

**NIHILISM:
Heidegger/Jünger/Aristotle¹**

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**I
Overcoming nihilism?**

Do we live in the age of fulfilled nihilism? If so, can we overcome such nihilism?

These are two of the questions that inform the extraordinary open letter that Martin Heidegger published in 1955 in a Festschrift celebrating Ernst Jünger's sixtieth birthday.² Heidegger's letter was in response to an essay that Jünger had contributed six years earlier, in 1949, to a Festschrift on Heidegger's own sixtieth birthday. So there was a certain reciprocity in the exchange: a favor returned, a public gesture of respect mirroring an earlier one.

No doubt it was a heartfelt gesture on Heidegger's part, especially since the Festschrift in his own honor, the one to which Jünger had contributed, had come at the worst period in Heidegger's career, when he was isolated, under suspicion for his pro-Nazi activities in the 1930s, still forbidden to teach at any German university, and trying to put his life back together after the nervous breakdown he had suffered three years earlier.

But Heidegger's open letter was more than a cordial gesture toward an old friend. It was above all a philosophical engagement with the very person who had inspired Heidegger in the late 1920s with his essay "Totale Mobilmachung" and then with his book *Der Arbeiter*, published in 1932, the year before Hitler took power. These works not only had inspired Heidegger but also opened doors for him

¹This text develops themes that found an initial expression in "Nihilism, Facticity, and the Economized *Lethe*," in *Heidegger: A Centennial Appraisal* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1990), pp. 28-61. The present text is dedicated, as was the earlier one, to Prof. William J. Richardson, S.J.

²Originally published as "Über 'Die Linie,'" in *Freundschaftliche Begegnungen. Festschrift für Ernst Jünger zum 60. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt a. M., 1955), pp. 9-45; later as *Zur Seinsfrage* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1956). Reprinted in Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe* (hereinafter: *GA*), 9, pp. 385-426. ET by Jean T. Wilde and William Kluback, *The Question of Being* (New Haven, Conn. Twayne Publishers, 1958). Hereinafter abbreviated as *ZS* with the paginations from the 1956 edition, the *GA* edition, and the current English translation. For example, in the present case: *ZS* pp. 9-45/385-426, ET pp. 33-109. Ernst Jünger died on February 17, 1998, at the age of 102.

onto such themes as nihilism, technology, and *Gestell*, which figure so prominently in his later work. Since Jünger had raised some of these issues in his 1949 essay, Heidegger took the occasion to address them too and, in the process, to re-evaluate his intellectual relationship to Jünger.

To return to our first two questions: At first glance it seems that, *ex professo*, Heideggerians would agree that we do live in the age of fulfilled nihilism and that it is both desirable and possible that such nihilism be overcome. The long "history of being" has culminated in the virtual domination of $JXP < O$ over $nbF4H$, the triumph of the man-made world over nature, of forms imposed by artisans and technicians, over forms that come to be of themselves (cf. nbT), so much so that $nbF4H$ seems to disappear, to count for nothing, to amount to *nihil*, a "negative nothingness."⁵ Hence, the age of complete nihilism. It is not that being *tout court* has disappeared: that is impossible, since as long as there are human beings there will be being, and even nihilism is a formation of being. Rather, Heideggerians hold that only a certain kind of being -- but the most fundamental kind, the one that underlies all other modes of being -- has withdrawn. Or better, it seems to have been stamped out by men and women, who stamp everything with their own Gestalt, turn all entities into reproductions of human will, and thus reduce being to production. On this reading, nihilism means that the being of entities has become their unlimited intelligibility-as-this-or-that and their unlimited availability-for-production. Entities *are* whatever human beings would make of them.

Thus we no longer live in a natural world that is moved from within by $nbF4H$; rather, we live in an artificial world frenetically propelled from without, by $JXP < O$, into what human beings want it to be. The world is too much with us -- in fact it *is* us, the theater of our mirrored selves. "We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves." "So it returns. Think you're escaping and run into yourself."⁴ The universe of modernity is a closed world as hermetically sealed as the tidy little cosmos of Eudoxus or Callippus or Ptolemy, a world that reflects modern human subjectivity just as much as the cosmos of Augustine, Aquinas, and Bonaventure reflected divine subjectivity. For those medieval philosophers, each entity had its being to the degree that it stood before God's mind and was held in existence by his divine vision: "We see these things you have made because they exist; however, only because you see them do they exist."⁵ Each entity was stamped into existence by God and had being to the degree that it was a reflection of his own divine ideas, the *rationes aeternae*. But today, thanks to technology, that hermetically sealed world is no longer divine but human: it is referred back to ourselves. It is a world in which we seem to meet nothing but ourselves *qua* workers extrapolated into our products.⁶ In this reading, therefore, correlative to nihilism is "humanism," the ideology which asserts that human being is fulfilled in abetting the limitless availability and intelligibility of everything that is.

On this account it seems that we do live in the age of complete, fulfilled nihilism, where the

³ZS, p. 34/415, ET p. 89.

⁴James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: The Modern Library, new edition, 1961), pp. 213, 377 (Dedalus and Bloom, respectively).

⁵"Nos itaque ista quae fecisti videmus, quia sunt; tu autem quia vides ea, sunt." *Confessiones*, XII, 38 (52), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Prima Latina* (hereinafter *PL*), ed. J-P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1844-1864), here XXXII (1861), p. 868. Augustine frequently expresses his related conviction that God does not know things because they exist but that they exist because God knows them; cf. *De Trinitate*, VI, 10 and XV, 13, *PL*, XLII, pp. 931 and 1076.

⁶ZS, p. 27/407, ET p. 75: der Mensch meinen kann, er begegne nur noch sich selbst.

power of being is reduced to the power of human labor under the rubric of Vico's thesis that *verum et factum convertuntur*.⁷ It would seem, too, that the task of philosophy (or at least that of Heidegger's thinking) is to annihilate nihilism, i.e., to overcome it, by drastically limiting the power and the reach of $\text{JXP} < \text{O}$ and making room again for nbF4H . Should we not, at least to some degree, turn our backs on technology, industrialization, and the exploitation of the earth, and first of all on the rationality that drives them? Should we not strive to preserve ourselves from the ravages of city life and return to nature, the way Heidegger did by taking refuge in his simple hut in the Black Forest? Isn't this why he threw his weight in the 1930a behind the reactionary socialism ("half lamentation, half lampoon") of the Nazis?⁸ Isn't that the case Heidegger is arguing? And even if his political choice was wrong, wasn't at least his philosophical motive commendable?

Let us see if that is so. The essay Jünger published in Heidegger's honor had been entitled "*Über die Linie*," roughly: "Across the Line." There Jünger had discussed the overcoming of nihilism -- specifically how, after World War II, Western humanity seemed to be crossing a line from nihilism into a new age when being, *das Sein*, might "turn toward" human beings and put an end their homelessness. Jünger called this hoped-for future event *die Zuwendung des Seins*, and in the phrase we seem to hear an echo of Heidegger's own language and thought. But not so. When he responded to Jünger's essay in 1955, Heidegger subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) rewrote Jünger's essay and reinscribed it -- much transformed -- into Heidegger's own quite different understanding of nihilism and of the prospects for possibly "overcoming" it.

Fifteen years earlier, during his 1940 seminar on the *Physics*, Heidegger had called attention to how Aristotle, in taking up the doctrine of the fifth-century Eleatic Sophist, Antiphon, had radically reinterpreted that doctrine by quietly incorporating it, with a new meaning, into his own vision of nbF4H . Heidegger had written that

Aristotle's acceptance of Antiphon's doctrine nevertheless constitutes the sharpest rejection of it. The most drastic way to reject a proposition is not to dismiss it brusquely as disproved and merely brush it *aside*, but on the contrary to take it over and work it *into* an essential and grounded connection with one's own argument -- i.e., to take it over and work it in as the non-essence [*Unwesen*] that necessarily belongs to the essence.⁹

⁷Giambattista Vico, *De Antiquissima Italorum Sapientia ex Linguae Latinae Originibus Eruenda* (Naples: Felice Mosca, 1710), I, 1, i; ET *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians Unearthed from the Origins of the Latin Language*, trans. L. M. Palmer (Ithaca, N.Y. and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 45; cf. "Verum esse ipsum factum," p. 46.

⁸Cf. "...halb Klagelied, halb Pasquill, halb Rückhall der Vergangenheit, halb Dräuer der Zukunft": Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke* (Berlin: Dietz, 1971), IV, 483 (*Communist Manifesto*, III, 1.A).

⁹Martin Heidegger, "Vom Wesen und Begriff der MbF4H . Aristoteles' *Physik B 1*," *Wegmarken*, GA 9 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976), pp. 239-301, here, p. 364; in the *first* edition (1967), pp. 309-371, here, p. 294. ET "On the Essence and Concept of MbF4H in Aristotle's *Physics B 1*," tr. Thomas Sheehan, in Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 183-230, here p. 224. Hereinafter I provide pagination to both the *second* and the *first* German editions and to the English translation. For example, in the present case: *Wegmarken*, p. 364/294, ET p. 224. For the text of the *Physics* I use W.D. Ross' edition, *Aristotle's Physics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1936).

Something similar can be said of Heidegger's open letter of 1955, in which Jünger's earlier essay is quietly appropriated as *Unwesen*, a perhaps inevitable but finally false "shadow" of the essential issue. Heidegger takes virtually all the major topics that Jünger had expounded and inverts and corrects them or takes them beyond themselves. Heidegger transforms Jünger's *Überwindung* into a *Verwindung*; his "topography" into a "topology"; his "line" into a "zone." Above all, he shows Jünger's central thesis about a future *Zuwendung des Seins* to be an impossibility: we should await no such future moment when being will allegedly "turn" to human beings, precisely because being is always already a *Zuwendung zum Menschenwesen*. And above all there is no "crossing of the line," no promised exit from nihilism.

Heidegger's incorporation/transformation of Jünger begins at the very top of the piece. Jünger had called his essay *Über die Linie*, and Heidegger gives his open letter the same title, except that he adds a set of quotation marks around the noun and thereby changes the meaning: *Über "die Linie."* The preposition *über* can mean both "over"/"across" (Latin, *trans*) and "concerning" (Latin, *de*). Jünger had used it in the first sense: "Crossing the Line" (from nihilism to being), whereas Heidegger's quotation marks transform the title from *trans lineam* to *de linea*: *Über "die Linie,"* as if to say: "What about this 'line'?" The alteration effects an important shift of horizon that lets Heidegger propose a different kind of question, not about a possible "attribute" of nihilism (its ability to be overcome) but rather about its essence.¹⁰

This shift in the question about nihilism might remind us of an analogous effort: Socrates' attempt

¹⁰Heidegger's discussion presumes some basic distinctions. First one must observe the difference of *Seiendheit*/beingness -- sometimes named as "the being of entities" -- from *das Sein selbst*/being-itself/*Ereignis*. Second, it is important to distinguish between the *essence* of nihilism (which we shall provisionally call "essential nihilism") and historical-cultural nihilism. "Historical-cultural nihilism" refers to the alleged fact that, under the pressure of the increasing humanization of the world, the "natural" beingness and intelligibility (*Seiendheit*) of entities gives way to *human* constructions of beingness and intelligibility and thus seems "forced" to withdraw. But what makes historical-cultural nihilism possible is "essential nihilism," the fact that what enables or makes possible ("gives," "dispenses") any and all forms of beingness and intelligibility, including the form operative in historical-cultural nihilism, is, when viewed from any entitative perspective, a *nihil*, i.e., neither an entity nor any form of the beingness of entities. (Heidegger calls this enabling power "*Ereignis*.") The nil-status of what enables all forms of beingness is called its intrinsic "hiddenness" or "withdrawnness." This hiddenness is *Seinsvergessenheit* in its primary and strict sense -- the "self"-concealment of being-itself -- which Heidegger finds named in Heraclitus' dictum that *ἄνθρωπος*, in and of itself, prefers to hide (Fragment 123). The "self"-concealment of what enables beingness leads to the enabling power getting overlooked and forgotten -- *Seinsvergessenheit* in the less important of its two meanings, the "forgottenness" of being-itself -- which in turn leads to historical-cultural nihilism.

