should occur at all, in any distant and uncertain future, it would need man's taking part in it to be the leap taken and the moment seen. Our role is crucial, but never decisive. At best, we could work towards this "uncertain" future. We could help grow a preparedness in ourselves for the arrival (*Ankunft*) of such an ultimate turning event in history, by trying to cultivate a poetic-thinking awareness that re-calls (*an-denkt*) our relatedness and belonging to Being, and that explicates/ appropriates our primordial comportedness towards Being (indicated above). Heidegger seems to think that this could come only as an appropriation of the question of Being in our personal lives: personal transformations alone would prepare the path towards an ultimate breaking point of history. Sometimes Heidegger refers to this phenomenon as *Kehre* in which human being's turning toward Being is accompanied by Being's corresponding turning toward human being. In *Kehre*, Being's and human being's essential belongingness to one another occurs. It is actually the moment of thoughtful questioning as "critically" standing in the openness of thinking. *Kehre* in this sense means a "turn of focus", say a "paradigm shift" in one's whole orientation. I would call it "inner revolution" (from Latin, *revolvere*, i.e. turn round), which would pave the way for the moment of the only true revolution of history, Ereignis, i.e. for "the stillest crossing onto the other beginning"²³¹.

I would, in this connection, like to return to the basic point of my thesis in this chapter, namely the essential role of "the question of Being" pointed out above. For Heidegger, an authentic question, above all, the question of Being, is always an essential happening (of Being). Its essentiality goes hand in hand with its mystery to which we remain heedless even though we are familiar to questions (obviously, we ask and answer questions all the time). Questioning is that happening of gathering in which the questioned and the questioner, both alike, are called and gathered towards each other, and thus "turn towards" each other in their own essence (*Wesen*), in a standing open, in response to the claim of the question. A question is a claim which binds both sides in the same way, as a call to be open and true to what it lays bare and thereby necessitates. This is the tacit convention (understood and acknowledged in the deepest way by the parties) that makes question as question possible. The question of Being, into the realm of which the questioner steps by raising it and the questioned responds, "in turn", by essentially happening/ arriving, is the ground of

²³⁰ Remember Heidegger's words inscribed in his thumbstone: "to head toward a star—this only", "The Thinker As Poet" in *PLT*, 4.

²³¹ *B*, 98; *M*, 81.

Kehre. Indeed, any thinking of Being moves in the realm of questioning, which “is beginning and end”²³². We can face nihilism only “through” the question of Being.

²³² *CP*, 242.

CHAPTER 5

ONTO-THEO-LOGY: THE THEOLOGICAL SOURCES OF NIHILISM

In this chapter, I would like to discuss the theological dimensions and sources which Heidegger traces in the world-historical movement of nihilism. According to Heidegger, one basic dimension of Western nihilism, one decisive source of domination of metaphysics is theology, and this always as onto-theology. Onto-theology is one more name to designate metaphysical way of thinking. It means to indicate that metaphysics from its very birth on is twofold-one (“*zwiefach-einig*”²³³) i.e a unity of two intimately related aspects, namely ontology and theology as having simultaneously issued from the same origin (metaphysics). “Metaphysics is in itself theology. It is this, in so far as it thinks entity as entity, *on qua on*. Ontology is at the same time and necessarily theology.”²³⁴ Metaphysics is onto-theology in that it represents beings both in terms of universality (ontology) and with respect to the highest being (theology), *ta agathon* in Plato and *theos* in Aristotle, a view of reality which later deeply affects the judeo-christian interpretation of god as the supreme entity. Through the history of Being, theological interpretation of Being and theoretical reification of god have ended up covering over the clearing of thinking as the site to pose the question of Being and, concomitantly, draining up all the content of authentic religious experience, which Nietzsche has declared as the “death of god”.

From Heidegger’s position, it can safely be said that the essence of “the death of god” can be found inherent in the initial formulation of theology in the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle, the latter being the paramount expression. Theology is essentially theoretical, that is, a theoretical (metaphysical) determination of thinking with respect to god. Theology has not produced an authentic relation to god, but, rather ironically, undermined it. Indeed, the movement of theology in the West inaugurates and harbours the long and fateful (*geschichtlich*) unfolding process of “death of God”, the forgetfulness of Being, the growing exclusion of Being from reflective awareness, in short, nihilism. Questions arise. Why is theology nihilistic? Above all, why has it played such a crucial historical role in the progressive intensification of nihilism in the Western tradition? How are theory and theology

²³³ “Einleitung: Der Rückgang in den Grund der Metaphysik”, in *WM*, 379: “Introduction to “What is Metaphysics?””, in *PM*, 287. Here, W. Kaufmann renders “*zwiefach-einig*” as “in a twofold and yet unitary manner”.

²³⁴ *MN*, 214.

inseparably connected in the very onset of metaphysics? Why, it seems, should one think technology and theology together? Heidegger may give a guiding direction towards an answer:

We shall master Greek philosophy as the beginning of Western philosophy only if we at the same time understand this beginning in its originating end. For the ensuing period it was only this end that turned into the ‘beginning,’ so much so that it at the same time concealed the original beginning.²³⁵

To sum up: everything is found hidden in the onset (*Beginn* or *Anfall*). So far as the “decisive structure” of metaphysical thinking (onto-theology, or onto-theo-logy) is concerned, the onset of forgetfulness of Being can be said to have matured and become fully operative in Plato’s and Aristotle’s thought. So, from here alone, we can get “original” insights into its “relation to Being”, which, Heidegger argues, leads to an insidious eclipse of Being, due to the collapse of *A-letheia*/ temporality. Let us critically discuss these issues by turning on the initial crystallization of metaphysics as onto-theology. In so doing, we will, so I believe, reach one more decisive characterisation of the inner character of metaphysical determination of Being as the true form of nihilism.

Common-sensically, we may tend to think that theology and nihilism stand far away from each other. This is a correct impression only as far as common-sense is a correct guide. That common-sense is not a good guide is perhaps the starting-point for all philosophy: when the early Greeks wondered about Being, their thinking has definitely moved outside common-sense. In Heidegger’s case, thinking is usually a matter of confronting common-sense. He already leaves behind the ground of common-sense, the ground of the received understanding of Being which is ultimately metaphysics, (if not “the metaphysics of savages” as Russell once called it). Heidegger would say that it is precisely by way of hiding itself in this ground of common-sense that metaphysics as nihilism survives. It is easy to surmise from *Being & Time* that common-sense belongs to the realm of *das Man*, to its levelling-down dictatorship on humans. Thinking of Being needs to dispense with common-sense in order to emerge in its proper radicality i.e as an authentic question. As a result, what we call comom-sense and often (unreflectively) take as a sure authority for intelectual matters could be *nothing* more than a manifestation of nihilism in so far as it blocks further thinking/questioning and serves for the subjection by *das Man*. Then the first thing to see is that real essence of nihilism is something hidden to us.

²³⁵ *EM*, 188. Quoted in Walter Brogan’s *Heidegger and Aristotle: Twofoldness of Being*, (New York:Suny Press, 2005), p. 9. Brogan’s translation. Fried and Polt renders *bewältigen* as “surmount” (see *IM*, 191), whereas Brogan interprets it as “master”. *Bewältigen* means overcome, finish as well as manage. Perhaps we should keep in mind all these meanings.

The same might well be said of the form(s) of morality dominant in Western societies. We see, after all, that common-sense and morality usually overlap. But this is not to say that one should reject morality as such. For Heidegger, ontology (the question of Being) is fundamental but not in the sense that everything else (including ethics) is derivative and you can deduce all other explanations from an ultimate ontological position to be attained through a rigorous foundational reflection on “Being as such”. No. This is the language of metaphysics. To say that the question of Being is the essential and the sole matter for thinking is to say that everything of true importance can emerge in its own essence, rank and weight only in the realm of a thinking pertaining to the question of Being. Either you think of Being or you do not really think anything (thinking does not make sense at all).

This is part of the reason for Heidegger’s life-long refraining from moral theory. For one thing, how can morality and theory come together? As we pointed out, one of the most unmistakable traits of Heidegger’s philosophy is its strict opposition to theory of any sort.²³⁶ If you set out “theorizing” on a specific matter, you take for granted many ontological preconceptions which the stance of theorizing as such brings in its train (which constitute a full-fledged understanding of Being, what Heidegger calls *Seiendheit*, and which he thinks proves to be definitive for Western tradition). Then all basic content of your reflection on this specific matter is already determined beforehand, only waiting to be articulated. Indeed, once you have an understanding of Being, an horizon of intelligibility to see and make sense of entities in this or that way, once entities are disclosed as such and as a whole, what counts true and false i.e truth, is already determined, even though this truth might be just errancy, as has been in the case of Western tradition.

Thus *Seiendheit* has its own truth, and this truth is put into action when theory is at work anywhere. Roughly put, theory is systematic (sees truth as a systematic unity of propositions), representational (sees truth as mind-dependent, as constantly at the disposal of the introspection of mind, as at will presentable by a mechanism based on certainty), ahistorical and atemporal (sees time in a stand-still, in terms of the present, of the succession of now-points, and takes Being as constant presence), propositional (i-sees propositions as isolated atoms standing in their own without reference to pre-reflective ontological/

²³⁶ Already in 1919, Heidegger targeting at Husserl writes “What is distorting the real problematic is not just naturalism, as some people think, but the overall dominance and primacy of the *theoretical*.” “Die Idee der Philosophie und das Weltanschauungsproblem” in *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* (GA 2), quoted in *Edmund Husserl: Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger, (1927-1931)*, ed. and trans. Thomas Sheehan and Richard E. Palmer, (Kluwer Academic Publishers:Dordrecht, 1997), p. 18.

background assumptions, and ii- sees truth as belonging to propositions), abstract and essentialistic (sees essence in terms of abstract generality and universality, of *to ti estin/mahiyya/quoidditas*) and so on. It should be clear for Heidegger that a live sense of morality cannot be done justice in this framework. Rather, if this paradigm now underlies our understanding of Being, the most urgent need is not a theory of ethics which is already bound to fall prey to it, but a more fundamental thinking of Being which brings to light and questions all our ontological assumptions.

The case with theology is similar but perhaps far more complicated than ethics. Nihilism reigns in its hiddenness not only in common-sense and morality, but in theological beliefs and motivations as well, inasmuch as these are parts of the received (metaphysical) understanding of Being. Theology is a theoretical study of divine Being just as biology is a theory of living Being. As Heidegger writes “the object of theology is God”²³⁷. For Heidegger, the question is similar: how can god and theory come together?²³⁸ One can argue that the question of Being is as much the question of god, a question to be kept alive and never let turn stale. But if our understanding of Being (i.e metaphysics) determines the way we approach to god, then any theology that we may attempt to furnish today will be derivative, and thus unable to reach any essential decision about God. What is more, for Heidegger, the problem is, in a special sense, theology itself:

All metaphysics is theological, i.e entity is, from out of a supreme entity as the first cause, conditioned (*herleitet*)... to which the god of calculation and explanation corresponds.²³⁹

The rightly conceived theology conceals itself in cosmology and in psychology (anthropology) as well as in *Metaphysica generalis*.²⁴⁰

Western metaphysics is theological even where it opposes church theology.²⁴¹

Theology becomes *diabology*, which does not of course restrict itself to the harmlessness of the “devil” as a fallen angel, but first lets in and unleashes the

²³⁷ Martin Heidegger. “The Problem of Sin in Luther”, in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time, and Beyond*, ed. John Van Buren (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 105.

²³⁸ For Heidegger’s remark that the god of theory (*causa sui*) would remain the furthest removed from the divine God, see, for instance, “Die Onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik” in *ID*, 77.

²³⁹ *MN*, 92.

²⁴⁰ *M*, 215.

²⁴¹ *N IV*, 26.

unconditional non-essence (*Unwesen*) of god in the truth of entities. The complete unfolding of diabolology is yet to come.²⁴²

Then, theology, far from Being a mere descendant of metaphysics, is the inner core of metaphysics as it has arisen in the late Greek age. For this reason, according to Heidegger, the essential task is a fundamental de-structuring (*Destruktion, abbauen*) of our understanding of Being (the Western tradition, the history of Being), through a focus on thinking of Being as such, which Heidegger calls being-historical thinking. If the theological impetus lies at the heart of Western tradition and if “historical *Mindfulness* transforms history”²⁴³, then a historical *Mindfulness* on the theological sources of nihilism is first needed to overcome nihilism, i.e to transform history. This also suggests that theology subtly informs common-sense and morality in the Western context.

From a theory-based approach, there would remain no difference between the way one comes to an entity and the way one comes to God, no matter how much one stresses the transcendence and absoluteness of its Being/essence. Only an essential thinking of Being as a happening of Being can decide about God. Only in the full earnestness of this venture of decision, can the true essence of the divine, and its nearness emerge for us.²⁴⁴ For this it is imperative that we carefully separate the question of God from theology, a theoretical perspective on things related to God. Hence when Heidegger speaks of theology in purely negative terms as the height of nihilism (as will be elucidated), this should not be considered as atheism, which is neither to say that Heidegger endorses a version of theism, not only because the question of God remains as a matter of decision to be taken up by the utmost radical of all thinking (by “the ones-yet-to-come who belongs to the last God”²⁴⁵), but also all sorts of theisms or atheisms remain metaphysical.

Now theology is our chief concern, for we said, according to Heidegger it is the central part of the nihilistic picture. To see the connections between theory and theology, I propose to briefly examine the theological center of Aristotle’s metaphysics, for Aristotle, according to Heidegger, is the culmination of Greek philosophy, i.e a case which can offer to us “Greek philosophy in general”²⁴⁶. Such theological standpoint has been exercising an enchanting influence on Western mind ever since, such that all Western religious traditions have come to bear its stamp to varying extents. Aristotle’s metaphysics can well be construed as an attempt which conceives of the consummation of theoretical thinking as

²⁴² *MN*, 155.

²⁴³ *M*, 329.

²⁴⁴ *CP*, 62-71.

²⁴⁵ *CP*, 280. Also see 280-288. And cf. *BQP*, 23-24.

²⁴⁶ *BQP*, 57.

theology (what he calls *prote philosophia*).²⁴⁷ So, when we here speak of theology in Aristotle we actually speak of the objective of full realization of *theoria*, provided that we keep in mind that what Aristotle constructs, the theory of *theos*, as the climax of his thinking is, in the usual sense of the word, not “religious” at all. Aristotelian meditations towards the knowledge of *theos* (i.e the dynamic of his whole thought) had no concern for piety to any extent, at least in the sense we (who are in some way brought up in the judeo-christian-muslim tradition) take it. It remains theoretical throughout, that is, determined by the desire to know (see and understand) the absolutes of things, their innermost and most general reality. God in this context appears only as the highest case of, say, “thinghood” (*ousia*)²⁴⁸, that is, basically one thing among other things. Blind to this fact, medieval (muslim, jewish and christian) philosophers embarked on plundering Aristotle’s theology in the service of their religious concerns to which Aristotle was fundamentally alien. This partly explains why “theology” distorted the original religious experience which belonged to a totally different realm and why the medieval philosophers generally had a distorted conception of Aristotle.

Aristotelian ontology presents a hierarchy of Being, of what is real, i.e of substances (*ousiai*). Roughly, there are terrestrial substances which are composed of matter and form, and which are corruptible and mobile. There are celestial substances which are composed only of form, in movement but not corruptible. All movedness of terrestrial substances depends on the movement whose source lies in the celestial bodies. Celestial bodies in turn are dependent on formal substances which are in no way related to corruptible sublunar entities, but only to the celestial substances as the sources (*archai*) of movement and actuality for them. Now the top of this hierarchy is *theos*, which, as an absolute mind engaged only with itself in the form of self-reflection, rules “unbeknownst” over the whole universe of being through “the pure atemporal acts”²⁴⁹ of self-thinking, which correspond to formal substances (pure principles of reality, *archai*) that activate and inform celestial substances and so forth. Consequently *theos* is the ontological ground of the universe, which is also to say, the basis of intelligibility of things for a reflecting thinking, for truth belongs to the form Being is characterised and diffused into the universe. *Theos* as pure actuality is the supreme exemplification of Being, the paradigmatic meaning of Being.

Aristotle opens metaphysics with a simple remark: “all men by nature desire to know”.²⁵⁰ The ultimate object of this desire is *theos*. Although the term “theology” is not

²⁴⁷ This point Heidegger also emphasizes, see *AM*, 7, 38; *M*, 331. Aristotle’s theological meditations come to fruition in *Physics* Book VIII and chiefly in *Metaphysics* Book XII. We will have a cursory glance at these texts by presupposing the “whole” of Aristotle’s thought.

²⁴⁸ *Metaphysics* XII, 9, 1074b.

²⁴⁹ Richard Bodéüs, “Aristotle.” In *The Pimlico History of Western Philosophy*, ed. by R.H. Popkin (London: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 65.

²⁵⁰ *Metaphysics* Book 1, 980a.

used by Aristotle himself (he did not ever pronounce the terms “metaphysics” and “ontology” either), he explicitly refers to the science of Being *qua* Being as the knowledge of *theos* which he comes to call “the first philosophy” (*prote philosophia*) in that it alone addresses this desire. “*Prote philosophia* in itself becomes *episteme theologike*.”²⁵¹ Then, theology is what we, for Aristotle, strive for or seek after, “by nature”. As is well-known, it studies Being only as Being, regardless of other aspects. Wisdom (*sophia*) is the causal knowledge of entities, which must ultimately be fulfilled as the knowledge of *theos*, for *theos* is the “causative/ principal ground” of all beings, thus absolute basis of intelligibility, of the explanation (*aitia*) of *ousia*. For this reason, theology is the ultimate form of all knowledge (*sophia* or *episteme*). *Theoria* is the kind of seeing that informs and pervades *sophia*. It means “to behold of something” or “to look at a view” (θέα *thea* “a view” + ὁρᾶν *horan* “to look”), but is freed of all practical urges: It is seeing for the sake of seeing. As indicated, the definitive object of *theoria* is *theos*. However, one possible etymology of *theoria* sees concrete connections between *theoria* and *theos*²⁵²: it traces *theoria* not back to *thea*, but back to τὸ θεῖον *to theion* “things related to *theos*”, which might suggest, in turn, a sense of “beholding of the divine things” as the totality of the nature (*cosmos*). Inasmuch as *theoria* perceives (*noein*) beings in their pure and indifferent standing-there and with a detached gaze, in utter constancy i.e in generality and in the eternal present, in “*aei on*, the nunc stans, the now that stays still and constant”²⁵³ (in Heidegger’s vocabulary, in “*reine Vorhandenheit*”), *theos* proves to be the exemplary being in respect of which *theoria* could be fulfilled as an intuitive contemplation of Being *par excellence*, an activity, Aristotle claims, distinctive for humans.

This has a few consequences. (1) With the exercise of *theoria*, Being human is fully disclosed, in so far as it is defined by *rationality* (λόγος, *ratio*), an intuition which, for Aristotle, would suggest itself as self-evident for anyone who attends to *phainomena* about human beings. Hence, human being as *zoon legon echon*, *animal rationale*. (2) Because *theoria* is ultimately directed towards *theos* (through *orexis* which moves *theoria* and lies behind the *kinesis* of *theoria* whose ultimate *telos* is representing *theos* as the causal ground of all entities) in apprehension (*nous*) of *theos*, the movement of Being human becomes fulfilled, reaches its goal. Theology as the pure form of metaphysics and as carried out through the movement of *theoria* brings together a definition of human being as a living being which is distinguished by having *legon*, theoretical articulation of reality, and of reality in its perfect form, *theos*. (3) human being is attracted towards the *theoria* of divine Being

²⁵¹ *M*, 331.

²⁵² Heidegger, too, has this view. See *Parmenides* (GA 54) (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982), pp. 162-167.

²⁵³ *M*, 332.

through *orexis*, which is desire to participate in the divine life by way of theoretical excellence as the highest sense of excellence (*arete*, virtue). The more *theoria* is achieved, the more our humanity gets actualised, the more we have the knowledge of *theos* (first principles of reality). As T. Sheehan notes “Precisely *when* human beings follow the knowledge correlative to their nature, they find themselves on a path that leads toward the divine. In Aristotle's cosmos, where reality is diffused analogically and without rupture, wherever there is human being there is a natural desire to see, to know, to imitate, and thus, analogously, to *be* God.”²⁵⁴

Theology also indicates a reference to *legein* (through the suffix, -logy); *legein* roughly means to bring to articulation, to lingual presence in an articulated way. (For without articulatedness/ patternedness such presence would not do at all: all disclosure of entities happens in and through a unified space of meaning, against the background of a holistic referential totality, that is, all givenness of entities is “patterned”. This concerns the phenomenon of world as systematic totality, as *cosmos* in the sense of Heraclitus.) Theology then means: to bring *theos* to an articulatedness in terms of a pure generality given in the most universal properties of that entity.

As a result, it is a striving towards getting the Godly knowledge of things: man is the desire (*orexis*), the striving to be like God. And theology is the name for such *rational* striving, for such desire to know the ultimate nature (s) of being(s), the divine as the *rational* principle/reality of the cosmos. Theology is the knowledge of the absolutes. Heidegger writes laconically:

“Theology”—The Absolute

The question concerning entities as a whole as the question concerning the “absolutes”. The absolute as the primal cause, the primal entity—the first and universal determination of making entities possible as a whole and as such.²⁵⁵

Now, let us interpret what we presented above about the original and therefore decisive stage of Western theoretical thinking as onto-theology, from the perspective of Heidegger's thought on metaphysics, onto-theology, nihilism. We, hereby, should explore precisely where Heidegger finds the sources of nihilism here. However, for the whole picture to emerge, we, subsequently, will need to attempt to examine and contrast the early Christian

²⁵⁴ Thomas Sheehan, “Nihilism:Heidegger, Jünger, Aristotle”, 28. Available in the website www.stanford.edu/dept/relstud/faculty/sheehan/Sheehan.html

²⁵⁵ ““Die Theologie”—Das Absolute

Die Frage nach dem Seienden im Ganzen als die Frage nach dem “Absoluten”. Das Absolute als die Ur-sache, das Ur-seiende—die Erste und All-Bedingung der Ermöglichung des Seienden im Ganzen und als solchen.” *MN*, 173.

(kairological) and the scholastic Christian (theological) experiences of *Being and Time*. These I gather under four points: (1) With theology, ontological difference is obstructed. (2) Theology is projected to ground the “absolutism” of theory/ metaphysics. (3) Theology sets up a *techne*-based model to conceptualise the nature. (4) Theology, however indirectly, establishes human centrality.

Firstly, in theology, the ontological difference is from the very outset not only lost, but also obstructed. If thinking is committed to the idea of supreme entity as one entity that grounds all other entities, thus as the supreme principle of Being of beings (*ousia*, *Seiendheit*), as in Plato, Aristotle and the tradition following him), there is no way to take ontological difference into consideration, which means, there is no way to take Being as Being into the area of thought. But as indicated, metaphysics is “*zweifach-einig*”: it is as much theology as it is ontology, and vice versa. Theology and ontology belong together in their metaphysical origin (*Wesen*), i.e in the initial stage of metaphysics which refers to the Being-historically decisive thoughts of Plato and Aristotle. Both think entities as entities, theology in terms of “supremeness”, ontology in terms of “generality”. One moment inextricably involves another. Then such obstruction must be construed with regard to the inseparability of ontology and theology, that is, with regard to onto-theology. However, because such obstruction is actually “forgetting”, which Heidegger interprets in reference to the concealment of Being (*lethe*), not as the failure of some human faculty, theology remains the dawn of a fateful (*geschicklich*) forgottenness of the ontological difference, i.e of metaphysics, a phenomenon which is itself the most thought-provoking issue for *Seynsgeschichtliches Denken*.²⁵⁶ Theology sees Being to be fulfilled in the pure and highest entity, because it thinks beings as beings, and Being only with an entitative concern, as the ground of beings, for always a necessity arises, for any form of thinking, to refer to Being (so as to make sense at all). Then it takes Being as an entity, thus not thinking it at all (which is “the other” of entities). That is to say, if there is no way towards bringing into consideration the difference between Being and beings, it is not possible for Being to arise as a question, it is not possible that one can think of Being *itself*. For this reason, in metaphysics Being itself remains unthought, which entails “thoughtlessness as such” as a basic comportment pervading through man’s all existence, i.e nihilism. In this sense, the forgottenness of ontological difference, which is itself possible only in the openness of the difference between Being and beings, as “an area (as one which is unthought) where metaphysics, the Western thinking in its whole essence, could continue to be what it is”²⁵⁷, is

²⁵⁶ “Die Onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik”, in *ID*, 63.

²⁵⁷ “der Bezirk, innerhalb dessen (als eines ungedachten), die Metaphysik, das abendländische Denken im Ganzen seines Wesens, das sein kann, was sie ist.” “Die Onto-theo-logische Verfassung der

the ground of nihilism itself.²⁵⁸ In such forgottenness, in turn, onto-theology gets the space to move and take roots as disguised nihilism.

Secondly, theology is projected to ground the “absolutism” of theory/ metaphysics. Theology as indicated interprets beings as beings on the basis of an (implicit) understanding of Being that appeals to the supreme entity as the absolute causative ground of all entities. *Theos* has its all attractiveness in Aristotle primarily for its satisfying the need of an unconditional ontological ground for things. At bottom, this can be attributed to a preoccupation for ground and grounding, intrinsic for metaphysics. Heidegger writes: “... all metaphysics, actually, is, in virtue of its ground, a grounding (attempt) accountable to the ground, accounting for the ground, and in the end, calling the ground to account”²⁵⁹. This obsession with grounds and grounding actually has its ground in the metaphysically transformed *logos* in the sense of “ground, reason, discursive articulation, and eventually logic” (which finds expression as the suffix, “-logy” attached to all fields of knowledge).²⁶⁰ Theology (and ontology which involve each other, are “identical”) is an ultimate answer for this concern. In Heidegger’s sense, although it has been the completion, the end-point of this absolutism, this does not mean it is something derivative, rather this only shows that it was the arche of the whole movement of metaphysics, and as arche it was already found there as the origin of this movement, as its “principal” guide.

Accordingly, theory is absolutistic, and with theology, *theos* becomes the ultimate principle of this omni-scientific drive. Structurally, i.e in virtue of its essence (*Wesen*), theory reifies/ hypostatizes/ objectifies Being (assumes it as constant presence). In so doing, it aims at total unconcealment of Being, that is, intends to reach total clarity and intelligibility, i.e the absolutes, of all things. Meanwhile, we recall from *Being & Time* that for theoretical seeing, Beings are disclosed only as things present-at-hand, in their practical irrelevance and in constant presentness purged of all sense of finitude. The frozen reality demands a frozen framework suited to articulate its own structure, i.e the framework of logic for which what counts true and false is restricted to the sphere of assertions. Hence truth is envisioned as an unfailing system of assertions kept always in view, for “system is system only as absolute system”²⁶¹. This project of system makes sense only through an ideal of

Metaphysik”, in *ID*, 60. Otherwise indicated, all the translations of *ID* (*Identität und Differenz*) are mine.

²⁵⁸ On the forgottenness of ontological difference, see “Überwindung der Metaphysik” in *VA*, 76, 78, 89.

²⁵⁹ “... ist alle Metaphysik im Grunde vom Grund aus das Gründen, das vom Grund die Rechenschaft gibt, im Rede steht und ihn schliesslich zur Rede stellt.” “Die Onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik”, in *ID*, 66.

²⁶⁰ See the whole article, “Die Onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik”, in *ID*, especially, 66-75.

²⁶¹ *MN*, 158.

complete certainty, which requires a search for absolute foundations.²⁶² Truth derives from absolute foundations, is ultimately unshakable certainty of one's representations of reality (of "facts"). Truth turns out a function of mind's getting a grip of reality. This paradigm of certainty informs epistemological motivation throughout, as something most perfectly satisfied by mathematics. Knowledge of all things real becomes possible and counts as acceptable (true) only on the basis of the ultimately calculative certainty of mathematics. Hence, modern science working on the model of "mathematical physics". At each step of the movement of this theoretical perception of the world, i.e. metaphysics, which can be detected in the various destinings/ epochs of history of Being and which are already determined through the onset of metaphysics in Plato and Aristotle, we observe a further unfolding of the destruction of *A-letheia* (the original structure of truth as un-concealment) and, equally, of temporality.²⁶³ Where is nihilism here, for Heidegger? I owe some explanation.

Obviously, the ideal of total knowledge of Beings cannot accept any mystery, any concealment at the heart of Being. It moves with a presupposition of complete intelligibility of things and is driven to achieve total clarity about the world. For Heidegger, this is purely nihilistic. Any kind of clarity of entities happens thanks to and relative to a fundamental disclosedness of Being as a horizon of intelligibility, as an articulated meaning-structure of entities, which thus comes before and conditions all disclosures of Beings, namely Being (*Sein*). This "patterned givenness of beings" (*Sein*) in turn is given by a fundamental happening, which Heidegger calls *Seyn*. *Seyn* gives *Sein*, i.e. happens, as a beginning. It has given the first beginning as *physis*, i.e. the original Greek understanding of Being. Being (*Sein*) remains concealed (in thinking and for thinking) in favor of its gift, the revealed entities "as a whole": the revelation of entities and concealment of Being happen simultaneously. It discloses entities only from out of time, i.e. in response to human comportment informed by an experience of time, hence essentially temporal. Any disclosure it grants is finite i.e. not complete and not permanent. This is roughly what Heidegger calls "truth of Being" which we can express with the word, *A-letheia* or un-concealment, and to which human essence belongs as its "own" site. Accordingly, the truth of Being refers to the radical and enduring mystery of Being that needs to be appropriated as such, which is precisely what metaphysics fails to do. Hence Heidegger thinks that in the history of (destinings of) Being, concealment remains concealed. Appropriation of the mystery of Being is an appropriation (*Er-eignis*) of this concealment of Being, taking it explicitly (*eigens*), remembering it. Metaphysics which moves with an implicit understanding of Being as "constant presence" (*staendige Anwesenheit*), thus as total clarity at the disposal of

²⁶² About system and metaphysics, see, *BQP*, 125-126; *MN*, 159-160; *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, 22-33.

²⁶³ See, for instance, *MN*, 155-156.

thinking, misses this point. In chapter 3, we had pointed out that this is the result of metaphysics' inability to address the phenomenon of *das Nichts* (No-thing) since it is intrinsically thing-oriented. In so doing, metaphysics remains outside an understanding of concealment dimension of Being, and outside an appropriate relation to (the mystery of) Being which gives and prevails in all possible intelligibility of things. Because concealment is not removable from Being, from the unconcealment of Beings, mystery of Being is central to the truth of Being. Every bringing to light, simultaneously, possesses concealed, unintelligible, unfamiliar elements, and is conditioned by lethe, closedness, concealment, from which it springs and to which it withdraws after standing in the light for a "while". It only "from time to time grants an openness"²⁶⁴, only arises in finite disclosures. Neither its concealment nor its unconcealment abidingly endures. Rather, concealment and unconcealment belong to one another and occur simultaneously forming a temporal field of interplay (i.e world).

Accordingly, for Heidegger, given the truth of Being (i.e its a-letheic character, concealment at the heart of unconcealment), total clarity i.e total unconcealment (or alternatively expressed in the metaphysical experience, total clarity, complete certainty, absolute knowledge, unconditioned ground, which metaphysics in various ways has sought after ever since its outbreak) is not only purely illusory, but also darkens the meaning dimension of beings to which alone beings belong, makes the world a one-dimensional place where all distinctions are gone, "a night where all cows are black"²⁶⁵. Heidegger would like the quasi-Pascallian caveat (levelled against the Cartesian obsession with indubitable foundations): "Search for too much clarity brings only darkness in the end."²⁶⁶

It seems that the essence of nihilism consists in an alienatedness to (i.e "forgetting") the truth of Being, that is, of its inherent radical mystery, as suggested above. Nihilism then is such an understanding of Being that for it, in principle, there is no hiddenness, no mystery about the world. And Heidegger suggests that this is exactly what is systematically done by metaphysics. Nihilism grows out of an understanding of Being in which Being is not allowed to happen as *itself*, i.e in its essence/ truth which is its radical mystery as experienced and appropriated by thinking. In nihilism Being happens as nothing or Unbeing (i.e as unimportance, triviality), or said differently, non-essence of Being happens, that is, as abandonedness of thinking (humanity) by Being itself, with its becoming a banality²⁶⁷, with

²⁶⁴ Otto Pöggeler. *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, p. 147.

²⁶⁵ A German saying made famous by Hegel. See *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 9.

²⁶⁶ See *Penseés*, especially sections 194, 229, 242.

²⁶⁷ I here want to draw attention to the etymological connection between "abandon" and "banal". Abandon, a French word, formed of ad and ban, means give up, forsake what one is, has or does. Ad-, a Latin prefix, implies motion or direction to something, or intensification of meaning. For example,

“the most unusual of all things” (i.e Being itself) Being “the most usual” for thinking²⁶⁸. Absence of Being is such a darkness that underlies and forges all human darkness which manifests itself, above all, in the drive for a total clarity of Beings, in which oblivion of Being (and of Beings as belonging to Being) reaches to an extreme. What this implies is that nihilism is basically not a formulated destructive position in philosophy; but something more profound, something lying, hidden through familiarity, therefore imperceptibly, in the ground of all destructiveness (of all cruelty, frenzy, senselessness, insensitiveness, goallessness, thoughtlessness, superficialness, unboundedness) as a deeply (historically) rooted “unthinking” attitude toward Being *itself*, which is bred by the emptiness abandonment of Being has left behind.