It is clear from Heidegger's texts (1) that *Seinsvergessenheit* in its secondary sense is not the forgetting of *Sein* (the complete overlooking of beingness is, in any case, a virtual impossibility); (2) that *Seinsvergessenheit* in its primary sense cannot be overcome; and (3) that what *enables* the beingness of entities is not reducible to the beingness that it enables. In what follows I argue that the so-called "forced" withdrawal of being *qua* *ἄνθρωπος*, due to the increased humanization of the world, is the *gift* of that which enables beingness; and that the intrinsic hiddenness of this enabling (i.e., the *ἄνθρωπος* at the heart of *ἄνθρωπος*) comes into its own as the total availability of entities to human cognition and manipulation. If what enables beingness loves to hide, it also loves to turn the world over to human beings. Therefore, to awaken from the oblivion of being in the secondary sense (ignorance of the enabling of beingness) would be to awaken to the inevitability of the humanization of nature and the naturalization of the human.

to get Meno to ask a different kind of question about •DgJZ. At three cardinal points in the *Meno* (70a and 71a-b; 86c-e; and 99e-100b), Socrates tries to direct Meno's attention away from an attribute of •DgJZ (viz., how it might be acquired) and toward the essence of •DgJZ -- from *quale est* to *quid est* -- for "If I do not know what something is (J\ |FJ4), how could I know one of its qualities (OB@A@<):" (71b)

Heidegger does something similar. Jünger's essay was concerned with how nihilism might be overcome. Heidegger, however, insists on the prior question: "What is the *essence* of nihilism?" Without first answering that question (Heidegger seems to say), one might end up like Meno (cf. 70a, 86c, 100b), thinking that nihilism could be overcome by nature, effort, or learning, or perhaps by some other way:

- ! "by nature" (nbFg4), that is, by a future "turning" of being/nbF4H toward Dasein,
- ! which turning would be accompanied, on Dasein's part, by a unique kind of effort (cf. •F6OJ` <), the discipline of "willing-not-to-will,"¹¹
- ! all of which might be taught and learned (cf. *4* "6J` <, : "hOJ` <) -- perhaps by elucidating and appropriating Heidegger's texts on technology and the history of being;
- ! or nihilism might have to be overcome "in some other way" (J\<4 B@J¥ JD` Bâ: 86c; ØJ4<4 JD` Bâ: 100b), perhaps with the help of the gods.

The *Meno*, we recall, ends with Socrates pretending to favor the last of these four possibilities. "When it comes to acquiring •DgJZ," he seems to say, "only a god can save us" (*nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten*) -- for as far as Meno was able to discern, •DgJZ apparently "comes to one by divine fate, unaccompanied by understanding" (•DgJ- hg\` : @\D' B"D" (4 (<@: X<O -<gL <@Ø: 99e). However, for Socrates that suggestion is entirely ironic, not because it claims that virtue is a divine gift (it might well be) but rather because it says that virtue is bestowed -<gL <@Ø, without understanding. The core of the *Meno* was dedicated to illustrating the exact opposite, namely, that the path to true understanding -- the path to essence -- is •<V: <OF4H (81a-e, 85c-86c, and 98a).¹² And once one recollects the essence of •DgJZ (or any other essence), one realizes that it is always already present, always already known (cf. @Ü6 §FJ4< Ö J4 @Ü : g: Vh06g<, 81c). Strictly speaking, then, one need not "search" for the always-already but only recover it.¹³

Heidegger seems to treat Jünger (and by implication some Heideggerians) the way Socrates treats Meno. Regarding those who would sit on their hands and wait for being to "turn toward us" some day, Heidegger is as ironic as Socrates was: "Only a god can save us now!" What is more, against

¹¹"...wollen wir das Nicht-Wollen." Martin Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, 3rd ed. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), p. 57.

¹²Socrates' answer to the dilemma posed by Meno was that it is possible to search for what we think we do not know -- by remembering what we already know. St. Augustine makes a similar point: "Perdiderat enim mulier drachmam, et quaesivit eam cum lucerna (*Luc.* xv, 8), et nisi memor ejus esset, non inveniret eam. Cum enim esset inventa, unde sciret utrum ipsa esset, si memor ejus non esset?" *Confessiones* X, 18 (27), *PL* XXXII (1861), p. 791.

¹³The obligation to search mentioned at 86b-c (*gÃ< . OJgÃ<) is contrasted with Meno's claim that it is neither possible to find, nor obligatory to search for, what we think we do not know.

anyone who thinks nihilism can be overcome at all -- whether by the four ways indicated above or any others -- he argues that once one has experienced •<V: <OF4H -- what he calls the "turning back" (*Rückkehr*) or "thinking back" (*Andenken*) into essence -- one must realize that nihilism cannot be overcome at all. Overcoming nihilism is an illusion.

Heidegger's focus on the *essence* of nihilism rather than on one of its "attributes" -- namely, its ability to be overcome or not -- is the reason why he changed the title of his open letter one last time, not simply by inserting quotation marks into Jünger's old title but rather by directly stating what he thinks is at stake. When he published his text as a separate pamphlet a year later (1956), Heidegger called it *Zur Seinsfrage*, as if to say: The question of nihilism must be brought back to the question of being. In the Preface to the pamphlet he wrote: "The new title is meant to indicate that this reflection on the essence of nihilism stems from a clarification of being as ~~being~~." (The cross-out indicates that "being" as used here does not refer to "beingness" -- the whatness, thatness, and howness of things¹⁴ -- but to what *enables* all forms of beingness.¹⁵)

This sentence from Heidegger's Preface to *Zur Seinsfrage* sets our task, namely: (1) to clarify the essence of ~~being~~ (2) so as to clarify the essence of nihilism (3) so as to decide about the possibility or impossibility of overcoming nihilism. In what follows I focus on Heidegger rather than Jünger, not only because Heidegger is philosophically more interesting, but also because Jünger himself eventually conceded Heidegger's points. Some twenty-six years later, in an interview with Frederic de Towarnicki in Paris (October 1981), Jünger remarked:

The reflections that Heidegger wrote to me on this subject seem to me to be quite right. [...] At that time [1949, the writing of "*Über die Linie*"] I was too optimistic. After the defeat [of Nazi Germany] I was saying in effect: "The serpent's head has already broken through the line of nihilism. It has gotten out, and the whole body will soon follow, and we shall soon enter a better spiritual climate, etc." In fact, we are far from

¹⁴In its traditional formulation, the question of/about being is directed at the beingness (@ÜF\ /*Seiendheit*) of entities and corresponds to Aristotle's question, J\H ° @ÜF\ ; (*Metaphysics* Z 1, 1028 b 4). This usage is cognate with what Husserl (in a more restricted context) called "ousiology": see *Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertlehre, 1908-1914*, Husserliana XXVIII, ed. Ullrich Melle (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988), Beilage XIV, p. 377: "Die reale Ousiology behandelt die Wesenslehre realer Gegenständlichkeit in allgemeinsten Allgemeinheit."

¹⁵To distinguish being-itself and beingness we might draw on the *verbal* (but not the definitional) distinction that late Hellenistic philosophy and the Greek Fathers made between @ÜF\TF4H and @ÜF\ , where the former would have the sense of simply "making possible/enabling @ÜF\ " rather than the Patristic sense of "creation." As *terms*, @ÜF\TF4H and the corresponding verb forms occur frequently in Simplicius' commentaries on Aristotle; cf. *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* (Berlin: Reimer), VIII (1907), *Simplicii in Aristotelis Categorias Commentarium*, ed. Carl Kalbfleisch, pp. 34.19; 102.2; 114.31 and 32; 129.23 and 27; 195.18; 182.15, 227.28, and 369.11 (these last three are perhaps the best approximations to the meaning we are indicating here). In the Greek Fathers the term generally means "creation": cf. Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, PG XX (1857), p. 56A; cf. also p. 1405C, and *Demonstratio evangelica*, PG XXII (1857), p. 252C; but in the Latin Fathers also "subsistentia": cf. Boethius, *De duabus naturis et una persona, contra Eutychem et Nestorium*, PL LXIV (1847), p. 1345A/B: "in nullo subjecta" and "nullo indigens." According to Procopius of Gaza (ca. A.D. 520), @ÜF\TF4H (rei primitivam essentiam dare) and : gJ" B@iOF4H (in meliorem conditionem commutare) are treated as equal subsets of B@\OF4H/6J\F4H: *Commentarii in Deuteronomium*, (32:6), PG LXXXVII, Pars Prima (1863), p. 956D.

it.¹⁶

Moreover, I propose to read the Heidegger of *Zur Seinsfrage* as he demanded (rightly or wrongly) to be read, namely, as *homo philosophicus* rather than as *homo politicus*, i.e., as a thinker about being rather than as the conservative German nationalist who inserted himself dramatically and disastrously into politics more than two decades before he published this essay. It is not that I think we should refrain from reading Heidegger politically -- far from it. But regardless of whether one believes Heidegger's artfully crafted *apologia* for his political engagement, regardless of whether one thinks he was amazingly naïve in how he read German politics in the 1930s and how he understood world politics right up to his death, Heidegger did in fact claim, to the very end, that his reasons for supporting National Socialism had to do with his hope of overcoming nihilism and tempering the effects of technology. He claimed in effect that we could understand his political "error" (as he called it) only if we first understood what he thought about nihilism and technology. Taking Heidegger at his word, one might argue (as I emphatically do not) that in his laudable effort to overcome nihilism he may have picked the wrong party, but at least he intended the right goal, and that even while criticizing him for the former, one might join him in pursuing the latter.

Be that as it may, I choose to investigate nihilism and technology on Heidegger's own terms and to bracket for now the political implications of his philosophy. My focus is on Heidegger's transformation of Jünger's hope for an *Überwindung* of nihilism into Heidegger's new vision of a *Verwindung*, a "freeing" of oneself from social and cultural nihilism by seeing its rootedness in a deeper and unsurpassable "nihilism" that is, in fact, the human condition.¹⁷ In so doing I shall take seriously Heidegger's claim that in questioning nihilism one has to "reflect on old, venerable words that, as language, convey to us the realm of the essence of nihilism and the promise of *Verwindung*, that is, getting free in relation to it."¹⁸

To repeat: Are we in the age of fulfilled nihilism? and if so, can we overcome it? There may well be other, more direct and more fruitful ways of broaching these two questions, but for now let us follow Socrates' suggestion that questions of "how to...?" follow from questions of "what is...?" Let us test Heidegger's thesis that reflecting on the essence of nihilism by reflecting on the essence of being will help

¹⁶Martin Heidegger, ed. Michel Haar (Paris: Cahiers de l'Herne, 1983), p. 149. Jean Beaufret and Odile Gandon were present at the interview.

¹⁷It is best to shelve the discourse of the "overcoming" (*Überwindung*) of metaphysics and of the nihilism that is its fulfillment, insofar this alleged "overcoming" seems to promise that once human beings come to understand the history and the meaning of the *Gestell* as the form of the current epoch of disclosure, they will take a step towards a new day when being will again "turn towards" humankind and when the current economic, social, and political configuration of power might thereby begin to change. All of that is an illusion, and its illusoriness is not mitigated by the fact that it is shared by so many Heideggerians. It is also a misreading of Heidegger, who finally prefers the discourse of a *Verwindung* of metaphysics and nihilism, a liberation from metaphysics' blindness to the original *nihil* that enables all forms of beingness. According to Heidegger, that *nihil* is bound up with the human essence, and not to accept and "enter upon" it is to refuse one's essential destiny. But the more important point is that this *Verwindung*, as an "accepting" of the original *nihil*, provides not the slightest clue as to how one might set about the tasks of solving the concrete material problems of humankind.

¹⁸ZS, pp. 43-44/425, ET p. 109.

us to decide on whether or not nihilism can be overcome.¹⁹

II Horizon and Method

First, a remark on the horizon within which Heidegger's reflections in *Zur Seinsfrage* move. As we would expect from this thinker of "one thing only," whatever Heidegger has to say about nihilism is bound up with what he has to say about being. Thus we must "reduce" nihilism (in the sense of *zurückführen*, leading nihilism back) to the question of being, and hence to a "meta-technological" level. However, Heidegger's "question of being" is not about being as beingness/@ÜF\", taken as that which makes entities be entities. Rather, it is about the "essence" of @ÜF\" -- that which enables (brings about) all forms of beingness -- and this is |BX6g4<\" J-H @ÜF\"H, "beyond" @ÜF\", otherwise than beingness.²⁰ It is in this "beyond" that one presumably encounters the *essence* of nihilism. Heidegger writes:

Perhaps a time will come when the essence of nihilism will appear more clearly along other paths and in a brighter light. But until then I will content myself with the assumption that we might reflect on the essence of nihilism only by following the road that leads toward an explanation of the essence of being[ness].²¹

The "essence of beingness" is what *enables* the beingness of entities, and this Heidegger calls *Ereignis*/"appropriation," the central topic of his thought. "Appropriation" is Heidegger's effort to name

¹⁹Underlying the present essay are the following presuppositions about how *Heidegger* understands his *own* work: ! The beingness of entities is their in-principle unlimited intelligibility-as-this-or-that. ! Classical metaphysics attempts to trace the possibility of all forms of such synthetic intelligibility back to a perfectly self-coincident, self-knowing entity that is non-synthetic intelligibility-itself. ! The proximate cause of all synthetic intelligibility is human finitude, grounded in the insurmountable, intelligibility-enabling ontological lack that human being itself is. ! This lack is called "the nothing"/*nihil*; its state of inevitability and insurmountability is called "the mystery"; and human being's grounding in this insurmountable, intelligibility-enabling *nihil* is called "appropriation"/*Ereignis*. ! The limitless intelligibility of entities is the "gift" of the insurmountable, intelligibility-enabling *nihil* into which human being is appropriated. ! Thus the fulfillment of human being consists in understanding and accepting its appropriation into the insurmountable *nihil* and the resultant limitless synthetic intelligibility of everything that is.