In the writings of the 1950s, Heidegger stresses the intimate bond between the mystery of Being and Ereignis, but Ereignis now in somewhat renewed sense, that is, not as an ultimate (communal-global-historical) futural happening but something truly individual. Heidegger argues that when one appropriates this mystery of Being as the (temporal) occurrence of the truth of Being, one enters into *Ereignis* as thoughtful standing toward such mystery. In *Ereignis* one appropriates temporal dimension of unconcealment and its inherent finitude. Accordingly, one comes to experience oneself in the light of such temporal occurrence of Being, of the truth of Being, of its radical mystery²⁶⁹. This returns beings to their primordial sense, to the primordial level of Being. With this recognition one lets beings be, i.e opens a space for the authentic meaning of things. As discussed in chapter 4, this implies that one overcomes metaphysics only with the leap of Ereignis. Whereas metaphysics is stirred with the instinct of attaining “total clarity” (in Heidegger’s vocabulary “total unconcealment or disclosure”) about entities, the experience of Ereignis acknowledges radical mystery as proper to Being and adopts accordingly “openness to the mystery”²⁷⁰.

Thirdly, theology sets up a *techne*-based look at nature in which entities are brought about (i.e *her-gestellt*, pro-duced) ultimately through the absolute actuality (represented by *theos*, which has been an expansion on Plato’s famous “craftsman”) just like artifacts are produced (carried to reality) by an artisan by way of informing the forms found in his mind into matter(ial). Theology is the root level of “productionist metaphysics”, which has reached a decisive point with the medieval Christian formulation of God as creator God (creation theory) and Beings as *ens creatum*. The creator and master God has then become

adapt means going fit or becoming fitter. Ban, in turn, is the root of the word, “banal”, that is, common, trite. Abandon then first of all implies something’s growing banal to such an extent that it ceases to be what it originally was.

²⁶⁸ Cf. *BQP*, 143-148.

²⁶⁹ We already should see that *Ereignis* is a further development on *Eigentlichkeit* as the ethymological connection implies.

²⁷⁰ *DT*, 55.

down-to-earth under its more concrete forms, i.e human forms such as subject-object model (modern philosophy), the dichotomy between labor and nature (Marx), creation of all values by superman (Nietzsche) and eventually the rise of technological mastery over nature, an unbounded aggression on nature.²⁷¹

Theology formulated by Aristotle as the highest level of reflection on Being rests on the assumption that total knowledge of things is not only possible but desirable too, because this is just an outcome of man's nature (rational animal), a capacity of "absolute reflection" on entities. For Heidegger, from total knowledge of beings (theology) to total control and mastery over Beings (technology), there is a direct route which has unfolded historically in the Western tradition. In this connection, it would be appropriate to take into consideration a crucial passage from *Metaphysik und Nihilismus*:

"Metaphysics"—its "natural" idea: all entities must come from a highest and supreme entity. Where does this idea have the ground of its "naturalness"? The entity is what is present and in this way it comes *from* and comes *from by*.

It is taken for granted that engagement with entities, in the first place, is their production. Thus coming-from becomes mislaid in a first pro-duction (demiourgos). The "naturalness" of the idea is grounded:

1. in the unquestioned interpretation of Being as presence (*Anwesenung*)
2. in the unquestioned calling on pro-ducing (techne as competence therein) as the manner of clarification, revelation and explanation of entities.

In both, this interpretation and that calling, prevails the groundlessness of the already onset decision about Being; Being is passed over in this claimful but groundless, and therefore natural calling. The supremacy and power of entities as the present-at-hand is already conditioned in the beginning (*Beginn*) of metaphysics.²⁷²

Here, a few points re-emerge. We, who move in the area of Western understanding of Being, do not see anything beyond entities, beyond what is present. The entities which are present, standing-there, are then taken simply as the product of a making. Then all entities in the universe must have been brought about by an ultimate making, inasmuch as they are there at all. This is the paradigm of pro-ducer (that which brings about, maker) and produced (that which is brought about, the entity as that is present there, as something produced). We take this model as self-evident, because our "way-of-taking-things" (i.e *Seiendheit*) is already determined by the onset of metaphysics in the late Greek age. As

²⁷¹ See *MN*, 94.

²⁷² *MN*, 90-91.

entrapped in this model, we take Being, somewhat furtively, as standing-there constantly and presently (*Anwesenung*). Being, however, the meaning dimension of entities, which surpasses all entities and comes before all entities in the sense of making them disclosed to us, does, nevertheless, go unnoticed, and this, due to the way of thinking which defines metaphysics, namely re-presentation or *theoria*. Now re-presentation brings us before metaphysics itself: *Anwesenung* (as ontology) and techne-based model (as theology). Hence we see not only that *Anwesenung* and theology belong and fit together, but also that the theological model (God, the supreme being, *causa sui*, as the absolute pro-ducer, and cause of all beings) does actually involve a technological model (productionist model). Two points refer to one another.

(1) Because we see things as present-at-hand, as standing-there constantly and presently, so to speak, in an eternal now, that is, because we see things “theoretically”, we quite “naturally” leap to the productionist model, and ultimately to the idea of an absolute maker as an all-conclusive explanation, an explanation for what Heidegger calls above, *Herkommen*, i.e coming-from, which here stands for our pre-reflective engagement with Being, or its indispensable emergence/ “phenomenality” for us, at the pre-reflective level, as the stillest but the most essential claim.

But what is really involved with this leaping? We understand (pre-reflectively) its necessity, but hardly come to put it into question. Indeed, Being is something which is only leaped, and such leap is unavoidable, if we are to make sense of things. It makes sense of entities by surpassing entities. Plato’s leap has established the productionist model for our thinking decisively as something natural for anyone who takes things “rationally” (i.e theoretically).

(2) The reverse is also true; because we have a maker model in our mind familiar and evident from the everyday world (as a world of tradition), we tend to see beings in terms of Being present as simply lying-there. With this, we deal with the phenomenon of *Herkommen* (answer its call in a certain way). But the problem is that this understanding does not correspond to this phenomenon (Being itself), but only covers it over, that is, pre-vents it. We make sense of things (i.e have meanings), then, according to the way we approach to it, i.e by pre-venting its authentic disclosure (meaning). Coming-from (*Herkommen*) is thus “actually” hindered to “come”, to happen (*wesen*), i.e pre-vented, by way of taking it a coming-from-by a supreme being, thus as something entitative, something pro-duced (like a garment in the market), something obvious, usual and cheap. Here is nihilism in Heidegger’s sense.

As a result, metaphysics re-sorts to Being (i.e both appeals to and goes out of Being) at each step and moment of its re-presentation of beings, but cannot raise it as a question. Put it differently, metaphysics understands the difference between beings and Being, but never

explicitly addresses this most essential of all phenomena (difference as *Sein*), i.e. what addresses to thinking in this difference. It passes through the difference all the time, and this by necessity, however without knowing that it needs to pass through the difference in order to represent beings, that is, this difference as an open field, necessary for entities to emerge in this or that sense. This is because for metaphysics/ theory/ representation, the meaning of Being has proved already something clear, and this long ago in the very onset of metaphysics, which no longer invites question, and metaphysics as metaphysics belongs to the horizon of this meaning. This meaning is inscribed in the birth certificate of metaphysics: presence, or presentness, or entitiness (*Anwesen, Vor-handenheit, Seiendheit*) as the supremacy of entities, as the supremacy of the eternal now (*aei on*), as the collapse of temporality and *A-letheia*. Hence whenever representation (theory) tends to bring Being into the field of vision, it, by virtue of its own essence, is forced to take Being as an entity which grounds other entities by way of causing/pro-ducing them (i.e. theology—technology). Because Being is not some entity, it eludes all metaphysical way of thinking, representation or *theoria*. In metaphysics as the sterility of *theoria*, Being cannot live, and neither can meaning which is nothing but the happening of Being. It happens only with its non-happening, privation (*Unwesen, non-essence*), which is the privation of meaning, i.e. nihilism, a privation which is the essence of all meanings in circulation. These meanings are the meanings beings convey to us as resources for technological manipulation. Technology which is the eventual unfolding, the utter concretion of theological/ theoretical way of thinking, consists in representing beings (of course, humans included) as nothing other than resources, objects of exploitation, objects to impose power and in turn, extract power, and more and more power *ad infinitum*. Technology becomes the destructive essence of nihilism fully unleashed, an essence which is seminated by theology. That much suffices for our present purposes, because we will discuss this serious issue, the nihilism of technology, more fully in chapter 7.

Fourthly, by way of involving a definition of human being as “rational animal” theology as the center of Aristotelian metaphysics incipates man’s centrality, and therewith her falling outside Being and her own essence. As suggested, the god of theology proves to be nothing other than the very principle of total knowledge of beings metaphysics strives to attain from Plato onwards. We remember that essence (*Wesen*) is not a fixed quiddity in Heidegger. It is understood not in terms of “universality” (*Allgemeinheit*), the most general, but in terms of the most unique, of “belonging” (*Zugehörigkeit*), the latter being decisively prior to the former. So, essence of something is what is “ownmost” to it. Besides, human essence is a historically changable phenomenon, a way of man’s relatedness to Being. Man’s essence has changed many times in history accompanying a radical change in human

understanding of Being. In fine, we can say human essence is understanding of Being as openness for the happening of Being/ meaning. We also said that human essence is not human at all, does not belong to humans, but a gift of Being in which we stand as humans, and can be humans, a site essentially for the “needful usage” (*Brauch*) of Being, but this, our essence, we have forgotten long ago, with the onset of onto-theology.

Forgetfulness of our essence and the forgetfulness of Being correspond to each other. This forgetfulness is established with Aristotle’s conceiving man as “the animal having reason” (*zoon legon echon*). Indeed, with the impact of onto-theology, Heidegger argues, human essence is transformed into *animal rationale*, rational ground of reality. Consequently, this transformation in human essence (i.e in the way man is related to Being) is simultaneous with the onto-theological re-presentation of Being as *ousia* and ultimately as *theos*. Actually it comes as an inherent part of the whole play: while Being becomes a supreme entity, *theos*, man correlatively becomes *animal rationale*. That is to say, such metaphysical interpretation of man as *animal rationale* is not something added to the metaphysical picture as an independent or external aspect. Rather any understanding of Being necessarily entails an interpretation of what it means to “be” a human being. In so far as metaphysics does not think Being as Being, does not attend to the (ontological) difference as difference, it is unable to *essentially* differentiate human being, the ontological entity (*Dasein*), from other entities. For this reason, it can represent human being only entitatively (i.e anthropologically), only as one entity among others, only as “a living being” and thus bound to approach to man in terms of *animalitas*²⁷³, albeit this meant in its highest mode signified by the attribute “rational”. Metaphysics entails anthropological interpretation of man.

Heidegger’s account implies that in Plato and Aristotle, in fact, man’s essence is thought as animality (in the broader sense, as the sphere of living Beings), but this is qualified by a property, *rationality* which is actually there simply “as a differentiation in the sphere of living beings”²⁷⁴. *Rationality* is not (and cannot be) something that separates man from the realm of the animal. Rather, it appears as a distinguished aspect of animality, actualised in man alone. It intends to refer to a discursive/ calculative capacity (“mathesis”²⁷⁵) in the service of “desire or striving to be like god”. *Rationality* is man’s essence, in the sense of a higher, a more real moment of *animalitas*, of “the not yet

²⁷³ “the animal’s way of Being, which we call Leben (‘living’ or life)” *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. W. McNeill and N. Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 198. (translation slightly modified). And Heidegger notes that “Das Dasein ... ist ontologisch nie so zu bestimmen, daß man es ansetzt als Leben – (ontologisch unbestimmt) und als überdies noch etwas anderes” SZ, 50.

²⁷⁴ M, 139.

²⁷⁵ EJ, 65. All translations of EJ (*Zu Ernst Jünger*) are mine.

established animal”²⁷⁶. Hence we are left with the unmasked definition of man: an animal striving to be *like* God by virtue of its discursive /calculative capacity (*legon*).

In *Brief Über den Humanismus*, for example, Heidegger writes: “Die Metaphysik denkt den Menschen von der animalitas her und denkt nicht zu seiner humanitas hin”²⁷⁷. In Nietzsche, the consummation of metaphysics, such animality, in the sense of “elementary sensuality”, only becomes fully recognised. Heidegger, by contrast, holds that human being is separated from all animals by an “abyss of essence”, not only in its fundamental character (as a privileged relationship to Being, i.e. Dasein), but in its “body” as well.²⁷⁸

Heidegger’s interpretation intimates that when metaphysics conceptualizes man as rational/ thinking animal, as, on the one hand, belonging to an animal realm with regard to its sensuality, and on the other hand, partaking of divinity with regard to its rational capacity, thinking power, metaphysics both thinks man on the model of *theos* (as a possible god, in virtue of striving to be like god) and thinks *theos* on the model of man (as a supreme human being, an absolute man). Anthropological interpretation of man and anthropomorphic interpretation of Being go hand in hand.

As a matter of fact, when the idea of god drops with growing rationalization, there remains only man as the sole absolute in the universe. (Note that exactly from here Nietzsche’s philosophy takes its departure, as a theology made down to earth.)

This refers to humanism, the belief that man is the ground of reality, the measure of everything, lord of the earth, the justified exploiter of nature, the only significance in the world, the subject of total knowledge. Metaphysics is humanism, i.e. man-based view of Being. We can identify its various moments in the history of Being: man as the measure of everything (Protagoras), sub-ject as the underlying ground of reality who constructs entities as ob-jects, and makes the world into a *Vergegen-ständlichkeit* (Descartes, Kant)²⁷⁹, absolute ego who posits the world according to its own moral will (Fichte), subjugator and exploiter of nature (Marx), *Übermensch* who creates all values according to its will to power (Nietzsche), transcendental ego as the basis of the transcendental constitution of reality, as freely conferring meanings upon entities (Husserl).

As a consequence, theologically determined *theoria* (representation), while hunting for eternal essences, empties up the essence(s) of all things, of Being, of the divine, of the

²⁷⁶ *EJ*, 65.

²⁷⁷ “Brief Über den Humanismus” in *WM*, 323. Let me offer a free translation of this almost untranslatable remark: “metaphysics takes man from out of animality without ever coming to think its humanity.”

²⁷⁸ “Brief über den Humanismus” in *WM*, 324, 326. “Der Leib des Menschen ist etwas wesentlich anderes als ein tierischer Organismus”, *opcit*, 324. An animal as “Lebe-Wesen ... durch einen Abgrund von unserem ek-sistenten Wesen geschieden ist.” *opcit*, 326. Thus humans have “abgründige leibliche Verwandtschaft mit dem Tier.”

²⁷⁹ Cf. *EJ*, 68-70.

human and of the entities, as what is “ownmost” to them. Theologically/ theoretically determined humanism (the unity of *theos* and the *rational* animal) dis-humanizes man and all entities “as such and as a whole”. In this case, entities as such are simply impoverished, one-dimensionalised. Entities “as such and as a whole” (i.e in terms of their “patterned givenness”) depend on human essence. For entities only emerge into radiance, become what they are, in the open space of man’s essence, in the *Da* of *Da-Sein*, that is, only when we, humans, think them in relation to Being *itself*, in the light of the difference as difference. The more man is interpreted anthropologically (i.e as simply one entity among others to be studied by scientific methods in the same way we re-present animals and plants), the more a human-centred perspective becomes dominant in the manner man views the world (i.e anthropomorphism), (and vice versa), the more Being is determined as trivial, and the more man falls outside his own essence, towards animality, towards dis-humanization. Heidegger writes:

By the grace of representing, Being as representedness is a contrivance of the *rational* animal.

There lies in anthropomorphism a prior decision on Being as a contrivance of the ‘dis-humanized’ man.²⁸⁰

Heidegger touches on the same point:

‘Dis-humanization’ of ‘beings in the whole’ from out of ‘dis-humanizing’ man which is grounded in positing man as animal; man’s forgottenness of Being and consequently the self-unfolding of Being’s abandonment of beings.²⁸¹

Man-centred view of reality (i.e humanism) is, according to Heidegger, nihilism, because in it the essence of man is lost, down-and-out (conceived as *rational* animal), and equally, there is no place left for Being, since the place of Being is always man’s essence. There is no place for Being in humanism, because man invades everything and everywhere, becomes the only sense entities make. But if things and wheres are depleted with Being, what really reigns cannot be humanity, but dis-humanization, what really reigns is nihilism as the absence of Being itself and human essence. What is essential is Being itself, and man as belonging to it and as standing in its truth, in its radical mystery, which Being needs and claims (i.e man in its essence). Nihilism is just the opposite, the complete loss of the essential, and the resulting lostness of mankind within entities. The most concrete manifestation of this loss (and lostness) can be seen today in the form of a frenzy for “lived

²⁸⁰ *M*, 140.

²⁸¹ *M*, 117.

experience” in which man becomes an absolute spectator (*Zuschauer*), as the fateful consequence of *theoria*/ theology, of a determination of man’s essence as *animal rationale* (Plato and Aristotle) and sub-ject (certainty of ego, Descartes).²⁸² Rational animal has now turned into the “technicized animal”²⁸³ and the animal of lived experience, (of the drive to maximize pleasure through seeing) which today “constitutes the basic form of Being human”²⁸⁴. The basic occurrence that gave rise to the historical sway of nihilism, Heidegger repeats times and again, is the collapse of *A-letheia*, of the original experience of truth and temporality (and with this, simultaneously, Being’s abandoning beings, flight of meaning from beings), with Plato and Aristotle, i.e with the beginning of Western tradition. This entails metaphysics (*Seiendheit*) and the transformation of man’s essence (*animal rationale*), the domination of theology and *theoria*. Indeed, theology—*theoria*—*animale rationale*—nihilism are the co-equal moments and aspects (among others) of the circle of the onset (*Anfall*) of Western tradition as the history of Being, as metaphysics.

Theology is thus that quest which seeks to attain the total knowledge of things, which consists in the knowledge of the absolute Being, for which human mind (*nous*) can be a receptive mirror, given that pure actuality and pure truth correspond to one another, and both found in God. “Isness” (*ousia*) of everything there is (ὅν), derives its truth (ontological content) from God, only who truly *is* (actual). For Heidegger, the unity of Being, or Being (ὅν) as one (Ev), ultimately *energeia* (as *theos*) and the multiplicity of Being (*categoria*, *to on legetai pollochos*) is a central aspect of Aristotle, and, thus, of all metaphysics, which he calls the twofoldness of Being. Multiplicity of Being is to be thought through the unity of analogy, a unity provided by the *energeia* of *theos*. Hence, analogically unified senses of Being through *one* focal meaning of Being.²⁸⁵ Analogy of Being has been the attempt to bind together essence and existence in the one supreme entity, which becomes the basic premise, say, the building block of medieval Muslim (Avicenna) and Christian (St Thomas) metaphysics. However here at this supremely onto-theological moment, the whole nucleus of metaphysical Being-blindness is established. Heidegger writes:

The analogy of Being—this designation is not a solution to the Being question, indeed not even an actual posing of the question, but the title for the most stringent

²⁸² See, *BQP*, 122-130.

²⁸³ *CP*, 68.

²⁸⁴ *BQP*, 129.

²⁸⁵ *Metaphysics* 4.2 (1003a33-35): “There are many senses in which a thing may be said to ‘be’ (*pollachos legetai*), but all that ‘is’ is related to one central point (*pros hen*), one definite kind of thing, and is not said to ‘be’ by a mere ambiguity. Everything which is healthy is related to health... and that which is medical is relative to one thing being called medical.” *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

aporia, the impasse in which ancient philosophy, and along with it all subsequent philosophy right up to today, is enmeshed.²⁸⁶

As is well-known, analogy of Being has been the basis of a philosophically constructed God in the medieval theological discourse: all entities other than God, that is, everything created, can be predicated of Being only analogically, that is, only in analogy to the completeness of Being, to the purity of actuality found in God (infinite substance, *actus purus*). Hence Being is already presupposed as something explained as the most self-evident, and thereby its question disappeared altogether. Beings (finite substances) actually are so poor in terms of Being, fall so short of Being exemplified in the Being of God that we are forced to take them beings only by way of simile: they are merely “pathetic creatures”, in the shadow of the supreme Being, of no import, consequence or value of themselves. Then this world of entities is a world basically without Being and meaning, indeed a despicable, poor place which one needs only to endure, and from which one should aver as far as possible, a place of necessary suffering where the believer waits to be saved by divine favor and is taken accordingly to the other (real) world, to the non-temporal world of the divine Being (heaven); thus it is a place where man is “the pilgrim on earth”²⁸⁷, does not really dwell. If Being is an entity (a supreme entity), then Being as *itself* has no place in theology (as the center of metaphysics), that is, it counts actually for nothing in the sense of “extreme triviality”. According to Heidegger, when Being counts for nothing, with beings too there is nothing at all. Thus, as hinted at above, with theological way of thinking, entities become poor and cheap things (“creatures”), cut off from their (belonging to) Being, from their essence. In this way, we think entities as entities (i.e in their neutralness, objectiveness, *Vorhandenheit*, emptiness), not as entities of Being, not in terms of Being, this is because we do not think Being as itself in an explicit/ appropriate(d) manner. Accordingly, if we think entities as entities, an empty understanding of Being, necessarily, guides our thinking and we take beings, at the deepest level, as “intrinsically” empty (neutral, objective, self-evident, usual).

It is this emptiness of *Seiendheit* which nourishes the ever growing sway of nihilism in our lives, in an uncanny disguisedness. This disguisedness of nihilism originates from the obviousness and self-evidence of the perspective of *Seiendheit*, as resting on onto-theology i.e on the dissociatability of *Washeit* (κοινον, τί ἐστιν) and *das Seiendste* (τιμιώτατον ὄν, τεός), which goes unquestioned in the history of Being. For it to be questionable for us, instead of obvious, we have to come to a position to think of it not as a universal and fixed

²⁸⁶ *AM*, 38.

²⁸⁷ *M*, 141.

condition, but as “having its origin in a certain particular beginning”²⁸⁸ i.e in Plato and Aristotle. Hence Being-historical thinking, i.e thinking through the metaphysical articulations of Being, is essential for the attempt to step beyond nihilism, for “only if we devote ourselves, by way of thinking, to the already-thought, only then what-is-to-be-thought-yet become manifest to us”²⁸⁹, we could look ahead towards the other beginning.

Consequently, we conclude that theology is truly nihilistic. Nevertheless, as indicated in the outset of this chapter, religious experience can be a very authentic one. In some texts that date back to the early 1920s²⁹⁰ Heidegger takes pains to provide a phenomenological interpretation of religious experience. In these texts, one can observe the early form of Heidegger’s hostility towards theory (as well as the root-forms of many of his key notions such as *Zeitlichkeit*, *Welt*, *Ereignis*, *Geschichlichkeit*, *Augenblicke*, *Sorge*). Here, we also see some sort of deep religious motivation behind Heidegger’s thinking. In one of these texts, “The First Letter to the Tssalonicans”, Heidegger shows that the early Christian religious experience was far away from any traces of metaphysics and theory, for it turned on a primordial/ authentic relation to time. The early Christians in Anatolia guided by Paul found themselves in a terror of the imminence of the day of God. But Paul reminds and consoles them: “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.”²⁹¹ The day of God is uncertain and imminent, but in its radical uncertainty it needs to be “waited” with an awakened awareness. For Heidegger, this “anticipatory alertness” for the moment (*kairos*) gives the true essence of time (*khronos*) as that occurrence of the single perspective which enables the Christian to experience the divine in its nearness and which discloses to the Christian its own situation in emergency.

This temporal disclosure is not a disclosure of time which characterizes *theoria* (metaphysics), i.e not an objectively given time (chronological time). Here it is not a matter of the knowledge of entities (e.g, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God”²⁹²), but an understanding, a type of knowledge which all of us have, which constitutes our humanity, and which needs to be remembered /appropriated / explicated, and which is known better than all knowledge of entities. In the words of Paul, “For yourselves know perfectly”²⁹³. In this sense, the early Christian religiosity lives temporality and is an enactment of temporality, whereas in everydayness we are cut off from this true experience

²⁸⁸ *BQP*, 121.

²⁸⁹ “Erst wenn wir denkend dem schon Gedachten zuwenden (im Schritt zurück), werden wir verwendet für das noch (erst) zu Denkende.” “Identität und Differenz” in *ID*, 50.

²⁹⁰ See, especially, *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond*, ed. J. Van Buren (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006) and *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. J. Van Buren (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).

²⁹¹ “The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians”, 5:4, *The King James Bible*.

²⁹² “The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians”, 3:19.

²⁹³ “The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians”, 5:2.

of time and thus sunk into inauthentic lives. Consequently, early Christianity as an enactment of temporality is determined by an authentic understanding of Being which underlies authentic disclosures of Being/ meaning in human life. In the early stage, God was not yet put to the Procrustean bed of theology, not yet roped into the steel net of theory. Theory is governed, from beginning to end, by a disclosure of time as an ever-lasting present (eternal now/ *aei on/ nunc stans*) and this gives rise to its understanding and interpreting Being as ever-lasting presence (*Beständige Anwesenheit, Anwesenung*). So, theory is the perspective of the present as an absolutization of the present, and as such, the death of temporality, and concomitantly, the death of God in its true essence i.e the way it has been experienced by any pre-theological religiosity.

This brings us to the central problem, i.e to the way Being itself, truth and temporality belong to the same essence. Heidegger always refers to metaphysics and nihilism as a collapse and loss of “the ground of this essential belonging-togetherness” that is *Da-Sein*. As we indicated in each of our four general points elucidated above (that is, the four moments of nihilism as rooted in onto-theology: the loss of ontological difference, absolutism of theology, theology as technology, and theology as humanism), metaphysics destroys the space of Being itself, i.e its “own” truth and temporality as bound up with one another. Nihilism corresponds to this destruction, and the bleak void such destruction brings together, as the area (*Lichtung*) nihilism shows itself, has its historical movement. Nihilism/ metaphysics means both such initial destruction itself (Plato and Aristotle) and the historical movement such destruction of truth and temporality leads to, and becomes in the end a complete one. Nihilism means the gap between truth and temporality that such destruction brings about, a gap which separates them from each other by an infinite distance. Heidegger’s purpose then, in so far as we have to leap outside the historical plateau of nihilism into the historical realm of *Ereignis*, is to re-trieve truth and temporality in their primordial identity.

In this context, obviously, one striking feature of Heidegger’s thought is its radical insistence on the intimate bond between time (temporality) and truth (*A-letheia, Wahrheit*): there is no truth without time. This is, we know, directly set against the classical discourse of Western tradition (from Plato on): truth excludes time. The pure emergence of time, i.e as finitude and temporality, is the moment of the emergence of truth in its essence, i.e truth as truth, as the truth of Being. The more one is captivated by the present, the more one gets away from one’s human essence as a radically temporal site, as an openness for the disclosure of Being.

Heidegger writes: “*Sein* als solches ist demnach unverborgen aus Zeit. So verweist Zeit auf die Unverborgenheit, d.h die Wahrheit von *Sein*”²⁹⁴. “Die Frage nach dem Wesen der Wahrheit ist die Frage nach dem *Sein* selbst.”²⁹⁵

In all the moments of Greek philosophy, from Anaximander to Aristotle, Being is always thought from the perspective of time (and this, out of a transcendental necessity which lies in the constitution of Dasein as basically a temporal space), but time, while serving as the horizon of thinking, and thus as something which determines the whole thinking, has remained unquestioned. The point then is to think of the truth of time, before taking time for granted. The truth of time is given to us in “temporality”, finitude in which an anticipation of the end suffuses through our relation to time, and radically condenses it. An appropriated temporality (i.e *Eigentlichkeit*) alone is able to enable a crystallization and purification of what is “ownmost” to Being human, of human essence as an open site for the un-concealment of Being. True and pure sense of time emerges in the ultimate risk in which one may find oneself. Early Christians had experienced things in the light of this ultimate risk, the coming of the day of God at an indefinite but imminent moment (*kairos*). Hence, this piety has achieved something which *theoria* could never have achieved, that is, human essence (Dasein) as an *Augenblicksstätte* (moment site) for the happening of Being/meaning.

Why has this been forgotten in medieval Christianity? Because of a theoretical determination of god (i.e theology) which increasingly dominated the self-understanding of later Christian experience. Moreover, it has been a further stage of the unfoldment (*Entfaltung*) of metaphysics, therefore a more qualified expression of nihilism than the previous (Greek) one. From the foregoing discussion, we know that nihilism prevails there where Being as such is not appropriate(d) as a question, where Being as such remains unthought, excluded, trivialised, i.e absent. Instead, entities alone become determinative for thinking, and this on the basis of the highest entity, i.e the metaphysically/ theoretically understood God, which, as *ens communis*, also in a special way grounds the whatness (*essentia*) of entities. It follows that the supremacy of entities is both established and secured through the authority of god. Salvation (faith) now becomes a matter of certainty (*certitudo*), something to be guaranteed, by a full adherence to the dogmas, an adherence which allows no room for questions, queries and doubts. Religious experience which is essentially not something propositional becomes bound (and deadened) by dogmatism as a set of rigid propositions demanding unconditional acceptance (mental internalization). Dogmatism (i.e

²⁹⁴ “Einleitung zur ‘Was ist Metaphysik?’”, in *WM*, 376: “*Being* as such is hence unconcealed through time. Time thus points towards unconcealedness, i.e the truth of (and about) *Being*.” (translation mine)

²⁹⁵ *MN*, 259: “The question concerning the essence of truth is the question concerning Being itself.”

faith as *certitudo*) is actually a direct outcome of the collapse of *A-letheia*. It presupposes truth (and thus Being as well) as something in the possession of intellect, as constantly present to mental determination (re-presentation), as enclosed and taken over in and by intellect once and for all. Dogmatism and a preoccupation with the other-worldly salvation are twin and inseparable outcomes of the theoretical determination of the Christian god.

Conversely, thinking of Being, a thinking which does not furnish mere propositions but attempts to experience Being itself, avoids drawing conclusions or generalizations and stands open to the happening of *A-letheia* as a transformative event for thinking. This means that such thinking needs to remain in each case “open-ended”. This open-endedness is the only field in which thinking can preserve its essence. It can be interpreted as the field of fundamental questioning (i.e. Being-drawn questioning). Now, faith as dogmatism closes up all the field in which thinking can move. Heidegger therefore in many occasions states that there is no room for faith in the realm of thinking, and vice versa. Once dogmatism (i.e. exclusion of the question of Being) invades the field of thinking, from here it can easily move to the modern subjectivistic (secular) obsession with one’s beliefs: “one believes in one’s beliefs (extreme nihilism)”²⁹⁶. Consequently, nihilism is the non-essence (*Unwesen*) of Being to the same extent it is the non-essence of thinking. It is, in this sense, the manifold of the loss of essence: the non-essence of Being, of truth and temporality, of thinking, of human being (*Dasein*), of entities and of God. Heidegger once calls nihilism “the event of the dwindling away of all import from all things, the fact of the missing of essence”²⁹⁷.

To balance out. With the view of *ta agathon*, the highest idea, (the idea of ideas, the idea of Good) as “the origin, i.e the original source (*Ur-sache*) of all things, and their thingness (*Sachheit*)”²⁹⁸ in Plato, and with its radicalisation in Aristotle, theology as the pinnacle of all his system, metaphysics decisively establishes itself as a way of thinking that depends on an understanding of Being as *bestaendiges Anwesenheit* and correlatively on an understanding of human essence as *rationality* as a characterization of a certain form of *animalitas*. Thus supreme entity primarily functions as the basis of metaphysical picture of reality as *bestaendiges Anwesenheit* and complete intelligibility perfectly suited to rational accessibility and elaboration of Beings. The supreme entity then appears to be the principle of intelligibility of (and that means human mastery over) Beings, and nothing authentically divine. Here becomes five strictly interrelated aspects of metaphysical thinking (let’s say, the

²⁹⁶ *MN*, 166.

²⁹⁷ Martin Heidegger. *Nietzsche*, Erster Band, 1. Auflage (Pfullingen:Neske, 1961), p. 421. Heidegger’s sentence: “Der Nihilismus ist das Ereignis der Schwindens aller Gewichte aus allen Dingen, die Tatsache des Fehlens des Schwergewichtes”. I here translated *Gewichte* as import (as more suitable to the context, than weight). Accordingly, *Schwergewichte* better makes sense as central import, or essence, in a broader sense.

²⁹⁸ “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”, in *PM*, 176.

basic structure of metaphysics) concrete and its root Heidegger identifies as onto-theology. That is: (1) time as the perspective of “the present”, pretty much like a drop from eternity (2) Being as “everlasting present-ness” (*bestaendiges Anwesen*), (3) man as “*zoon legon echon, animal rationale*” who re-presents what is present, that is, *Seiende im Ganze* as *Anwesenheit* (4) truth as “the correctness of re-presentation” and (5) thinking as (disengaged) “seeing”, *theoria* or representation.

Indeed, *theos* has place in this picture only as a sort of human self-projection, as the infinitely distant human being, not the Holy (the divine God, the last God, Hölderlin’s *das Heilige*) to whom one can bow and pray, and which can “heal, whole and light” (*heilen*) human beings. Heidegger’s authentically divine God is Hölderlin’s poetic God, the Holy (*das Heilige*) which Heidegger in “Remembrance of the Poet”²⁹⁹, for instance, associates with the truth of Being (i.e. *Un-verborgenheit*, A-letheia). It is not the God of Christian theology, that is, of metaphysics in which it “is debased into an object of proofs”³⁰⁰, has gone dead for long, even long before Nietzsche. It is the last God, God of the other beginning. It is “the totally other over against gods who have been, especially over against the Christian God”³⁰¹. If “only a God can still save us”³⁰², it would be the only possible God, the divine God (*göttliche Gott*), the holy (*das Heilige*). This God remains in question, and this is most proper for its nearness to us, since the highest nearness that can be achieved is a nearness in thinking, and thinking is most alive as “questioning, (which) is the piety of thinking”³⁰³. Indeed, how else could piety be imagined other than residing in thinking, given that man’s essence is thinking? If piety is essentially the piety of thinking, then questioning is the highest way of addressing the divine. This emphasis on questioning, really as the question of Being, implies that only in questioning an appropriate(d) openness or space to the divine can be cleared. Then, we should cultivate the question of Being as the uniquely authentic ground for the blossoming of thinking as a thinking of Being. Taking up the question of Being involves adopting a “thoughtful openness to the mystery of Being” that acknowledges the truth of Being as A-letheia, as temporal interplay of concealing-unconcealing interplay of Being and thus making way for its “essential happening” (*wesen*), Ereignis, which is the stillest step onto the other beginning, outside nihilism. Consequently, salvation from the historical sway of nihilism rests on a question alone, on the question of Being, on whether we stand in the openness of that question or not, because, as far as human responsibility is

²⁹⁹ “Remembrance of the Poet”, in *Existence and Being*, ed. W. Brock, (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery, 1949).

³⁰⁰ NIV, 26.

³⁰¹ CP, 283.

³⁰² “Only a God can save us”, Heidegger’s *Der Spiegel* Interview (1966), in HC, 107.

³⁰³ “Das Fragen ist die Frömmigkeit des Denkens”, see “Die Frage nach der Technik”, in VA, 36: BW, 317.

concerned, achieving to raise the question of Being is actually the only essential thing, even more essential than any answer which can be stated in clarity, for its answer is not a proposition at all, but Being itself as Ereignis of the other beginning.

CHAPTER 6

NIETZSCHE: FULFILLED NIHILISM

Heidegger writes that his investigations into Nietzsche, which he takes up in his Nietzsche lectures delivered from 1935 to 1945, have a character of confrontation, and actually a confrontation with nihilism.³⁰⁴ Hence the basic premise of Heidegger's attack on Nietzsche is the claim that "Nietzsche's metaphysics is nihilism proper"³⁰⁵, a "consummated nihilism" as the actuality (hence "the normal condition") of our modern "epoch", a claim which is rather provocative on account of the fact that Nietzsche himself sees his own philosophical mission as one of destroying and overcoming nihilism, which he, just like Heidegger, identifies as operative at the core of the Western tradition. Here, of course, we cannot address the question whether Nietzsche's whole thought is actually an extreme nihilism or not: it lies beyond the scope of our topic. Rather, the task of this chapter is to critically examine Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche as fulfilled nihilism. Heidegger believes that this confrontation (*Aus-ein-ander-setzung*) with Nietzsche reveals the "ultimacy" of Nietzsche's experience for the historical movement of the West, i.e. for nihilism. It should provide us a "thoughtful knowing ... (of) in what moment of the hidden history of the West we stand"³⁰⁶, that is, a thoughtful knowing of nihilism which has been growing throughout the epochs of metaphysics, the whole history of Being, and which finds its mouthpiece, speaks aloud its truth in Nietzsche's metaphysics. Hence, it is at bottom a "confrontation" with the whole history of metaphysical tradition, and with its future, a confrontation which must be conceived as "a meditation on the truth which is up for decision"³⁰⁷, and not a polemic or vain critique.

Accordingly, let us first analyze the basic elements of this ultimate expression of nihilism which Heidegger finds in Nietzsche's position. This should, apparently, provide us with a decisive characterization of what Heidegger understands as the real essence of nihilism. For this reason, this chapter is the *locus crucis*, the most critical part of our whole attempt concerning Heidegger's interpretation of nihilism. The following sixth (last) chapter, "the nihilism of technology", is just a natural and easy step, as Heidegger understands it,

³⁰⁴ See, "Letter to the Rector of Freiburg University", in *HC*, 65.

³⁰⁵ *NI*, 202, 203.

³⁰⁶ *NI*, 10.

³⁰⁷ *NI*, 59.

from Nietzsche's "will to power" to machination, (i.e from *Macht* to *Machenschaft*) where machination is viewed "as the fulfillment of the essence of power"³⁰⁸: technology has all its ontological character fully revealed in the Nietzschean experience of Being. Metaphysics grounds an age, and Nietzsche's "grounds" our technological age (which is not to be confused with "causing"). This also implies that Nietzsche has crucial significance to fully make sense of the modern technological world. Nietzsche, in this sense, looks ahead into the very ending of history of Being, "(which) *lasts* longer than all history of metaphysics hitherto"³⁰⁹, but cannot think into the other beginning, the leap outside metaphysics/nihilism, into the truth of Being itself, a leap in the sense of *Er-eignis* (which, Heidegger holds, the futural thinking of Hölderlin's poetry achieves).

Consequently, the matter at stake, as far as Heidegger's Nietzsche interpretation is concerned, is the possibility of overcoming nihilism. In this context, as we have already indicated, Heidegger suggests that in order to overcome nihilism, we first need to have an adequate understanding and experience of nihilism itself. To experience nihilism in its true essence involves first to experience Being *itself* and the way in which Being becomes (as) nothing, a triviality, and is accordingly excluded from an appropriate(d) and explicit concern of thinking, the way in which both the question of Being and the question of nothing (as questions belonging together) has been forgotten and humanity sunk into a mindless engagement with beings. Now, in Nietzsche such forgetfulness reaches a pure and definitive moment, and as pointed out, Being becomes (as) nothing, happens non-essentially, i.e in its default. Therefore, from Heidegger's perspective, to overcome nihilism requires a thoughtful knowing, a full grasp of Nietzsche's whole metaphysical experience, which, thus, means metaphysics *par excellence*, a knowing possible only through sustaining and unfolding the question of Being in each step of inquiry. The question of Being, that is, Being as *the* question itself, we shall, in turn, argue, for Heidegger, is the unique key to an authentic relation to Being, which can bring a crossing beyond nihilism, provided that it is radically posed and fully developed.

But meanwhile let us note that the theme of overcoming metaphysics and nihilism undergoes a subtle twist towards the end of the war (!), together with the disappearance of reference to *Ereignis* (and the other beginning) as a global-futural happening.³¹⁰ The issue of

³⁰⁸ *MN*, 94 and 150.

³⁰⁹ "Die Verendung *dauert* länger als die bisherige Geschichte der Metaphysik". "Überwindung der Metaphysik", in *VA*, 69.

³¹⁰ Eventually in the article "Zeit und Sein" (1962), *Ereignis* is interpreted as a happening which seems to deal with personal transformation. However nothing proves that Heidegger abandoned the notions of *Ereignis* and the other beginning as they are developed in the *Contributions*. At best we can say that they lose prominence, and perhaps withdraw, in a special sense, into background, given that Heidegger shows a keen interest for the publication of the *Contributions* posthumously, and sees it as the most important statement of his thinking after *Being & Time*.

overcoming will be briefly examined in the due course of this chapter. For the moment, let it suffice to indicate that Heidegger comes to see the very desire of “overcoming” as part of metaphysical “will drive”, a drive of getting supremacy and taking under control. No willful enterprise (including this drive of overcoming) can save us from nihilism, which itself grows out of the supremacy of will which does not allow Being be as *itself*, i.e happen essentially (*west*). Nihilism precisely means that world-historical phenomenon (the Western history as a whole) in which Being happens in its default. To confront nihilism then means to confront Being in its default, in its non-essencing. Thus, we cannot overcome nihilism since such an attempt is proper neither to the essence of Being nor to the human essence, but there are ways we may let it fall away.

Then, let me first present the basics of Nietzsche’s position in a nutshell, which is to provide us a general picture of Heidegger’s Nietzsche, in the rough terms. Nietzsche says that “the highest values have devaluated themselves”. What are these highest values? They are the Platonic “ideas” which, as ethical ideals, have determined Christian morality (For Nietzsche, actually the latter was the vulgarised form of the former). Platonism asserts that “values” originate from the “supersensuous reality”, the true world (later, the transcendent God of Christianity). But, historically, that means with the rise of modern scientific worldview, it proved to be clearly evident that supersensuous reality was merely an illusion, indeed a nothing, and sensible (earthly, sensuous, material) things are all there is. Accordingly, because the transcendent source was not really “real”, but fictitious, (that is, man’s own creation, and as such, the expression of a stunted power drive), these values have increasingly lost ground in the face of “life” and become inevitably “devalued” (the death of God). Therefore, a morality as a system of values based on such supersensuous source, i.e on that which is not the case at all, on “nihil”, turns out to be a “nihilism” (passive nihilism, something poisonous to life, representing the decline and recession of the power of spirit). Supersensuality, the Platonic/ Christian reality with all its religious and moral ramifications, was a lie, while sensuality (“the earth”), accordingly, is the only truth, the only real world, animality Being its highest expression as the expression of all vitality. Western history in this sense is a history of a vital error: “How the true world finally became a fable. History of an error.”³¹¹ Hence, such passive nihilism needs to be actively destroyed: these devaluing values must be revalued in an attempt to create totally new ones (*Umwerten alle Werte*) that will serve to encourage and promote the defining instinct of life, will to power, essential for the self-creation and -maintenance of *Übermensch* (active nihilism). What is central to

³¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Twilight of the Idols; or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, trans. Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 20.

Nietzsche's stance is "the rejection of moral view of the world"³¹² and upholding power as the only principle of creating norms and values. Power as will to power (*Wille zur Macht*) exerts itself on the world which then corresponds to the eternally recurring possibilities for power (*Ewige Wiederkehr des Selbes*).

Nietzsche's active nihilism is resolved to remain loyal to the "earth", thus surmounting the degeneration of the West, its cultural disease (Platonism), through the norms belonging to and springing from the earth, not as standing over and above it, like Plato's ideas. With Plato, the Western culture has "made a sickness into a wisdom"³¹³, namely the decisive equation, reason=virtue=happiness. What is wrong with this Platonic (Socratic) formula, reason=virtue=happiness³¹⁴? The answer: it promises happiness by subliming reason as the basis of virtues. Socrates seduced the Athenian nobles with this formula for happiness, Nietzsche intimates. Nietzsche's alternative path to happiness exploits the leitmotif, the value of life. The question is apt: how does Nietzsche conceive of life so that one can understand its value in the proper way? For Nietzsche, life means instinct, really 'animal instincts'. Indeed, Heidegger takes it that for Nietzsche, life is basically 'animality' (as the duality of the senses of this Latin word already implies, i.e. animals and the sphere of life). Heidegger expressly notes: "In Nietzsche's metaphysics, *animalitas* is taken as the guide"³¹⁵. If life is instinct and animality, man is to seek to realize and satisfy his animal instincts. How? The way one lives one's essence is for Nietzsche characterised by a certain urge, which he calls 'will to power'. Whoever fully recognizes, cultivates and gives full rein to this "ultimate *factum*"³¹⁶ of life is the highest specimen of mankind, the single meaning of earth, namely *Übermensch* (Overman). Then Nietzsche's alternative formula, I maintain, would be something like this: instinct=power=happiness. And Nietzsche in the 11th barb of *Twilight of the Idols*, comes to say: "happiness equals instinct"³¹⁷. The contrary, namely the whole Western tradition- from Socrates onwards, Christian morality included- is sickness, decadence, negating life and thereby negating the possibilities of happiness. Now, values (all norms of life) must be let determined by nothing other than life itself, which is to say, they must be functions of maintaining and promoting instincts as "pure" manifestations of life. The fundamental instinct is the maintenance, preservation and expansion of vitality (much like Spinoza's *conatus*), which entails a

³¹² Herman Philipse. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 280.

³¹³ *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 11.

³¹⁴ *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 12.

³¹⁵ *N IV*, 147.

³¹⁶ *N IV*, 73.

³¹⁷ *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 15.

constant war³¹⁸ in nature against the hostile environment (a sort of Darwinism), a war which is necessary to purify instincts/ vitality. As indicated, this most fundamental instinct Nietzsche calls “will to power”. Hence, values as functions of “value of life” embodied in “will to power”.

To return to Heidegger’s critique of Nietzsche as fulfilled nihilism, as the final moment of a long tradition. Obviously, Nietzsche’s is a value-thinking, and Heidegger stresses this as its essential trait. Nietzsche would admit this, but what Nietzsche could not ever admit is Heidegger’s very charge that this value thinking amounts to the consummation of metaphysics (i.e a culmination of Platonism), and thereby to nihilism proper.³¹⁹ Whereas Nietzsche considers value-thinking (“revaluation of all values”) as an antidote to (passive) nihilism and metaphysics, Heidegger holds that it is precisely their highest form. “With revaluation of all values, metaphysics begins to be a value thinking”³²⁰ in that it involves “a rethinking of all determinations of the Being on the basis of values”³²¹: Being, as the Being of beings, becomes the source of all values, what makes all revaluation possible, namely will in the purest (which is will to power). For such revaluation, it is imperative that an elementarism (an earthly, sensual framework) must be the decisive basis, given that no transcendent parameter can function as guide any longer. Nietzsche seems to assume that doing away with all transcendence (the supersensual world) in the sense of reversal (*Umkehrung*) is simply enough to get rid of metaphysics and nihilism. From Heidegger’s perspective, a reversal of metaphysics does not (and cannot) amount to an overcoming, since every reversal is done against the background of what it intends to reverse so that such background provides the ground for the movement of reversal. Hence any reversal of metaphysics remains determined by that in respect of which reversal is done, i.e by metaphysics itself. This means that from within metaphysics, metaphysics can never be overcome, since: “metaphysical representations of metaphysics remain necessarily far behind this essence (of metaphysics). Metaphysics from within metaphysics can in no way reach its essence.”³²² In fine, to metaphysics its essence remains concealed.

We, however, observe that Heidegger and Nietzsche are at one in considering

³¹⁸ In that sense of war which Clausewitz, in the very first page of his reputed book, *On War*, defines it: “War is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will.”

³¹⁹ Let us note that Heidegger focuses on Nietzsche’s last work, *Will to Power*, which is actually not a complete work, but a heap of Nietzsche’s latest notes posthumously brought together first by his elder sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche and re-edited in the 1930s by some Nazi ideologues such as A. Baumler. At any rate, it remains controversial with regard to its editorial quality. The problem is that Heidegger sees it as the most mature expression of Nietzsche’s philosophical thinking. For a critique, see Bernard Reginster’s *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 16-20.

³²⁰ *N IV*, 6.

³²¹ *N IV*, 70.

³²² *MN*, 211. And therefore, “die Umkehrung eines metaphysischen Satzes bleibt ein metaphysischer Satz”, “Brief Über den Humanismus” in *WM*, 328.

metaphysics and nihilism to be synonymous phenomena. It might be right, but trivial, that Heidegger has taken this idea of the identity of metaphysics and nihilism, from Nietzsche (trivial in that we know quite well that Heidegger's interpretation of both issues as well as their "identity" is radically different not only from Nietzsche, but from all previous philosophy as well). For both Nietzsche and Heidegger, metaphysics represents the proper essence of nihilism. In this sense, both thinkers find the origin of nihilism in Plato and take nihilism as "the hidden basic law of history"³²³. But they interpret this origin in markedly different ways. For Nietzsche, this refers to Plato's formulation of transcendent reality as the ground and source of moral values. For Heidegger, on the other hand, this refers to Plato's rupture from the original sense of truth (*aletheia*), that is, "unconcealedness" and making truth a matter of correctness of statements based on "correct seeing", thereby on the human thinking, and human being; the result is a purely man-centred thinking (subjectivism and humanism), i.e metaphysics, in which there could be no place for Being in its truth. Metaphysics, from its first moment up to the end, is conditioned by an entity-based projection of Being (*Seiendheit*), by a (un)thinking of Being from out of entities, that is, remains nihilism proper: Plato is the beginning of which Nietzsche is the end. This suggests that while "the essence of nihilism is merely concealed in the former, it comes completely to appearance in the latter"³²⁴, in Nietzsche's value thinking (as unthinking of Being). Heidegger writes:

Oblivious of Being and its own truth, Western thinking since its beginning has constantly thought beings as such. During that time, it has thought Being only in the kind of truth that verbalizes the name "Being" rather awkwardly and also ambiguously, since the multiplicity of its meaning is not known by experience. This thinking that has remained oblivious of Being itself is the simple and all-bearing (and for that reason enigmatic and unexperienced) event of Western history, which meanwhile was about to expand itself into world-history. In the end, Being has sunk down to a value in metaphysics. This shows that Being is not permitted as Being. What does that mean? ... What is going on with Being? With Being nothing is going on...³²⁵

In its fulfilled stage (Nietzsche), with "Being's having sunk down to a value" for thinking, metaphysics has reached the full vacuity of its essence, its all possibilities have been exhausted. Hence, "with Being nothing (*nihil*) is going on", "there is nothing to Being itself" (which are expressions to characterize nihilism and which occur so many times in

³²³ *NI*, 27.

³²⁴ *NI*, 205.

³²⁵ "Nietzsche's Word 'God is Dead'", in *OBT*, 193.

Heidegger's writings, and most frequently in voluminous Nietzsche lectures). That is, the most high, Being itself, has become (as) nothing for us, a triviality, "a vapor and a fallacy"³²⁶, "an empty fiction"³²⁷. Our thinking has no more any such concern as Being. Unbeing (*Unwesen*) of Being in the present age has been perfectly actual with Nietzsche's unthinking of Being, with the determination of Being in terms of value thinking.

For Heidegger, all value thinking (*Wertdenken*), including Nietzsche's sort as an absolute revaluation, is inherently nihilistic. Therefore, the centre of Nietzschean nihilism must be sought in this valuative thinking as based on the positing act of an unconditional will. It is first in Nietzsche that value-thinking becomes a purely independent moment as the source of an absolute revaluation of all prior values. It is in this sense the peak of the subjectivism and humanism of metaphysics initiated by Plato. Heidegger's account hints that Nietzsche's whole metaphysics rests on three interconnected moments: (1) absolutize value-thinking, (2) absolutize man-centred view of reality, (3) take man in the most elementary sense, as a biological/ animal mechanism determined by instinctuality/ will, as "a fixated animal"³²⁸. The interconnectedness may be shown this way. A value is in each case a creation of human experience driven by power impulse (just like an artwork that an artist creates), not something objectively present there like a mathematical equation or a piece of wood: It must be posited/ created. If such positing is an absolute one, one that overthrows all already-existing values and standards, it requires human being as an absolute subject of value creation. Man as the ultimate subject of value creation could not take anything other than itself as the standard of such positing. Otherwise, man's centrality is not genuine: man would turn something secondary to and dependent on a standard "beyond" itself, which is simply metaphysics (Platonism). Then such standard must first remove all extra-human criteria (i.e all metaphysical residues of the tradition) from consideration, and take itself in its thus "naked", most elementary reality, i.e as sheer animality having will to life.

What is nihilistic with value-thinking? Nietzsche himself treats nihilism in terms of a history of degenerate values, a history in which all uppermost values have become valueless, and thus meaningless, valuelessness and meaninglessness being equivalent. But they were already baseless, because they rested on negating man's highest instincts. This fact now only becomes fully recognized. He accordingly demands a radical revaluation, which first eradicates the extant relics of all metaphysical values (Platonic- Christian values), as a remedy for overcoming nihilism. This revaluation entails a drastic rupture from all previous history by setting a totally different paradigm/ truth (i.e will to power) for making values:

³²⁶ *N IV*, 182, in D. F. Krell's footnote.

³²⁷ *Twilight of the Idols*, 17.

³²⁸ *MN*, 102-103. "Fest-gestellte Tier", an expression frequently occurring in *Metaphysik und Nihilismus*, in all of the Nietzsche lectures, and in *Zur Ernst Jünger*.

“with the downfall of the highest values also comes the elimination of the above, and the high and the beyond.”³²⁹ This reversal (*Umkehrung*), Heidegger thinks, results from the fact that all possibilities of metaphysics have been experienced in the history of Being, and therefore completely consumed. The only option which is left to Nietzsche, the last essential thinker of metaphysics, is a total reversal of metaphysics itself with which metaphysics, as a thinking of Being through the truth of beings, says its intrinsic and definitive, and therefore “ultimate”, word about Being, its utter nothingness (i.e its Being a mere “value”, a condition and function, for will to power). All this implies that according to Heidegger when Nietzsche is attempting to formulate a remedy for nihilism, this attempt itself falls prey to nihilism and becomes its darkest and extreme form. This is because Nietzsche’s thinking is metaphysically determined, and especially so when it is an attempt at the reversal of metaphysics. Nietzsche’s thinking is metaphysically determined because Nietzsche has been unable to come to think and experience the essence of metaphysics which first requires a developed question about *nihil* itself (which Nietzsche omits as futile) that cannot be carried out by thing-oriented ways of thinking (metaphysics). Put it differently, Nietzsche while attacking on a passive nihilism and propagating an active nihilism (or with its other names, “classical, extreme, ecstatic nihilism”³³⁰), never orients to the experience and question of *nihil* at the heart of all nihilism.³³¹ Failing to step outside metaphysics, the historical movement and basis of the West, Nietzsche’s thinking has become its completion as fulfilled nihilism, i.e “thought metaphysics to its conclusion”³³².

To fully understand this, we should look more closely at Nietzsche’s valiative thinking. Nietzsche came to such a position, revaluation of all values, that is, to value thinking, to a nihilistic interpretation of Being, on the basis of the metaphysical history itself. Ontologically, i.e Being-historically, Nietzsche’s values (*Werte*) are simply the remote descendants of Aristotle’s categories (*kategoria*). Heidegger believes that categories, in varying forms, are always the basic words of metaphysical experience of Being. In so far as metaphysics thinks entities as entities, and thinks therefore Being necessarily as “entitiness” (*Seiendheit*), it understands Being of beings in terms of “the paradigmatic role of the a priori”³³³, i.e in terms of the generality (*katholou*) of categories as aspects of the entity, as “the ways of addressing the entities as such and as a whole”³³⁴. In Aristotle, these appear as substantial categories, in Kant as subjective categories, and finally in Nietzsche as dynamic-

³²⁹ *N IV*, 49.

³³⁰ *N IV*, 56.

³³¹ See, *N IV*, 21-22.

³³² *N IV*, 22.

³³³ *MN*, 53 and, 87-88; see also, *N IV*, 159-166, and 208.

³³⁴ *N IV*, 40.

psychological³³⁵ categories, that is, as values.³³⁶ As Nietzsche takes it, values are the categories, in the sense of general a priori conditions, an entity is subject to in terms of its potential for “calculative worth”, for techno-cratic utility, to be considered, i.e. to be “e-valuated”³³⁷ by the “perspective” of will to power.

To repeat, in Heidegger’s view, exactly here in this value-based thinking, in this underlying understanding of Being as value lies the nihilism of Nietzsche (and of “the modern epoch”). We need to ask: Can values be ultimate? Can values be the essential parameter of man’s relation to beings as a whole? Can values be the standard of meaning? Can a value become the basis of man’s ultimately serious and binding relatedness/ belonging to Being itself, a relatedness by standing in the open realm of which man is granted his humanity? Can values satisfy this weight of seriousness the essential matter, Being itself, involves? Heidegger answers in the negative: “keiner stirbt für bloße Werte”³³⁸. From 1920s on, Heidegger is deeply antipathetic to the talk of values (associated primarily with Neo-Kantianism and Nietzsche, but pervading in various ways through all of the philosophical discourse of the time, from Neo-Thomism to Scheler and Hartmann). A value-oriented thinking assigns all things of highest importance (including, above all, Being and truth) to human subjectivity, and ultimately, to the whims, requirements and interests of will. Truth, for example, becomes justice, which, as a value, is the expression of the will of the powerful (in Marx, for instance, of the ruling class) in the form of putting the self-serving point of view of the powerful into a normative code. The master sets the truth (justice) as a framework of norms depending on value-estimation these norms entail. Here, value in accordance with its very essence is purely contingent upon the perspective of will to power. Accordingly, it would be posited as something today, and something else tomorrow. Values are the variables, the superficial rules of the intrinsically ruleless game of the power. Hence, a value is essentially and necessarily something derivative.

As a result, as Dreyfus argues, if you can posit value, you can also “unposit” it. A posited value thus can exert no binding authority on us, if it is something entirely contingent on our free creating of it. Value-based thinking drives away all seriousness of Being and

³³⁵ By this connotation, “dynamic-psychological”, I mean this: the adjective, “dynamic”, from Aristotle’s *dynamis*, in its long history, has come to express power and the adjective, “psychological”, from Greek *psukhe*, concerns the logic and mechanic of living drives, as far as Nietzsche is concerned. *Dynamis* is translated in Latin as *potentia*, potency which comes from *posse*, be able, which gives rise to the English word, power. The word, *psukhe* is translated in Latin with the word *anima*, (literally, “having breath”) which above all refers to the sphere of living Being, hence the English word, animal. “Logy” of psychology, too, is quite relevant: the subtle degeneration of *logos* into ratio(nality), a rationality which now means, in Nietzsche, rationality of power maximization. This etymology, as we will see, is crucial both for Heidegger’s and Nietzsche’s motivations.

³³⁶ See, *MN*, 53.

³³⁷ See, *N IV*, 176-177.

³³⁸ “No one dies for mere values.” “Die Zeit des Weltbildes” in *HW*, 102.

meaning from human life. “Thinking about our deepest concerns as values is nihilism”³³⁹. If the act of willing is unconditional in its positing/ creating values, then nothing can prevent it from being a wholly arbitrary positing. What is more, arbitrariness lies in the very logic of power drive which guides in Nietzsche’s case, revaluation of all values. Then depending on the context of power drive, anything can serve the need, be made valuable, and, by the same token, anything could be made valueless, through a sheer act of valuation. This value, in fact, negates itself, so long as it does not question the source (*Wesen*) of all worth.

What is elevated into “value” (e.g “truth” and Being) sinks thus into the deepest nullity, is the value-less, where value, in turn, means the worth of truth of be-ing (*Sein*) as essentially happening be-ing.³⁴⁰

Heidegger observes that Nietzsche’s call for “revaluing all values”, his metaphysics as a metaphysics of will to power, turns out ultimately something “merely moral”³⁴¹, a moral point of view that Nietzsche, “the immoralist”, had rejected in favor of “will to power” which is “beyond good and evil”. True. This morality is simply incomparable to the past moralities, is, quite literally, immoral when compared with them, in that while the latter inhibits man’s greatness, the overman within the man, Nietzsche’s morality wants to liberate the Overman, and, in the ultimate sense, wants to be the expression of his will, his valiative thought. For Heidegger this moral perspective characterizes all metaphysics to the extent that metaphysics rests on the humanization of all Being in the form of the hegemony of will. Such perspective is the unrecognized perspective of “will” the growing assertion of which covers over the essential need (*wesentliche Not*) between man and Being, an essential need to which essential happening of the truth of Being (*Wesung der Wahrheit des Seins*) and of Da-sein belongs. The illusion grows that “Being is without need”³⁴², and the essential need of man is not seen, “the mystery of suffering is covered over”³⁴³ and so are pain, death and love. Nietzsche’s only difference is that he takes the full step, sees what is unseen but inherent in the whole play, recognizes the central but somewhat chained place of will and wants to totally unchain it, make it into the only absolute. When Heidegger argues that Nietzsche represents a completion of the metaphysical picture of reality initiated by Socrates and Plato, he means that Platonic “moral point of view” (man-centred, will-based view of reality) finds its final and radical form in Nietzsche as *Umwerten alle Werte* guided by *Wille zur Macht*.

³³⁹ Hubert Dreyfus. “Heidegger on the Connection between Nihilism, Art, Technology, and Politics.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 293.

³⁴⁰ *MN*, 98.

³⁴¹ *N IV*, 122.

³⁴² *N IV*, 245.

³⁴³ “Why Poets?” in *OBT*, 204.

We have thus seen that for Heidegger nihilism is firmly connected with the unconditional subjectivism of this value thinking (*Wertdenken*). As for the dimension of thinking involved in value thinking, values could only come to be thought as the basic criteria of reality, as the basic items that matter for thinking, only after thinking has been degenerated (*unwesen*) into a calculative thinking. Indeed for Nietzsche values amount, in the final analysis, to the calculative worth or utility entities present from the perspective of the maintenance-enhancement (*Erhaltung-Steigerung*) of power (as “will to power”). Anything can be a value provided that it serves such a function. A value then is a calculative-subjectivistic norm that signifies what is important and functional for the interests of the insatiable power drive, will to power—in short, conditions conditioned from the point of view of will to power. They are conditioned by will to power whose only drive is to get ever more power, to surpass the present stage of power, i.e. to overpower itself, which Heidegger once indicates by writing “Erhaltung-Steigerung” where the hyphen means “the unity of both, no “and””³⁴⁴.

Today, the term “value” enjoys a very pervasive (as well as heedless) employment virtually in all spheres of modern life, and in this popularisation of the concept, Nietzsche, certainly, has a significant role. According to Heidegger, value is a mode of Being (Being-a-value), that is, at bottom, grows out of an understanding and interpreting Being in a certain way, whereby presupposes something about Being. Nevertheless, no thinking about values (from the everyday talk to philosophical reflection) comes to question these ontological assumptions, but takes them for granted. When one uses the word value, usually something of highest importance is meant, but when this is not made the concern of an explicit questioning, the essential (ontological) content of the concept remains in darkness, that is, in disguisedness, where nihilism can grow and seize the control of one’s relation to Being.

In a very condensed passage, Heidegger writes:

The overcoming of metaphysics in its end is overcoming “the revaluation of all values”; whose essence lies especially in the new positing of the natural (“the physiological”) values (as paradigmatic) and in the interpretation of metaphysics hitherto, and metaphysics, above all, as value-positing... the value positing is the extreme devastation (*Verwüstung*) of the essence of truth, whose non-essence (*Unwesen*) has already been misplaced in consciousness and in the representedness of what is objective (certainty and knownness). In this devastation, even truth is recognised as necessary value, and precisely this recognition is the last essential annihilation, and establishment of Being’s abandonment of beings as the chaos of the unconditional will to power. The revaluation, the basis of which is truth newly

³⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger. *Nietzsche: Seminare 1937 und 1944* (GA 87), ed. Peter von Rückteschell (Vittorio-Klostermann: Frankfurt Am Main, 2004), p. 263. Henceforth abbreviated as *Nietzsche* GA 87. All translations from this work are mine.

posited as value, is the extreme nihilism.³⁴⁵

This very crucial passage brings out many key points in Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche and nihilism. First, we have already pointed out in the previous chapters that the most essential sense of nihilism refers to the destruction of truth, of *a-letheia*, i.e. the truth of Being (both subjective and objective genitiv) as un-concealment. Truth comes to be understood as the correctness of representation: once the whole emphasis is placed upon beings, thinking turns into a forgetfulness of the fact that beings *are* thanks to Being, that beings are given i.e. unconcealed to us as such and as a whole, through the happening of Being. Truth is the unconcealment of beings in which unconcealment as such, that is, the happening of Being, conceals itself, in correlation with the fact that Being remains unthought.

Metaphysics is the cultivation of the unconcealment of beings (thus, of the truth of beings) without having any awareness of such un-concealment *itself*. Its nihilism is that it takes such unconcealment of beings as a matter of self-evidence and in terms of constant presence: the meaningful givenness of beings calls for no question, rather the only concern being how to get the knowledge of and the reign over beings already present there. Now, in Nietzsche, truth, in line with the metaphysical tradition, is the truth of beings, makes sense as correctness of representation which rests on the unquestioned presence of entities. It is, as indicated, understood as a mere value, though "a necessary one"³⁴⁶, necessary because it is functional for life, for an unbounded power drive, i.e. "will to power", which is the only meaning that beings express. Truth is a special kind of error we need to make for the cause of "life" (as understood in terms of an elementarism and biologism). Truth, as a value, is a tool, say a hammer (!) in the hand of "will to power", which, like a sculptor, hits, beats and fashions its material/object, the reality (becoming) as a chaos, into Being, that is, a product of will. (We return below to this issue, i.e. the crucial role of perception of truth in the growth of modern nihilism, a process from Descartes to Nietzsche, when we examine the intimate ontological ties between these respective thinkers.)