²⁰By "that which enables" ("das Tauglichmachende") I mean to evoke Heidegger's claim that what he calls "Ereignis" is already intimated, albeit inadequately, in Plato's $\text{J}\bar{\text{I}} \bullet (\text{h} \text{ } < : \text{Wegmarken}$, p. 228, E.T. p. 175 (see *ibid.*, *Ermöglichung*). Compare (1) Heidegger's *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, GA 24 (Frankfurt: Klostermann), 1975, p. 405: "die Bedingung der Möglichkeit des Seinsverständnisses [= Seiendheitsverständnisses]"; ET by Albert Hofstadter, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 286. And (2) his *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, GA 26, where Heidegger seems to retrieve from Plato's |BX6g4<\" J-H @ÜF\"H (*Republic* VII, 509 b 9) the notion of the world as "das Umwillen": p. 203-252; ET by Michael Heim, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 159-195.

²¹ZS, p. 25/405, ET p. 71.

the complex movement whereby

- a. the relative absence intrinsic to the human essence,²² operating in the mode of $\hat{J}\hat{I}$ "a < g6",
- b. "evokes" that essence, i.e., pulls it forth into presence-bestowing possibility,²³
- c. thus making possible and necessary the openness (*Da*)
- d. wherein any and all entities can appear *as* this or that, i.e., *in* their current mode of beingness.

In short: *Ereignis* (a term that Heidegger retrieved from the unsaid in Aristotle's $\delta\lambda\epsilon\gamma\mu\alpha$) names the ontological movement whereby *Dasein* is drawn into pres-abs-ence in such a way that worlds of possible significance are engendered and sustained.

Under nihilism, on the other hand, appropriation seems to disappear, to "turn away" from the human essence, such that human beings, in taking things *as* this or that (and in thus encountering the beingness of those things) might think they are encountering only themselves, their own man-made purposes and intelligibilities. If human beings thus enable all forms of beingness, if they transcendently "work up" the various possibilities of intelligibility, then the self that they thus encounter is, in Jünger's language, their Gestalt as "worker," one whose essence is exhausted in dominating the world, with the consequence that the "worker"-self is locked into a correlativity with "the total work-character" of everything that is.²⁴ It seems, then, that the crux of nihilism is the correlativity -- in fact, the direct proportionality -- between, on the one hand, the assertion of the self as worker-dominating-the-world and, on the other, the "withdrawal of being," the apparent disappearance of appropriation as the source of all beingness and intelligibility.

But is this really so? A number of questions arise: How and in what way are these two correlative? Why are they correlative in an apparently zero-sum way, such that the increase in the power and domination of the Gestalt of the worker would necessarily entail the decrease in the power of appropriation? Why and with what consequences should this correlation be so crucial in the investigation of what is called nihilism? Add to this Heidegger's suggestion that in the final analysis efforts at overcoming nihilism miss the point. The purpose of his open letter, Heidegger writes at the end, is to take everything Jünger has to say and

²²Cf. *Wegmarken*, p. 195, "das vergessene Geheimnis des Daseins" and Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie. Vom Ereignis*, GA 65 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1989), #168, p. 293: "Der Entzug aber ist des Da-seins."

²³The *togetherness* of (1) the "evocation" of the human essence and (2) the human essence's "response" (i.e., its being-called-forth) to the evocation is (3) *Ereignis* as the "appropriation" of the human essence. This is what Heidegger is referring to when he writes: "Dieses jedes Mal Selbe, das Zusammengehören von Ruf und Gehör, wäre dann 'das Sein'?" (the answer he intends is: Yes) and: "In Wahrheit können wir dann nicht einmal mehr sagen, 'das Sein' und 'der Mensch' 'seien' das Selbe in dem Sinne, daß *sie* zusammengehören; denn *so* sagend, lassen wir immer noch beide für sich sein." *ZS* p. 28/408-9, ET p. 77.

²⁴*ZS*, p. 27/407, ET p. 75: den totalen Arbeitscharakter.

elevate it to [the level of] a higher ambiguity, one that would let us experience how the [so-called] overcoming of nihilism requires the entry into the essence of nihilism and how, with this entry, the desire to overcome nihilism becomes null and void.²⁵

Jünger's hope of "overcoming" nihilism gets transformed into something quite different. Heidegger is making no predictions, and expressing no hopes, that social and cultural nihilism will (or can) ever be overcome. What counts for him, rather, is the awareness and acceptance of the original and originating *nihil*. The only kind of "overcoming" that interests him is that whereby "the *essence* of the nothing that was once related to 'being' can arrive and dwell amongst us mortals."²⁶

In the 1930s Heidegger had hoped National Socialism would provide economic, social, and political solutions to the problem of planetary nihilism (and he implies that his own philosophy might have served as the ideological superstructure of such changes). By the 1950s, however, it would appear he was convinced that a more profound understanding of the *essence* of nihilism invalidated such naïve hopes for a remedy.

If the horizon of Heidegger's discourse on nihilism is the "question of being" -- the inquiry into appropriation -- his usual : $Xh^*@H$ for approaching nihilism is *Seinsgeschichte*, the history of the dispensations of beingness from archaic Greece up to the epoch of the planetary worker. Since that road is long and winding, I propose instead to follow not Heidegger's historical : $Xh^*@H$ but a more analytical • JD^B^H , a "short cut" that gets to the heart of the matter by raising the question of $JXP<O$. Heidegger himself hints at this approach in his open letter, when, after accepting *juxta modum* Jünger's position that the epoch of fulfilled nihilism consists in the total work-character (*Arbeitscharakter*) of the real, correlative to the Gestalt of the worker,²⁷ he goes on to assert that the "total mobilization" of the world is the last phase in the development of Greek $JXP<O$. Heidegger develops this point further in his essay "The Question of Technology," which he says was intended as something of a dialogue with Jünger.²⁸

The short-cut, then, consists in following Heidegger's lead and investigating $JXP<O$ in the light of the question of meaning of being (that is, the inquiry into appropriation), which means: investigating it in conjunction with the notion of $\eta bF4H$. Here I shall use Heidegger's reflections on *Physics*, B 1 as a guide to understanding the alleged hegemony of the Gestalt of the worker in the present age. The first step (section III) will be to get clear on the three presuppositions that, in Heidegger's view, inform the text of *Physics*, B, 1 (see note 9 above). Those presuppositions will, in turn, lead us to the Greek vision of being-and-time according to Heidegger (sections IV and V) and so to the fulfillment of that Greek vision in the finite infinity of availability in the current epoch (section VI). All of this should allow us to decide about the overcoming of nihilism (section VII).

III Three Presuppositions $\eta bF4H, 6\setminus<OF4H, n^{\setminus}<gFh^4$

²⁵ZS, pp. 42f./424, ET p. 105f.

²⁶ZS, p. 29/410, ET p. 79, emphasis added.

²⁷ZS, p. 22/401, ET p. 65.

²⁸ZS, p. 20/400, ET p. 61.

The first presupposition that governs Aristotle's text on nbF4H is what we might call a thoroughgoing "naturalism" -- but in the Greek rather than the modern sense of that word. This "Greek naturalism" entails that absolutely everything that is, insofar as it is, even if it is an artifact, is in an essential sense a natural entity -- something that has its being from and because of nbF4H -- and thus one that is moved of and by itself, $\text{6"}\text{hZ } \text{"BJ}^{\sim}$. That is, before nbF4H designates a determined region of entities (growing things as contrasted with artifacts, $\text{J} \bullet \text{nbFg4 } \text{D} < \text{J}^{\sim}$ vs. $\text{J} \bullet \text{B@4@b: g} < \text{"}$), it refers to the whole of reality and names the in-itself-ness of every entity.²⁹

But this is too formal a characterization. It begins to take on specificity and content only when we note a second presupposition that is intimately bound up with the first. Accompanying this thoroughgoing naturalism, and in fact defining it, is an equally thoroughgoing "kineticism." For Aristotle, as for the archaic Greeks (even though they did not use this exact phrase), nbF4H is the $\bullet \text{DP} \neg \text{64} < \text{ZFgTH}$, the principle of intrinsic movement, its origin and on-going ordering force, which, in an effort to capture $\text{6} \setminus \text{OF4H } \text{6"}\text{hZ } \text{"BJ}^{\sim}$, we might risk calling "self"-movement.³⁰ In other words, to say that absolutely everything that is, insofar as it is, is a $\text{nbFg4 } \text{D} <$ is to assert (1) that every entity as such is intrinsically in movement (cf. $\text{J} \bullet \text{nbFg4} \dots \text{BV} < \text{J}^{\sim}$... $\text{64} < \text{@b: g} < \text{" gE} < \text{"}^4$, *Physics*, A 2, 185 a 12) and (2) that every entity, to the degree that it is a $\text{nbFg4 } \text{D} <$, has within itself the origin and directing of its own movement. Without prejudicing the case that Aristotle himself will make for an ultimate final cause of movement,³¹ we may combine the presuppositions of naturalism and kineticism and say that, for Aristotle, all entities, insofar as they are $\text{nbFg4 } \text{D} < \text{J}^{\sim}$, are "self-moving" entities.

It is true, of course, that from the very first sentence of *Physics* # 1 (192 b 8-11) Aristotle divides all entities into "those that are of-and-by nbF4H " and "those that are of-and-by other causes." That is, he divides entities into (1) those that have been intrinsically ($\text{6"}\text{hZ } \text{"BJ}^{\sim}$) moved into their current form of existence from within themselves and (2) those that have been moved into their current form of existence from outside themselves. These latter are $\text{B@4@b: g} < \text{"}$, artifacts, things produced through the $\text{JXP} < \text{O}$ of a $\text{Jg6} < \setminus \text{JOH}$, the know-how of an artisan. The world seems divided, therefore, into intrinsically and extrinsically moved entities, into nLF46V and $\text{B@4@b: g} < \text{"}$.

But on the other hand even the artifact is made out of a natural substrate. Thus while we can and do (in action, language, and so forth) take entities *as* artifacts, that is, as entities that have been moved into their present form (their current intelligible presence) by human artisans, nonetheless, regardless of whether we thematically attend to the fact or not, we always co-understand them as artifacts made *of* some natural stuff and to that degree as self-moved entities, $\text{nbFg4 } \text{D} < \text{J}^{\sim}$. We evidence that co-understanding, for instance, when we look at an old and beautifully crafted table and say, "Now *that* is wood!" -- by which we mean something like: "This artifact shows us what wood really is and can be used for." Or for a non-linguistic example, there is Antiphon's experiment, which

²⁹Cf. *Wegmarken*, p. 369/299, ET p. 228f. Also *Holzwege*, 4th ed. (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1963), p. 298 ("...die weite Bedeutung des Alls des Seienden"); ET, *Early Greek Thinking*, tran. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 15.

³⁰No anthropomorphism is intended, here or below, by this use of "self-." We are indicating, rather, that the entity's movement (and later, the entity's presentation) is *intrinsic* to the entity.

³¹*Metaphysics*, 7 7, 1072 b 7: $\text{J4 } \text{64} < \text{@} \text{Ø} < \text{" } \hat{\text{U}} \hat{\text{J}} \hat{\text{I}} \bullet \text{6} \setminus \text{OJ} \text{@} < \text{D} <$ I use *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924), 2 volumes, Sandpiper Books edition, 1997. See also *Physics* 1 5, 256 a 10-22.

Aristotle mentions at 193 a 12-15: Bury that same table in your back yard, wait a long time until it rots and germinates, and then check what comes up. The seedling will be the start not of a table but of wood.