As a consequence, Heidegger thinks that Nietzsche understands Being (i.e. beings as a whole, the *essentia* of entities, the world) as "will to power" (*Wille zur Macht*). Heidegger comments on a quote from *Will to Power*, Nietzsche's famous and contentious work:

"And do you know, also, what the world is, to me?", he answers "this world: an enormity of force, without beginning, without end, a fixed magnitude of force..."

Nietzsche thinks of the world as the entities as a whole. He finally asks: "do you

³⁴⁵ *MN*, 38.

³⁴⁶ *NI*, 131.

want a name for this world?" He answers: "this world is will to power –and nothing besides! And also you yourself is will to power—and nothing besides!"³⁴⁷

Here the world stands for the basic character of beings, of "what" of the beings which is identified in turn as "will to power". But as we have seen, metaphysics at the same time asks the concomittant question, "how" of the beings. For the latter, Heidegger argues, Nietzsche's answer is the eternal recurrence of the same (*Ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen*). Here in Nietzsche's thought, too, we see the twofold structure of metaphysical thinking, namely "ontotheology". Will to power is the ontological moment (the question concerning beings as such, what-Being, *essentia*, thinking Being in terms of generality) while eternal recurrence of the same is the theological moment (beings as a whole, that-Being, *existentia*, thinking beings in terms of supreme entity), and we know that both moments belong to each other, involve one another. A Nietzschean leitmotif, "god is dead", is not an expression of atheism, but rather of negative theology as the last moment of ontotheology "in which nihilism proper is fulfilled"³⁴⁸. It follows that the corelatedness of the two doctrines (will to power and eternal recurrence of the same) is due to the metaphysical core of Nietzsche's thinking, for, metaphysics, in its whole history, considers "whatness" and "thatness" of beings (i.e beings as such and as a whole) together and simultaneously. To illustrate this, Heidegger refers to a passage from Nietzsche:

To impose upon becoming the character of Being- that is the supreme will to power... That everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of Being: high point of meditation.³⁴⁹

A world of Being is something created, and this is done by will to power in the form of imposing Being upon becoming. Any sort of order (i.e Being), as value, is the creation of will to power, and involves an explicit act of struggle or war against chaos/becoming that refers to the world. Will to power then is the truth, the determinative ground of the world of Being, of all sense of Being as something created. The world of Being as a determination, function and creation of will to power is a world in which all things "recur", there is no beginning and no end, no consequence and no purpose, no emergency and no necessity, other than the sheer imposition of will to power as truth / value creating power which is driven to ground/ secure itself as absolute tyranny over against everything by way of seeking ever more power at its disposal. This leads to an unbounded ego-centricism, which is, for

³⁴⁷ *MN*, 198.

³⁴⁸ *N IV*, 210.

³⁴⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, section 617. Quoted in Hans Sluga, "Heidegger's Nietzsche", in *Blackwell Companion to Heidegger*, ed. H. Dreyfus and M. Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 112.

Heidegger, the final form Aristotelian *animal rationale* and Cartesian sub-ject have reached. If the basic character of beings as a whole (*essentia*) is will to power, this means that beings appear and make sense to humanity in the key of power drive, as possible objects of power imposition and extraction. Power is such a thing that any power can survive, remain powerful only by incessantly enhancing itself, by overpowering itself and others. Therefore, the essence of power is overpowering.³⁵⁰ There can be no rest, no limit, no measure, no end for power. In this sense, a frantic race on earth for power, for domination over earth, for plundering and thus devastating all entities is not only inevitable, but would get more and more destructive (destructive for earth, for humans, and for Being: a war without any winner) when it got a fully technological character in a due course. Here is no place, of course, to draw out the full implications of this account for a possible critique of “capitalism” from a different (ontological) angle, which, one might well suggest, would reveal Marx’ analysis a bit superficial.

“Will to power” is the essence and culmination of all willing. “To will is to will to be master.”³⁵¹ As Nietzsche remarks:

I shall now say to you my word concerning life and the nature of all the living. I pursued the living; I walked the widest and the narrowest paths that I might know its nature ... test in all seriousness whether I have crawled into the very hearth of life and into the very root of its hearth... Wherever I found the living, there I found the “will to power”: and even in the will of those who serve I found the will to be master.³⁵²

In this connection, Heidegger argues that there is an “essential” connection between power and will. We suggested in Chapter 3 that will and abandonment of Being (the being-historical ground of nihilism) are perfectly commensurate, (and expressed this with the formula: abounding of will= abandonment of Being). The history of Being, in this sense, refers to the unfolding sovereignty of will through the basic moments of metaphysics (i.e through essential thinkers). Once metaphysics represents the world as a totality of beings and thinks beings as beings, that is, once Being is conceived as *Seiendheit* (*ousia*, *realitas*, *substantia*, Beingness), will comes to be the determinative framework of thinking as representation. Metaphysics thinks entities from within will’s projection of entities in advance, prior to any explicit engagement with entities, and thereby informing and guiding its representation and cognition (as “co-agitare”): what we want from entities, what we ask

³⁵⁰ *N IV*, 7-8.

³⁵¹ “Nietzsche’s Word “God is Dead””, in *OBT*, 174.

³⁵² *The Portable Nietzsche*, selected and trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), p. 226.

entities to offer us determines what we *will* do with these entities. But will can only be complete, when it becomes a self-willing, i.e when it chooses itself, not other things. On the basis of self-willing, the modern philosophy, in the footsteps of Aristotelian *energeia* and *dunamis* and the medieval *potentia*, experienced Being as such essentially as will, from *conatus* (Spinoza), *appetitus* (Leibniz), *Vernunft* as *Wille des Wissens* (Hegel)³⁵³, *Wille der Liebe* (Schelling)³⁵⁴, *Wille* (Schopenhauer) up to *Macht* (Nietzsche) and *Machenschaft* and dynamics (technology). In Nietzsche's will to power, will has found its full articulation, i.e metaphysics has been consummated.³⁵⁵

As a result, we should see that value thinking also is grounded in will, in the will-based determination of Being. In Nietzsche's thought, "will" brings together four notions, namely 1- value (*Wert*) 2- instinct (*Instinkt*) 3- power (*Macht*) 4- vitality (*Lebendigkeit*), as tightly connected aspects of its view of the world. Roughly put, (1) value is such a thing that it can only be "posited", i.e be the product of a willing, no matter such will occurs in the form of a willing which is universalistically motivated and purports to have universal validity (like in moral and juridical theories) or by an absolutely unique willing (which Nietzsche's will to power and *Übermensch*, taken together, implies). (2) will, in its purest form, as in animality, becomes the execution of instincts, becomes something like unrestrained instinctuality at work. (3) but in the blond beast, it becomes "power instincts" to subjugate and exploit every potential for its ultimate realization as total power or unconditional will (4) vitality as sensuality, for the interests of its maintenance, enhancement and fulfillment, creates its own standards (values), given that such standards can never be provided by something dead (the transcendent world, god). The logic of such vitality Nietzsche interprets as "psychology". Psychology accordingly is about the positive logic of will (as will to power), which underlies in turn the normative logic of revaluation of all values, i.e the morality in Nietzsche's sense. Psychology in this sense (actually, Heidegger thinks, as the fulfillment of its development as a philosophical discipline, say, from Plato up to behaviorism) is the true name for Nietzsche's whole metaphysics, because will (as will to power) is both the essential character of beings as such and as a whole, and the essential definition of man.³⁵⁶ It follows that Nietzsche's psychology is at once both cosmology and anthropology, and thus the sophisticated heart of his nihilism, as "the queen of all sciences"³⁵⁷.

Now, Heidegger's claim becomes clear that will to power is basically an ultimate

³⁵³ See, *N IV*, 147.

³⁵⁴ Even "will of love", which Schelling puts forward, is nihilistic, i.e will-driven and will-determined. See, *MN*, 146, 160.

³⁵⁵ Cf. *N IV*, 178-182.

³⁵⁶ *N IV*, 52.

³⁵⁷ *N IV*, 28.

expression of will “as such”, the ultimate mode of the willing act. This is also to say that will to power is the essence of all willing: it is the will that is inside all will.³⁵⁸ We may tend to think that power and will are separate issues, independent of each other. When one wills, one might will different things, and if, at some point, one willed not other thing but to get and use power, one would orient to get and use such power found somehow somewhere (outside one’s will). In other words, we tend to view power as an object of will, an object among many others. Heidegger’s account runs counter to this common-sensical view. Power is nowhere outside will: power *is* only as long as there is a will which asserts itself. This implies that will is essentially power impulse with which power as such first starts. Stars and mountains have no power, because they cannot project the potentials of things from the perspective of willing: they are only potentials, let us say, for a power to be willed/represented. For this reason, Heidegger thinks, will to power is at bottom will-to-will: will to power is such a will that it wills only itself as an absolute and unconditional form of willing. To put in a different way, all command starts first by willing to will: will-to-will means, above all, crystalization and concretion of all possibility of willing. It is the origin of all willing, and as such, the essence and the essential realm of all willing and power. There is no perfect willing, no exercise and projection of power, before one has not willed to will. Heidegger writes: “will essences (*wesst*) as will to will”³⁵⁹, which corresponds to “a world in which Being has begun to rule as the will to will”³⁶⁰. Beings appear and make sense fundamentally in the light of will to will which requires a calculative and totalizing attitude towards beings, and this is what will to will envisions so as to enhance and guarantee itself, its present stage of power, and ultimately to overpower itself.³⁶¹ Here meanwhile human essence (as *ek-sistence*) is harnessed to the slavery of this power impulse, becomes an absolute “worker”, in Ernst Jünger’s designation.

According to this, metaphysics is ultimately a will-driven engagement with beings, which wants to get mastery over beings and over the whole globe, knowledge being the form and means of getting such mastery. Its truth is its correctly representing the entities, bringing them before vision as an objectifying apparatus. If, for this relation to entities, entities arise only in terms of representability and manipulability, if it is only the truth of entities which matters, then Being as such has no import at all, which involves the implicit decision, nihilism, that beings, including ourselves, are empty objects with no urgent purposes. Nietzsche explicitly states this: “Being is an empty word” given that perfect fullness is to be sought nowhere but in the assertion of will in the purest. If thinking is

³⁵⁸ “Nietzsche’s Word “God is Dead”” in *OBT*, 176; see also *NIIV*, 31

³⁵⁹ “Why Poets?” in *OBT*, 209.

³⁶⁰ “Why Poets?”, in *OBT*, 218.

³⁶¹ See, “Überwindung der Metaphysik”, in *VA*, 78-79.

representation of entities, it is determined by will (in the sense of “valuation”). In a text that dates from 1955, “Conversation On A Country Path About Thinking”, a text written in the dialogue form, Heidegger has “the scholar” speak as follows: “But thinking, understood in the traditional way, as re-presenting is a kind of willing; Kant, too, understands thinking this way when he characterizes it as spontaneity. To think is to will, and to will is to think.”³⁶²

Hence, will to power is that will which wills only itself. The decisive step is to get mastery over the human being, over oneself, as cognitive mechanism, as a subject, that is, as a “mental potentiality”. The decisive step, then, is epistemological. As we indicated in chapter 4, in Aristotle’s (and also in Plato’s) ontotheology, what drives the whole process of metaphysical reflection is the ideal of *episteme*, that is, the ideal of total knowledge of things. The ideal of total knowledge is actually the “will” to total control over the whole beings. Total control over beings in turn proceeds through total control over thinking (conceived as a constantly and immediately present mechanism, mind or consciousness). For Heidegger, consciousness (*Bewusstsein*, literally “Being-known”) is a subjectivistic determination of thinking, which involves an interpretation of Being in terms of unconditional knowledge (*episteme*) of beings, for the project of which man’s essence is thought as sub-ject (the basic, the underlying) and entities as ob-jects, standing over against the re-presentative act of sub-ject. Above, when Kant defines thinking (as willing), he actually defines representational thinking, that is, consciousness (with the presupposition that thinking is fundamentally representational). Consciousness, will to absolute knowledge (i.e. will to power) and metaphysics of subjectivity are bound up with each other.³⁶³ The quest for certainty of knowledge which marks metaphysics of subjectivity leaves no room for the question of Being to arise. It thereby entails the nihilistic illusion that man himself determines truth and Being. “In the subjectivity... Being is known (*bewusst*), that is, absolutely without question (*fraglos*). The usual and traditional conception, Being is the most self-evident, becomes now metaphysically and unconditionally justified.”³⁶⁴

Therefore, consciousness is will-driven: “consciousness belongs to will”³⁶⁵ on the basis of which to subjugate nature (the kernel of modern subjectivism). Being is thus assumed to be at the disposal of thinking and thinking (as consciousness) at the disposal of man. Now in Nietzsche, the whole picture (this nihilistic picture) becomes explicit, its all hidden elements are explicitly pronounced. Nietzsche interprets consciousness from within psychology (his own psychology), as we today do with a scientific psychology, as the mechanism of power drives, i.e. instincts. Instincts, understood in the context of Nietzsche’s

³⁶² “Conversation on a Country Path”, in *DT*, 58-59.

³⁶³ See, *MN*, 120, 121.

³⁶⁴ *MN*, 98.

³⁶⁵ “Überwindung der Metaphysik” in *VA*, 84.

psychology, become the basis of consciousness; instincts become consciously grounded and consciousness becomes instinctually grounded.³⁶⁶ The point is actually this: consciousness is purely purged off all moral-transcendental content (platonic tradition), and radically naturalized as the framework of instincts governed by the principal expression of instincts, will to power. Hence, consciousness becomes the perspectival framework of will to power, the most elementary principle and fact of all living reality, animality. What kind of specific human conception corresponds to this “psychology” by which nihilism is raised into the status of a principle, indeed the all-governing principle of animality/ reality? It is what Nietzsche calls overman (*Übermensch*). What kind of thing is Overman? It is first of all the embodiment and bearer of will to power, i.e. of the very principle of nihilism. Put it differently, the subjectivity of consciousness becomes fully unleashed in the absolute subjectivity of will to power, whose bearer is called Overman. Overman is nihilism in action, in the flesh, and consequently, the absolute non-essence (*Unwesen*) of the human.

We no longer derive man from spirit, from deity: we translated man back into the animal. It is, to us, the strongest animal, because it is the most cunning; one consequence of this is its spirituality.³⁶⁷

And the following remark Heidegger quotes from *The Will to Power*:

Man is beast and superbeast; the higher man is inhuman and superhuman: these belong together. With every increase of greatness and height in man, there is also an increase in depth and terribleness: one ought not to desire the one without the other or rather: the more radically one desires the one, the more radically one achieves precisely the other.³⁶⁸

The result is the tyrannic character of *Übermensch*, Nietzsche’s ideal of man, and its exclusive centrality in reality. The centrality of man in metaphysics, as we have seen, goes back to Plato, to Plato’s taking “seeing” (correctness of thinking) and “what is seen” (*idea*, the universal, the atemporal essence as constant reality) as the ground and true form of truth.³⁶⁹ *Aletheia* comes to be understood as *homoiosis*: the inseparability of truth and temporality which speaks in the early Greek experience of *aletheia* becomes dissolved. The unconcealment of Being and man’s relation to it as belonging in its “radius” are displaced from the scene in favor of an interpretation of Being as beingness (*Seiendheit*, *ousia*) which

³⁶⁶ See, *N IV*, 49-50.

³⁶⁷ *EJ*, 126.

³⁶⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will To Power*, ed. W. Kaufmann, trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 531: this quotation with a slightly different translation is found in *Nietzsche IV*, 51.

³⁶⁹ See, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”, trans. T. Sheehan, in *PM*.

puts man at the “centre” of Being justified by an interpretation of its essence as *animal rationale*. This metaphysical centrality of man goes hand in hand with its twin phenomenon, the nihilistic “unthinking” of Being, the exclusion and default of Being (*Ausbleiben des Seins*) in the form of an illusion that it is the most self-evident. Heidegger believes that with Nietzsche’s doctrine of Overman, what is already found implicit in *animal rationale* attains its full articulation, and metaphysics shows its true essence i.e “man’s absolute pre-eminence among beings”. One might say Nietzsche says the “unsaid” of metaphysics, an unsaid which determines all saying of metaphysics as a governing center, as a hidden source. As indicated, this source Heidegger qualifies as nihilism, which is the deep truth of (Western) history, as that which “determines the historicity of this history”³⁷⁰, as “the way (and occurrence) in which man is historical”³⁷¹.

The connections that Heidegger explores between will and consciousness, between value thinking and representation, between *Übermensch* and subject point towards a Being-historical chain which intimately binds Nietzsche’s nihilism with Descartes’ metaphysics as the dawn of modern philosophy: “Nietzsche ineluctably stands ... under Descartes’ metaphysics, in a way no other modern thinker does”.³⁷² Thought being-historically, first of all, there is a direct route to Nietzsche’s tyrannic *Übermensch* as “absolute and unique measure of all things”³⁷³, the subject of will to power, from Descartes’ “subject”, from the subjectivism of modern philosophy—which itself was even more degenerate extension of medieval philosophy: Nietzsche only takes up the full implications of the Cartesian position such that subject becomes what it truly is, *Übermensch*. The essence of man, with Descartes, is conceived as “sub-iectum” (Latin translation of the Greek word, *hypo-kaimenon*, i.e “what under-lies and lies-at-the-base-of, what already lies-before of itself”³⁷⁴, as a permanent ground). With this conception of man, Heidegger argues, man’s essence, momentarily, has undergone one more essential change; it has become subject, that is, a re-presenting being which is permanently present to itself, a self-certain and self-sovereign entity “essential for what lies at the every ground”³⁷⁵, who has “thinking” at its disposal, as a transparent ground for the knowledge of beings.

As we have seen, for Heidegger, metaphysics grounds an age: in metaphysics the destiny of Being is at stake, for here there is made, even if unknowingly, a decision about Being. Therefore, metaphysics, as far as history of Being, that is, Western tradition, is concerned, remains decisive regarding “man’s essence” (man’s relation to Being as

³⁷⁰ *NI*, 53.

³⁷¹ *NI*, 29.

³⁷² *NI*, 103.

³⁷³ *NI*, 84.

³⁷⁴ *NI*, 96.

³⁷⁵ *NI*, 108.

definitive for man). In other words, the essence of man, truth, thinking, time, in short, of all essential things, are necessarily always co-decided with Being itself, belong to the destiny of Being. Hence, Being, man, truth, time and thinking are all simultaneously transformed in Descartes' metaphysics, as they are in all essential thinkers, including the last one, Nietzsche. Note that for Heidegger, all these thinkers think one and the same thing, their thoughts belong to the same essence, are ultimately the selfsame, which, nevertheless, in turn, makes their uniqueness possible, as unique moments of the history of Being, of the destiny of Being decided in the late Greek age, in the dimmed light of the first beginning of the Greeks. Now, Descartes' metaphysics necessarily involves a transformed experience and notion of truth such that it comes to be the determinative shape of the modern notion of truth into which we are born and which we take almost for granted. In this sense, it is the nearest notion of truth to us, and it was so for Nietzsche, too. Descartes' conception of truth proceeds from a radicalisation of the theologically motivated medieval view of truth, *adaequatio intellectus et rei* (as it was, simultaneously, of medieval understanding of Being). In Descartes, certainty (*certitudo*, *ens certum*) as representationally established "secureness" (*ego cogito*) has been the real form of truth. Certainty is required for the knowledge of *res extensae* (knowledge of mathematical physics), i.e. for the predictability and controllability of objects. The bodily objects (*res extensae*) have to be rendered always accessible to perception by means of a mathematically conceived certainty which relegates thinking to a representational operation. Hence, "the metaphysical possibility of machine technology, and with it, the modern world and modern mankind"³⁷⁶. On the other hand, always accessible total certainty of truth corresponds to a further intensification of the metaphysical understanding of Being (beingness) as "representedness through and for the subject"³⁷⁷ and to a re-presentation of beings as objects, which "stand over against" this subject.

Subject as objective knower of all reality is motivated "to master" over all reality (all beings, including primarily human being) through the absolute certainty of knowledge established in the methodically driven procedure of "cogito". Truth is a matter of formalization. One rests on consciousness in an attempt to form *certitudo* of propositions which is most supremely available in the mathematical formalization. Calculative nature of metaphysical thinking eventually finds its proper framework in the paradigmatic certainty of the mathematical. Calculative approach to entities hides in itself the urge to control what is thus known. The will to certainty (to fixation) is the expression of the will to get mastery over things on the basis of the certainty of knowledge. This will in Descartes' experience of *ego cogito* is will to truth which is, in turn, simply a part of "will to power" which found its

³⁷⁶ *NI*, 116.

³⁷⁷ *NI*, 122, 137.

completion in Nietzsche's thinking and in Nietzsche's "epoch" (the epoch of science and technology). Therefore, "Descartes' metaphysics is indeed a metaphysics of will to power, albeit an unwitting one."³⁷⁸

Heidegger in the work *Nietzsche* (volume IV) presents a quotation³⁷⁹ from Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, where Descartes urges people for the new and most proper sort of knowledge of beings (i.e. mathematical physics) that his philosophy represents and makes possible, a knowledge which can "render ourselves masters and possessors of nature."³⁸⁰ Obviously, in Descartes' whole metaphysics a call is explicitly made for the conquest and domination of the world. Then, Nietzsche's Overman is the full appropriation of this call.

Indeed, Heidegger writes: "Nietzsche's psychology is the absolute and complete unfoldment of *Meditationes de prima philosophia*."³⁸¹ As a consequence, "will to power" reveals itself as the absolute subjectivity, which is absolute and exclusive centrality of human being. Absolute subjectivity is a representation of entities in the light of "eternal constancy of presence" (read, eternal recurrence of the same). In addition, Nietzsche's doctrine, "eternal recurrence of the same" (*ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen*) is the pure form of the theoretical-metaphysical (Platonic-Aristotelian) experience of time as *aei on*, the eternal now. Disclosure of Being (as the occurrence of meaning and human experience) loses its ground, what is its ownmost (essence), the temporal dimension, i.e. man's essence as the site of moment (Da, man's temporal awareness and experience) and therefore begins to non-essence (*Unwesen*), presence as absencing (abandonment of Being), because it is buried over under the veil (and illusion) of permanence: Nietzsche experiences the fulfilled stage of the "understanding of Being as permanent presence" i.e. metaphysics. One should then say that the horizon of time behind Nietzschean picture, the idea "eternal recurrence of the same", leaves no room for authentic time (temporality, finitude) which rests on "the moment", on the momentous and momentary un-concealment of Being as a temporal play (*Zuspiel*)³⁸². Because un-concealment of Being, given its intrinsic temporal basis, is a matter of moment. From the perspective of un-concealment of Being, (i.e. of the truth of Being), the moment is of ultimate significance. In this sense, Da-sein is the site of the moment. From the perspective of "eternal recurrence of the same", the moment is of no point, for nothing is irrevocable, everything returns eternally in the same way, as Simon May puts it, "all events

³⁷⁸ *N IV*, 179.

³⁷⁹ See *N IV*, 135.

³⁸⁰ René Descartes. *Discourse on Method*, in *Descartes: Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Norman K. Smith (New York: The Modern Library, 1958), p. 131. Quoted in *N IV*, 135.

³⁸¹ *MN*, 52.

³⁸² Here play is meant in the Heraclitean sense. In the fragment 52, Heraclitus enunciates: "*Aion* is a child at play, playing at draughts; dominion is the child's". However, for Heraclitus, playing of a child signifies not arbitrariness but the moment of ultimate seriousness and authenticity. A famous word attributed to Heraclitus runs as follows: "One is most nearly oneself when one achieves the seriousness of a child at play."

recur infinitely in an identical manner and order”³⁸³. As a consequence, according to Heidegger, “eternal recurrence of the same” is an utterance of absolute timelessness, thus *the* genuine expression of nihilism.

Metaphysics is preoccupied with beings as such and as a whole, and this is guided by the assertion of will. Metaphysics, from its very birth on, is the pro-ject of conquering beings, and therefore remains determined by the truth of beings. The truth of beings, for Heidegger, is a destiny already decided at the level of Being. The history of Being consists of the moments of this destiny in which the truth of beings as correspondance between mind and beings (with its various unfoldments in the history of Being, from Platonic *homoiosis* to Nietzschean *Gerechtigkeit*) becomes fulfilled as the completion of the pro-ject of total hegemony and exploitation of beings.

This brings us to the totalitarian vision of reality which governs all metaphysical projection upon beings, and to Nietzsche as its pure revelation. For Heidegger, this totalitarian vision marks all modern phenomena from political ideologies (democracy included) to the function of science in society. This totalitarian vision is the mark of nihilism. Being a nihilistic phenomeon it is conditioned by nihilism, that is, historically rooted in nihilism. Given that nihilism is not a modern phenomenon, but the very structure of history destined with the onset of metaphysics in the late Greek age, totalitarian vision of reality belongs to the historical unfoldment of nihilism.

As we argued in chapter 4, metaphysics is a cultivation of this totalitarian vision of reality: beings are approached, with an implicit understanding (of Being), as things to be controlled, produced and manipulated for certain preconceived human ends (i.e to enhance power and security). Hence, the frenzy for control, mobilization, organization, planning and management—in short, totalization—that seems a salient future of modern humanity is actually a metaphysically cultivated and grounded form of relation to beings. Yet, the phrase “totalitarian vision of reality” is, one should notice, actually a tautology, thought from Heidegger’s point of view: every vision of reality is already totalitarian, will-driven, once Being is experienced and understood as reality (first as *realitas*, in the middle ages, which is a further degeneration of *ousia* i.e *Seiendheit*, beingness), that is, as constant presence, as something theoretically determined totality, suited to re-presentation (i.e *by* and *for* representation³⁸⁴) as the form of thinking it demands which is carried out necessarily from the perspective of temporal disclosure, *aei on*, eternal now, the absolute present. Hence

³⁸³ Simon May. *Nietzsche’s Ethics and his War on Morality* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 119.

³⁸⁴ See, “Metaphysics as History of Being” in *EP*, 25.

Heidegger writes “the hidden history of Being as reality also first makes possible Western man’s various *fundamental positions* (i.e epochs of history of Being) within beings.”³⁸⁵

Now, in Nietzsche, such totalitarian understanding of beings becomes fully recognised and thus fully explicit as the definitive moment of thinking. It is supremely nihilistic in that it demands total intelligibility of things, i.e driven by the crave for total unconcealment, a drive in which both concealment and unconcealment (i.e un-concealment, truth) of Being remains concealed altogether. As we discussed in chapter 4, this is part of the ontotheological project, established by Plato and Aristotle, for total clarity and total knowledge. This has found expression in early modern philosophy as the objective of total certainty, i.e as an epistemological foundationalism which rested on the notion a self-certain subject as immediate owner of a mental mechanism (mind, consciousness). This was the necessary step guiding the objectivity whose final goal is to control and master the objects, and thus determined in advance by the vision, total control over entities. That which motivates in turn the total control over entities is the possibility of total (unlimited) exploitation and manipulation of entities, of nature, which makes sense only as instrumental for the ideal of total power to be extracted from entities and imposed again upon entities. The originating end (i.e *arche*) of the whole movement, then, is this will to power as the ultimate accomplishment and execution of will itself. It is not surprising that Nietzsche, in *The Will to Power*, explicitly understands his “active nihilism” as “a divine way of thinking (*Göttliche Denkweise*)”³⁸⁶, that is, as the manner will to power represents itself in terms of omniscience and omnipotence. Then the rough picture of the nihilistic chain as western tradition and as the Being-historical transformation of *Seiendheit*, i.e of Being in its non-essencing is as follows.

Total knowledge (*episteme* in Plato and Aristotle, ontotheology) → total clarity and total certainty (modern philosophy, metaphysics of subjectivity) → total mastery and total exploitation (Nietzsche and technology).

Or we can have a look at Heidegger’s own picture. *Ousia* (Beingness)

1. As *koinon*—the most general; *katholou*.
2. As *aition*—the supreme entity; that which is the primal cause.
3. Re-presentedness in certainty (subjectivity).
4. Re-presentedness as represented representation; Leibniz’s doubled *represantatio*.

³⁸⁵ “Metaphysics as History of Being” in *EP*, 19. Paranthesis added.

³⁸⁶ “To this extent, nihilism, as the denial of a truthful world, of being, might be a divine way of thinking.” *The Will to Power*, 15. Heidegger cites it *N IV*, 56, and also *Nietzsche* (GA 87), 39-40.

5. Objectifiedness (*Gegenstaendlichkeit*) of Kant in the transcendently clarified sense.
6. Absolute knowledge as will.
7. Beingness as will to power: the unconditional non-essence of absolute subjectivity.³⁸⁷

Accordingly, the unconditional will, the will to a total power, emerges as the hidden impetus, the hidden understanding of Being, at work, in the hidden history of Being. For Heidegger, this will to power is actually a will to the unconditional will, i.e a will-to-will itself: will-to-will is the source and ground of will to power.

To sum up, as discussed above, for Heidegger, Being, truth, time and Dasein (human essence as ek-sistence) are strictly bound up with one another, conceivable only in a radical belonging together. Nietzsche as the consummation of metaphysics conceives of (1) time- which is the transcendental horizon, inherent guide of all thinking- in terms of “eternal recurrence of the same”, hence the moment, that is, temporality, is entirely lost. He considers (2) Being, consequently, as “eternally constant presence”, essentiality of never-changing “will to power” in an ever changing world (becoming). (3) truth, in terms of “certainty” in the service of the execution of “will to power” which codifies it into a value system of justice (4) Dasein, in terms of *Übermensch* as the fulfilled form of *animal rationale* and of inherent tyranny of Cartesian “sub-ject”. Considered from one angle, metaphysics had started with the definition of human essence as *animal rationale*, now it ends with the notion of *Übermensch*: “At the end of metaphysics stands the statement *homo est brutum bestiale*.”³⁸⁸

On the other hand, taken in terms of its relation to everyday life, Heidegger’s account implies that people breathe each second the air of nihilism, but does not feel the plight at all. As we pointed out, the hegemony of metaphysics, i.e nihilistic experience of Being, remains disguised to us, which is precisely why it is rather difficult to encounter it in its essence, and precisely why it is “the normal condition of mankind”³⁸⁹. In a deeper sense, for Heidegger, it is the “lawfulness of history... its *inner logic*”³⁹⁰, that is, not an aspect of history, not one history among others, but history itself.³⁹¹ In this history, the paradigm of intelligibility of things is metaphysics. But there is always room to experience the nihilism at stake, at the level of authentic thinking, and especially at the level of poetry, where will is the least. Therefore, thinking, to get near its essence, i.e to be the thinking of Being, needs to

³⁸⁷ *MN*, 153. Also in the same work, cf. 100-103.

³⁸⁸ *N IV*, 148.

³⁸⁹ “On the Question of Being”, in *PM*, 297.

³⁹⁰ *N IV*, 53. See, also, *ibid*, 232.

³⁹¹ See, *N IV*, 52-57.

learn to poetize. Hölderlin's poetry, in this sense, is a response to the nihilistic darkness, past and modern, a response which, Heidegger argues, clears and grounds an open realm, with its poetic saying of Being, for a truly historical future (read Ereignis). This reminds us of the Greek poet, Yannis Ritsos' remark: "Poet sees in the darkness". Not Hölderlin alone: all authentic poetry can sense the darkness (in particular, the special darkness of the consummate nihilism of our age). Rilke, for example, experiences this desolateness of the modern epoch, "answers to the coming world-era"³⁹², and this comes to words³⁹³: "Sufferings are not recognized/ no one is learning to love/ and what in death displaces us."³⁹⁴ Hegemony of nihilism operates in its concealment. Being in its default "veils itself with itself"³⁹⁵: unconcealment of beings happens in the light (or darkness) of non-essencing (*Unwesen*) of Being. And the need of needlessness (*Not der Notlosigkeit*) reigns. Humans never feel the "essential need" which defines human essence: the need *of* Being (both subjective and objective genitive), due to its metaphysical omission, is overlooked. Indeed, this implies that people, under the sway of metaphysics and nihilism, do not experience senselessness or despair in their life. The average person may consider her life quite meaningful- acquiring goods, security, status, the latest modern conveniences, etc.- but Heidegger thinks that she suffers from nihilism, albeit unwittingly.³⁹⁶ Consequently, power (i.e will)-driven humanity stands in danger of losing the essential thing in his humanity, the last relics of *Lichtung* (*Da*), the open for the truth (i.e un-concealment) *of* Being. Tyrannical essence of subject, with Nietzsche's grasping the heart of the matter about subject, i.e with his defining the essence of human being as *Übermensch*, rose to the surface. The danger nihilism presents must be perceived as danger *itself*, for with it, Being itself and the human essence in their belonging-together are at stake. "man is threatened with the annihilation of his essence, and Being itself is endangered in its usage of its abode."³⁹⁷ The phenomenon of nihilism is therefore the highest sense of danger, "a human concern... presumably not merely one among others"³⁹⁸. But danger and salvation belong together. Then how can salvation from nihilism be possible?

The first thing is to let aside the drive of overcoming itself. We above pointed out that Heidegger abandons the drive of overcoming (overcoming metaphysics and nihilism), because such drive itself, too, is entangled in the metaphysical comportment towards Being, a comportment marked by the domination of will. Accordingly, we said that no willful

³⁹² "Why Poets?" in *OBT*, 240.

³⁹³ See, "Why Poets?" in *OBT*, 240-241.

³⁹⁴ "Why Poets?" in *OBT*, 205.

³⁹⁵ *NI*, 214.

³⁹⁶ I thank to John Caputo who once made this point to me. Here I only paraphrase it.

³⁹⁷ *NI*, 245.

³⁹⁸ *NI*, 221.

enterprise can save us from Nihilism, which is itself the product of the supremacy of will which does not allow Being be as *itself*, i.e happen essentially (*west*). Nihilism cannot be over-come, because this involves an attack or advance against that which is to be over-come, nihilism, that is, Being in its default, given that nihilism is a phenomenon, the basic happening and movement of history, about Being itself, in which Being non-essences. Overcoming as an attack against defaulting Being, against that which essences as default itself, must be motivated to bring it, as such, under man's mastery, i.e as Being itself, thus removing nihilism. But taking the matter in terms of power and will misses the point. It would be a struggle, ultimately, against Being itself, which is, as such, apparently, not an appropriate relationship to Being itself, but, unwittingly, an exacerbation of the sway of metaphysics.³⁹⁹ Such an enterprise is so opposed to man's underlying relationship to Being itself that it could lead to unhinging human essence as the abode of Being itself, in which now Being happens non-essentially. Put it differently, it would be a war against one's own essence, against the basis one stands in.⁴⁰⁰

Inasmuch as the matter is to correspond to the essence of Being itself, Heidegger, in place of *Überwindung*, proposes *Verwindung*, getting-over, in which metaphysics is left to itself.⁴⁰¹ However, Heidegger's central point remains: All of the things which we need for *Überwindung*, that is, those things which can bring us on a path of *Überwindung* (roughly delineated above), are now transposed to *Verwindung*. These we noted as (1) encountering nihilism in its essence as a question (2) this involves that we raise the question of Being itself, i.e be prepared for a thinking experience of Being as such (a) an essential part of this attempt is to bring the question of nothing into consideration: the question of Being and the question of nothing radically belong together. (b) another essential part of this attempt is to take up being-historical thinking, thereby trying to eluciate the unthought and the unsaid of metaphysics in its history, which determines the thought and the said in metaphysics, and in which Western history as the essential unity of the unfolding nihilism is decided.

The key to "getting-over" is provided through taking up the question of Being. Indeed, we need, first of all, to take seriously the question *of* Being as the question *itself*, as the most essential of all questions, and, in doing this, bring into consideration the question character of Being, and thereby the essence of question itself. Everything depends on this immersion into questioning, for Being and *its* question remain inseperable throughout. Heidegger notes:

³⁹⁹ See *N IV*, 223-225.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. *N IV*, 223-229.

⁴⁰¹ See "On the Question of Being" in *PM*, 313-322. Elsewhere Heidegger also notes: "Darum gilt es, vom Überwinden abzulassen und die Metaphysik sich selbst zu überlassen." "Zeit und Sein" in *SD*, 30. (Translation mine).

The *non-essence* (*Unwesen*) of metaphysics consists in this that in it- in the question of Being undertaken by it- Being in its *questionworthiness* (*Fragwürdigkeit*) does not come to the governing position, that neither Being nor entity questionable is, rather everything is saved into the unquestionableness of the machinationally manipulable. Ontology is so much self-evident as Zoology, as a study of the animal.⁴⁰²

Accordingly, in order that we can get over metaphysics and nihilism, there is needed an essential change in the underlying attitude of thinking such that in it there is made an appropriate(d) openness, room and way for Being itself, which we interpret in this study as the free space fundamental questioning of the question of Being clears. Indeed, Heidegger's argument suggests that questioning itself grounds a particularly appropriate relationship to Being. Question is that thing which allows what is questioned speak for itself, i.e. speak in the most authentic sense, according to its essence. Quest-ioning means beeing in quest, seeking (Latin *quaero*, *quaesit*- seek). One can only seek that which one has lost. Therefore, every seeking (question) is motivated by a finding (answer), by that which needs to be found. Finding (*Finden*) of Being as a thinking of Being should not be taken as a pragmatic operation dominated by will: it needs to be an in-venting (Latin *invenio*, literally come-in, German *Erfinden*), which lets Being come-in, or an inviting (from Latin *in-vito*) which "gently" asks Being to come, thus making way for the ad-vent, the arrival (*An-kunft*) of Being. Thinking is an ad-venture led by questioning.⁴⁰³ Hence, for Heidegger, what the question of Being aims at uncovering or finding is Being itself. The Arabic word for Being is *Wujûd*, which is derived from the root, *vjd*, find, and implies the sense, the happening of finding. Accordingly, the question of Being is, in a special sense, seeking of Being, "seeking from a pure finding"⁴⁰⁴.

Such seeking Heidegger interprets in terms of "remembering" in *Being & Time*, remembering the nearest of thinking (Being itself as the horizon of intelligibility of entities,

⁴⁰² MN, 15-16.

⁴⁰³ See, "Brief über den Humanismus", 363-364.

⁴⁰⁴ "Suchen aus dem *reinen Finden*." *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, GA 69, ed. Peter Trawny (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio-Klostermann, 1998), p. 171. Above I try to interpret some important points in this mentioned page. Let me quote them:

" 176. *Das Fragen*

als Er-fragen der Wahrheit des Seyns die einzige Würdigung des Seyns.
Seyn als Ereignis.

177. *Das reine Finden*.

Das Er-finden ist nicht Ausdenken, ist nicht Er-rechnen, ist nicht Verzwängen, sondern sich in das Eigentum finden – das *Er-eignet* werden.

Be-stimmt sein durch das Stimmende.

Ohne Vor-weg-nahme; ohne Vor-gehen.

Suchen aus dem *reinen Finden*.

Darauf stoßen."

as temporality) and suggests that ontology involves an “anamnetic thinking”. Remembering is understood and construed “topologically” in the later writings, that is, as remembering both our “own” (forgotten) place in relation to Being as an inherence (*Inständigkeit*) in Being and the place of Being itself as our essence. When such remembering becomes a full event, happens essentially, through the path question of Being opens up, this would be the essential happening of Being (*Wesung des Seyns*) as Ereignis, as the other beginning in which an enduring remembrance (*Gedächtnis*) of Being *itself* grants thinking its identity and man its ownness as Da-sein.

The question of Being is something to be appropriated, not merely answered. We do not do enough justice to the question of Being, let alone its answer, in so far as we take it merely in the propositional sense (i.e. metaphysically). The question of Being stands precisely opposed to what is propositional and abstract, in that it arises from emergency/need (*Not*). Furthermore, Being in its questionableness is not one need among others, but the need *itself*. In fact, all authentic questions arise out of needs, not out of the curiosity of intellectual formulations. But Being is the need itself (*Sein als Not selbst*), the emergency in the most fundamental sense: its question arises from the most essential need, a need in which our human essence is at stake. Then so far as Being itself is the need itself, thus the most authentic question, this question stands always in need of being raised. It is no abstract concern. Rather, Being itself as need, as the true matter of questioning, is the most concrete heart of all thinking.

A genuine questioning must patiently resist answers, that is, “will to answers”, and let itself be fully developed, be carefully matured from the very first moment of the dawn of the question up to the end, for “essential answers are always just the last step of questioning”⁴⁰⁵.

Moreover, only when we have questions, people, texts and things (i.e. Being) speak to us, yet do that in terms of and from the perspective of our questions. This is because a question is always an occurrence which directs thinking, i.e. puts it in a way, a direction. Question serves, implicitly or explicitly, as a starting point for the movement of thinking, an *arche*. Hence it opens a way and a site for thinking to move: it guides thinking in advance. Then it is of ultimate significance for thinking to situate itself in the most basic, the most necessary and the most authentic of all questions (to wit, the question *of* Being), which can feed in turn all authentic questions in its guidance. It is of ultimate significance for thinking to spring from the need and (therefore) matter *of* Being as its *own* question. This implies that Being turns to us and responds to our address only when we do raise its *own* question. Through the question *of* Being alone, thinking can cor-respond to Being.

⁴⁰⁵ “Nachwort zu “Was ist Metaphysik?””, in *WM*, 44.

A question, when it is actually raised, i.e. appropriated, allows what it questions to be opened up in its essence. Because question clears a required and appropriate openness in which what is questioned can show up. It allows such site, brings it into focus. In other words, an authentic question, when properly articulated, rests on the acknowledgement that it must make room for the answer, for what is sought-after, it must stand open to it, submit to it as it opens up itself for and in human thinking, that is, it recognizes itself (i.e. its own open field as the question) as the there (*Da*) for the happening of *an* answer. Then, an authentic question is marked and determined by a submissive attitude towards its matter (*Sache*): such submissiveness may be interpreted as a free space (that is, “free of will”), a prepared room for the happening of matter, that is, as the truth of *Dasein*.

On the other hand, the question of Being can only be appropriated as a step-back (*Schritt-zurück*) from representational thinking, for which “Being remains outside the horizon of questionability”⁴⁰⁶, a step-back which resides in the area of the simple (*Einfaches*), of the differentiation (*Unterscheidung*)⁴⁰⁷ between entities and Being, of the question-worthiness (*Fragwürdigkeit*) of Being as different from beings, of that which is given to thinking to think.⁴⁰⁸ Such differentiation is another name for *Sein*, unconcealment as such. It is the essential, the simple, the primal matter of thinking that needs to be raised as a question, which is exactly what metaphysics fails to do. Metaphysics thus understands differentiation, uses it, rests and depends on it, but never comes to make it an explicit/appropriate(d) matter of questioning, i.e. never thinks it as such. Heidegger intimates that all nihilism follows from this failure of metaphysics: “that already the differentiation of beings and Being is the source of collapse and destruction of *aletheia*, i.e. the way in which differentiation is understood (a priori) and passed over.”⁴⁰⁹ Step-back and the question of Being belong to one another.

In short, the question-dependent essence of thinking and the question-dependent happening of Being correspond to one another. And precisely it is in such correspondance that “getting-over” has its ground. As far as Being is concerned, the answer cannot be a propositional one, but one that “situates” truth of Being, the whole understanding within which Being comes to happen in its essence, the whole moment which grounds and incipates a history, the whole experience which brings man and Being into their own as belonging to each other, and granting thinking its true focus, its basic remembrance (*Gedächtnis*) to dwell in. The answer cannot be other than Being itself, i.e. its essential happening (*Wesung*),

⁴⁰⁶ *NI*, 201.

⁴⁰⁷ The theme of differentiation (*Unterscheidung*) is actually a further deepening of “ontological difference”. See, for example, *MN*, 65-82.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. “Brief Über den Humanismus”, in *WM*, 343.

⁴⁰⁹ *MN*, 68.

Ereignis, which has nothing to do with propositional form of saying.⁴¹⁰ In the metaphysical history of West, the happening of Being is determined by nihilism, Being has happened in its default, taken place in its non-essencing, presented as absencing, that is, Being has come to be (as) nothing. Today, as Heidegger sees it, the word “Being”, wherever heard, invokes only vacuous reverberations in us. The heart of all importance is reduced to nothing more than an empty triviality for us. Being, in its default, in its nothingness, in turn “releases the evanescence of all that is hale in beings”⁴¹¹. This calls to mind Abbé Sieyès’ famous remark (that Heidegger cites in *Zur Ernst Jünger*).

“Was ist der dritte Stand? Gegenwärtig nichts; *in Wahrheit alles*”.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ Cf. *SD*, 19-21.

⁴¹¹ *N IV*, 248.

⁴¹² “What is the third order? Presently nothing; *in truth everything*.” *EJ*, 120.

CHAPTER 7

MEANING, BEING, *GESTELL*: THE NIHILISM OF TECHNOLOGY

As discussed in chapter 6, with Nietzsche, Heidegger contends, all possibilities of metaphysics are exhausted: humanity at the ontological level entered into the final darkening, namely the dominion of technology as the inevitable and eventual arena of “will to power”, humanity as a whole is drawn to the unbridled race of a global play of power. Nietzsche’s metaphysics of will to power as fulfilled nihilism grounds this age by giving it legitimation, consistency, comprehensiveness, i.e. its concepts to express and assert itself. This implies that technology, the final form of “the truth of beings” the history of Being has amounted to, must presuppose as its ground the full breath of Nietzsche’s experience of Being by way of raising it into a total grasp of things, a possibility which is still unfolding today. In this connection, Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* as power seeking animal shows its face as “technicized animal”⁴¹³. The underlying mania for power (*Macht*) hence gives expression to machination (*Machenschaft*) and is nourished in its frantic growth in man’s relationship to technology. In the power crazed technological world, the abandonment of Being, that is, the total refusal (*Verweigerung*) of Being to show up in its true face (truth, un-concealment, *aletheia*), sets the tone of everything and all attunement to things, with the result that “senselessness now becomes the sense of beings as a whole.”⁴¹⁴ Nihilism as the virtual loss of what is ownmost to Being and as the cultivation and rule of the truth of beings determines (*bestimmt*) the human essence, the space of happening of meaning/Being, as the space of meaninglessness.

Heidegger, simultaneously with his engagement with Nietzsche’s philosophy, embarks on a philosophical elucidation of the essence of technology, of what kind of understanding of Being guides and determines technology. From the mid-1930s on up to the very end of his philosophical activity (presumably, *Four Seminars*), technology has been an extremely significant issue for Heidegger’s thinking, because it was the last instance of the destiny of Being as the fateful unfolding of the truth of beings. In the *Beiträge*, we see some scattered, but incisive, observations on technology, in the *Besinnung*, some more detailed reflections come to appear, and in *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* and other writings that date

⁴¹³ *BP*, 98, 442, 495. “technisierte Tier”.

⁴¹⁴ *N III*, 177.

early 1940s, technology is always the key element of Heidegger's being-historical thinking. However, only with "Die Frage nach der Technik" (first drafted in 1949, published with revisions and expansions in 1954), Heidegger comes to provide a full essay on the subject, an essay which has been, without doubt, the most influential source of inspiration for the subsequent debate on technology in the continental philosophy.

For Heidegger, technology is important chiefly because it involves the highest danger for human essence (the threat of its complete annihilation) and for the essencing (*Wesung*) of Being (i.e its remaining without an abode, without a clearing). It is important, above all, to point out that technology is metaphysical from the ground up, and in this sense, the concluding chapter of the history of Being, and still basically in this sense, it has whatever historical significance it has. Therefore, in Heidegger's view, as far as technology is concerned, it is not a matter of offering some wisdom about technology so as to contribute to the development of a new field of philosophy (i.e philosophy of technology), to a research and literature about it. Indeed, some studies seem to take it that Heidegger, with his meditations on technology, is concerned to show how the philosophy of technology should be done as one more basic field of philosophical research.⁴¹⁵ In fact, the only essential thing, from Heidegger's perspective, is just the question of Being, so technology and other things, nihilism included, come to matter only as far as they are certain ramifications in the path of this question: "they spring from a necessity of thought"⁴¹⁶. For Heidegger, philosophy has no compartments, no fields.⁴¹⁷ But the question of Being is inseparable from the question of metaphysics and nihilism in that these latter refer precisely to the way Being has come to be for us, thus concerning what has happened to Being itself and what is going on with Being itself. At this level, we are dealing with history (*Geschichte*) in the essential sense, i.e as a destining (*Geschick*) of un-concealment of Being. All historicity of history issues from man's relationship with Being itself as underlying man's relation with all entities, for "im Sein alles Seiende *schon west*"⁴¹⁸: all that is historical relates to the way Being comes to happen in the open of human essence (as Being's clearing, free space, abode) as un-concealment of beings, i.e as truth. Metaphysics heedless both of unconcealment and of concealment at the heart of all occurrence of meaning passes over the truth of Being, while, at the same time, in the light of it, inadvertently, setting out to immerse in the truth of beings as the self-evidence of an atemporal presence of entities to be delimited in terms of correctness of what they present to the vision of intellect. Technology then is the eventual framework of

⁴¹⁵ Two such examples are Don Ihde (1991) and Albert Borgmann (1984, 2005).

⁴¹⁶ Martin Heidegger. *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), p. 21.

⁴¹⁷ Martin Heidegger. *What is a Thing?*, trans. W. B. Barton and V. Deutsch (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1967), p. 3.

⁴¹⁸ "All beings *presence already* in and through Being." *MN*, 109.

this entity-oriented and presence-based structure of thinking. Today, thus, Heidegger argues, Being happens to us technologically. The matter then is whether technology does justice to the essence of Being itself, to its truth, or distorts, elides and does not let it happen *as* itself. Obviously, the latter is the case as a growing threat, at least presently. It follows that the above mentioned danger is, in each case, strictly connected with metaphysics and nihilism as the inherent truth of technology.

Hence, we can never come to understand Heidegger's motivations and insights concerning technology, as long as we fail to appreciate the vital connections with the problem of metaphysics and nihilism. The objective of this chapter is, accordingly, to explore the dimensions of nihilism involved in the technological disclosure of beings, the technological view of the world, the technological relationship to Being. We raise the questions: In which sense is technology part and parcel of metaphysics and nihilism? Precisely wherein lies the nihilism of technology? How can we characterize the essence of technology so that what is nihilistic in it can be identified and encountered? To this end, we first examine Heidegger's setting the problem of technology from a being-historical point of view, in the middle-period writings (from the *Contributions to Metaphysics and Nihilism*). Thereafter, we proceed to investigate the ideas that connect technology, metaphysics and nihilism, ideas found in Heidegger's more mature later writings, principally "Die Frage nach der Technik". Finally, we explore the question of Being and the question concerning technology in terms of their question aspects, as regards the potentials of salvation found in thinking itself as questioning experience of Being. We, accordingly, argue that for Heidegger, in questioning, that is, in the appropriately comprehended sense of it, the whole essence of thinking is grounded, in such a way that the whole authentic potentials of thinking are bound up with thinking's developing itself into a full-fledged questioning. Inasmuch as the possibility of salvation from nihilism and of "getting-over" (*Verwindung*) metaphysics lies in cultivating the kind of thinking that is essential to being human (*besinnliches* or *wesentliches Denken*), questioning appears to be what activates and sustains this authentic essence of thinking. Granted that Heidegger's account of technology is amply discussed in the secondary literature, in what follows we directly focus on the essentials of our argument (about how the essence of technology is related to nihilism in its extreme sense) thus skimming over several issues pertinent to the legendary topic "Heidegger and technology".

In chapter 5, we characterized metaphysics as a productionist grand-scheme of beings as such and as a whole. Theology, as genuine philosophising, as the omniscient project upon beings, was the most general expression of this productionist model, according to which the supreme entity (*das Seiendste*) was the ultimate craftsman (*Demiurge* in Plato) or the absolute creator of beings (creation theory, Christianity). Building on the Greek and

medieval heritage, modern humanity takes this, step by step, to its uttermost realization: beings are increasingly projected in the light of limitless human mastery, planning, organization and production. Therefore, in the Western metaphysical tradition there is entrenched a definitive tendency to consider Being in terms of makeability or formability. Modern technology, roughly speaking, is the unfoldment of this understanding of Being as its climax, or in Heideggerian terminology, as its “end”.

In many occasions in *Metaphysik und Nihilismus*, Heidegger identifies technology with end (*das Ende*). End, as we discussed earlier, refers not to expiration, cessation or finish but to the final stage of consummation. According to Heidegger’s ‘epochal’ understanding of history (*Geschichte*), we live in the final epoch/dispensation/paradigm/destiny of the metaphysical history of the West. End thus is the final epoche of the history of Being as the culmination or concentration of the extreme potentials of metaphysics, and this Heidegger designates as the age of technology. Heidegger concisely points towards this: “technology (modern) and end (the nonessence of metaphysics)”⁴¹⁹. Technology, accordingly, corresponds to the end phase of the history of Being, to the extreme epoch of the manifestation and domination of metaphysics as the inessencing (*Unwesen*) of Being. Heidegger describes “end” still further: “End: the absolute hegemony of inessential happening (*Unwesen*) over essential happening (*Wesen*)”⁴²⁰. It also entails the unquestionedness of Being (*Fraglosigkeit des Seins*)⁴²¹ as underlying the fact that Being defaults (*ausbleibt*), does not happen essentially (*west*). Consequently, Heidegger sums up:

End-- the hegemony of nonessencing as abandonedness of beings by Being (this as refusal: clearing of Being); and as the forgottenness of Being: Being-historically conceived “nihilism”.⁴²²

Nihilism, in its true sense, i.e in its being-historical sense, a sense that lies in the ground of all nihilistic phenomena, signifies the manner in which Being shows up to historical humanity in which the essential meaning of Being (i.e its truth) is eclipsed and elided. In the full reign of technological disclosure of beings, such nihilism, such elision of Being from human comportment towards beings, in the sense of forgetfulness of Being, reaches a supremely critical intensity. Heidegger, in a somewhat futural tone, construes this technological epoch, the ultimate epoch of metaphysics, as regards the approaching of the eeriest possibility of world history: what is at stake is not *simply* the destruction of environment, or the extinction of species, or a world-wide grinding poverty or even ruthless

⁴¹⁹ *MN*, 37.

⁴²⁰ *MN*, 42.

⁴²¹ *MN*, 42.

⁴²² *MN*, 42.

techno-totalitarianisms (Orwell's nightmarish world in 1984), but something even more essential, namely the belonging-together of the human essence and the truth of Being itself, in which lies the possibility for both to be in their ownness. Indeed, Heidegger's account suggests that if nihilism wins the game, humans will lose their essence (humanity), their touch with Being itself, and thereby any possibility of meaningful occurrence of beings in a totally mechanized world. However, given that the game is not over yet, nihilism has not determined all ways of making sense of things yet, and thus there is still room to ponder and question about nihilism and especially about its most perfect form, technological nihilism, because even if modern technology as the extreme form of nihilism is a destiny for us, "such destiny is never a fate that compels"⁴²³. Rather in a destiny (*Geschick*) alone, as the ground of human historicity, we are granted freedom, that is to say freedom becomes meaningful, freedom in the sense of an (thinking, questioning and responsive) openness to the truth of such destiny. This possibility Heidegger interprets in terms of "developing a free relationship to the essence of technology"⁴²⁴. To this end, we have to first question "the essence of technology" ("which is in no way anything technological"⁴²⁵) as nihilism, i.e. as nihilistic *Lichtung* of Being. Nihilism, too, is at bottom a *Lichtung* (clearing, free space) of Being, a *Lichtung* in the light (but now actually, "in the darkness") of which truth happens (Being unconceals beings, things become intelligible to us in such-and-such a way). Today, happening of truth takes place through the key of machination. Nihilism more precisely here is that such happening leaves out the happening of Being's own truth. This means that disclosure happens basically as an enclosure. Technology drives out the truth of Being in the extreme and with this, the whole diversity and richness of disclosures of things, of meaningful occurrence of things, say, of the colors of the world withdraw into oblivion. Let us consider Heidegger's following remark:

Metaphysics as the truth of beings is, as such, as a whole the refused truth of Being itself (*Seyn*). Refusal is through and as Being itself. It in the extreme happens (*geschieht*) in the releasement of beings into the truth of machination.⁴²⁶

This passage says that technology is essential to modernity in the sense that it is the truth of modernity. Truth, in the rough terms, means the guiding framework of all intelligibility of

⁴²³ "Question Concerning Technology", trans. William Lovitt, in *BW*, 306. "Aber es ist nie das Verhängnis eines Zwanges". "Die Frage nach der Technik", in *VA*, 25-26.

⁴²⁴ "Wir fragen nach der *Technik* und möchten dadurch eine freie Beziehung zu ihr vorbereiten. Frei ist die Beziehung, wenn sie unser Dasein dem Wesen der Technik öffnet" (7). and "Wir fragen nach der Technik, um unsere Beziehung zu ihrem Wesen ans Licht zu heben" (24). See "Die Frage nach der Technik" in *VA*.

⁴²⁵ "... das Wesen der Technik ganz und gar nichts Technisches". "Die Frage nach der Technik" in *VA* 7.

⁴²⁶ *MN*, 99.

things. It follows that technology maps up the world for us, and entities (including our own selves and our fellow men) in the space of intelligibility of world technology opens and grounds are unconcealed only through technological perspective as technological potentialities. Our obsession to control and exploit things gives rise to the sway of a monochromous and thus nonessential understanding of Being (i.e nihilism).

It goes without saying that for Heidegger modern technology is nihilistic to the core. But Heidegger believes that the ancient (Greek) technology was not nihilistic in this sense. It was not nihilistic yet, because in ancient Greece it was not differentiated from art yet. Instead, it was intertwined with art, both having the same name, *techne*. This, however, does not alter the fact that modern technology has descended, in subtle ways, from Greek *techne*. Then we should investigate into the nihilism of modern technology, i.e into that which makes modern technology the most uncanny and radical form of nihilism, by way of taking into consideration the essential difference of this understanding of Being from the kind of understanding of Being which prevailed in the Greek poietic *techne* as well as its Being-historical roots in the same phenomenon.

Modern technology stands in an intimate connection with the Greek *techne* and this connection must be understood in a Being-historical (*seynsgeschichtlich*) way, i.e in terms of the unfoldment of metaphysics as Western tradition, as that “which gives the inner truth and necessity of modern technology”⁴²⁷. Then, to have a Being-historical grasp of modern technology means to explore its foundation in the Greek *techne*. Greeks understood Being as *physis* (emergence, radiation or presencing). *Physis* was something deeply mysterious for them, something provoking wonder. Thinking has gained its first impetus from this wonder about Being (*physis*), and wonder about Being has been sustained by the fact that *physis* loved to hide, was something un-concealing, that is, marked by *a-letheia*. But *physis* was above all *poiesis*, bringing-forth, bringing into presence. All forms of *poiesis* (from poetry, architecture, music to farming, medicine and politics, from blossoming of flowers, raining and snowing to the birth and growth of animals) were simply various fields or instances of *physis*, of say radiation and precensing of Being from a mysterious depth. Therefore, there could not be any dichotomy for the Greeks between the natural and the artifactual, that is, between *physis* and *techne*, both of which were *poiesis*, bringing-forth, bringing something concealed into unconcealment. Everything seemed to belong to *physis*, to nature. Now, man’s function which is required in the case of *techne* was only a tocolological one, one of abetting bringing-forth. As far as *techne* is concerned, in Richard Roycewicz’s words, “human hand is merely the midwife’s hand.”⁴²⁸

⁴²⁷ *MN*, 149.

⁴²⁸ Richard Roycewicz. *The Gods and Technology: A Reading of Heidegger* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 66.

Nevertheless, Heidegger argues that *techne*, in the late Greek age, has played a crucial part in the transformation (and collapse) of *a-letheia* into *homoiosis*, of unconcealment into correctness. Precisely here, in this transformation, lies the process of degeneration of *techne* into technology, of the role of humans, with respect to *physis*, from abettors to imposers. Heidegger, in *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, holds that *techne* in any case involves a course of activity against *physis* “so as to retain the holding sway of *physis* in unconcealedness”⁴²⁹. This always runs the risk of *techne*’s turning into a drive to render *physis* a permanent disclosure. And this is just what has happened. Accordingly, both in Plato and Aristotle *techne* is a special and distinguished mode of knowledge (*sophia*), a know-how, practical knowledge used to produce or build something, and used in the processes against beings, i.e against *physis*. For Plato, it is “knowledge pure and simple”⁴³⁰. For Aristotle, the highest mode of disclosure (*aletheuein*), the genuine understanding, the supreme level of human existence is “the *arete* of *techne*”⁴³¹. Thus, *techne* as a practical mastery following from a practical grasp of the processes of nature is the *teleosis* of philosophical knowledge, and as such the intrinsic end of all metaphysics in the form of a technological hegemony over entities.

We observe that Heidegger thinks that *techne* in ancient Greece is situated in a delicate position in relation to *physis*. On the one hand, it is a mode of bringing-forth, a disclosure, an assistant of *physis*. It is accordingly required by *physis* itself “as the occurrence and establishment of the unconcealedness of beings”⁴³². It was nourished by a fundamental comportment towards such *physis*, i.e wonder which then thoroughly pervades Greek way of thinking. But more importantly, wonder as a thinking-questioning attitude towards Being itself (*physis*) was the primordial need, that is, the indispensable need of thinking that has been historically experienced in the first beginning. On the other hand, as indicated, it has a precarious potential to fall outside such wonder. In other words, the risk and danger involved in *techne* is that it might cover over *physis* and *a-letheia* by way of permanentizing the disclosure of Being, thus coming to perceive it as a constant presence. *Techne*, with the wonder of *physis* and *a-letheia*, goes to entities, but it may grow stuck in the ontic projects and therefore it may be increasingly difficult for it to come back to Being itself from entities. The danger then is the loss of wonder, of the primordial need, and the resulting needlessness. Absorbed in the ontic projects and standards, *techne* can easily lose its measure coming from Being itself, that is, revealed in wonder, and turn into a measureless relation to beings. With

⁴²⁹ *BQP*, 155.

⁴³⁰ *BQP*, 154.

⁴³¹ See, Martin Heidegger. *Plato’s Sophist*, trans. Richard Roycewicz and Andre Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 39-40 and 47. See also R. Roycewicz’s *The Gods and Technology*, pp. 57-66.

⁴³² *BQP*, 155.

the loss of essence (i.e. need, wonder), *techne*'s losing its measure goes together. "In the essence of *techne*... there lies the possibility of arbitrariness, of an unbridled positing of goals and thereby the possibility of escape out of the necessity of the primordial need."⁴³³ As discussed earlier, Heidegger understands need (*Not*) as the highest and pure need of thinking, as that which is definitive of being human. Obviously, the kind of thinking which is need for us, in the full sense of the word, but which has been forgotten in Western tradition (because of the sway of metaphysics), is nothing other than thinking *of* Being as a thoughtful standing before its question. *Techne* as a disclosive relation to *physis* is the chief reason for driving thinking outside its defining and essential domain and turning it into a ground-plan of entities, i.e. into metaphysics. With *techne*'s covering over *physis*, not only *physis* is lost but also the original essence of *techne* as something inspired by wonder about *physis*, thus as assistant of *physis*, as abetter of revelation of Being, falls into oblivion. *Techne* becomes a heedless ordering, arrangement and manipulation of beings. In this sense, it prepares machination "which fosters what is *not* ownmost to Being."⁴³⁴

Nevertheless, the Greek *techne*, even in the late Greek age, was not an explicitly nihilistic relationship with Being and thus not an explicitly nihilistic engagement with beings. It was not motivated to overwhelm and plunder entities. It was not a calculative or use-committed approach to beings. The Greek (or any traditional) peasant's occupation with nature did not harm it. Ancient craftsmen or artisans (e.g. a ship-builder, a shoemaker, an architect, a potter) had a respectful distance towards nature (or *physis*), for nature disclosed itself to them in an awesome depth and wondrous mystery. So they felt themselves responsible to nature for what they are doing and making with nature. Producing something, bringing forth and about something (e.g. a temple), as a midwifery for *poiesis*, or the natural emergence of things in nature (e.g. blossoming of a rose) involved being responsible and were explained in terms of responsibility. That is to say, causes (*aitia*) of things were ways of being responsible for these things. To explain the presence of something was to explain what is responsible for its coming about as such-and-such, and in turn to what it owes (*verschuldet*) this. Aristotle formulated four such ways as an exhaustive explanatory framework for any phenomenon, i.e. for the coming of anything concealed into unconcealment. For a finished temple, for instance, not only the architect but also the stone, the end of its employment, and the shape it is projected to have were all responsible at the same time in a fourfold unity. At bottom, the point was that Greeks understood *techne* as assisting *poiesis*, thus as subservient to *physis* which, clearly, refers to a critical human role, but not to its dominance or centrality. Accordingly, causing something meant "giving

⁴³³ *BQP*, 155.

⁴³⁴ *CP*, 88.

occasion” (*Ver-an-lassen*) to it which entailed in turn being responsible for that which is given occasion.

What is more, they saw their work as part of nature. A temple did not infringe upon the natural beauty of its environment or did not stick out as offensive to it. Rather it shone with respect to its environment. This was so even if Greek philosophy, with Plato and Aristotle, came to consider the excellence of *techne*, i.e practical knowledge as means to mastery in natural processes, as the ultimate point of knowledge of things. Aristotle distinguishes between *techne* and *episteme* as modes of knowing only in terms of how and what they reveal, a distinguishing that keeps them linked, not apart.⁴³⁵ It follows that in the onset of metaphysics *techne* and *episteme* have been understood as standing in a special relation of completing each other. Both were, in the final analysis, demands for absolute disclosure of beings, for bringing beings under the constancy of a presence-centred vision. Heidegger’s account implies that only after two millenia we have come face to face with the full implications of thus conceived *techne* as concrete historical conditions of modernity, i.e as machine-based ordering of beings. The Greek practice of *techne* itself (and all practices of *techne* in pre-modern societies), apart from the philosophical formulations of *techne* in the Greek metaphysics that has prepared and underpinned modern technology, remained an instance of bringing-forth as fourfold occasioning, and thus was not yet under the spell of the nihilism of this metaphysics. If one reason for this is that what is projected by metaphysics was not possible for the age to realize, the other is that Greeks, unlike moderns, were not power-driven subjects (yet), and to them things did not appear in the key of power. Thus Heidegger writes in the *Contributions*: “since at the time of the first beginning *physis* is disempowered, *machination* does not yet become fully manifest in its ownmost.”⁴³⁶ We might say *Machenschaft* requires a Nietzschean type of humanity, a humanity gripped by *Wille zur Macht*.