As Heidegger reads Aristotle, the self-movement of natural entities is not just locomotion, or qualitative or quantitative motion, and not even coming-to-be-at-all ($\langle X \langle gF4H \rangle$). Rather, the entity's self-movement is its *self-presentation*, its appearing-at-all ($n \langle gFh \rangle^4$) and its appearing-as-this-or-that ($: @DnZ/gE^* @H$).³² Here we encounter yet a third presupposition that underlies *Physics* # 1, one that ties $nbF4H$ and $6 \langle OF4H \rangle$ together into what may be called, at least provisionally, Greek "phenomenology." Everything that is, to the degree that it is natural and thus self-moving, is a process of putting itself into appearance, i.e., becoming available/intelligible. This is what the Greeks called $n \langle gFh \rangle^4$, the process of becoming a phenomenon, becoming available for human engagement.³³

Taken as a unity, these three presuppositions -- $nbF4H$, $6 \langle OF4H \rangle$, $n \langle gFh \rangle^4$: the "natural" movement of "self"-presentation -- are the structure of what Heidegger calls the intrinsic (and in the medieval sense of the term, the "transcendental") disclosedness of entities, their $\bullet 8Zhg4$.³⁴ In Heidegger's view there are at least three levels of disclosure, ranging backwards from the most derivative to the most fundamental:

- ! $\bullet 8Zhg4$ ₃: truth in the usual sense of the *adaequatio* of propositions and states of affairs;
- ! $\bullet 8Zhg4$ ₂: truth in the (medieval "transcendental") sense of the intrinsic "disclosedness" or intelligibility of an entity, according to Aristotle's dictum, "The degree of being a thing has is the degree of truth it has," which is echoed in the medieval *verum*

³²"Die Gestellung in das Aussehen," *Wegmarken*, p. 347/277, ET p. 212.

³³In this essay I use the word "intelligible" ($\langle @OJ \langle \rangle$) in the broad, Heideggerian sense of *zugänglich*: "accessible/available-to-human-beings." This broad sense of intelligibility/*Zugänglichkeit* encompasses entities both as $\langle @OJV$ in the narrow sense (i.e., accessible to theoretical intellection) and as BDV ($: "J"$ in the narrow sense (things available for practical use), as well as entities as works of art, toys, etc. -- in short, any and all entities as *innerweltlich*, within the range of, and considered in terms of, possible significance to human beings. This meaning is consonant with both Parmenides' and Aristotle's usage. When Parmenides says that $\langle @, \hat{A} \langle$ is correlative with $gE \langle " 4$ (fragment 3), he is not referring to intellectual knowing alone but to all forms of what Heidegger in *Einführung in die Metaphysik* calls *Vernehmen*, the "receiving" of entities -- and that includes technical and practical as well as intellectual knowing. And when Aristotle in *De Anima* discusses the $J \langle LJ \rangle JOH$ between $\hat{B}4FJZ: O$ and $J \hat{I} BD \bullet$ ($: " (' 5, 430 a 20 and 7 431 a 1)$, he is referring not just to the mind's knowing of tools and usable things. In that context the word $BD \bullet$ ($: "$ means "anything accessible to human RLPZ." Moreover, even when $\langle @OJ \langle$ and $BD \bullet$ ($: "$ are used in their specialized sense of *Vorhandenes* and *Zuhandenes* (in *Sein und Zeit*, for example), the underlying and common issue is still that of *Zugänglichkeit*, accessibility.

³⁴And to this concatenation of terms we may add $: gJ \langle \$ @8Z$, not in the ordinary sense of "change" but rather as that whereby "something heretofore hidden and absent comes into appearance": "...daß im Umschlag [$: gJ \langle \$ @8Z$] etwas bisher Verborgenes und Abwesendes zum Vorschein kommt....," *Wegmarken*, p. 319/249, E.T. p. 191; cf. also Martin Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare. Protokolle - Gespräche - Briefe*, ed. Medard Boss (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1987), p. 201.

*et esse convertuntur;*³⁵

- ! •8Zhg4" ₁: "truth" as generation of the open (the *Da* or *Lichtung*) that allows for *all* significance and thus for both the disclosedness of entities (•8Zhg4" ₂) and the correctness of statements (•8Zhg4" ₃).

In this view, the natural-kinetic-phenomenological presuppositions that we have discussed operate on the *second* level of "truth."

Heidegger argues that for ancient Greek thinkers, and especially for the pre-Socratics, the words *ἄλθεια* and •8Zhg4" (along with *εἶναι* (•8Zhg4", *ἄλθεια*, and by implication, *ἀλήθεια*) did indeed name the being of entities. However, unlike the later philosophers of *ἄλθεια* (Plato and Aristotle), the pre-Socratics not only knew of beingness, taken as the "stable" availability of entities to human engagement, but more importantly had an implicit awareness of "being-itself," the relative non-presence that is the enabling (•8Zhg4" of such availability. What those ancient thinkers failed to thematize, however, was the essential structure of that enabling (•8Zhg4": the "appropriation" that we sketched out above. That is why in Heidegger's eyes the archaic Greek thinkers rank a cut above the philosophers of *ἄλθεια*: they at least *name* the genesis of *ἄλθεια* (which we have termed *ἄλθεια*: note 15 above). But what goes unthematized in their insights -- appropriation as the prior generation of the open that makes possible the genesis of *ἄλθεια* -- cries out for the retrieval and articulation that Heidegger believed his own thought provided. Therefore, as much as archaic Greek thinking is (unthematically) aware of •8Zhg4" ₁, it mostly operates on the level of •8Zhg4" ₂.

All of this is pretty much a commonplace in the Heideggerian literature today, as is the groundedness of the three levels of disclosure in temporality. *SZ* argues that temporality makes possible *all* disclosure. More precisely, at levels two and three, the relation is one of possibilizing to possibilized (these two levels presume openness, and openness is made possible by *Zeitlichkeit*), whereas at level one, temporality *is* the intrinsic structure of openness.

However, Heidegger speaks not simply of *Zeitlichkeit* but also of the *Zeitigung* of *Zeitlichkeit*, one of his earliest names for *Ereignis*. Unfortunately the Macquarrie-Robinson translation of *Sein und Zeit* misleadingly renders *Zeitigung* as "temporalizing" (*Being and Time*, p. 278.17), and Professor Stambaugh's new translation carries over this non-starter as "temporalization" (p. 217.13 *et passim*). (1) *Zeitigung* would be more meaningfully translated as "generation" -- *ἄλθεια* as (•8Zhg4" -- in the double sense of the "bringing-about"/"coming-to-be" of the existential becoming called *Zeitlichkeit*. (2) But the temporality thus generated constitutes the very openness of the open.³⁶ (3) Thus the generation (*Zeitigung/Ereignis*) of temporality *is* •8Zhg4" ₁, that which makes possible both the self-presentation of entities and the correct correspondence of propositions with states of

³⁵*Metaphysics*, " 1, 993 b 30-31: *ἡ αὐτὴ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀλθεια ἡ ἀλθεια ἡ ἀλθεια*, *ἡ ἀλθεια ἡ ἀλθεια ἡ ἀλθεια*. Thomas Aquinas glosses the point: "Eadem est dispositio rerum in esse sicut in veritate," *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 3, 7, c. Aquinas traces this "transcendental" state (omne ens est verum) back to the creative divine intellect: "Veritas etiam rerum est secundum quod conformantur suo principio, scilicet intellectui divino." *Summa Theologiae*, I, 16, 5, ad 2. For the *Summa Theologiae* I use the text in the series Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 3rd ed. (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1963). See also *De Veritate* I, 2 (things are measured by the divine intellect in which all created things are).

³⁶Cf. "Weil die *Zeitlichkeit* die *Gelichtetheit* des *Da* ekstatisch-horizontal konstituiert..." (italicized in the original), *Sein und Zeit*, *GA* II (Klostermann: Frankfurt, 1977), p. 539 (Niemeyer edition, p. 408.7-8).

affairs. Thus what we have called the "phenomenological" presupposition of Greek thought (level two) points back to a more fundamental "aletheiological" presupposition (level one).

Heidegger made the first of the points above in a conversation he had with Medard Boss in 1963:

Zeitigung as *Sich-zeitigen* means self-unfolding, emerging and thus appearing. The Latin word *natura* comes from *nasci*, "to be born." *nbF4H*, from *nbg4<*, means (in Greek [thinking]) "emerging" in the sense of coming out of concealment into the unconcealed.³⁷

In turn, *Zeitigung* as the emergence/appearing of *Zeitlichkeit* makes possible $n \setminus \langle gFh \rangle$ as the emergence/appearing of a $n \langle \setminus \rangle$: $g \langle @ \rangle$ as the intelligible appearance of an entity.

We find an indirect confirmation of this reading of *Zeitigung* as *nbF4H* in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*,³⁸ where, in the process of retrieving the problematic of openness (*Dasein*) from the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Heidegger takes up Kant's notion of time as pure self-affection. Heidegger finds the roots of pure receptivity ("being affected without experience, that is, affecting oneself," *KPM*, p. 172), and thus the subjectivity of the subject, in what he calls *das Von-sich-aus-hin-zu-auf...und Zuruck-auf-sich*, "the emergence-from-itself-and-going-forth-from-itself and the return-onto-itself." This bulky phrase is Heidegger's effort at reinterpreting the apparent circularity imaged in Aristotle's *nbF4H...0*IH |6 nbFgTH g/H nbF4<* (*Physics* # 1, 193 b 12) and applying it to the structure of human being. The "return" mentioned here is not a mere "going-back" to an ontic starting point but a returning to, and hence a remaining with, *one's essence*, a structure that is cognate with what *SZ* calls *Gewesenheit*. The emergence-and-return that remains with its essence -- in this case, pure self-affection as a receptive openness that confirms one's essence as *Da-sein* -- defines the structure of human being, *nbF4H/•8Zhg4*¹. Such emergence-and-return, he says, "constitutes the mental character of the mind [*den Gemütcharakter des Gemütes*] as a finite self" (*KPM*, p. 173). That is to say, this imperfect (i.e., "kinetic") *Bei-sich-sein*, this $\setminus \langle XD \rangle (g4 \setminus \bullet Jg8ZH$ of *Zeitlichkeit*, is what constitutes the essence of openness (*Dasein*) in general and its aletheiological character in particular. What Heidegger envisions here is the circle of the *Da*, the open world of intelligibility: $J\hat{I} \bullet 8Ohg \setminus OH g\hat{U}6L68X@H \bullet JDg: \text{¥H } \mu J@K$, the "calm and stable heart of well-rounded disclosure."³⁹

³⁷"*Zeitigung* als *Sich-zeitigen* ist *Sich-entfalten*, *aufgehen* und so *erscheinen*. *Natura* (lateinisch) kommt vom *nasci* = geboren werden. *nbF4H* ---> *nbg4<* (griechisch) = *aufgehen* im Sinne des aus der *Verborgenheit* ins *Unverborgene Kommen*." *Zollikoner Seminare*, 203. Compare Heidegger's remark to Medard Boss in the spring of 1963: "Taken as words, neither *natura* nor *nbF4H* have any connection with *time*." "Weder bei *natura* noch bei *nbF4H* besteht dem Worte nach ein Zusammenhang mit *Zeit*," *loc cit*.

³⁸Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, third edition, 1965), p. 172f. Hereinafter *KPM*.

³⁹Parmenides, Fragment 1: Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, second edition (Berlin: Wiedmann, 1906), I, 115.29 ($g\hat{U}6L68X@H = g\hat{U}6L68ZH$; cf. $g\hat{U}6b68@L F n \setminus \langle DOH$, fragment 8, Diels, I, 121.43). Heidegger cites the first text in his "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens," *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Max Niemeyer: Tübingen, 1969), p. 74; ET in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, revised and expanded edition, 1993,

We may go further: This emergence-and-return is the secret of traditional Western philosophy, ever intimated but rarely thematized. It achieves a certain culmination in Thomas Aquinas' description of all knowledge (and preeminently God's self-knowledge) as an analogous "reditio in seipsum."⁴⁰ And this "divine circularity" finds a cosmic mirroring throughout the Western tradition, whether in the neo-Platonic cycle of emanation and return (BD`@*@H/|B4FJD@nZ),⁴¹ or in the *exitus/reditus* of the medieval notions of creation and •B@6"JVfJ" F4H,⁴² down to Hegel⁴³ and even to the Marx of the

p. 444.