Heidegger suggests that technology as the essential swaying of entitiness (*Wesung der Seiendheit*) dominates the whole history of Being from Plato up to Nietzsche as a *telos* of this process. Consequently, it has its full actuality in the modern technology. This suggests that metaphysics, nihilism and technology are at bottom the same things which have unfolded as the history of Being in western philosophy and as the ground of western history. Indeed, if technology is the *telos* of the history of Being, then it must be early in a different, but more fundamental, sense than being early in a chronological sense. Accordingly, Heidegger is convinced that “that which is primally early shows itself only ultimately to

⁴³⁵ See “Die Frage Nach der Technik” in *VA*, 14-15: “Question Concerning Technology” in *BW*, 294-5.

⁴³⁶ *CP*, 88.

men”⁴³⁷.

Therefore, modern technology, in so far as it is not *techne* any more, has a certain novelty which constitutes its nihilism. But, first, we should note that modern technology, too, is a revelation of Being, a mode of revealing things (*Entbergen*), a disclosive engagement with beings, hence a way of understanding what it means for something to be. Yet, as opposed to the Greek *techne*, the mode of revealing that is definitive for modern technology is not *poiesis*, not bringing-forth (*Her-vor-stellen*) which entails “fourfold occasioning”. Rather it is challenging forth (*Heraus-fordern*). Challenging-forth beings proceeds through setting-upon (*Hinstellen*) them by putting to them an aggressive demand that they release all that is treasured in them i.e the energies, and be completely orderable. Technology sets upon and challenges forth beings in order to extract the energies concealed in them through complete orderability (*Bestellbarkeit*). As Heidegger indicates “air is set upon to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium. Uranium is set upon to yield atomic energy, which can be released for destruction or peaceful use. The setting-upon which challenges forth energies of nature is a ravishing (*fördern*) in a double sense. It ravishes in that it unlocks and exposes... driving to the maximum yield at the minimum cost.”⁴³⁸

This involves a technological chain: technological understanding of Being leads to (1) challenging forth and setting upon beings, (2) unlocking the energies found in them which are then (3) transformed (4) stored up (5) distributed (6) made available to immediate use and consumption at will. As a result, the mode of revealing which determines technology has the form of regulating and securing. For technological revelation of Being, entities reveal as resources of energy, resources (1) which, whenever willed, need to be immediately and constantly on hand for use, (2) to be infinitely ordered, exploited and manipulated. In other words, beings make sense in terms of their potential for economic-technological value (i.e power), that means in terms of “resources” (*Bestand*).

Heidegger’s argument implies that in the earlier epochs, too, Being was unconcealed/ concealed, in a sense, as resource. One sense among many other senses of manifold sense of Being was resource. However, what is unique to the modern age is the fact that in it such unconcealment of beings occurs in such a way that it reveals beings purely as resources and as nothing else. The only meaning of entities appears in their projectedness as resource. Things appear as nothing but resources such that there remains no other dimension to them other than that. In other words, modern technology does not allow, more and more, what is natural (*physika*) to come into Being: rather, it, itself, seeks to impose form. Modern in-formation has its truth in this drive. This form, being-historically, finds its roots, as

⁴³⁷ “Question Concerning Technology” in *BW*, 303. “Jenes, was hinsichtlich des waltenden Aufgehens früher ist, wird uns Menschen erst später offenkundig.” “Die Frage Nach der Technik” in *VA*, 23.

⁴³⁸ “Die Frage nach der Technik” in *VA*, 18-19.

indicated, in Platonic (*eidōs*) and Aristotelian (*morphe*) metaphysical reflections, which were, thus, basically “form-ulations”.

We should also note that technological unconcealment of beings is something into which we, moderns, are thrown as the way things appear and make sense to us: it is in no way in our hands to break the sway of technology, because it is the swaying (*Wesung*) of Being *as* entitiness. We today hear the call and claim of unconcealment (i.e. of Being) as a technological claim, as a call to unconceal things technologically, in the light of technological possibilities of use or exploitation. It is in this context that Heidegger writes: “We name that challenging claim which gathers men thither to order the self-revealing as resource (*Bestand*) – *Ge-stell* .”⁴³⁹ In short, Heidegger calls the technological understanding of Being (i.e. “the essence of technology”) *Gestell*. Put in different terms, *Gestell* is the nihilism constituting the essence of modern technology, that is, the disclosure of Being as self-closure.

Consequently, according to Heidegger, modern technology as different from Greek *techne* (and from all sorts of traditional craftsmanships) is nihilistic principally because of its *Gestell* character. *Gestell*, in this sense, designates the understanding and disclosure of Being that determines modern technology as a whole. Heidegger sometimes employs this term with hyphen, as *Ge-stell*, in order to suggest that it designates “the gathering unity of all ways of positing”⁴⁴⁰ (*Stellen*, e.g. *Bestellen*, *Herstellen*, *Darstellen*, *Vorstellen*, *Hinstellen*) as forms of as-assertive⁴⁴¹ human positions, *vis-a-vis* Being itself. *Gestell* places a violent claim on entities, challenges them to yield what is found in them in the form of an attack, entraps and ravishes them. This is sharply contrasted with the Greek *techne* which only abets “bringing-forth” as a fourfold occasioning. So *Gestell* does not bring forth, rather it challenges forth. In all this process, a calculative approach remains essential to guarantee the efficiency of technological conduct. *Gestell* is a calculative mind in full operation, a calculatively ordered-up world for the requirements of technological horizon, a world marked by a resource-character.

A critical facet of the nihilism of modern technology (*Gestell*) consists in its violent character. Arbitrariness of *Gestell*, (i.e. its lacking measure in its relation to entities, a measure that functions to preserve the essence of things, their reference to Being, and makes man guardian of beings) involves an unconstrained violence. Indeed, it is a systematically violent approach to entities. Under the violence of technological drive, entities show themselves only one-dimensionally (that is, as indicated, as infinitely manipulatable

⁴³⁹ “Question Concerning Technology” in *BW*, 301: “Die Frage nach der Technik” in *VA*, 23.

⁴⁴⁰ *Four Seminars*, 60.

⁴⁴¹ Note that assert, a Latin word, comes from *certus* which means settle, put or set and corresponds thus to German *stellen*. *Certus* also connects assertion (proposition as the unique locus of truth) and certitude (truth as complete certainty), which underlies subjectivistic self-assertiveness of man in modern times and modern technology (*Ge-stell*) as its eventual form.

resources and raw materials) viz. only as useful entities for promoting human power, and therefore other possibilities of unconcealment, indeed the most authentic possibilities of disclosure of Being remain occluded. It seems that *Gestell* as a comportment to beings is possible only after beings have lost their intrinsic importance (i.e their thingness or *Ringsein*) by being mere materials for endless manipulation.

This aggression upon beings starts from, is rooted in and rests on man's self-aggression. Man himself views himself (as well as his fellow men) as a potentiality of resources to be taken under control for unbounded exploitation and manipulation. It is unbounded because "the will to power" is intrinsically restricted by no bounds. To think that technology refers to that kind of seeing things, and of doing and making them in which humans refer to rational subjects for whom objects stand over there as resources to be manipulated, also misses the point. Because, in the light of *Gestell*, human beings, too, appear as resources. Indeed, human beings (as "human resources") become most important raw material.

Heidegger further notes "the greater the challenging of nature, the greater the challenge man imposes upon himself."⁴⁴² To understand what is said here one should, first of all, see that man is part of nature. Put in a different way, man, too, is a field of *physis*. Technology as that sort of knowledge which guides man's dealings with the processes of nature in a way enthralled by a control over them guides in turn man's self-relatedness because it embodies, at the most fundamental level, a disclosure of Being, an understanding of Being. Man's relationship to beings in the light of *Gestell* (as, at bottom, a relationship with Being) does inextricably throw back as man's relation to himself, as a self-disclosure. Man relates to himself technologically, understands *himself* merely as a stockpile of energy to be mastered, exploited and consumed for getting ever more power. Entrapped in the language of power and in an endless straining for ever more power, man might lose altogether the ability to listen (*zuhören*) or even to hear (*hören*) the silent voice of Being, to respond to its claim (*Anspruch*), and therefore cease to belong (*gehören*) to Being itself as its essential abode. This is tantamount to a destruction of human essence as a belongingness (*Zugehörigkeit*) to Being, that is, as thinking, since thinking (*Denken*) is, above all, a listening (*Zuhören*) openness to Being. This might, at first sight, sound strange. In fact, Heidegger here is speaking of our distinction from animals, and of the challenge of *Gestell* to destroy such distinction. *Gestell* effaces the insight of thinking into the revealedness of beings, into a being *as* a being by making calculation the only dimension of thinking. Thinking under the frenetic rule of calculative approach to beings which *Gestell* demands becomes less and less able to hear the silent call of Being, and even less able to respond to its

⁴⁴² *Four Seminars*, 75.

needful claim. Animalization is precisely this that man ceasing to stand in the open, and towards the claim, of Being comes to relate to himself only in terms of his/her biological functions (*Leben*). It is a state of “not standing within a manifestness of beings”⁴⁴³, a state of lack of receptivity for the disclosure of Being (i.e for meaning). Nihilism as the spectre of animalization embodied in *Gestell*, in this sense, is the gravest danger, a danger of losing the human essence as a *Lichtung* for the truth of Being, i.e as the unique site of meaning endowed to us, humans.

To return to the violence of *Gestell*. Heidegger sometimes uses the word *Fördern* in order to indicate the sort of violence which characterizes modern technology. W. Lowitt, the translator of “Die Frage nach der Technik”, renders *Fördern* in several ways as “expedite”, “extract”, “put out”, “haul out”, “dispatch”, “exploit”. Yet Heidegger’s usage implies a more forceful sense of *Fördern* in which modern technology attacks entities and nature on all sides in order to extract and plunder boundlessly their treasures, and doing this with an extreme harshness and heedlessness. *Fördern*, in Heidegger’s sense, means to devastate things, to turn them into wastes, to ravage what is their ownmost, to strip of their possession, to despoil them as in a warfare, to rape dishonorably and to leave barren and desolate. In this context, R. Roycewicz proposes “ravishing” as an appropriate equivalent of *Fördern*.⁴⁴⁴ Ravishing is that sort of violence in which the essence of something is violated, that is, something is given an essential harm. An animal is violated when one sees and orders it only as a milk resource, or only as a meat resource. Someone is violated when s/he is taken only as labour resource. Things are violated (lose their “thingness”, relation or reference to Being) when they are considered (become open to us, disclosed) merely as materials to be manipulated and exploited, i.e merely as resources. If something is ravished, is given an essential harm, it loses its essence, can no longer present itself to us in its ownmost as radiating Being.

Ravishing then is the nihilistic reduction of things to sheer material. It is very much similar to destroying a masterpiece, say Picasso’s *Guernica*, in order to extract chemicals from this painting. In this case, the world of meaning which is disclosed in its richness in this painting is simply lost. To think technologically, to act under the spell of *Gestell*, that is, to look at nature as a totality of material means that we look at *Guernica* and see it as a piece of stuff, potentially to be made use of. The next step, certainly, would be “ravishing” it for its material. True. A painting is also a piece of stuff, but this is only one dimension of it, and

⁴⁴³ *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, p. 248. In this study Heidegger provides a detailed discussion of animal’s difference from man, of, what he calls, “*Weltarmut*” of animals. See, part 2, pp. 165-360. For Heidegger’s developing this theme of difference between man and animal, the former’s standing with understanding in the open and thereby receiving the disclosure of Being, differentiating between Being and beings, responding to the un-concealedness of Being and the latter’s lacking any comportment towards *a-letheia*, see *Parmenides* (GA 54), pp. 225-243.

⁴⁴⁴ See, R. Roycewicz, *The Gods and Technology*, pp. 78-80.

obviously the poorest one. Accordingly, nihilism of *Gestell* involves the poorest disclosure of world, pure privation of its richness. For a thinking which can appreciate the intrinsic worth of a great painting as something never reducible to its material constituents, the above kind of perspective upon paintings would seem extremely thoughtless and horrible. By the same token, *Gestell* and its ravishing nature would mean but utter nihilism for a thinking of Being. Just as a painting can never be reduced to its material constituents, Being can never be reduced to beings. Metaphysics, as Heidegger argues, is guilty of the latter, and to this extent, it is the source of all nihilism, including the intrinsic nihilism of technology. If we need a different kind of thinking to do justice to a painting, as an artwork, a thinking which can take the peculiar “leap” into the meaning dimension of it, then we, as far as Being is concerned, need a different way of thinking which avoids reducing Being to beings, that is, can take Being as absolutely central. Heidegger, in this sense, wants us to look at nature as an artwork, i.e a disclosure of Being, which is fairly different from the way in which technology and science represents nature (as a totality of resources to be subjected to immediate and constant use or a totality of calculable forces). I will return to this.

This one-dimensional resource-based revelation of the world (*Gestell*) is directly connected with an understanding of Being, as a destining of Being, in which the world cannot show up as the world which it is, but only as a one-dimensional totality (“darkening of the world”). As Julian Young puts it: “Violation or setting upon is in one way or another, to one degree or another, preventing something being (or becoming) what it is”⁴⁴⁵. The world subjected to the ravishing and setting-upon by technology (*Gestell*) is prevented to become what it is, losing its colors and dimensions as the place/site (*topos*) for the temporal interplay of the un-concealment of Being. Technology is urged towards providing us a maximum of comfort, luxury and security but this comes only at the price of an extremely impoverished world (e.g “a gigantic petrol station”⁴⁴⁶).

Technological violence points towards a power-driven humanity. Power obtained through subjugating and exploiting beings functions, in turn, further fueling the quest for ever more power, that is, ever more ravishing beings, and devastating the earth. It is however entirely doubtful whether this power makes man more powerful or renders him a mere servant used up in the technological processes. Besides, one should also question whether thinking of man’s relation to itself and to other entities (and, at bottom, to Being itself) in terms of power does correspond to the essence of this relationship or drives it outside the essential realm of this relationship. Also to be questioned is the illusive essence of power as covering over the radical powerlessness of man, his essential need *of* Being. In any case,

⁴⁴⁵ Julian Young. *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 52.

⁴⁴⁶ *DT*, 50.

being-historically thought, this urge for power through technological violence, this technological violence, is already thought and grounded in Nietzsche's metaphysics of "will to power". Nietzsche's ideal of man, *Übermensch*, power-seeking animal, is here at work at the very core of technological understanding of Being, and at the consequent technological relationship to beings. What is inherent in technological nihilism, thus, is the prejudice that man is the lord of the earth, of all beings with a legitimate right to infinitely exploit and manipulate the earth; a prejudice, which, for Heidegger, is the consistent outcome of metaphysical conception of man, initiated by Plato, as the ground of reality and of truth. Only now, with the global development of technology, the tyrannic essence of rational animal and of subject as central to nihilism appears concretely.

Ge-stell then emerges as the need and drive, on the side of man, for a complete ordering of entities: things, systematically ordered, can now be systematically (that is, perfectly and boundlessly) exploited. It wants to put everything into an unfailing order most suitable for machination-based production. *Ge-stell* as the technological disclosure of Being, (as the way Being shows up in the age of technology as the technological intelligibility of beings, and thus the way beings are disclosed to us and we understand them as a whole, including principally "ourselves", and relate to them) is not itself technological; it is a dispensation/destiny of Being. As the last upshot of metaphysical ratiocination, it is the central phenomenon of nihilism, the rule of what is not ownmost to Being, of Being in default.

To sum up, in the world of meaning that technology involves and brings about, a distinctive kind of understanding of Being prevails, and paradigmatically determines our access to things; entities are understood as potential raw materials, as resources to be subjected to machination and as "values" in the light of maximum exploitation. Humans even are disclosed as "human resources", i.e. in terms of the calculative worth their abilities might provide. This rush for plundering beings, and above all, human beings, is driven to get ever more power, an endless quest, a mania for power and control which Nietzsche's metaphysics had already grounded for the spirit of the age. But with this tyranny over nature, what is concealed is the fact that man, in search of an absolute dominion over nature, paradoxically, ends up being a tool and servant of technological process. This is fairly opposed to the naive assumption that machines serve us and we use technology for human purposes and to make life easier: rather the danger in technology is that it is not machines that serve us, but we, humans that ultimately end up as servants of machines.

This servanthship, on the other hand, finds its justification and expression in the sublimation of "working" (*Arbeit*) in the modern world. Heidegger, at some point, in *Zu Ernst Jünger*, raises a question concerning the origin of "industrial worker". Ernst Jünger,

too, as a follower of Nietzsche, is cognizant of the totalitarian character of the technological age (under the rubric, “*totale Mobilmachung*”), but he, unlike Heidegger, welcomes this as a positive occurrence. For Heidegger, an understanding of historical place and essence of (industrial) worker is inseparable from the rise of machine-based production and from the context of mechanization as an ontological phenomenon. This, of course, in turn requires an investigation into the ontological, the being-historical essence of technology. Man’s essence in this technological world is determined as “worker”, i.e. as “technicized animal”, “working animal”⁴⁴⁷, “means of production, made cheap because of hunger”⁴⁴⁸. With this essential determination man only serves for machines, becomes subject to an inhumanization asserting itself through and through as the fundamental demands of mechanization. However, domination of mechanization and man’s consequent slavery, as worker, for the technological process, and man’s increasing alienation to his own essence (i.e. the free space for the unconcealment of Being, and, as such, the carer for beings) is presented to us as progress (*Fortschritt*).⁴⁴⁹ This metaphysical (technological, modern) understanding of progress is not progress at all, because, in and through this progress, “human *essence* ... becomes tinier and emptier, forgets itself”⁴⁵⁰. Hence, working becomes man’s essential quality, man ends up, above all else, as “that which works”. Heidegger notes

Not that he works for the machine, but rather that the machine as “that which works” transforms the essence of worker, indeed it turns out to be “that which works”.⁴⁵¹

Working becomes so central in the modern life that it comes to designate, for the modern man, the way Being *is*, governs the sense Being has to have: *Werk—Wirken—wirklich—Wirklichkeit*. Then, even in *Wirklichkeit*, the German word for *energeia* and *actualitas*, which has emerged and been common in the late middle and early modern age, echoes the destiny of Being as technology. In the late modern age, this absolutized will of working refers to a straining (*Anstrengung*) for total mobilization of the world. World, meanwhile, has become “the world of work”, i.e. a world in which work has come to be understood as the most fundamental necessity.⁴⁵² In other words, world has been the arena of power shaped up by the pre-eminence of technologically conditioned understanding of working. Working thus absolutized is everywhere in the service of technology, and represents a slavery to the unbounded self-assertion of technological will. Heidegger writes:

⁴⁴⁷ “Überwindung der Metaphysik” in *VA*, 70, 71.

⁴⁴⁸ *EJ*, 108.

⁴⁴⁹ See, *EJ*, 158-162.

⁴⁵⁰ *EJ*, 161.

⁴⁵¹ *EJ*, 118.

⁴⁵² See, *EJ*, 54.

In the modern times (*neuzeitlich*) the essence of working (*das Wesen der Arbeit*) is determined from out of metaphysical essence of technology (*Technik*), which is to say, from out of Metaphysics—History of Being; not that how is work, so is actuality—but that how is Being, so is the essence of work (nicht wie die “Arbeit”—so die “Wirklichkeit”—sondern: wie das Sein—so das Wesen der Arbeit).⁴⁵³

This thoughtless cult of work, in the modern technological age, is so pervasive that man (“the worker”) stands in danger of losing touch with Being, with that which grants the world, the clearing for work, i.e the world of work.

And the danger is:

That the forgetfulness of Being which is distinctive for metaphysics and characterizes metaphysics in an absolute way, now first becomes truly consolidated and only the actual, the entity is seen and participation (activity) is pursued.

That the ground and the truth of this actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) becomes more and more unaccessible.⁴⁵⁴

According to Heidegger, modern science, too, is part of this technological nihilism. “Science does not think”⁴⁵⁵, because it thinks technologically, that is, it moves in and through the truth of technology, possible only on the basis of a prior technological projection and revelation of nature. Calculative thinking of science happens in and serves for the horizon of technology. Technology as the horizon of scientific practice and of theoretical science is its *telos*, and in this sense, prior to all sciences. All scientific practice, Heidegger intimates, is always done with a view to a possible application, i.e with a view to its technological implementation and results. Clearly, technology is not applied science, rather the opposite is true. We should, however, avoid boiling down science to technology. Even though science is dependent on technology (in that it can operate only in the light of technological projection of possibilities) and technology has priority over science, technology needs science.⁴⁵⁶ Science and technology, in this sense, belong to one another, and, as all things belonging to one another, cannot be reduced to one another, but cannot either be thought apart from one another.

⁴⁵³ *EJ*, 109.

⁴⁵⁴ *EJ*, 75.

⁴⁵⁵ *WCT*, 8.

⁴⁵⁶ “Today’s sciences belong in the realm of the essence of modern technology, and nowhere else.” In *WCT*, 14.

In this context, Heidegger, in some of his writings dating from 1940s and 1950s discusses the nihilistic disappearance or nonappearance of “thing” from the modern world, under the impact of technological and scientific relation to the world. Let us briefly examine this in order to see the extent in which metaphysics (science and technology) fosters a nihilistic relation to our essential engagement with meaning (things), involving a nihilistic reduction of things to mass of calculable forces (and at bottom, to resources) to be represented. Science does not (and, indeed, *cannot*) take things in their authentic import as part of our meaningful engagement with the world. According to Heidegger, a “thing” gathers the world as the fourfold (*das Geviert*) of sky, earth, mortals and gods and recalls us our belonging to it in a disclosive dwelling. Our belonging to our social world, for instance, is implicitly conveyed in our relation to things and found in the inherent meaning of things. A jug, for example, (Heidegger’s own example in his essay, “*Das Ding*”) has among others a historical-communal meaning, thus gathers and embodies our social and communal practices. Things thus are irreducible. For science, by contrast, nothing is irreducible: things are the composition of molecules and atoms, lacking any intrinsic worth and significance, except for that revealed in technological projection. Heidegger thinks that scientific representation takes us afar from the thingliness of things: no matter how much we reflect scientifically on a thing, we are denied any understanding of its thingliness, i.e its essence, which means we ineluctably lose sight of its essential (“meaningful”) character. To illustrate, the void in the jug is essential for the jug, for its functioning and being a jug; yet, scientifically considered, that void is simply nil, or at best a mass of air. The sort of representation that scientific thinking involves removes altogether from consideration the world of meaning which a jug as a thing stands for, a world of meaning which Heidegger denotes as the radical unity of the fourfold. This world of meaning makes possible, for us, standing there a jug, that is, our relationship to this jug. In fact, a jug as a thing to be a jug that it is must bring together and become an embodiment of earth, sky, the mortals and the divinities, that is, a complex but unitary background world of meaning, a fact which we rarely come to notice or pay heed while owing to it our understanding of things. When one deals with a jug, all these interpenetrated elements come to be in interplay, or in mirror-play. A jug discloses the world and belongs to it, “world” here, predictably, refers to the world of meaning (as described in *Being and Time*). This sense of world is wholly lost to science, and not only to science but to metaphysics in its whole history from which sciences historically descend. What is more, scientific and technological understanding of things today poses a danger of entirely wiping out this sense of world.

World as unitary and historical space of meaning, within which man dwells, encounters entities, and receives the sense of Being, this world Heidegger later comes to call

Lichtung, the essential site of man's relatedness to Being, of the un-concealment of Being, i.e. "das Offene für alles An- und Ab-wesende"⁴⁵⁷. As indicated, Heidegger also conceives of it as human essence.⁴⁵⁸ Heidegger qualifies it as that which is nearer than everything nearest ("seine 'Nähe', näher als jedes Nächste"⁴⁵⁹) i.e. nearness pure and simple. In this sense, it follows, the question concerning the essence of things involves the question of nearness as well as the question of human essence. So, "The question of 'what is a thing?' is the question 'who is man?'"⁴⁶⁰ Heidegger wants to uncover the original sense of thing. Thing in many of the western languages (*eiro, res, causa, dinc, chose, thing*) is originally not a neutral term for present-at-hand entities, but actually denotes an engaged concern for meaning. It gives the senses; that which is the case, what is pertinent, a matter, an affair, something that bears upon man etc.⁴⁶¹ But, ontologically thought, a thing is the gathering of the world as man's meaning-related essence. Thing things: thing gathers the world. Then, just as a thing gathers in itself the world of meaning, and precisely because of its gathering the intimate unity of the fourfold in mirror-playing, it can have any signification it has for us, that is, can be a "place" in the world, or better, in J. Stambough's words, "the meeting place"⁴⁶². Indeed, Heidegger wants us to think of "things themselves as places, and not merely belonging to a place."⁴⁶³ Place (*Ort*) in Heidegger is just the open or the moment for the disclosure of Being, an embodiment of meaning, and thus with an essential bearing upon our human essence.

A thing as a place then instantiates the contextual totality of the world in the open of which man dwells and can receive the disclosure of Being, can stand with respect to Being, i.e. can be granted his humanity. Consequently, a thing is a manifestation of nearness, to which, Heidegger holds, we fail to give thought due to the sway of scientific-technological representation. In this case, a thing cannot function as nearing the world as a fourfold unity of meaningful presence of things. We, in the distancelessness of technological age, remain removed from the real (that is, "thingly") sense of nearness (as well as of farness). In fine, we remain homeless, because this nearness of things as the site of gathering (*Versammlung*) and as the site of embodiment of remembrance (*Gedächtnis*) is the real site of human dwelling. It is in this sense that we can interpret Heidegger's view that the plight of modernity is, in the first place, man's homelessness⁴⁶⁴ and that "Heimatlosigkeit wird ein

⁴⁵⁷ "the open for anything absent and present" *SD*, 72.

⁴⁵⁸ See, for example, *MN*, 222-223.

⁴⁵⁹ *MN*, 43.

⁴⁶⁰ *What is a Thing?*, 244.

⁴⁶¹ See "The Thing", in *PLT*, 174-176.

⁴⁶² Joan Stambough. *Thoughts on Heidegger* (Washington, D.C: University Press of America, 1991), p. 141.

⁴⁶³ "Die Kunst und der Raum" in *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* (GA 13), p. 208.

⁴⁶⁴ "Bauen Wohnen Denken" in *VA*, 161.

Weltschicksal.”⁴⁶⁵ The theme of homelessness then must be understood as another metaphor for nihilism. In the modern world, man is homeless, not because of economic poverty or shortage of houses, but rather because of the fact that nihilism holds sway (as *Gestell*). *Gestell* by fostering a mindlessness of Being makes it impossible for us any authentic relation to place, any thoughtful standing-out (ek-sistence) towards what is. Moreover, place has already evaporated into the sterility of space as a technologically-scientifically constructed physical mass. Home, as suggested, is not a physical place, but the essential realm of meaning, that is, of man’s belongingness and relatedness to Being, which is in turn appropriated in essential thinking in which Being essentially happens and brings man into his “own”. Put differently, man’s own essence (which is nothing human) as the open (*Ortschaft*, *Lichtung*, *Da-sein*, *das Offene*) for the un-concealment (truth) of Being is man’s home, the site where man is “himself”, provided that it is appropriated (and thus grounded) through an essential thinking, which is the thinking *of* Being.

A thing (e.g a painting, a jug) is the place of remembrance (*Gedächtnis*), of the gathering of thought, and as such, re-calls us where we essentially belong to, that is, our home as humans, with the proviso that we give thought to this silent call embodied in things, which becomes more and more difficult due to the spell of representing entities in the light of scientific precision and technological control. We above discussed the scientific approach to *Guernica*, Picasso’s famous painting, and drew attention to its violent and destructive potentials or implications (i.e its nihilism) for the essence of *Guernica* as an embodiment of a world of meaning disclosed in that work (e.g the human sufferings in the WW2). For science, there is, in principle, no difference between *Guernica* and its chemical-physical composition. Indeed, this misses everything essential to *Guernica*, that is, its “thingliness”, its being an event of un-concealment. Just as *Guernica* is a thing, an event of nearness, an embodiment of remembrance, all beings are things that mean more than their material, stand for the embodiment of shining forth of Being (as the temporal interplay of the fourfold). Hence they are things we need to preserve within a thoughtful care. Consequently, it is in this sense that “man is the shepherd of Being”⁴⁶⁶, employed in the guardianship (*Wächterschaft*) of *a-letheia*, that is, of beings *as* things, (in which the truth *of* Being needs to be preserved), those beings which thus arise as “impetus to the question-worthiness of Being”⁴⁶⁷, show up in radiance. For the technological projection of science, by contrast, beings come to the area of vision in such a dull overcastness, withdraw into such a muted lifelessness that they could be considered only as resources.

Therefore, science serves ultimately for the intensification of the metaphysical

⁴⁶⁵ “Homelessness becomes a world-destiny.” “Brief Über den Humanismus” in *WM*, 339.

⁴⁶⁶ “Brief Über den Humanismus” *WM*, 342.

⁴⁶⁷ *M*, 310: *B*, 348.

oblivion of things, of nihilism, in that it, as part of technology, tacitly denies any authentic meaning to things, “empties” things. Accordingly, in our technological epoch, no “thing” is indispensable, rather “to be is to be replaceable”⁴⁶⁸. Quine’s assertion “to be is to be the value of a variable”⁴⁶⁹ seems to be an elegant restatement of this bleak thoughtlessness. In that case, the exactness of calculation would suffice to ground what it means for something to be. Being makes sense then only as the calculability of the quantifiable. Calculation moves in the horizon of certainty, predictability and control of beings, thus is part of the perspective of *Gestell*. Calculation still cannot have any understanding of the thinghood of things, for thinghood simply vanishes into thin air the moment it is presumed to be something calculable. A jug or a ring discloses a world (of remembrance) to you when you thoughtfully stand towards it. But it becomes a dull and silent magnitude when you approach to it merely as a quantifiable material.

Technological nihilism points towards the fact that things, under scientific representation and calculation, become banal and uniform, neutral and controllable, disposable, impossible and deposable, hence constantly subject to technological manipulation, lacking any sort of intrinsic worth, valuable only as tools and raw materials to be exploited for material consumption.

What is at stake here in Heidegger’s talk of “thing” is then man’s a priori engagement with meaning, man’s essence as the gift, property and need of Being, *Lichtung*, in short essential thinking. The challenge and the threat of technology as *Gestell* bears upon the destruction and loss of this essence. This is the danger that modern technology as the climax of nihilism poses. As we discussed in chapter 5, no will-based engagement is appropriate as a strategy to be saved from nihilism (*Gestell*): we cannot overcome, overpower, get top of nihilism, or force it to go away. Simply because *Gestell* is the way Being happens to us today as the ultimate form of essential happening of entitiness. It is the way beings, today, *are*. As the extreme nonessence of Being, it is the ground in which we stand. In so far as one cannot stand without a ground, one cannot war against the understanding of Being in which one breathes and swims. At best, one can hope the arrival of a new understanding of Being, a new current of air to breath.

It is, however, possible as well as necessary that we do something to preclude this intrusion of *Gestell*, to get-over (*verwinden*) it and thereby to retrieve the original sense of things as souvenirs of Being. Nonetheless, what is to be done must not be understood in the subjectivistic sense of action (i.e acting of a subject over against an object), which actually obscures the true essence of action. Heidegger interprets, in “Letter on Humanism”, the

⁴⁶⁸ *Four Seminars*, 61.

⁴⁶⁹ W. V. Quine. *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 15.

perfect activity, the fulfilment of man's acting nature, in terms of thinking. In this essay, Heidegger suggests that the highest and the fullest activity open to man is thinking itself in its essential manner, which involves, say, the passivity of thinking, i.e its submissiveness, to truth as such (i.e to the un-concealment of Being). Hence Heidegger implies that salvation lies not in resignation⁴⁷⁰, but in the perfect sense of activity as (essential) thinking which is "handicraft *par excellence*"⁴⁷¹. This sort of salvation (i.e perfect passivity of thinking as perfect activity) from *Gestell* Heidegger interprets in terms of *Gelassenheit* (letting-be) in *Discourse on Thinking*, which involves four co-equal moments, namely *besinnliches Denken* (meditative or essential thinking), openness to the mystery, *Bodenständigkeit* (rootedness), lasting human works. In letting itself into the woodpath (*Holzweg*) of the question of Being, thus off the beaten track of metaphysics, *Gelassenheit* lets thinking come to its own. Then I would sum up these moments as the dynamics of the question of Being, or better, a unity conjoined by the question of Being in which true essence of thinking comes to be at work.

Consequently, it should be noted that salvage from technological nihilism (*Gestell*) consists in cultivating and keeping alive thinking in its essential, non-metaphysical sense as perfect passivity (submission) to the happening of Being, *a-letheia*: it is nothing other than thinking itself that can save itself from a complete annihilation of its own essence which is the real challenge of *Gestell*. And thinking is thoughtfulness before the question of Being, that is, before Being as question. But (1) if the possibility of full growth of such thinking rests on the essential happening of Being in the open of this thinking, and (2) if the history of Being is characterized by the abandonment of Being and in it Being prevails as refusal and in default, and (3) if the arrival (*Ankunft*) of Being in its truth, its essential unconcealment is not left completely to us, not something we can decide, THEN, Heidegger argues, the only thing that our thinking (i.e the above five moments) can achieve is to foster in us a thinking, a mindful (*besinnlich*) preparedness (*Bereitschaft*) for such possibility as a ground breaking start for a new occurrence of history (Ereignis, the other beginning). We can step outside the sway of *Gestell*, only when an essential happening of Being, i.e Ereignis, establishes a new world of meaning in which beings step into radiation, into their ownmost, things body forth the fourfold, owing to the light of the truth of Being. In this world alone, man can be homely again, experience the event of "nearness". Hence Heidegger understands *Gestell* and Ereignis as two diametrically opposed phenomena. "*Gestell* is the photographic negative of Ereignis"⁴⁷²: while *Gestell* is the disclosure of Being as self-closure, the essential happening of entitiness (*Wesung der Seiendheit*), Ereignis is the essential happening of Being *itself* (*Wesung des Seyns*), the disclosure of Being in its *own* truth.

⁴⁷⁰ In the *Beiträge*, Heidegger notes in the parantheses: "Kein Buddhismus! das Gegenteil". *BP*, 171.

⁴⁷¹ *WCT*, 23.

⁴⁷² *Four Seminars*, 60.

Nevertheless it would be erroneous to think that for Heidegger it is both possible and desirable to wipe out technology from human life, and this will happen once Ereignis comes up, and breaks up “the essentially rootless tradition of metaphysics, the occidental history”⁴⁷³. It is certain that Heidegger is not a luddite. Ereignis is, among other things, the event of removal of *Gestell*, not of *Technik* (technology or technicity) “as such”. Heidegger’s account implies that technology freed from the essential structure of *Gestell* would turn into a marginalized field: it would cease to be dominant and central in human life. It might, in this way, return to its artistic root, to *techne*, as a form of *poiesis*, originating from and assisting *physis*. It is, roughly speaking, in this context that Heidegger speaks of saving dimensions of art concerning technology, art in the sense of “setting-truth-into-work” (*Wahrheit-ins-Werk-setzen*), art as originally po(i)etical, thus art as serving for “thinging” (and thinking). Then, it is possible that technology can become a setting-into-work of truth rather than covering over, obscuring or destroying it, as in modern technology (*Gestell*). What is more, technology’s becoming a po(i)etical activity (thus minimally determined by the self-assertion of will, by the drive of control and power) subservient to the thinghood of entities, recollective of divine nearness (the fourfold), is one and the same phenomenon as thinking’s becoming a poetical remembering (*Andenken*) of the gift, of the givenness of beings and its heart as un-concealment of Being. Heidegger also thinks that thinking to open place for the thinging of things, for the worlding of the world, for the happening (*Wesung*) of Being, must start not from global projects but from regional practices, from “little things” nearby: “Hier und jetzt und im Geringen so, daß wir das Rettende in seinem Wachstum hegen”⁴⁷⁴.

To recapitulate. We, in the preceding chapters, discussed at some length the key role of the question of Being, as the true locus of thinking that truth of Being needs and lays claim, in cultivating a way of thinking which corresponds to Being as an appropriate “saying” of it and which springs from Being itself as an event of appropriation (Ereignis). It thus belongs (*gehört*) to Being, and is determined (*bestimmt*) by Being itself: It hears (*hört*), listens to (*zuhört*) Being, and is “obedient to its voice” (“*gehorsam der Stimme des Seins*”⁴⁷⁵). It is in this cor-responding (*entsprechen*) to Being as a question, that metaphysics, and therewith nihilism itself, is left behind. Being itself is deeply *fragwürdig*, and remains so throughout, for metaphysics, however, “Being is what is unquestionable, and what absolutely needs no questioning.”⁴⁷⁶ The questional character of Being belongs to its truth such that “the

⁴⁷³ *MN*, 150.

⁴⁷⁴ “Here and now and in little things that we may foster that which saves in its growth.” “Die Frage Nach der Technik” in *VA*, 54.

⁴⁷⁵ “Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?”” in *PM*, 237: *WM*, 311.

⁴⁷⁶ *M*, 299: B, 335. “Für dieses vorbeifragende Fragen *nach* dem Sein ist das Sein das Unfragliche und einer Befragung durchaus Unbedürftige”.

genuine question is not superseded by the answer that is found”⁴⁷⁷. Hence, thinking of Being preserves, and does not at all aim at overcoming, *die Fragwürdigkeit* of Being. Thinking as questioning-experience of Being first finds itself before “what has been thought of Being” as it showed up in the history of Being, in the thoughts of essential thinkers of Western tradition: The question of Being is inherently being-historical, requires an attentiveness to the history of Being which still holds sway today in our meaning-Being relatedness.

Gestell is the last and the climactic moment of the history of Being, of the forgottenness of Being, which, therefore, demands a reflection of the most urgent kind. It demands questioning in a profoundly serious sense which enables us “developing a free relationship to technology”, that is, an openness to its essence.⁴⁷⁸ A being-historical questioning of *Gestell* is necessary to encounter its nihilism, a moment which helps reveal its disguised hegemony embedded in the familiar everyday ways of the modern life. Questioning involves an encountering openness, making the matter (nihilism as Being in its default) explicit and radically present before a thoughtful standing, “so that Being (*Seyn*) may respond, may gift the word which says the truth of Being (*Seyn*)”⁴⁷⁹. The kind of questioning which the question of Being as such involves is such that it, unlike metaphysics, does not take Being as an object but rather “delivers us over to Being as what alone is responding”⁴⁸⁰ and to Being in *its* history. The question of Being opens us to the history of Being, to the essential sense (historicity) of history, to “what has been with Being” up to now, to its hidden swaying through metaphysics. Then the question of Being can be developed only through a being-historical mindfulness. Being-historical mindfulness grows out of an experience of nihilism and metaphysics as the history of Being. Hence, nihilism today, as *Gestell*, refers to the having-beenness of Being, to the condition in which “the world ... is not just out of joint but tumbling away into the nothingness of absurdity.”⁴⁸¹ And nihilism is, in this sense, what constitutes the urgency of the question of Being: nihilism is “the matter” of the question of Being as our “thought-provoking time” of which we remain heedless, we fail to think, that is, we fail to bring into the area of questioning.

Nihilism (*Gestell*), once appropriated as the matter of questioning, opens many questions about the technological world which were not seen before, questions which are obscured or elided through metaphysical forgetfulness inherent in the sway of technology, questions that bring out the simplest and the most essential things about technology (as *Gestell*) that remain closed to objectifying reason. Questions such as: Whither is technology

⁴⁷⁷ “Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?”” in *PM*, 232: *WM*, 304.

⁴⁷⁸ See, “Die Frage nach der Technik” in *VA*, 7, 24.

⁴⁷⁹ *M*, 301: *B*, 337. “*Die Seinsfrage fragt jetzt das Seyn*, damit das Seyn antworte, das Wort verschenke, das die Wahrheit des Seyns sagt.”

⁴⁸⁰ *M*, 301: *B*, 337. “Das Fragen überantwortet uns dem Seyn als dem allein antwortenden.”

⁴⁸¹ *WCT*, 29-30.

going? What are the costs of technology for nature and for my life as a whole? Does technology make my life any more meaningful? What kind of changes does adapting myself to the technological way of thinking, which today imposes itself to us as something necessary, create in the presence of things to me, and in my relationship to them? Does the maximizing logic of technological production have any ultimate ends in view? And are these ends really justifiable? Is exploiting the nature the only dimension to my relation to the world? What is the difference between something's being and nonbeing from a technological viewpoint? What is the life-and-death matter (if any) for a technological revelation of world? What is the true end of my engagement with technology? More material consumption? If so, does it follow from any real need? (What is really "need", after all?), does it make my life more meaningful? Security? But what does it really mean that I am really secure? Is the world now in the technological age more secure place than before, or the reverse is the case? And above all, security for what and against what? Power, for what and against what? What is really power? What if I mistake playing God for power? Etc.

The world-wide race of power to which all sciences, technology, economy, culture, education service in many ways, on close inspection, has nothing to justify itself: it is the self-assertion of unbounded will, of blindness of animal instincts. All aspects of technological world today are parts and parcels of a grand self-delusion of humanity asserting itself through various rational means, and as rationality itself. Such semblance of rationality can maintain itself, because the dominion of *Gestell* holds sway precisely by obstructing the emergence of the simplest and the essential questions. But, as indicated, such semblance would dissolve the moment thinking abandoned the authority and ultimacy of scientific and technological propositions, and opened itself to more "primitive" questions that stem from the question of Being. Therefore it is imperative, and not only desirable, that the question of Being be the essential moment of thinking, and we thereby come face to face with the nihilism of *Gestell* and penetrate into its being-historical ground which is metaphysics.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The exposition which is offered in this study explores the potentials of a specific angle into one of the most pervasive themes in Heidegger's ontological thinking, namely the question of nihilism in its intrinsic interconnections with metaphysics. Our angle departs from the history of Being as the locus of the progression of nihilism, the deep history of the West in which metaphysical experience of Being has unfolded (and exhausted) its possibilities. Heidegger asserts that (1) "Das Wesen des Nihilismus ist die Geschichte, in der es mit dem Sein selbst nichts ist."⁴⁸² (2) "Das Wesen des Nihilismus *ist* geschichtlich als die Metaphysik"⁴⁸³. (3) "Die Metaphysik als solche ist der eigentliche Nihilismus."⁴⁸⁴ (4) "Der Nihilismus ist, in seiner Wesen gedacht, ... die Grundbewegung der Geschichte des Abendlandes."⁴⁸⁵ (5) "Das Wesen des Nihilismus nichts nihilistisches ist."⁴⁸⁶ In one sense, the present investigation can be considered as a commentary on these specific statements.

We followed a trajectory in which the patterns of forgottenness of Being have set the tone of human being's comportment towards entities (to himself, fellow human beings, nature, world, history and culture, philosophy and art) in ever increasing elision of Being. We observed that everyday forgetfulness of Being (as our starting-point that we detected in *Being and Time*, in the discussions of forgetfulness of Being, fallenness upon or amidst entities, inauthenticity) which underlies and characterizes theory and science, among others, grows out of an evasion from man's radical finitude, *Nichtigkeit* as the constant threat of meaninglessness which stirs Dasein's essence, a priori engagement with meaning. This evasion from finitude and temporality assumes a specific structure of thinking, comportment toward and understanding of Being, i.e. metaphysics, which, Heidegger argues, has historically established in the late Greek age. Being a presence-centred, entity-absorbed vision, this experience of Being (metaphysics) misses "Nothing" (*Nichts*) at the core of Being, which is, like void in a jug, an essential dimension of Being. Rather "Nothing ...

⁴⁸² "The essence of nihilism is the history in which it is nothing with Being itself." *MN*, 206.

⁴⁸³ "The essence of nihilism *occurs* historically as metaphysics." *MN*, 210.

⁴⁸⁴ "Metaphysics as such is the actual nihilism." *MN*, 216, 210, 211.

⁴⁸⁵ "Nihilism thought in its essence is ... the fundamental movement of the history of the West." "Nietzsches Wort 'Gott ist tot'", in *H*, 218.

⁴⁸⁶ "The essence of nihilism is nothing nihilistic." "Zur Seinsfrage", in *WM*, 414.

opens up an expanse in which Being as such is disclosed.”⁴⁸⁷ As Agamben puts it “*Lichtung* is always already *Nichtung*.”⁴⁸⁸ Metaphysics sees Nothing a trivial abstraction, the negation of beings. For Heidegger, nihilism correctly understood is the historically conditioned and rooted occurrence that signifies not only the exclusion of Being (the nil status of Being for thinking) but also of Nothing, from thoughtful consideration. In the technological age which finds the expression of its inner truth in the Nietzschean metaphysics of “will to power”, it signifies an utterly inauthentic unconcealment of Being. Actually, we only witness the final (and therefore, extreme) repercussions of a movement which has onset long before, in the late Greek age. Heidegger’s account implies that (1) the whole Western history is at bottom, at its ontological heart, a movement of nihilism, and (2) becomes intelligible only when placed into such a focus. Being has lost all its richness for the western thought, once it is carelessly and readily taken simply as “presence”, a position which proceeded from Being’s gradual sinking into a usualness, after the overwhelming wonder (*thaumezein*) of the first beginning before the event of Being, which has come to language as a founding event of language (*logos*) and gifted Western humanity its originary and ground-breaking (*anfänglich*) experience and word for truth, *aletheia*. In the following 2400 years, this originary event, *aletheia*, has increasingly receded into oblivion in favor of an understanding of truth as correspondance (*homoiosis*, *adequatio*, accordance, rectitude, certitude) between mind and beings. To a view of Being as presence there corresponds a view of truth as correspondance. All in all, Being is thought in terms of beings (*Seiendheit*), not in its *own* terms. Consequently, Being has been reduced to the uttermost generality, a pure abstraction, an absolutely flat and self-evident level, needed as such for the constancy of entitative vision (*theoria*). The ontological words that embody such metaphysical experience of Being Heidegger suggests, are *idea* and *ousia* (the fundamental and decisive concepts of Platonic thinking, as a thinking of Being, which has been consolidated in the metaphysics of Aristotle). The structure or mechanic of entitative vision (metaphysics) has unfolded as a drive of absolute (*unbedingt*) knowledge of beings which would serve an unfailing basis for the mastery over beings. Metaphysics from the outset is determined by the truth of beings (*Seiendheit*), which is a techno-logical framework, a paradigm which while disclosing beings in technologically functional ways, as such and as a whole, left no room for the authentic disclosure (*Wesen*) of Being. If an understanding of Being is an ontological paradigm which, as something essential for our functioning as human beings, situates and guides all human practices (above all, thinking), then metaphysics is a nihilistic ontological paradigm which

⁴⁸⁷ Lin Ma. *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), p. 179. Lin Ma, in this study, explores interesting connections between Heideggerian and Taoist (or Daoist) Nothing, see chapter 6, 8 and 9.

⁴⁸⁸ Giorgio Agamben. *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 80.

obscures the truth of Being (*aletheia*, *Lichtung*, *Anfang*, the essential happening of Being as Ereignis) in favor of an absorption in the truth of beings.

Technology as the consummation of nihilism drives Being away from the human, and man in turn is bound to receive light from a dead star, be determined by the utterly inauthentic and the poorest disclosure (*Unwesen*) of Being, for to be human being means to receive the disclosure of Being, to have an understanding of what it means to be, to be determined by the giving of Being. Thus for a human being, beings can only show up through the light of Being, which in turn needs an open site, a clearing, to radiate and light up things. Being (let us say, such light through which anything *is*, that is, presences) is actually a genuinely rich dimension, indeed an unexhaustable richness. Metaphysics is the loss of such richness, i.e. nihilism, in which it is reduced only to presence (*Anwesenheit*) fit to serve for the purposes of control and power.

As we explored in chapter 7, Heidegger argues that the *telos* of metaphysics (all science and knowledge of beings) is technology, the unconcealment of things under a technological projection (exclusively as “resource”—*Bestand*). Perhaps, a Huxleyan world is the ultimate end (say, u-topia) of such technological disclosure of beings: a well-functioning social system, maximum comfort, total security, economic prosperity, full reign of pleasures, and the like.⁴⁸⁹ Heidegger finds this thoroughly uncanny. Such utopia requires a totally inauthentic man, a type of human being totally alienated to his own Being that is given to him in his radical finitude. Heidegger by contrast has in mind a man who lives on the earth as mortal. Hence Heidegger, in some key postwar essays, such as “The Thing” (1950), “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1951), and “. . . poetically, Man dwells . . .” (1951), refers to humans as “mortals”, one element of the fourfold structure of *Lichtung* (*Geviert*). The implication is clear: man can maintain his essence, that is, continue to be Dasein, “an a priori engagement with meaning”, only in so far as he remains, one way or another, a mortal awareness. Otherwise, man would lose touch with “meaning”, cease to be a temporal site required for the disclosure of Being, which is the very spectre of nihilism for Heidegger. Thus, in the *Der Spiegel* interview, the interviewer provokes Heidegger: “everything is functioning...we have peak production. Men are ... well provided for. We live in prosperity. What is really missing here?”⁴⁹⁰ Heidegger retorts:

Everything is functioning. This is exactly what is so uncanny, that everything is functioning and that functioning drives us more and more to even further functioning, and that technology tears men loose from the earth and uproots them... We don't need any atom bomb. The uprooting of man has already taken place. The

⁴⁸⁹ See Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

⁴⁹⁰ “Only a God Can Save Us” in *HC*, 105.

only thing we have left is purely technological relationships. This is no longer the earth on which man lives.⁴⁹¹

Heidegger in this interview complains of the widespread blindness of today's world concerning the danger inherent in the nihilism of global technology. Nihilism ("the absence of the God in the time of decline"⁴⁹²) owes its rule to its hiddenness and inconspicuousness. Then such absence, before all else, is what needs to be realised. Indeed, in the consummated nihilism of the modern age, the defining fact is that Being happens in its default, has abandoned beings. But such absence of Being, the most thought-provoking aspect of modern life, does never provoke any question at all. Therefore, this nihilistic condition of Western tradition which now in late modernity has reached its climax with the full hegemony of technology is a double-layered phenomenon, namely the abandonment of Being and the forgetfulness of Being which in turn, it seems, aggravate each other. As Joan Stambaugh succinctly puts "what Heidegger calls true nihilism has two aspects or factors: (1) that Being remains absent, and (2) that thinking leaves out, omits, neglects to pay heed to this remaining absent."⁴⁹³ Yet, one should also note that such elision of Being drives Being away from the realm of its truth, for Being and thinking in Heidegger are not two separate and isolated phenomena: so to speak, Being lives (*west*) in thinking, and thinking is the happening of disclosure of Being. (As is explicitly defended in *Was Heisst Denken*, it is not a human possession). However, thinking as a historically structured receptivity of the disclosure of Being remains almost bound to operate in the structure or realm the previous thinking (principally, Plato and Aristotle) has established. Ever since thinking has lost *aletheia*, ceased to be a thinking of Being, the essential togetherness and thus unity of both has disappeared as the "privation" of both, that privation which is the exact meaning of nihilism in Heidegger's sense. Then, 3 moments emerge: (1) the two phenomena Stambaugh notes (i.e the role of Being and the role of thinking) are primordially, that is, in the first beginning of the early Greek thinking, unitary and simultaneous, (2a) but later, they have gone separate and consequent: in the onset of metaphysics (Plato and Aristotle), the latter has given rise to the former, (2b) and in the ensuing history of Being (particularly, today), the former determines the latter. This issue is the focus of chapter 3. In any case, these thoughts invite the very difficult problem of freedom in Heidegger. Actually, the problem of freedom is one of the central difficulties in Heidegger's whole philosophy. Sometimes Heidegger seems to say everything is ineluctably determined by Being (*Geschichte als Geschick*), thus in this

⁴⁹¹ "Only a God Can Save Us" in *HC*, 105-106.

⁴⁹² "Only a God Can Save Us" in *HC*, 107.

⁴⁹³ Joan Stambaugh, "Nihilism and the End of Philosophy." In *Thoughts on Heidegger* (Washington, D.C: Center for Advanced Research on Phenomenology and the University Press of America, 1991), p. 144.

history, nothing is human doing. And sometimes he emphasizes the human role as decisive in the emergence of nihilism and metaphysics. Nevertheless, the impression is hard to avoid that we are just *figurants* in the world theatre of Being. The questions, precisely what is our role in the relation of man and Being (in their “identity”)?, precisely where does the human freedom consist?, what kind and degree of freedom does thinking involve?, perhaps are questions that remain unsettled and deeply intriguing for Heidegger as well, even though Heidegger has written extensively on the issue of freedom. As a matter of fact, the problem of freedom in (later) Heidegger’s thought is a fairly complex one that exceeds the scope of the present study. At least, let it suffice to indicate that part of the trouble, presumably, lies in Heidegger’s firm conviction not to think of freedom in terms of human will and morality.⁴⁹⁴ Thus Heidegger’s freedom is not the freedom of *an* individual, but rather a condition prior to it, namely the fundamental aspect of *Lichtung* as *das Freie*. One should even ask if there is any room in the thought of later Heidegger for the individuality of human being at all.

Yet, nothing can be “certain” about the future of Being. As we have seen, Heidegger seems to think that appropriate human attitude can foster the growth of “that which saves” (*das Rettende*). Heidegger inspired from Meister Eckhart calls this thoughtful attitude toward Being *Gelassenheit*, perfect passivity of thinking (a whole of questioning-listening-waiting) as man’s perfect activity (the fulfilment of all human action) which thus fosters the growth of *das Rettende* in *Geringe*, in (little) things that as “rings” serve as souvenirs of Being, embody the nearness, re-call us our essence, our “belonging” to Being. *Gelassenheit* is a letting-be which clears the authentic space (*Zeit-Spiel-Raum*) of onwmdom: it lets Being speak for itself, essentially happen (as the radical mystery of *a-letheia*); it lets beings be, step into radiance (as the beings *of* Being); and it lets oneself be (as one’s own self). *Gelassenheit* stands at the opposite pole of the absolute self-assertion of will (“will to will”), which Heidegger sees grow in each moment of metaphysics in its history, i.e in the history of Being. Once will is the ultimate principle of thinking whereby our fundamental understanding of Being is structured, then there is no “place” for Being itself to show up in its own character (*A-letheia*). All sorts of consciousness (e.g Descartes’ cogito, Hegel’s absolute self-consciousness, Husserl’s pure consciousness) are simply its variations. A willful engagement with the world (and this as consolidated and intensified over the ages) distracts human essence as the place (*Ortschaft*) or openness (*Offenheit*) for the disclosure of Being. It distracts attention from the essential (Being itself) to the derivative, to beings as “objects” of the self-assertion of will, thus to beings to be mastered. As Heidegger indicates: “As the will

⁴⁹⁴ “Freedom not the property of man, but rather: man the property of freedom.” *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. J. Stambough (Ohio University Press: Athens, Ohio, London, 1985), p. 9; exactly the same point can be found also in “On the Essence of Truth” in *PM*, 145.

to will, this life demands in advance that all knowledge move in the manner of guaranteeing calculation and valuation.”⁴⁹⁵

Man stands and dwells in such open (*Lichtung*) in which he receives the gift of Being, the unconcealment and presence of beings as such and as a whole (in terms of a unified pattern). In and through such open, such space of meaning (the field of intelligibility or vision), alone, man can encounter entities. But the open is opened first through and as the unconcealment of Being as such which reveals beings in such and such a way. We lose sight of such unconcealment and thus of *Lichtung* itself in favor of what is revealed in the light of it. *Lichtung* thus is the nearness of Being: man dwells in the nearness of Being; such nearness is man’s primordial essence, its abode, its home. But if metaphysical attention is consumed by what is unconcealed (what is present), and out of a habit of thinking structured and hardened in a long tradition, forgets the event of unconcealment as such, then man through this history goes alienated to his home/ his ownmost (*Wesen*). Heidegger draws attention to the nihilistic essence of homelessness which he argues marks Western existence from the ground up and in particular modernity, since metaphysics entails a thorough-going alienation to home (the nearness of Being). Nihilism then shows itself as “the unhomely mind” of the Western humanity.

Accordingly, nihilism in its world-historical forms, and finally in the form of technology, is “the most uncanny (*unheimlichste*) guest”, as Nietzsche (the philosopher of homelessness) cries out, renders man “unhomely” (*unheimlich*), without an authentic dwelling, a home. In fact, the whole problematique of nihilism, as we have attempted to show in chapter 5, is Nietzschean, but Heidegger appropriates and transforms it in a new light. Nietzsche’s metaphysics of “will to power”, contrary to Nietzsche’s intentions, leaves Being in an extreme darkness, and concomitantly, the essential realm (home) of human essence in which man is related to Being. Search for home in our age, according to Heidegger, then needs to take up a direct and decisive confrontation with the question of nihilism. Such confrontation should take place in the form of “thoughtful questioning”, viz. thoughtful submission to, and journeying in, the path opened by the question of Being (i.e. *Gelassenheit*), not driven for conclusive results or final answers, but a tentative open questioning that is least affected by will and most attuned to the willless reverberations of poetic saying stirred by the silent voice of Being. Even for that purpose, as we pointed out in our study, willful attempts like “overcoming nihilism or metaphysics” should be abandoned. One first of all needs to focus on the task of thinking as preparing proper openness (readiness) for the emergence of Being in its true essence. Besides, this cannot come about unless we take up a dialogue with the Western tradition, especially with the early Greek

⁴⁹⁵ “Overcoming Metaphysics” in *EP*, 109.

thinking which harbours in itself the remembrance of Being, the upsurge of wonder, as the event of the first beginning. Falling away from such remembrance, its fading away into metaphysics, is the source of the forgetfulness of Being, of the hidden history of nihilism as a destiny. Such a dialogue “in and for remembrance nourishes the possibility of a transformation of destiny”⁴⁹⁶. So *Gelassenheit* involves *An-denken* (recollective thinking) which needs to re-call (*er-innern*), appropriate (*er-eignen*) and shelter (*wahren*) the remembrance of Being (*Gedächtnis*) by embodying it in po(i)etic saying, which is the opposite of the forgetfulness of Being. Heidegger here has in mind Hölderlin, the poet-thinker of home-coming (*Heimkunft*).

Gelassenheit is hence what is left to humans as the only authentic option outside of the dominion of technology, in the age of technological nihilism: it is the submissive and listening attitude conducive to the flourishing of *Besinnung* (or *besinnliches Denken*, essential thinking) that is deeply attentive to language (“the house of Being”⁴⁹⁷, i.e. the primordial manner in which the truth, un-concealment, of Being “takes place”) and whereby responsive or response-able to Being. *Besinnung* is *Gelassenheit* as “*Gelassenheit zum die Fragwürdigen*”⁴⁹⁸, as that in which the question of Being submits itself to its matter and thereby gets underway, makes room and way for Ereignis. A way is the site of the event of Being (Ereignis). The way of thinking is the question of Being: to think means to be on this way, and thus to be underway. To be on a way (*unterwegs*), in Heidegger’s sense, is something adventurous, the matter of radical uncertainty: one cannot know beforehand what will happen. Being an adventurous venture, thinking, nonetheless, harbours in itself, that is, on its *own* path, the advent of the essential happening of Being (*Wesen des Seyns*) which Heidegger calls with various names. Perhaps the principal one is Ereignis. Heidegger also identifies it with Hölderlin’s *das Heilige*⁴⁹⁹, the last God “the totally other over against the gods who have been, especially the Christian God.”⁵⁰⁰ In the *Der Spiegel* interview, he speaks of *a* God which alone can save us.⁵⁰¹ We will, Heidegger seems to say, remain in the grip of nihilism up to the essentially uncertain but hoped-for advent of *a* God, (assuming that we undertake *Gelassenheit*). Such *a* God (as *Es*) would grant (*gibt*) us, mortals, *a* language, *a* world, *a* home within which we could re-call and discover ourselves as ecstatic dwellers of the ecstatic nearness, the inexhaustible richness and the radical mystery of Being.

⁴⁹⁶ “Moirā (Parmenides VIII, 34-41)” in *EGT*, 101.

⁴⁹⁷ “Letter on Humanism” in *PM*, 239; “The Way to Language” in *OL*, 135.

⁴⁹⁸ “Wissenschaft und Besinnung” in *VA*, 63.

⁴⁹⁹ “Was sagt Hölderlin’s Dichtung? Ihr Wort ist: das Heilige.” *Zollikoner Seminare: Protokolle-Zwiesgespräche-Briefe*, ed. Medard Boss (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), p. 332.

⁵⁰⁰ *CP*, 283.

⁵⁰¹ The very sentence thereof became the title of the interview: “Nur ein Gott kann uns noch Retten/ Only a God Can Save Us” see, *HC*, 107.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Turkish Summary*

Bu çalışma Heidegger'in düşüncesinde nihilizm problemi ve onun metafizik ile olan bağlantısının (veya özdeşliğinin) boyutlarını incelemeye girişmektedir. Heidegger felsefesinin 1930'lar sonrasındaki başat temalarından birisi olan nihilizm, Heidegger'in ontolojik düşüncesinde hayati bir yer işgal etmektedir. Heidegger'in bu problemi ele alış O'nun yegane felsefi angajmanı olan Varlık düşüncesi (ve böylece sadece bir kaç örnek vermek gerekirse, metafizik, tarih, hakikat, Nietzsche, teknoloji, hümanizm ve düşünmeye ilişkin mütalaalar) ile kaçınılmaz bir şekilde içli dışlıdır. Öylesine ki, Varlık sorununu ters çevirirseniz, nihilizm sorunu ile karşılaşsınız: her ikisi de Varlık'ın hakikatının Varlık-tarihsel düşünümünün aynı alanına işaret eder. Bu düşünce, kabul edilmelidir ki, karmaşık bir yol izler. Dolayısıyla, Heidegger'in nihilizmi (yani, hariçte-kalması bağlamında Varlık'ı) metafizik temele ve kökene sahip olarak tasavvur etmesi ancak bu yolu, ve içindeki dönüşümleri, dikkatli bir şekilde ele alırsak yeterli bir şekilde aydınlatılabilir. Böylece şu soruları soruyoruz: Heidegger anlamında nihilizmin tam olarak mahiyeti nedir? Neden metafizik temel bir anlamda nihilistiktir? Yani, Heidegger'in nihilizm metafiziğin gizli özüdür şeklindeki argümanı nasıl yorumlanabilir? Nihayet, metafizik ne tür bir düşünmedir? (Neden tüm kötülüklerin anasıdır!?) metafizik bir düşünme şekli olarak nasıl bir şekilde tüm Batı tarihini belirlemekte ve temellendirmektedir? Eğer böyle ise, bu, tarihsel idealizm sorunu içermez mi? Nasıl olur da modernite nihilizmin nihai safhası olur? Bu iddianın Heidegger'in Varlık felsefesinin tüm bağlamı açısından merkezi önemi nedir? Heidegger şu "nihilizm" ifadesi ile neyi kasetmektedir? Bu araştırma bahsi geçen sorulara Heidegger düşüncesinin eleştirel bir incelemesi temelinde cevaplar vermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Bu bağlamda, çalışmamızın sunduğu serimleme Heidegger'in ontolojik düşüncesinde en çok öne çıkan temalardan birisine, metafizikle içkin bağlantıları içerisinde nihilizm sorunununa ilişkin muayyen bir açının potansiyellerini araştırmaktadır. Açımız Nihilizmin giderek ilerlemesinin mekanı olarak, içerisinde metafiziksel Varlık deneyiminin imkanlarını açımladığı (ve tükettiği) Batının derin tarihi olarak, Varlık tarihinden hareket etmektedir. Heidegger'in tezleri: (1) "Nihilizmin özü, içinde Varlık'ın kendisinin bir hiç

haline geldiği tarihtir.”¹ (2) “Nihilizmin özü tarihsel anlamda metafizik olarak tezahür eder.”² (3) “Metafizik, bizatihi, hakiki nihilizmdir.”³ (4) “Nihilizm, özü bakımından düşünüldüğünde ... Batı tarihinin temel hareketidir.”⁴ (5) “Nihilizmin özü nihilistik bir şey değildir.”⁵ Bir anlamda, mevcut araştırmamız bu tezler üzerine bir şerh düşmek olarak düşünülebilir.