⁴⁰*Summa Theologiae* I, 14, 2, obj. 1 and ad 1. (Since God is self-coincident, any "reditio" is really a "remaining" with his essence.) Aquinas derives the insight from Proclus (A.D. 410-485), EJ@4Pg\TF4H hg@8@ (46Z (*Institutio Theologica*) via its ninth-century Arabic condensation known in Latin as *Liber de Causis* (also known as *Liber de expositione bonitatis purae*). See Proclus, *The Elements of Theology: A Revised Text*, edited and translated by E.R. Dodd (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933): proposition 82 (76.29-30): A•< JĪ ©" LJ@Ø (<TFJ46Ī < BDĪH ©" LJĪ B" <J@ |B4FJDgBJ46` < |FJ4< (roughly: Everything that is capable of knowledge of itself is one that reverts to itself by way of a complete [return]). In the *Liber de Causis* that Aquinas used, proposition 15: "Omnis sciens scit essentiam suam, ergo est rediens ad essentiam suam reditione completa," in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Librum de Causis Expositio*, ed. H.D. Saffrey (Louvain: Éditions E. Nauwelaerts, 1954), p. 88; In English, Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, translated and annotated by Vincent A. Guagliardo, Charles R. Hess, and Richard C. Taylor (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), p. 98. In a recent and more correct rendering: "Omnis sciens qui scit essentiam suam est rediens ad essentiam suam reditione completa," *Le Liber de Causis*, edited Adriaan Pattin (originally in *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie*, ca. 1967; I use the text in an offprint form). Cf. his *In Platonis Theologiam* [the gFH J- < A8VJT <@H hg@8@ (\` <], e.g., II, 4: 5" Å gF B•H <@ØH gFH " βJĪ < §FJD" BJ" 4 6" Å | < ©" LJè |FJ4..., in Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, 6 volumes, ed. and trans. H.D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968--1997), II (1974), chapter 4, p. 36 (Greek), lines 22-23. See also Proclus, *Elements*, prop. 15 (16.30): •FT: "J` < (which may already be hinted at in *De Anima*, 6, 430 b 24: PTD4FJ` <); also props. 16 (18.7-8): PTD4FJ- < @ÜF\` < §Pg4 B" <JĪH Ff: "J@H: 43 (44.25): "ÜhLB` FJ" J@<; and 44 (46.1-2): 6" Jz @ÜF\` < |BXFJD" BJ" 4 BDĪH ©" LJ` .

⁴¹For example in Proclus, *Elements*, propositions 25-30 (pp. 28-34, especially prop. 29) for BD`@*@H, and nn. 31-39 for |B4FJD@nZ. See also ©•nz ©<ĪH BD`@*@H, in Proclus, *In Platonis Cratylum Commentaria*, ed. Giorgio Pasquali (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908), p. 2 P., and *Théologie platonicienne*, IV (1981), chapter 1, p. 7 (Greek), lines 10-11. Cf. Lucas Siorvanes, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 105-109. The notion is already found (less thematically) in Plotinus' *Enneads*: •B@DD@Z at II.3.2; BD`@*@H at VII.5.6; |B4FJD@nZ at I.2.4, V.2.1, etc. Plotinus, *Opera*, ed. Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzler (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964ff.).

⁴²See John Scotus Erigena/Eriugena (ca. 810-ca. 877): descensio/reversio in *De divisione naturae*: cf. "descendens" at III, 23, *PL CXXII* (1865), p. 689B; and "in primordiales causas revertetur, quae sunt semper et incommutabiliter in Deo..." and "mirabilis atque ineffabilis reversio" at V, 8, p. 876B; also "defluunt/redeunt" at III, 4, p. 632C; "descendens" and "omnium reditus in causam" at III, 20, p. 683A and B/C; etc. Some of *De divisione naturae* is found in: John the Scot, *Periphyseon: On the Division of Nature*, tr. Myra L. Uhlfelder (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976): V, 8, p. 876B at p. 288; and III, 4, p. 632C at p. 139. Note the theme in the title of his fragmentary *De Egressu et Regressu Animae ad Deum*, *PL CXXII* (1865), p. 1023-4. See Werner Beierwaltes, *Eriugena*:

Paris manuscripts: communism as the complete return (*Rückkehr*) of humankind to its true nature as species-being.⁴⁴

Let us take the next step. Heidegger finds the three presuppositions that underlie *Physics B 1* -- "naturalism," "kineticism," and "phenomenology" -- packed into the phrase that, for him, captures not only the essence of Greek ontology but also the problematic that will eventually develop into nihilism. Plato and Aristotle, he says, understood reality in terms of $\text{@}\text{Ü}\text{F}\text{\textbackslash}$ " , that is to say (and here is Heidegger's key phrase) as *beständiges Anwesen*.⁴⁵ These are the two words that we must carefully unpack if we are to get to the heart of Heidegger's interpretation of nihilism.

The accepted interpretation of *das ständige Anwesen* is as an entity's "stable/constant coming-into-and-being-in-presence," where "presence" always entails "intelligibility" (*esse = verum esse*). As far as it goes, this translation is correct. But the English here misses the richness not so much of the German as of the Greek phrase that underlies it: $\text{°}\text{•}\text{\textbackslash}^*40\text{ @}\text{Ü}\text{F}\text{\textbackslash}$ ".⁴⁶ More important, the translation misses the interplay of "being" and "time" that is at work in the phrase. We shall now consider the "Greek" relation of being and time, first by treating the being-aspect under the rubric of *Anwesen/@ÜF*" (Section IV), and then the time-aspect under the rubric of *beständig/•g* (Section V).

IV *Anwesen/@ÜF*"

Anwesen does indeed translate $\text{@}\text{Ü}\text{F}\text{\textbackslash}$ " (specifically $\text{@}\text{Ü}\text{F}\text{\textbackslash}$ " as *nbF4H: Physics B 1, 192 b 33 ff.*) and thus refers to the "self"-presentation whereby entities become-and-are-intelligible to human beings. Heidegger makes this clear in his 1955 letter when he argues against Jünger's hope for a "future" *Zuwendung* or turning of being toward human beings, as if being were something in and for itself that

Grundzüge seines Denkens (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), pp. 71, n. 50, 300-307, and *passim*.

⁴³"...der Kreis, der sein Ende als seinen Zweck voraussetzt und zum Anfange hat und nur durch die Ausführung und sein Ende wirklich ist." G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), III, 23 (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Vorrede), echoing Proclus' development of prop. 33 (36.13-14): $\text{F}\text{L}<\text{V}\text{B}\text{J}\text{g}4\text{ J}\pm\text{ •}\text{D}\text{P}\pm\text{ J}\text{I}\text{ J}\text{X}8\text{@}\text{H}$. On Hegel's relation to Proclus and Erigena, see Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus*, Philosophische Abhandlung, Band 40 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972), pp. 154-187 (Proclus) and pp. 188-201 (Erigena).

⁴⁴In the third manuscript of his 1844 Paris manuscripts Marx speaks of "Der Kommunismus...als Reintegration oder Rückkehr des Menschen in sich...; ...als wirkliche *Aneignung* des *menschlichen* Wesens durch und für den Menschen; ...als vollständige, bewußt und innerhalb des ganzen Reichtums der bisherigen Entwicklung gewordene Rückkehr des Menschen für sich als eines *gesellschaftlichen*...": Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke* (Berlin: Dietz, 1968ff.), *Ergänzungsband* (Schriften bis 1844, Erster Teil, 1968), p. 536; in MEGA: I/2, 263.

⁴⁵*Wegmarken*, p. 336/266, ET p. 204.

⁴⁶See, for example, Plato, *Timaeus* 37e.

only occasionally orients itself toward men and women. Rather, says Heidegger, "Such turning toward [human beings] is itself presumably what we...call 'being.'"⁴⁷ Indeed: "Presence ('being') as presence is always and in each case presence to the human essence...."⁴⁸ Thus: "We always say *too little* about 'being itself' when, in saying 'being,' we leave out presence *to* the human *essence* and thereby fail to recognize that this [human] essence itself goes to make up being."⁴⁹ This theme recurs frequently in Heidegger's thought in the 1950s. In the spring of 1951, for instance, students in his *Übungen im Lesen* heard him say: "If the Greeks understand presence as $\text{gÉ}^*\text{@H}$, and if $\text{gÉ}^*\text{@H}$ is thought of as an essential trait of nbF4H , then included therein is a relatedness of presence to human beings."⁵⁰

We must take these assertions as literally as Heidegger puts them. If "being-itself" (*Ereignis*) is presencing, taken as the enabling of any and all accessibility, then the beingness of entities is their inclination to enter the realm of intelligibility. That inclination is not an add-on, such that entities would first of all be present in their beingness -- even present to themselves -- and then only occasionally be available to human beings. Rather, entities are ontologically "ad hominem." This is precisely what Heidegger is referring to when he says that the essence of a phenomenon is "to come into unconcealment," "to be disclosed," "to stand forth in the clearing," and other such ways of discussing $\text{D} < \text{rñH} \bullet \text{80hXH}$, entities as open and available to human engagement. That movement-into-availability -- *Anwesung* -- happens not in some utopia beyond the human world, but only with, and in the midst of, that world. The very nature of entities is to be open to what the Greeks called $< \text{@} \text{ØH} / < \text{@}, \text{Å} <$, and therefore to be $< \text{@} \text{OJV}$, always already correlative to a possible human $< \text{` OF4H}$. By reason of the $\text{nbF4H}/\text{Zeitigung}/\text{Ereignis}$ that makes $\text{@ÜF} \setminus$ /beingness possible, entities are open to, available for, usable and knowable in, praxis, discourse, and thought. Their essence is to be "innerworldly" (*innerweltlich*).

And just as the "ad hominem" disposition of entities is not an add-on, so likewise the openness of human $< \text{@}, \text{Å} <$ to entities -- its ability to engage and know them -- is equally essential to human being. It is this reciprocal correlativity that Heidegger finds named in Parmenides' third fragment, in the $\text{JÎ} \text{ "ÜJ} \setminus$ (the "togetherness" or "gathering") that brings $< \text{@} \text{gÅ} <$ and $\text{gÉ} <$ "4 together,⁵¹ a phrase that is

⁴⁷ZS, p. 27/407, p. 75: "Vermutlich ist die Zuwendung selber, aber noch verhüllterweise, Jenes, was wir verlegen genug and unbestimmt 'das Sein' nennen."

⁴⁸ZS, p. 28/408, ET p. 77: "Anwesen ('Sein') ist als Anwesen je und je Anwesen zum Menschenwesen, insofern Anwesen Geheiß ist, das jeweils das Menschenwesen ruft."

⁴⁹ZS, p. 27/407, ET p. 75: "Wir sagen vom 'Sein selbst' immer *zuwenig*, wenn wir, 'das Sein' sagend, das An-wesen *zum* Menschenwesen auslassen und dadurch verkennen, daß dieses Wesen selbst 'das Sein' mitausmacht." Compare: "Wir fragen nach der Beziehung zwischen dem Menschenwesen und dem Sein des Seienden. Aber -- sobald ich denkend sage 'Menschenwesen', habe ich darin schon den Bezug zum Sein gesagt. Ingleichen, sobald ich denkend sage: Sein des Seienden, ist darin schon der Bezug zum Menschenwesen genannt." *Was heisst Denken?* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1954), p. 74; ET *What is Called Thinking?* trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 79. (The *Beziehung* that enables the Bezug between the human essence and beingness is Ereignis.)

⁵⁰"Wenn die Griechen das Anwesen als $\text{gÉ}^*\text{@H}$ verstehen, wenn $\text{gÉ}^*\text{@H}$ als Wesenszug der nbF4H gedacht wird, so liegt darin eine Bezogenheit des Anwesens zum Menschen...." *Übungen im Lesen*, winter semester, 1950-1951. April 18, 1951.

⁵¹Parmenides, fragment 3: $\text{JÎ} \text{ (} \bullet \text{D "ÜJÎ} < \text{@} \text{gÅ} < \text{;FJ} \setminus < \text{Jg 6 "Å} \text{gÉ} < \text{"4}$.

echoed in Aristotle as the "sameness" that gathers together B4FJZ: O and $\text{BD} \bullet \text{C}$: " in actual knowledge.⁵² This togetherness is what Heidegger called "the wonder of all wonders": not transcendental consciousness as in Husserl, but *Ereignis*/ $\bullet 8Zhg4$ "₁, the "appropriation" of the human essence such that entities *are*, i.e., are *present to* and *engagable by* a reciprocally disposed <@, \AA< .⁵³

To neglect this correlativity of $\text{N} \text{< } \text{A} \text{ } \text{D} \text{<}$ with human praxis, production, and thinking is to miss "the central issue" (*die Sache selbst*). At the very least, as Heidegger puts it, it is to "say too little" about being-itself/*Ereignis* and even worse to "fail to recognize" what *Ereignis* entails: the availability of absolutely everything to human cognition and will. It must be admitted that this "failure to recognize" is the norm rather than the exception in the scholasticism that goes under the name of "Heidegger studies." But to recognize that correlativity for what it is means to concede the virtual inevitability of nihilism.