İncelememizin takip ettiği güzergah, Varlık’ın unutulmuşluğunun, giderek artan bir dikkatten uzaklaşma şeklinde, oluşturduğu örüntülerin insanın varlıklara (kendisine, insan hemcinslerine, doğaya, dünyaya, tarih ve kültüre, felsefe ve sanata) yönelik takındığı tutumların temel tonunu belirlediği bir tarihsel harekete tekabül etmekte ve ona ışık tutmaktadır. Gözlemledik ki insanın radikal sonluluğundan kaçışından nebean etmekte olan Varlık’ın gündelik hayattaki unutulmuşluğu (*Varlık ve Zaman*’da, Varlık’ın unutulmuşluğu, varlıklar içerisine ve üzerine düşmüşlük, sahicilikten uzaklık tartışmalarında, saptadığımız kalkış noktamız olarak) diğer şeyler yanında özellikle teori ve bilimin temelini oluşturmakta ve onları karakterize etmektedir. Bu radikal sonluluk, anlamsızlığın daimi tehdidi olarak hiçsellik (*Nichtigkeit*), Dasein’in özünü harekete geçirmekte, O’nu anlamla a priori bir meşguliyet haline getirmektedir. Bu sonluluk ve zamanlılıktan kaçış, muayyen bir düşünme yapısı, Varlık’a yönelik tutum ve algılayış, yani metafizik, halini almakta halini almaktadır. Heidegger bu zamandışı düşünme biçiminin daha geç Yunan çağında müesses hale geldiğini öne sürmektedir. Mevcudiyeti, hal-i hazırda bulunmayı, merkeze alan, varolana hapsolmuş bir görü şekli olarak, bu Varlık deneyimi (metafizik), aynen bir sürahideki boşluk gibi, Varlık’ın asli bir boyutu olan, Varlık’ın ta kalbindeki Hiç (*Nichts*) gözden kaçırmaktadır. Oysa, “Hiç ... Varlık’ın Varlık olarak tecelli ettiği bir saha açmaktadır.”⁶ Agamben’in söylediği gibi “Açıklık olgusu hep evvela hiçleme olgusudur” (“*Lichtung* is always already *Nichtung*.”)⁷

Dolayısıyla, metafizik Hiç’i fuzuli bir soyutlama olarak, varolanların değillenmesi olarak görür. Heidegger’e göre, doğru anlaşılmış haliyle nihilizm, sadece Varlık’ın değil Hiç’in de düşünmenin dikkatinin alanından dışlanmasına (düşünme için hiç mesabesine inmesine) işaret eden, tarihsel olarak koşullanmış ve köklenmiş bir cereyandır. Nietzscheci “güç iradesi” metafiziğinde içsel hakikatinin ifadesini bulan teknolojik çağda, nihilizm,

* Burada sunulan Türkçe özet, çalışmamızın “Conclusion” bölümünün belli ölçülerde serbest bir çevirisinden ibarettir. Kısaltmalar için abbreviations page’e (xi) bakınız.

¹ MN, 206.

² MN, 210.

³ MN, 216, 210, 211.

⁴ “Nietzsches Wort ‘Gott ist tot’”, H, 218.

⁵ “Zur Seinsfrage”, WM, 414.

⁶ Lin Ma. *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), s. 179. Lin Ma, bu çalışmada, Heideggerci ve Taoist (veya Daoist) Hiç arasında ilginç bağlantılar keşfetmektedir, bkz. Bölüm 6, 8 ve 9.

⁷ Giorgio Agamben. *The Open: Man and Animal*, çev. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), s. 80.

Varlık için, tümüyle sahicilikten uzak bir açığa çıkma şekli demektir. Gerçekte, bizler uzun zaman önce, geç Yunan çağında, yoluna girmiş bir hareketin nihai (ve bu nedenle, müfrit) tecellilerine tanık oluyoruz sadece. Heidegger'in pozisyonunu şu iki noktayı içermektedir: (1) tüm Batı tarihi temelde, ontolojik kimliği itibariyle, bir nihilizm hareketidir ve (2) bu tarih ancak böyle bir zaviyeden ele alındığında anlaşılır bir bütün olarak okunabilir. Bir kez duyarsız ve ihmalkar bir bakışla, kısa yoldan, sırf bir "mevcudiyet" (veya "hal-i hazırda bulunma") olarak ele alındıktan sonra, Varlık, Batı düşüncesi için tüm zenginliğini yitirmiştir. Bu durum Varlık'ın tedrici olarak bir aleladelige gömülmesini müteakip, ilk başlangıçtaki Varlık hadisesinin uyandırdığı köklü hayretin (*thaumezein*) sönüp gitmesinin ardından, meydana gelmiştir. Söz konusu hayret Sokrat-öncesi Yunanlıların Varlık olgusu karşısında onların insani özlərini tümüyle belirleyen temel Varlık deneyimidir, ki bu, dilin kurucu olayı (*logos*) olarak dile gelmiş, eski Yunanlılara hakikate ilişkin kökensel ve çığır açıcı (*anfänglichlich*) tecrübelerini ve kelimelerini, *aletheia*'yı, bahşetmiştir. Takip eden 2400 sene içerisinde bu asli olay, yani *aletheia*, zihin ve varolanlar arasındaki mütekabiliyet (*homoiosis*, *adeaquatio*, *accordance*, *rectitude*, *certitude*) anlamındaki bir hakikat anlayışı lehine gittikçe hatırdan silinmiştir. Mevcudiyet (*Präzens*) şeklinde kendini gösteren bir Varlık anlayışına, mütekabiliyet anlamındaki bir hakikat görüşü tekabül etmektedir. Neticede Varlık, bizzat *kendi* özünde değil, varolanlar açısından (*Seiendheit*) düşünülmektedir. Yani, olmak bizzat olmak olarak değilde, bir şeylerin olması açısından ancak nazar-ı dikkate gelmektedir. Dolayısıyla, Varlık, bu haliyle ancak varolanlara yönelmiş görü biçiminin (*theoria*) gerektirdiği sabitlik için ihtiyaç duyulan, en uç genelliğe, saf bir soyutlamaya, mutlak manada bayağı ve kendinden anlaşılır bir düzeye indirgenmektedir. Bu metafiziksel Varlık deneyiminin tecessüm ettiği ontolojik kelimelerin Heidegger *idea* ve *ousia* olduğunu söyler (ki bunlar, Aristo metafiziğinde müşahhas ifadesini bulan, bir Varlık düşünmesi olarak, Platonik düşünüş biçiminin temel ve belirleyici kavramlarıdır.) Varolanlara yönelik görü biçiminin (metafizik) yapısı veya mekaniğinin dışavurumu varolanlar üzerinde kurulacak bir hakimiyet için hiç teklemeyen bir zemin olarak iş görecektir olan varolanların mutlak (*unbedingt*) bilgisini edinmeye yönelmiş bir itki şeklinde olmuştur. Metafizik ta başından beri, kendisi tekno-lojik bir çerçeve, bizzat ve bir bütün olarak varlıkları teknolojik yönden fonksiyonel tarzlarda görü alanına çıkarırken, Varlık'ın kendisinin bizzat kendine has tecellisine (*Wesen*) hiç bir mahal bırakmayan bir paradigma olan, varolanların hakikati (*Seiendheit*) tarafından belirlenmiştir. Eğer bir Varlık anlayışını, Heidegger'le birlikte, bizlerin insan varlıkları olarak varolmamıza imkan sağlayan asli bir şey olarak, tüm insani pratikleri (en başta düşünmeyi) bir bağlama oturtan ve yönlendiren bir ontolojik paradigma olarak kabul edecek olursak, o zaman metafizik Varlık'ın hakikatini (*aletheia*, *Lichtung*, *Anfang*, Varlık'ın özünce vuku bulması olarak Ereignis) varolanların hakikatine bir

hapsolma lehinde ve biçiminde karartan nihilistik bir ontolojik paradigma olmaktadır.

Nihilizmin tamama ermesi olarak teknoloji Varlık'ı insandan öteye itmekte, ve insan da şu halde ölü bir yıldızdan ışık almak durumunda kalmakta, yani Varlık'ın tümüyle sahici olmaktan uzak ve en fakir tezahürü (*Unwesen*) tarafından belirlenmektedir, zira insan olmak Varlık'ın tezahürüne mazhar olmak, olmanın ne manaya geldiğinin anlayışına sahip olmak, Varlık'ın verilme şekilleriyle belirlenmek demektir. Dolayısıyla, insan için, varlıklar yalnızca Varlık'ın ışığında gözönüne gelmekte, kendilerini göstermektedirler, ki bu da şeyleri aydınlığa kavuşturmak ve ısıtmak için bir boş/açık alana, bir mahale (*Lichtung*) ihtiyaç duymaktadır. Varlık (deyim yerindeyse, vasıtasıyla bir şeyin bir şey *olduğu* yani, belirlilik kazanıp, mevcudiyet alanına adım attığı, ışık) esasında fevkalade zengin bir boyuttur, gerçekten de bitip tükenmez bir zenginliktir. Metafizik bu zengin boyutun kaybidir, yani, nihilizmdir, O'nun kontrol ve iktidar güdülerine hizmet etmeye uygun gelen sırf bir mevcut olmaya yada hal-i hazırda bulunmaya (*Anwesenheit*) indirgenmesidir.

Heidegger metafiziğin (tüm bilimlerin, varlıkların tüm bilgisinin) *telos*'unun teknoloji olduğunu, yani şeylerin teknolojik bir projeksiyon çerçevesinde (münhasıran “hazırda bekleyen kaynaklar olarak ”—*Bestand*) açıklık kazanması olduğunu öne sürer. Belkide Huxley'in *Brave New World*'da resmettiği dünya varlıkların bu teknolojik açılımının nihai noktasıdır (demek gerekirse, *ü-topya*): makine gibi işleyen bir sosyal sistem, maksimum konfor, mutlak güvenlik, ekonomik refah, zevklerin hiç bir kısıt altına alınmayan hükümlanlığı, ve saire.⁸ Heidegger bunu tümüyle tekinsiz bir şey olarak mütalaa eder. Bu ütopya tamamen kendisi olmaktan uzak (*uneigentlich*) bir insan tipini gerektirir. Öyle bir insan bir tipidir ki bu, ona sonluluğunun radikal olgusunda verilmiş olan kendi Varlık'ına tümüyle yabancılaşmıştır. Heidegger, oysa, yeryüzünde ölümlülüğünün idraki ile yaşayan bir insanı tahayyül eder. Nitekim, Heidegger, “Şey” (1950), “İnşa Etmek, İkamet Etmek, Düşünmek” (1951), “... Şairane İkamet Eder İnsan” (1951), gibi bazı savaş sonrası metinlerde insanlara “ölümlüler” diye atıfta bulunur. Ve ancak ölümlü olmakla insan anlam alanının, *Lichtung*'un dörtlü yapısının (*Geviert*) olmazsa olmaz bir parçasıdır. Kastedilen şey açıktır: insan insani öze sahip olmayı, yani Dasein olmayı, “anlamla a priori bir işigali”, ancak, şu veya bu şekilde, ölüme yönelik bir idrake sahip olduğu sürece sürdürebilir. Aksi takdirde, insan anlamla olan irtibatını kaybedecek, Varlık'ın tezahürü için gerekli olan zamansal bir mekan olmaktan çıkacaktır, ki bu Heidegger için nihilizm heyulasının ta kendisidir. *Der Spiegel* mülakatında, işte bu bağlamda, mülakatı yürüten kişinin Heidegger'i tahrik etmeye matuf sorusu önemlidir: “Herşey işliyor ... üretimimiz zirve noktada.

⁸ Bkz. Aldous Huxley. *Brave New World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

İnsanlara ... gayet iyi imkanlar sağlanıyor. Refah içerisinde yaşıyoruz. Burada gerçekten eksik olan şey ne?”⁹ Heidegger cevap verir:

Herşey işliyor. Son derece tekinsiz olan şey de tamı tamına bu işte: herşey işliyor ve bu işleyiş bizi gittikçe hep daha çok işleyişe sevk ediyor, ve teknoloji insanı yeryüzünden koparıyor ve köksüzleştiriyor... Artık atom bombasına ihtiyacımız yok. İnsanın köksüzleşmesi zaten vuku bulmuş durumda. Bize kalan tek şey katıksız teknolojik ilişkiler oluyor. Burası artık insanın üzerinde yaşadığı yeryüzü değil.¹⁰

Heidegger bu mülakatta küresel teknolojinin nihilizmde içkin olan tehlikeye karşı günümüz dünyasındaki yaygın körlükten yakındır. Nihilizm (“çöküş zamanında Tanrının yokluğu”¹¹) hükümlanlığını gizliliğine ve dikkat çekmezliğine borçludur. O zaman Tanrının bu yokluğu, herşeyden önce, farkına varılması gereken bir şeydir. Hakikaten de, modern çağın tamamına ermiş nihilizmde, tanımlayıcı olan olgu Varlık’ın dışta kalmak suretiyle vukua gelmesi, varolanları terketmesidir. Fakat modern hayatın en kışkırtıcı yönü olarak Varlık’ın bu yoksunluğu, hiç bir sualin muharriki falan olmaz. Bu nedenle, şimdi geç modern çağda teknolojinin tam hakimiyeti ile doruğa varan Batı geleneğinin bu nihilistik vaziyeti çifte-katmanlı bir görüntü arz etmektedir, yani, Varlık’ın terketmişliği ile Varlık’ın unutulmuşluğu olgusu, ki bunların da birbirlerini karşılıklı olarak daha da şiddetlendirdiklerini söyleyebiliriz. Joan Stambough’un çok özlü bir biçimde ifade ettiği gibi “Heidegger’in hakiki nihilizm dediği şeyin iki veçhesi yada faktörü vardır: (1) Varlık’ın yokluk halinde kalması ve (2) düşünmenin bu yok kalmayı hariçte bırakması, gözardı etmesi, nazar-ı dikkate almayı ihmal etmesidir.”¹² Bununla birlikte Varlık’ın bu safdışı edilişinin Varlık’ı hakikatinin alanından dışarıya ittiğine dikkat etmek gerekir, zira Heidegger’de Varlık ve düşünme iki ayrı ve soyutlanabilir olgular değildir: Deyim yerindeyse, Varlık düşünmede yaşar (*west*), ve düşünme Varlık’ın tecelli olması hadisesidir. (Açık bir şekilde *Was Heisst Denken*’de savunulduğu gibi, düşünme hiç te insanın sahipliğinde değildir.) Fakat, Varlık’ın tecellisinin tarihsel olarak yapılaşmış bir alımlanması olarak düşünme, ilk aşamada, bir önceki düşünme tarafından (esasen, Platon ve Aristo) tesis edilmiş bulunan yapı veya mecra içerisinde hareket etmeye neredeyse mecburdur. Düşünme *aletheia*’yı yitirdiğinden beridir ki, Varlık’ın düşünmesi (yani, Varlık hakkında ve Varlık’a ait) olmaktan çıktığından beridir ki, her ikisin asli birlikteliği ve böylece birliği ortadan

⁹ “Only a God Can Save Us” HC, 105.

¹⁰ “Only a God Can Save Us” HC, 105-106.

¹¹ “Only a God Can Save Us” HC, 107.

¹² Joan Stambaugh, “Nihilism and the End of Philosophy” *Thoughts on Heidegger* (Washington, D.C: Center for Advanced Research on Phenomenology and the University Press of America, 1991), s. 144.

kaybolmuştur: bu durum her ikisinin “mahrumiyeti”/ yok kalması, yok-sullaşması (“privation”) demektir ki bu da Heidegger anlamında nihilizmin tam karşılığıdır. Şu halde, 3 moment belirlemektedir: (1) Stambough’un dikkat çektiği iki olgu (yani, Varlık’ın rolü ve düşünmenin rolü) köken itibariyle, yani erken çağ Yunan düşünmesine ait “ilk başlangıçta” (*Erste Anfang*), bütünsel ve eşzamanlıdır. (2a) ama daha sonra, yani metafiziğin (Platon ve Aristo) başgöstermesiyle, ayrı ve ardışık (consequent) hale geldiler, düşünme Varlık’tan kopup varolanlara yöneldi, Varlık’tan yoksun bir düşünme insanlığın Varlık yoksunluğunu belirledi. Ve (2b) akabinde gelen Varlık tarihinde (özellikle günümüzde), Varlık yoksunluğu düşünmeyi tüm veçheleriyle belirledi. Bu husus çalışmamızın 3. Bölüm’ün merkezi problemdir. Her halükarda, benim bu şekilde toparlamaya çalıştığım düşünceler çok zor bir sorun olan Heidegger’de özgürlük sorununu işin içerisine katmaktadır. Gerçekte, özgürlük sorunu Heidegger’in tüm felsefesinin en fazla güçlük arzeden yönlerinden birisidir. Bazen Heidegger herşeyin kaçınılmaz bir zaruretle Varlık tarafından belirlenmiş olduğunu (*Geschichte als Geschick*) söyler gibi görünmektedir. Bazen de insanın rolünü nihilizm ve metafiziğin ortaya çıkışında belirleyici olarak resmeder. Yinede, bizlerin Varlık’ın dünya tiyatrosunda sadece figuranlar olduğumuz yollu izlenimden kurtulmak zordur. İnsan Varlık ilişkisinde (öz-deşliğinde), bizim rolümüz tam olarak nedir? İnsanın özgürlüğü tam olarak nerede yatmaktadır? Düşünme ne türden ve dereceden bir özgürlük içermektedir? gibi sorular belkide Heidegger’in kendisi için de hallolmamış ve derin bir manada düşündürücü olarak kalmaktadır, her ne kadar Heidegger, 30’larda ve sonrasında, özgürlük konusunda çok geniş ölçüde yazmış ta olsa. Aslına bakılırsa, geç dönem Heidegger düşüncesinde özgürlük sorunu mevcut çalışmanın boyutlarını aşan son derece karmaşık bir sorundur. En azından, şuna işaret etmekle yetinelim: sıkıntının önemli bir kısmı, muhtemelen, Heidegger’in özgürlüğü insan iradesi ve ahlak açısından düşünmemeye yönelik güçlü kanaatinde yatmaktadır.¹³ Dolayısıyla, Heidegger’in özgürlüğü *bir* bireyin özgürlüğü olmaktan çok bundan önce gelen bir duruma, yani *Lichtung*’un (açık/ hali alan, mahal olarak “anlam alanı”) asli boyutu olarak *das Freie*’ye, işaret etmektedir. Hatta Heidegger düşüncesinde insanın bireyselliğine hakkını verecek bir yerin olup olamayacağı dahi sorulmalıdır.

Ne ki, Varlık’ın geleceği hakkında hiçbir şey “kesin” olamaz. 7. Bölüm’de gördüğümüz gibi, Heidegger gereğince insani bir tavrın “koruyucu, kurtarıcı olanın” (*das Rettende*) yeşerip büyümesinin yolunu açacağına inanmaktadır. Heidegger, Meister Eckhart’tan esinlenerek, Varlık’a yönelik bu mütefekkirane tavrı *Gelassenheit* olarak isimlendirir; yani, insanın kamil manada edimselliği olarak düşünmenin kamil manada edilgenliği (soruşturma-dinleme-bekleme’nin bir bütünlüğü). Bu bize tüm insan

¹³ “Özgürlük insanın mülkü olmaktan ziyadel, insan özgürlüğün mülküdür”, *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, çev. J. Stambough (Ohio University Press: Athens, Ohio, London, 1985), s. 9. Tastamam aynı nokta “On the Essence of Truth” (*PM* içerisinde), s. 145’te de bulunabilir.

edimselliğinin nihai tahakkuku olarak düşünmenin hakiki manasını vermektedir, ki böyle bir düşünme ancak, Varlık'ın hatıraları olarak hizmet eden yüzükler olarak (*Ringsein*) *Geringe*'de, yakınlığın tecessüm ettiği, bize özümüzü hatırlatan, bizi özümüze, Varlık'a aidiyetimize çağıran, (küçük) şeylerde, koruyucu ve kurtarıcı olanın (*das Rettende*) serpilip vücut bulmasına kapıyı aralayabilir. *Gelassenheit* kendilik'in kendine has (*eigentlich*) alanını (*Zeit-Spiel-Raum*) açıp boşaltan, böylece onu Olmanın kendisel/ sahici tecellisi için alımlayıcı kılan, Olmaya (yani, Varlık'a) izin verme hali, O'nu kendi özüne bırakmaya yönelik tutumdur: o, Varlık hakkındaki sözü, düşünmenin nihai noktası olarak, Varlık'ın kendisine bırakır, Varlık'ın özünce vukua gelmesine (*a-letheia*'nın radikal gizemi olarak) izin verir; Varolanları olmaya iade eder, ve onları böylelikle (Varlık'ın varolanları olarak) olmanın ışımasının alanına sokar; insanın kendi Varlık'ının, insanın kendisi olmasının önünü açar. *Gelassenheit* Heidegger'in metafiziğin kendi tarihinin, yani Varlık tarihinin, her bir momentinde tırmandığını gördüğü (uç ifadesi Nietzsche'deki "irade iradesi" olan) iradenin kendini öne sürmesinin mutlak formlarının tam karşısında yer alır. İrade bir kez vasıtasıyla temel Varlık anlayışımızın yapılandığı düşünmenin başat ilkesi haline geldi mi, ondan sonra Varlık'ın kendisine kendi özünce (*a-letheia*) tezahür edeceği bir "yer" kalmamaktadır. Bilincin tüm biçimleri (mesela, Descartes'in cogito'su, Hegel'in mutlak öz-bilinci, Husserl'in dünyasız saf bilinci) sadece bunun çeşitlemeleridirler. Dünya ile iradenin ağır bastığı bir iştilgal (ve bunun çağlar boyunca giderek güçlenip, yoğunlaşması) Varlık'ın tezahürü için yer (*Ortschaft*) ve açık alan (*Offenheit*) olarak insani özün yön sapmasına yol açmaktadır. Dikkati asli/ özsel olandan (Varlık'ın kendisi, olmak olgusu) tali olana, iradenin kendini öne sürmesinin "nesneleri" olarak, ve giderek te hakimiyet altına alınacak şeyler olarak varolanlara kaydırmaktadır. Heidegger'in işaret ettiği gibi: "irade iradesi olarak bu hayat tüm bilginin hesaplamayı ve değerlemeyi garanti altına alacak tarzda hareket etmesini önceden talep eder."¹⁴

İnsan, Varlık'ın hediyesine, yani (bütünlüklü bir örüntü çerçevesinde) varolanların bizzat ve bir bütün olarak görü alanına çıkıp, mevcudiyet kazanmalarına, mazhar olduğu bu açık/boş alanda (*Lichtung*) durmakta ve ikamet etmektedir. Ancak bu açıklık, bu anlam alanı (anlaşılabilirlik veya görü sahası) içerisinde ve vasıtasıyladır ki insan varolanlarla karşılaşabilmekte ve ilişki kurabilmektedir. Ama bu açıklık alanı, en önce, varolanları şu veya bu biçimde ifşa eden, Varlık'ın kendisinin açığa çıkması, örtüsünü sıyırması yoluyla ve şeklinde açılmaktadır. Söz konusu gizlilikten, örtüden çıkış, ve dolayısıyla, bu olayın tesis ettiği açık alanın (*Lichtung*) kendisi, bu açıklığın ışığında gözlerimizin önüne serilen varlıklar lehine, bizlerin gözünden kaçmaktadır. *Lichtung* böylece Varlık'ın yakınlığıdır: insan Varlık'ın yakınlığında ikamet etmektedir, ve bu yakınlık bizzat insanın asli özü, onun

¹⁴ "Overcoming Metaphysics" *EP*, 109.

mekanı ve evidir. Fakat eğer metafiziğin dikkati tümüyle görü alanına serilenlere, mevcut olanlara, hal-i hazırda bulunanlara, duyuşsal ve maddi olarak ulaşılabilir olanlara hasrolmakta ise, ve bu, uzun bir gelenek içerisinde yapılaşmış ve kesafet peyda etmiş, bir düşünme alışkanlığı suretinde, Varlık'ın gizinden çıkışı olayı olarak görü alanının kendisini unuttuyorsa, o zaman insan bu gelenek veya tarih yoluyla evine, asli meskenine, Varlık'ın saf manada dolaysız yakınlığına, onun için en özsel olana (*Wesen*), yabancılaşmaktadır. Heidegger evsizliğin, yersiz yurtsuzluğun (*Heimatlosigkeit*) nihilistik özüne dikkat çeker ve bunun Batılı varoluşu, ve bilhassa moderniteyi, tepeden tırnağa karakterize ettiğini öne sürer, zira metafizik, özsel anlamında eve (Varlık'ın yakınlığına) esaslı bir yabancılaşmayı içermektedir. Nihilizm o halde kendisini Batılı insanın “yersiz yurtsuz aklı” (*unhomely mind*) olarak göstermektedir.

Dolayısıyla, dünya-tarihsel şekilleri içerisinde, ve nihayet teknoloji şeklinde, nihilizm, (evsizliğin filozofu) Nietzsche'nin haykırdığı gibi, “en tekinsiz (*unheimlichste*) misafir” olup, öyle ki insanı yersiz yurtsuz, tekinsiz (*unheimlich*) bir yaratık haline getirmekte, hakiki bir ikamet imkanından, evden uzak tutmaktadır. Kısacası, insanın tekinsiz bir hal almasıyla, yersiz yurtsuz hale gelmesi, yeryüzünden kopması, ikamet etmekten, ve Varlık'ın yakınlığından mahrum kalması, ve varolanları elde etmeye yönelmiş bir düşünme biçim ve alışkanlığının esiri haline gelmiş olması arasında Heidegger doğrudan ve kopmaz bağlantılar görür. Aslında, tüm nihilizm problematiği, bölüm 5'te göstermeye teşebbüs ettiğimiz gibi, Nietzsche'ye dayanır, fakat Heidegger bunu yeni bir ışıktaki sahiplenir ve dönüştürür. Nietzsche'nin “güç iradesi” metafiziği, Nietzsche'nin niyetlerinin tamamen aksine, Varlık'ı sonsuz bir karanlıkta bırakır, ve bunun beraberinde, insanın Varlık'la ilişkilendiği insani özün asli yurdunu (ev) da. O vakit, çağımızda ev arayışı, Heidegger'e göre, nihilizm sorunu ile doğrudan ve belirleyici bir karşılaşmayı üstlenmek zorundadır. Söz konusu karşılaşma “mütefekkirane bir soruşturma” şeklinde, yani Varlık sorusu ile açılan yola mütefekkirane bir teslimiyet ve bu yolda seyahat şeklinde olmalı, ki bu Heidegger'in *Gelassenheit* dediği şeyin bir başka tarifidir. Diğer bir deyişle, nokta koyucu neticeler veya nihai cevaplar saiki ile yapılan bir araştırma değil de, iradeden en az miktarda etkilenen, Varlık'ın sedasız sesinden nebean eden şiirsel söyleyişin iradi olmayan inikalarına kendini salıveren ve hemhal olan açık uçlu, değişime açık soruşturma kastedilmektedir. Hatta bu maksat için, çalışmamızda işaret ettiğimiz gibi, “nihilizmin veya metafiziğin üstesinden gelme” gibi tamamiyle iradi girişimler de bir kenara bırakılmalıdır. Öncelikle ihtiyaç duyulan şey Varlık'ın kendi özünce tezahür etmesinin, avdet etmesinin, yani çıkagelmesinin yolunu açacak yerli yerince bir açıklığı (hazırlığı) hazırlayacak olan düşünmenin kendi vazifesine odaklanmaktan başka bir şey değildir. Ayrıca, bizler Batı geleneği ile, hususan kendi içerisinde Varlık'ın hatırasını, ilk başlangıç olayı olarak hayretin birdenbire doğuşunu

saklayan erken dönem Yunan düşünmesi ile, bir diyalogu üstlenmedikçe, bu gerçekleşemez. Bu tecrübenin hatırasından uzak düşme, onun metafizik içerisinde sönüp kaybolması, Varlık'ın unutulmuşluğunun, bir yazgı olarak nihilizmin gizli tarihinin kaynağıdır. “Hatır(a) içerisinde ve hatır(a) için” böyle bir diyalog “yazgının bir dönüştürülme imkanını besler.”¹⁵ Bundan dolayı, *Gelassenheit* Varlık'ın hatırasını (*Gedächtnis*) şiirsel ifadede tecessüm ettirmek suretiyle hatıra getirmesi ve hatırdaki tutması (*er-innern*), kendine ait kılması ve kendilemesi (*er-eignen*), muhafaza etmesi ve hafızaya maletmesi (*wahren*) icab eden hatırlayıcı bir düşünmeyi (*An-denken*) içermektedir, ki bu Varlık'ın unutulmuşluğunun tam zıttıdır. Heidegger burada Hölderlin'den, eve avdet edişin (*Heimkunft*) şair-düşünüründen ilham alır. Görüleceği üzere, Nietzsche ve Hölderlin, bu iki trajik şair-düşünür Varlık tarihinin iki zıt kutbunda yer alır, birisi nihilizmin alacakaranlığına, Varlık'ın ve anlamın uçup gittiği metafiziğin en uç tecellisinin biçimlendirdiği mukadder bir tarihsel dönemin ontolojik özüne tercüman olurken, diğeri hüküm süren ve ilerleyen nihilizmin tevahhuşundan, öteki başlangıcın şafağına Varlık'ın kendi hakikatine şairane bir açıklık zemininde sıçrayış (*Sprung*) yapmaktadır.

Gelassenheit böylece, teknolojik nihilizm çağında, insanlara kalan teknolojinin tasallutunun sahası dışındaki tek hakiki seçenek olmaktadır: o, düşünmenin kalbinde tecelli eden Varlık'ın sesine karşı teslimkar ve dinleyici bir tavidir, ki böylelikle *Besinnung*'un (veya *besinnliches Denken*, özsel düşünme, tefekkür) inkişafına vesile olması beklenebilir. Heidegger en başından beri metafiziği, ve onun içerdiği nihilizmi, aşacak bir düşünme biçimi arayışı içerisinde: bu tüm Heidegger felsefesi söz konusu olduğunda, üzerinde durulması zorunlu olan hayati bir olgudur, deyim yerindeyse Heidegger'in düşünme yolunun temel ve tanımlayıcı motivasyonudur. Heidegger'in böyle bir düşünme biçimine ulaştığından emin olduğunu söylemek güç olmakla birlikte, Heidegger bunu kariyerinin değişik evrelerinde değişik isimler vererek belli bir ölçüde, sakar yordamlarla da olsa, keşfettiğini düşünmüştür. Ama böyle bir düşünmenin ancak gelecekte yeşerip filiz vermesini beklediğini bir çok defa ifade etmiştir; kendi çabalarının bu gelecekte neşv-ü nema bulacak düşünmeye yönelik bir tohum serpmeye işi olduğunu söylemek gerekir. İşte *Besinnung* böyle bir düşünme biçimine Heidegger'in verdiği isimlerden birisidir. *Besinnung* dile (“Varlık'ın evine”¹⁶, Varlık'ın gizinden-açığa çıkışının, hakikatinin vukua geldiği asli tarza) derinlemesine duyarlı, ve bu surette Varlık'a karşılık veren (*Ant-wort*) ve karşılık gelen (*Entsprechen*), onun sesine uyan ve çağrısına icabet eden (responsive and response-able) sözü, her defasında, aramakta toplanır. *Besinnung* “suale şayan olana teslimiyet”¹⁷ anlamında, Varlık sorusunun kendisini meselesine teslim ettiği, ve böylece bir yola girdiği, Ereignis'e yer ve yol açtığı,

¹⁵ “Moira (Parmenides VIII, 34-41)” *EGT*, 101.

¹⁶ “Letter on Humanism” *PM*, 239; “The Way to Language” *OL*, 135.

¹⁷ “Gelassenheit zum die Fragwürdigen”, “Wissenschaft und Besinnung” *VA*, 63.

Gelassenheit'a aittir. Yol, Varlık olayının (Ereignis) mecrası demektir. Düşünmenin yolu Varlık sorusudur: Düşünmek bu yolda olmak, bir yol tutmak demektir. Yolda olmak (*unterwegs*), Heidegger anlamında, maceravari bir şeydir, radikal bir belirsizlik meselesidir: Önceden ne olacağı asla kestirilemez. Maceravari bir cüret olan düşünme, yine de, kendi içinde, yani *kendi* yolu üzerinde, Heidegger'in değişik adlar verdiği Varlık'ın özünce vukua gelmesinin (*Wesung des Seyns*), imkanını saklar. Bunlardan başat olanı muhtemelen Ereignis'tir. Heidegger ayrıca onu Hölderlin'in *das Heilige*¹⁸si ile, "olmuş olan Tanrılardan, özellikle Hristiyanlığın Tanrısından, tümüyle başka"¹⁹ olan son Tanrı ile özdeşleştirir. *Der Spiegel* mülakatında bizi kurtarabilecek yegane şeyin *bir* Tanrı olduğunu söyler.²⁰ Burada *bir* kelimesinin (belirsizlik edatı) hayati bir önemi olduğunu görmek gerekir. Heidegger'in dediğine bakılırsa, bizler nihilizmin pençesinde kalacağız ta ki *bir* Tanrının özünde belirsiz fakat umulan çıkagelişine değin (*Gelassenheit*'i üstleneceğimizi varsayarak). Böyle *bir* Tanrı biz ölümlülere, içerisinde kendimizi Varlık'ın sonsuz zenginliğinin, köklü muammasının, vecd veren yakınlığının, vecd ile alude sakinleri olarak tahattur ve keşfedebileceğimiz *bir* dil, *bir* dünya, *bir* ev bahşedecektir.

¹⁸ "Hölderlin'in şiiri ne söyler? O'nun sözü şudur: Kudsi olan." ("Was sagt Hölderlin's Dichtung? Ihr Wort ist: das Heilige.") *Zollikoner Seminare: Protokolle-Zwiegespräche-Briefe*, ed. Medard Boss (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), s. 332.

¹⁹ *CP*, 283.

²⁰ Bununla ilgili cümlelerin kendisi mülakatın başlığı olmuştur: "Nur ein Gott kann uns noch Retten/ Bizi Ancak bir Tanrı Kurtarabilir." *HC*, 107.