At the "innocent" dawn of Greek-Western history, this correlativity is the basis for what is altogether too loosely called Greek "humanism." Such "humanism" (if we may apply this much later term to archaic and classical Greece) is not first of all a celebration of the beauties of the human or a Promethean self-assertion whereby humans take themselves as the measure of all things. Yes, such self-assertion is a possible element of Greek humanism, maybe an inevitable consequence of it, and arguably even one of its positive achievements -- but not its basis.

Prior to such self-assertion there rules the fact -- which Greek philosophers understood -- that entities as such and of themselves are open to human <@, \AA< , that they are intrinsically accessible, engagable and (to take Heidegger's term *innerweltlich* in its broad and proper sense) ultimately "humanizable." The grounds for Greek humanism are ontological, not anthropological, and they lie in the *a priori* correlativity that governs the openness of human beings and the humanizability of entities. (And if Heidegger has any criticism of this Greek humanism, it is simply that it was unaware of, or did not adequately thematize, the *source* of this correlativity in the prior fact of *Ereignis*/appropriation.) The human being is $\text{<@OJ46} \text{ } \text{H}$ (Latin: *intelligens*) in the sense of being-in-a-world and able to have access to something only mediately, i.e., *as* something. And entities are <@OJV (Latin: *intelligibilia*) in the sense of falling within-world, within the province of <@OH ; and only thus are they able to be engaged *as* something. On the one hand, because being-itself is a *Zuwendung* (and thus the very possibility of intelligibility), so too entities are ontologically "turned toward" human beings, inclined to and accessible within the realm of <@OH . On the other hand, the essence of human being consists in

⁵²*De Anima* 1 5, 430 a 20 and 7, 431 a 1: $\text{J\hat{I} *z " \text{UJ} \text{ } | \text{FJ4} \text{< } \text{O} \text{ } 6 \text{ } \text{Jz} \text{ } | \text{<XD} \text{ } (\text{g4} \text{ } \text{< } | \text{B4FJZ: O } \text{J}\grave{\text{e}} \text{ } \text{BDV} \text{ } \text{C} \text{: } \text{"J4}$.

⁵³**Husserl**: "Das Wunder aller Wunder ist reines Ich und reines Bewußtsein...." Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, III: *Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*, ed. Marly Biemel, *Husserliana* V (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 75; E.T. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, III: *Phenomenology and the Foundations of the Sciences*, tr. Ted E. Klein and William E. Pohl (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980), p. 64. **Heidegger**: "Und das 'Wundersame' liegt darin, daß die Existenzverfassung des Daseins die transzendente Konstitution alles Positiven ermöglicht": in Edmund Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie*, ed. Walter Biemel, *Husserliana* IX (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), p. 602; ET in Edmund Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927-1931)* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), p. 140. Cf. also *Wegmarken*, p. 103/307: "...das Wunder aller Wunder: daß Seiendes ist." ET ed. and tr. Walter Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: Penguin/Meridian, 1975), p. 261.

being evoked by that *Zuwendung*,⁵⁴ such that humans have access to everything that is insofar as it is. These two potentialities -- the ability to know and to be known respectively -- are *a priori* correlative, a correlativity that is expressed in the $\text{J}\hat{\text{I}} \text{ "}\hat{\text{U}}\text{J}$ of Parmenides and Aristotle and that is grounded in the prior evocation/appropriation.

And at the other end of Greek-Western history -- its eschaton, where things are no longer "innocent" (in this regard Heidegger speaks of "an extraordinary danger"⁵⁵) -- we see the historical outcome of this Greek humanism in the virtual inevitability and arguable unsurpassability of nihilism, both rooted in that same $\text{J}\hat{\text{I}} \text{ "}\hat{\text{U}}\text{J}$. Insofar as the essence of entities entails their presence to human cognition and will, it also entails that they are disposed to be picked up and used, to be reshaped as B@4@b: g< -- and endlessly so. The endless accessibility of the real is at the core of the Greek-Western vision of being, which from the pre-Socratics up to Heidegger, has affirmed the infinity of the intelligibility (and thus the transformability) of $\text{J}\hat{\text{I}} \text{ D<}$, an infinity that is correlative to the infinite reach of $<@\text{O}\text{H}$. This affirmation does not require or necessarily depend upon (although one could argue to the possibility of) an entity in which everything knowable is already and fully known.⁵⁶ A bad infinity will do.

But can we include Heidegger in this vision as well? Yes, for if " $\bullet 8\text{Zhg4}$ " in Heidegger's texts always entails the ad-hominem status and intrinsic accessibility of entities, the 8Zh0 -dimension of " $\bullet 8\text{Zhg4}$ " (*pace* Heideggerian scholasticism) most emphatically does *not* indicate a point where such accessibility supposedly runs out. Rather, the 8Zh0 (to put it formally) names the unexplainable facticity of such accessibility, or (to put it more materially) names *Ereignis* as the presence-bestowing absence intrinsic to the human essence. By "evoking" human being and thereby generating the openness wherein entities can appear *as* this or that in their current mode of beingness, the 8Zh0 makes possible an infinity of significance. There is no end to the human reach into entities, and yet this infinite reach is finally an unexplainable given. That is, the 8Zh0 entails the endless availability of the real but "without [an ultimate] why."

Thus we would be doing being-itself no favors if we just let entities "be" in the sense of leaving them pristine and untouched, perhaps even unknown. To let entities *be* means to let them *be present*, that is, to take them as endlessly engagable. And we do that by endlessly engaging them, both scientifically and practically, and, yes, by letting them be submitted to the domination of the worker in the inevitable humanization of nature and naturalization of man. If one follows Heidegger's thinking (not to mention the facts) consistently, there is no promise of escape from that *Herrschaft*, no nostalgia for a time before we crossed over the line into "too much" JXP<O , no hope for a new age when the balance might shift back in favor of nature. Or better, if there *is* such nostalgia and such hope, its philosophical significance is nil. At worst, such nostalgia is an index of avoidance, flight, and inauthenticity, a refusal to face and accept the historical fatedness of Greek-Western existence that is captured in Parmenides' word $\text{J}\hat{\text{I}} \text{ "}\hat{\text{U}}\text{J}$.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Cf. *Geheiß and Ruf und Gehör: ZS*, p. 28/408, ET p. 77.

⁵⁵*ZS*, p. 10/389, ET p. 41: eine außerordentliche Gefahr.

⁵⁶The divine entity, in whom $\text{O} < \text{OF4H J}\hat{\text{e}} < @ @ \text{L: X} < \hat{\text{a}} : \backslash$: *Metaphysics* 7, 9, 1075 a 4-5. Heidegger comments: "Dazu ist sein [d.h. des Gottes] Verhalten ein solches, das in sich selbst JX8@H hat in dem, was es schon ist, nicht im $\text{SD} (< @ <$ [d.h. außerhalb]": *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie*, GA 22 (Frankfurt: Klosterman, 1993), p. 179.

⁵⁷The fact that the self to which the disclosed world is correlative is not a simple presence but a mortal "thrown project" in no way undoes the endlessness of accessibility and engagement but in fact

In Heidegger's view, the troubling fact that nihilism is inevitable and unsurpassable follows ineluctably from the philosophical insight that being -- from archaic Greek $\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\tau\eta$ through classical Greek $\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\tau\eta$, right down to Jünger's notion of work as the actualization of *Gestalt* and *Herrschaft* in planetary technology -- has always been experienced in terms of *Anwesenheit*, "presence-unto" human being. And the hidden source of this presence-unto is *Ereignis*/appropriation, the evocation of human being that generates and sustains the fields of presence-unto. Heidegger writes to Jünger:

In the *Praesenz* [that announces itself in the Will to Power] and in the *Repraesentation* [or reproduction of the worker that Jünger discusses] there is manifested the basic trait of what has revealed itself to Western thinking as being. From the dawn of the Greek world down to the dusk of our own century "being" has meant one thing: presence-unto [*Anwesen*]. Every kind of *Praesenz* and *Praesentation* stems from the appropriation that issues in presence-unto [*dem Ereignis der Anwesenheit*].⁵⁸

But if every kind of presence-unto stems from the appropriating dispensation-of-beingness that retreats beneath erasure, then nihilism is not just inevitable but arguably inescapable. In fact it is *empowered* by the hidden essence of beingness and cannot be "overcome" at all.

V Beständig • g\

The other word in Heidegger's key phrase *das beständige Anwesen* -- the adjective *beständig* -- points to the question of "time." *Beständig* is usually translated into English either as "stable" or as "constant," neither of which, as we shall see, is adequate. What does the adjective *beständig* add to *Anwesen qua* "presence-unto"? Is it merely a chance addition to the noun? Or does it contain the whole secret of the turn into the essence of nihilism?

Heidegger unfolds the meaning of *beständig* by means of a reflection on the meaning of the

confirms it. However, the crucial question lies in the "how" of that engagement.

(A) The "what" is clear: The projected status of our human openness (*Dasein*) is its fatedness to being mortal, and this fatedness is structured as our bivalent *a priori* movement of (1) being bonded to our dying and (2) returning "from" that dying to the entities of our world. This bivalent movement is primordial δ (@H, "existential" $\text{Fb} < \text{hgF4H} / *4 \text{ } \backslash \text{DgF4H}$, and it grounds the bivalent possibility of "linguistic" $\text{Fb} < \text{hgF4H} / *4 \text{ } \backslash \text{DgF4H}$ in the original sense of *Ansprechen*, "relating to something as something," whether conatively or cognitively.

(B) The crucial question lies in the "how," inasmuch as what was said above pertains to openness essentially and specifically, that is, in its species-being as an inter-communicating social co-openness (*Mitdasein*). Hence, to affirm that the world is "ad hominem" implies (1) that ideally (i.e., in essence) the entities of the world are (ontologically) equally available to all human beings and, all else being equal, no one of us has more claim than any other on the givenness of entities: being (both being-itself and beingness) is materially and formally "democratic"; (2) that entities are available to us specifically *in* our mortality; or, from the perspective of *Ansprechen*, that we address entities *from* our mortality and "speak" our own mortality *to* them; and (3) to refuse to address entities in this way, or better, to deny that in fact one always already does so, is to relate to them, and eventually to accumulate them, from the illusory point of the self as foundation/*fonds/caput/capital* -- which is intimately bound up with a certain, and in fact historically relative, kind of appropriation.

⁵⁸ZS, p. 21/400, ET p. 63.

Greek adverb •g\, "eternally," and the adjective •*4@H (a contraction of •g*4@H), "eternal, everlasting." This procedure appears logical enough, for do not stability and constancy necessarily point in the direction of eternity? This certainly has been the mainstream tradition in Western metaphysics -- compare, for example, St. Augustine's "Id enim vere est, quod incommutabiliter manet"⁵⁹ and Thomas Aquinas' "Esse autem est aliquid fixum et quietum in ente."⁶⁰ But it does not work that way for Heidegger.

Heidegger's explanation of •g\ and thus *beständig* comes in his commentary on *Physics* # 1 at the point⁶¹ where Aristotle establishes the priority of : @DnZ over à80 by rejecting what Heidegger calls the "materialism" of the Sophist Antiphon, a materialism that, interestingly enough, was intimately bound up with Antiphon's radical repudiation of JXP<O. By way of anticipation we may say: Antiphon saw the constancy of presence as the hallmark of the really real and thus as the touchstone for discerning what is truly nbF4H. Antiphon's approach does offer one way to escape JXP<O and the nihilism implied in it. His doctrine suggests that although, insofar as we are human, we must unfortunately live with JXP<O, nonetheless insofar as we are philosophers, we must be ever in retreat from JXP<O toward nbF4H. And is that not Heidegger's program as well?

In his fragmentary work Z! 8Zhg4", Antiphon puts forth the thesis that what most deserves the name nbF4H is the primary and most unshaped elemental matter -- JI •Ddbh: 4FJ@< BDäJ@<: earth, water, air, and fire -- rather than (1) anything (such as iron or wood or flesh) that derives from or is a reshaping of those primary elements, and (2) *a fortiori* anything, such as artifacts, that is further shaped from those secondary reshapings. It would be hard to find a more absolute rejection of technology.

Antiphon's reason for declaring the most basic elements to be nbF4H is that they are •*4": they do not change of and by themselves (@Ü (•D gÉ<"4 : gJ" \$@8- < "ÜJ@4H |> "ßJä<, 193 a 26-27). From Antiphon's use of the word, which Aristotle apparently accepts, it would seem that •*4@H must mean "eternal" or "everlasting." The most constant and most stable would be the eternal -- and ultimately the divine. And even though Antiphon and Aristotle might radically disagree on the

⁵⁹*Confessiones*, VII, 11 (17), *PL* XXXII (1861), p. 743. See his "De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et de Moribus Manichaeorum," liber II, caput I, 1, *PL* XXXII (1861), p. 1346: "Hoc enim maxime esse dicendum est, quod semper eodem modo sese habet, quod omnimodo sui simile est, quod nulla ex parte corrumpi ac mutari potest, quod non subjacet tempori, quod aliter non se habere quam habebat antea, non potest. Id enim est quod esse verissime dicitur." Compare *De Trinitate* liber V, caput II, 3, *PL* XLII, p. 912, where Augustine attributes change (mutatio) to substances that can include accidents (accidentia capere); however: "Deo autem aliquid ejusmodi accidere non potest; et ideo sola est incommutabilis substantia vel essentia, qui Deus est, cui perfectio ipsum esse, unde essentia nominata est, maxime ac verissime competit. Quod enim mutatur, non servat ipsum esse; et quod mutari potest, etiamsi non mutetur, potest quod fuerat non esse: ac per hoc illud solum quod non tantum non mutatur, verum etiam mutari omnino non potest, sine scrupulo occurrit quod verissime dicatur esse." See his "De Sermonem Domini in Monte," liber 2, caput VII, 27, *PL* XXXIV, p. 1281, where Augustine contrasts "hodie" (i.e., "in hac temporali vita") with eternity ("ante illam scilicet immutationem").

⁶⁰*Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 20, quarta objectio [24] in *Opera Omnia*, Parma edition of 1855 (New York: Musurgia, 1948-1949) V, 17A; ET *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, trans. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Doubleday, 1955), I, 112-113.

⁶¹*Wegmarken*, pp. 336-340/226-270; ET pp. 203-207.

content of that ultimate "theological" entity -- "materialistic" in the one case, "idealistic" in the other -- they would nonetheless agree on the *form* of the theological: eternal self-presence. Antiphon's retreat from human JXP<O in the direction of a chthonic nbF4H is a negative mirroring of Aristotle's sublation of human JXP<O in the direction of an Olympian nbF4H.

But Heidegger confounds those simple certainties. In showing how that is so, I will not go into the way Aristotle incorporates Antiphon, as *Unwesen*, into his own interpretation of nbF4H at *Physics* B 1, 193 a 21-31. (Briefly, we recall that Aristotle "wrests" from Antiphon's •DDbh: 4FJ@< BDàJ@< his own very different notion of BDF JO à80, so-called "prime matter.") Rather, I will present only the gist of Heidegger's radical reinterpretation of the meaning of •g\ in that same passage.

Heidegger begins by noting the astonishing ambivalence of the words •g\ and •*4@H. At one end of the spectrum these two words can indeed mean "forever," with all the connotations of eternity and necessity which that word bears: "that which is *always* the case." At the other end of the spectrum, however, these words can refer simply to "whatever happens to be the case at a given time," as in Herodotus' Ö "fg\ \$" F48gbT<, "the currently ruling king" or Aeschylus' Ö •g\ 6D" Jä<, "whoever is ruler" (*Prometheus Bound*, 937f., which David Grene masterfully renders "whatever king is king today").⁶²

The same ambivalence is found in the English word "ever" (compare the German *jeweils*) that we use in translating •g\ and •*4@H. On the one hand, "ever" can mean "always" and "eternally," with overtones of necessity (compare the Latin *ne-cesse*, "not withdrawing or yielding," from *ne+cedo*). On the other hand, the word can refer to any specific and non-perduring occasion: "Did you ever see so-in-so?" This latter meaning continues in the suffix of words like "whoever," "whenever," and "however" (that last taken as an adverb, not a conjunction), where it has the sense of "any at all, from among infinite possibilities" as in the aforementioned phrase from Herodotus, a meaning certainly quite removed from any notion of eternity or necessity.

Z! *4@H and "ever" can, of course, have the sense of "perpetual" or "eternal." Plato, for example, speaks of ° •*4O @ÜF\, "eternal being," and Aristotle discusses •*4@H \$" F48g\, "perpetual monarchy."⁶³ However, •*4@H and "ever" do not necessarily refer to time and above all need not indicate eternity or endless duration. Rather, Heidegger overturns the presumptive meaning of •*4@H when he interprets *das beständige Anwesen* (° •*4O @ÜF\) not primarily as stable, abiding self-identity, not as constant presence, but rather as *autonomously initiated* self-presentation:

With the word •g\ one has in view the notion of "staying for a while," specifically in terms of becoming-and-being-present. Something is •*4@< if it becomes-and-is-present *of and by itself without further assistance* and *for this reason* perhaps is constantly present. [...] The decisive factor is that entities proper become-and-are-

⁶²(A) Herodotus, *Historiae*, 3rd edition, ed. Charles Hude, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927, reprinted 1954), II.98 (vol. I) and IX.116, lines 1-2 (vol. II): "The Persians consider that the whole of Asia is the property of themselves and of J@Ö "fg\ \$" F48gb@<J@H [i.e., whoever happens to be their king at the time]" -- *not* "whoever is the eternal king," parallel to the (equally legitimate but here inapplicable) phrase Ö •gÄ PD` <@H. (B) Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, trans. David Grene, in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), I, 345.

⁶³*Timaeus* 37e; *Politics* V, 1, 1301 b 27: •*4@H (•D \$" F48g\ " --<4F@H |•< 1 |< ÇF@4H. (Here, of course, the form •*4@H is feminine [•*4@H, -@<]; alternately: •*4O.)

present *of and by themselves* and therefore are encountered as that which in every instance is *already* there in front of you -- $\text{B}\text{B}\text{6g}\backslash: \text{g}\text{<}\text{@}\text{< B}\text{D}\text{\ddot{a}}\text{J}\text{<}$.⁶⁴

In this remarkable passage we watch the meaning of the so-called "constancy" or permanence of beingness-*qua*-presence slide from *eternity* ("something constantly present") to *autonomy* ("becomes-and-is-present of and by itself without further assistance"⁶⁵), only to end up as the *apriority of accessibility*, here discussed under the temporal guise of the "always-alreadiness" of the intelligible presence of things ("already there in front of you").⁶⁶ But this apriority of accessibility is the same issue we saw in *Anwesen/@\text{U}\text{F}\text{\}*". The confluence of these two topics both raises the question of the *source* of this apriori accessibility (Heidegger's answer to that question is: appropriation) and offers a hint of what it means to "turn into the essence" of nihilism.

In the above passage Heidegger is claiming that $\text{J}\hat{\text{I}} \text{D}\text{<}$ is $\bullet\backslash^*4\text{<}$ to the degree that it is responsible for its own presence-unto, i.e., insofar as it is *per se* accessible (*omne ens est verum*). The factor of "alreadiness" in an entity's "already being intelligibly present" indicates not some chronologically prior intelligibility (e.g., "it was intelligible even before human beings came on the scene") but rather the entity's *intrinsic* intelligibility, the *a priori* status of its ad-hominem disposition.

However, when Heidegger discusses the movement of an entity's "self"-presentation and accessibility, where does he think its apriority lies? On the one hand, it is clear that for Heidegger the self-presentation and availability of an entity is prior to, and not dependent on, any human being's existential engagement with that entity. All our involvement with the real is an "evoked" involvement, not merely in the trivial sense that it is a response to something already out there, but in the weighty sense that what enables any such involvement is the same as what enables the intelligibility of entities: *Ereignis*/appropriation. So too, on the other hand, an entity's *ability* to be engaged -- that is, its beingness -- is always correlative to the human ability to have access to entities, for otherwise knowing and being, lacking any intrinsic connection, would merely bump up against each other, only occasionally and always accidentally, as they go their separate ways. Furthermore, this beingness, while distinct from the human essence, cannot be separated from it. In short, because the human essence "goes to make up 'being'"⁶⁷ (both being-itself/*Ereignis* and the beingness/intelligibility of entities), at the very minimum there is a fated correlativity between the human ability to know and the ability of entities to be known; and more importantly, the human essence even *co-constitutes* the intelligibility of entities.

Heidegger refuses (or at least brackets) the traditional thesis about the origin of the relatedness of being and knowing, viz., that the two are ultimately one-and-the-same in God *qua* $\text{<}\text{\`}\text{O}\text{F}\text{4}\text{H}$ $\text{<}\text{@}\text{Z}\text{F}\text{g}\text{T}\text{H}$ and that the meaning of being is thus that particular form of time called "unchanging

⁶⁴"Im $\bullet\text{g}\backslash$ ist es auf das Verweilen und zwar im Sinne der Anwesenung abgesehen; das $\bullet\backslash^*4\text{<}$ ist das von sich her ohne sonstiges Zutun und *deshalb* möglicherweise ständig Anwesende [...] [D]as Entscheidende liegt vielmehr darin, daß das eigentlich Seiende von ihm selbst her anwest und deshalb als das je schon Vorliegende -- $\text{B}\text{B}\text{6g}\backslash: \text{g}\text{<}\text{@}\text{< B}\text{D}\text{\ddot{a}}\text{J}\text{<}$ -- angetroffen wird...." *Wegmarken*, 339/269; ET p. 206 (translation amended and emphasis added).

⁶⁵Compare *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie*, p. 172, " $\text{@}\text{\`}\text{U}\text{F}\text{\}$ ": das eigenständig beständig Vorhandene" and p. 201, no. 26: " $\text{@}\text{\`}\text{U}\text{F}\text{\}$ ": 1. eigenständige Beständigkeit...."

⁶⁶Cf. Heidegger's bold interpretation of $\bullet\text{g}\backslash$ as "eigentlich": *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie*, p. 179.

⁶⁷ZS, p. 27/407, ET p. 75: "...daß dieses Wesen [des Menschen] selbst 'das Sein' mitausmacht."

presence" and finally "eternity." Nonetheless, Heidegger approaches that solution asymptotically. In the text cited above, he argues that the autonomy and apriority of self-presentation, which is indicated in its character of $\bullet 4^*4^{\wedge} \text{JÖH}$ or *Beständigkeit*, rests not with the primacy of entities (or of the "beingness of entities") over human knowing, nor with the primacy of human knowing over entities, but consists, rather, in the factual priority of the *correlation* of $\langle @, \text{Ä} \rangle$ and $\text{gÉ} \langle " 4$ over either of the two correlata, which correlation in turn is grounded in appropriation. If there is any necessity, constancy, and stability that "temporally" determines the meaning of being, it is nothing but the "always-alreadiness" of *Ereignis*.

Therefore, the supposed "constancy" of presence-unto, the $\bullet \text{g} \setminus$ -factor that serves as the touchstone of $@\text{ÜF} \setminus$ " in the Greek version of "being and time," in no way undoes the ad-hominem status of that presence. In fact it reconfirms it with the weightiest of inevitabilities. We might have thought that in the $\text{nbF}4\text{H}$ -centered cosmos of Antiphon and of Aristotle, the most real instance of reality would turn out to be that which is most removed from human beings -- it would be the most unchanging and eternal, whether in the form of Antiphon's pre-technological "elemental" (JI $\bullet \text{DDbh}$: $4\text{FJ} \langle \text{BD}\hat{\text{a}}\text{J} \langle$) or in the form of Aristotle's meta-technological divine ($\text{Ö hg} \setminus \text{H}$). But Heidegger argues that the ruling issue in the analogical structure of coming-to-presence is not eternity but the "apriority" of the correlation between $\langle @, \text{Ä} \rangle$ and $\text{gÉ} \langle " 4$. Which, at the other end of Greek-Western history, means the virtual inevitability of nihilism.

If I have spent so much time on Antiphon's false solution to the problem of technology, it is because this "solution" is both consonant with, and in fact prototypical of, what I call the "Right Heideggerian" response to nihilism. The terms "Right Heideggerian" and "Left Heideggerian" go back to discussions that John Caputo and I had in the late 1970s, when I began using the term "Right Heideggerians" for those who argued (a) that being-itself is exhausted in presence, (b) that even the $8\text{Zh}\text{Ö}$ is an as-yet-hidden presence that might someday emerge from concealment in the "new dawn" of a secular parousia, and (c) that the as-yet-hidden presence that is being-itself could arguably be already present to itself in a transparent *Bei-sich-sein*, not unlike the God whom Thomas Aquinas allegedly experienced in a mystical ecstasy shortly before his death at Fossanova. I claimed to find traces of such Right Heideggerianism in Professor Caputo's first two books on, respectively, Heidegger and Eckhart and Heidegger and Aquinas.⁶⁸

Some two decades later the Right Heideggerians have shifted a bit to the left. While a few hold-outs still await a parousia of *das Sein selbst* after the dark age of nihilism, the majority of the Right Heideggerian Establishment has by now assimilated the discourse about the lethic character of being-itself -- while nonetheless (and unfortunately) continuing to hypostasize and metaphysicize that $8\text{Zh}\text{Ö}$ into an ultimately unknowable absence, ontologically situated somewhere beyond the reach of human projection. While that is bad enough, the current *Left* Heideggerian position is little better. Having, in one of its incarnations, learned something from poststructuralism and in the process disabused itself of

⁶⁸John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, and New York: Fordham University Press), 1978; *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985). On the latter, see Thomas Sheehan, "A Way out of Metaphysics," *Research in Phenomenology*, 15 (1985), 229-234. In this early phase of the discussion, "Left Heideggerians" simply referred to those who understood being-itself as an "absence" that makes possible the presence of entities. The point was to get beyond both Left and Right Heideggerianism. Cf. Thomas Sheehan, "Derrida and Heidegger," in *Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, edited by Hugh J. Silverman, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 201-218.

the mythology of a hypostasized $\delta Z h 0$ (or has it?⁶⁹), it ends up rewriting that $\delta Z h 0$ as an untotizable (and historically empty) asymmetry bound up with a de-historicized "happening" of post-ethical obligation. This version of Left Heideggerianism may be a necessary, but surely is an insufficient, half-step toward salvaging whatever potential remains in Heidegger's discourse: necessary insofar as it tries to take social obligation seriously, insufficient insofar as it has no demonstrable resources for confronting history, either for understanding it in theory or engaging it in practice. Left Heideggerianism remains yet another but much thinner form of "German ideology."

In the final analysis neither the solutions of the Right nor of the Left Heideggerians work as adequate responses to technology and nihilism, at least not if one follows Heidegger (and the facts) consistently. To take only the example of Antiphon: Like the Right Heideggerian reaction to fulfilled nihilism, Antiphon's response to $JXP < O$ is to search for something untouched, or relatively untouched, by human beings, a $nbF4H$ with as little overlay of $JXP < O$ as possible. Antiphon's strategy is to deny intrinsic reality to $B@4@b: g < "$, to retreat from them in the direction of $nbFg4 \delta < J$ ", as he searches for a world where being is defined by unchanging stability. But in Heidegger's telling, this strategy is self-contradictory.

First, the supposed eternity or unmovedness of Antiphon's underlying elemental stuff denies the very reality of the $nbF4H$ that Antiphon is trying to preserve. $MbF4H$ means "movement-into-presence-onto" (*An-wesung*, $@\ddot{U}F\backslash TF4H$), whereas Antiphon's elemental stuff does not move at all, least of all in the direction of engagement by human beings. For Antiphon, any shaping of $nbF4H$ into a $B@4@b: g < @ <$ is a violation of $nbF4H$; and for him (or his modern Heideggerian counterparts) to follow this logic to its ultimate historical conclusions would mean becoming the mad ecologist, the Green gone berserk, who has to leave the earth in order to preserve it.

Secondly, the supposed eternal unmovedness of Antiphon's $nbF4H$ is also the guarantee of its pseudo-mysteriousness, its "ultimate unknowability." Insofar as $nbF4H$, in Antiphon's scheme of things, does not move at all and keeps entirely to itself, it resists all appearance and escapes behind any attempt to shape it into $gE^*@H$. For Antiphon the most real is the most unknowable, an "existent" prime matter without form,⁷⁰ a "something" without appearance. It is, therefore, an unknowable something, and thus in effect a nothing. Indeed, Antiphon's $nbF4H$ is the forerunner of the Right Heideggerians' $\delta Z h 0$: a something that is really nothing, or better, a nothing that *has* to be something insofar as it performs such mysterious acts as hiding itself, revealing itself, withdrawing itself, dispensing epochs of beingness, evoking post-metaphysical thought, sliding under erasure, articulating the call of the Victim,

⁶⁹Some hyperbolic critiques (verging on parodies) seem to believe they have *Heidegger* in their sights when they accuse him of a "hypervalorization of *aletheia*" and claim that "[in the 1930s] Heidegger's interest turned more and more toward the search for the Essential Being (*Wesen*) and Origin (*Ursprung*) of truth." "[The *Kehre* consists in Heidegger's turn to] a deep Essential Being," "a deep, primordial, originary truth," "removed from beings [and] purified of them," such that now "Being waits for an open space and a new god, in German, which is where the saving God will undoubtedly arrive." John D. Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1993), pp. 21, 118, 119, 123. This tops even Simon Blackburn's parody of Heidegger: "Modern humanity has lost the 'nearness and shelter' of Being; we are no longer at home in the world as primitive man was, thought is separated from being, and only a favored few have any hope of recapturing oneness with Being." Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford U. P. 1994), p. 169.

⁷⁰Compare Erigena: "Ea vero, quae per excellentiam suae naturae non solum $\delta 84 @ <$, id est omnem sensum, sed etiam intellectum rationemque fugiunt, jure videri non esse." *De divisione naturae* (cf. *supra*) Liber I, cap. 3, *PL CXXII* (1865), p. 413.

and on and on. This nothing/something cannot be known and yet somehow evokes memory of itself (at least among Heideggerians) by dropping hints of its withdrawal, arousing suspicions of its return, calling out, leaving traces, spreading scents..., the ultimate Cheshire Cat.

VI Fulfilled Nihilism: $\text{hge8e}(\backslash$ "

We have considered both terms in the key phrase that, for Heidegger, captures the Greek notion of being and time, and from either side of *das beständige Anwesen* the conclusion that imposes itself is that nihilism is inevitable. If *Anwesen* points to the endlessness of the human ability to engage entities, *Beständigkeit*, once freed from its presumed reference to eternity, reinforces that endlessness by revealing its *a priori* status. We may now take the last step in our

•JD" B` H or short-cut, by tracing the aforementioned three presuppositions back to their natural end: the theological.

We have argued that the "Greek" versions of naturalism, kineticism, and phenomenology entail one another in an intricate perichoresis. According to the first presupposition, everything that is -- from the Unmoved Mover, if there is one, down to prime matter if *per impossibile* one could speak of it as existing -- is, to one degree or another, nbF4H . But this presupposition entails another: that everything in the world is somehow "self"-presentative ($\bullet 80\text{hXH}$), or it is not at all. The degree of that self-presentation is measured by the entity's degree of nbF4H , which means its degree of movement, specifically its degree of return unto itself. All nbF4H , including that of God, is, as we have seen, a $\text{O}^*\text{IH} \dots \text{gFH nbF4}$ <, a direct or indirect, perfect or imperfect, *reditio in seipsum*. An imperfect natural entity makes an incomplete return to itself, and a perfect natural entity (if there is one) makes a complete return. In fact, as far as Heidegger is concerned, the thoroughgoing kineticism of Greek thought is not contradicted by, but rather fulfilled in, the notion of the divine as perfectly at rest in itself (cf. $\text{I} < \text{XD} (\text{g4} \bullet 64 < \text{OF} \backslash \text{H}^1$) insofar as "rest" is understood as the in-gatheredness (*Innehalten*) of motion into its JX8@H and hence not the opposite of motion but its highest instance.⁷²

Perfectly self-coincident in his return to himself, God is the perfection of $\text{nbF4H/6} \backslash < \text{OF4H/n} \backslash < \text{gFh} \text{"} 4$ and as such sets the pattern that is imitated by lower entities. Thus on the one hand an entity of incomplete self-return is imperfectly self-presentative and thus only imperfectly able to know itself. The perfectly natural entity, on the other hand, would be the one that is entirely self-present (to itself) and self-presentative (to others) precisely because of its complete return

⁷¹*Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 14, 1154 b 27.

⁷²*Wegmarken*, 354/282; ET p. 217. The point became a commonplace in Second International dialectics. Compare Ferdinand Lassalle's letter to Karl Marx, Düsseldorf, December 12, 1851: "[In its moment of fullness, a given historical situation] faßt sich...alle seine markirten Differenzen und Besonderheiten, die er, so lange er lebensfähig war, gesetzt hat, wieder aufhebend und in sich zurücknehmend, in sein rein allgemeines ursprüngliche Wesen, in seine einfache Totalität zusammen." In *Nachgelassene Briefe und Schriften*, Gustav Mayer, ed., 6 volumes, (Stuttgart and Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt and Verlagsbuchhandlung Julius Springer, 1920-1925), III (*Der Briefwechsel zwischen Lassalle und Marx*, [1922]), pp. 38-42, here p. 41. Also in *Briefe von Ferdinand Lassalle an Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels, 1849 bis 1862*, ed. Franz Mehring (Stuttgart: Dietz, 1902), pp. 39-43, here p. 41.

knowledge would be *LFJLPgĀH, very unlucky indeed.⁸⁰

But Aristotle refutes the objection. Not only is God not jealous ("poets tell many a lie," he informs us: 983 a 4-5), but there are more important reasons, relating to **nbF4H**, that should lead us to dismiss the objection. 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 (cf. **nbFg4** at 980 a 22 and 27) to see, to know, to imitate, and thus, analogously, to *be* God. Can this desire be fulfilled? While Aristotle does not answer the question unambiguously, he does imply (as he must, given the analogical nature of **nbF4H**) a human participation in the self-knowledge of God. **E@n**" (|B4FJZ: 0 hg@8@(46Z) is, he says, a knowledge that "either God alone can have, or God *above all others*."⁸¹

Aristotle's claim is momentous. He had opened the *Metaphysics* with the assertion "All human beings by nature desire to know," and by the second chapter of the Prooemium we learn that the object of that unlimited desire is God. Human beings can, to some degree, know God the way God knows himself, because in fact they participate in the same reality as the divine. But this means that, whether or not the project is ever actually fulfilled, Aristotle has opened up to human beings the *possibility* of the total knowledge (and along with that knowledge, the control) of everything that is insofar as it is. Aristotle's theology is the first technology, and modern technology is only the last theology. The "death of God" begins with the first sentence of the *Metaphysics*, and after it nihilism will be only a mopping-up exercise. Whether God exists or not, whether God is the object of faith, reason, denial, or indifference, henceforth in Western thought **hg`H**, the highest instance of **nbF4H**, will be a symbol for the goal and scope of technology: the humanization of nature and the naturalization of man. "God" will be the symbol *par excellence* for "der 'unendlich ferne Mensch."⁸²

⁸⁰"Knowledge correlative to their nature": A 2, 982 b 31-32; "unfitting": A 2, 982 b 31; "unlucky": 983 a 1.

⁸¹*Metaphysics* A 2, 983 a 9-10: J¬< J@4" bJO< ` : ` <@H ` : V84FJZ ¬< \$P@4 0 hg`H.

⁸² There are at least three interdependent ways of establishing the point that Aristotle's theology is the first technology and that modern technology is but the last theology: (1) from the nature of **hg@8@(46Z)** itself, (2) from what **hg@8@(46Z)** and **JXP<O** share in common, and (3) from the reduction of both of them, as forms of knowledge, to **•8Zhg4"**. Since I have touched upon the first way above, here I will merely allude to the second and third ways.

The second way: What both **JXP<O** and **hg@8@(46Z)** share in common is the notion that the apprehension of an entity depends in some way on the *pre*-apprehension of a projected ideal. (Heidegger takes this notion over, in a much transformed way, in *SZ*.) In the case of **JXP<O**, the term of the pre-apprehension is the envisaged form of the artifact to be constructed, the **gE*@H BD@"4DgJ`**<. In the case of [|B4FJZ: 0] **hg@8@(46Z)**, the term of the pre-apprehension is God himself as the most perfect separated form. This notion of the necessity of pre-apprehension embodies one of the presuppositions of Greek thought and of all traditional metaphysics, namely, that the imperfect is known through the perfect.

To take theology first (and I am expressing the tradition's theory, not my own): According to the aforementioned notion, to know an entity is to know it through its form, i.e., its relative perfection. However, the form is known, even if only implicitly, through pure and perfect form. For Aristotle the **RLPZ** is somehow all things (° RLP¬ J • Đ<J" BfH |FJ4 BV<J": *De Anima*, ' 8, 431 b 21). But the suppressed premise here is that human beings are what they are insofar as they are in some way a : 4: ZF4H J@0 hg@0, an imitation -- and so a desire -- for the divine. That desire is, in fact,

God as "the infinitely distant human": With those words the nihilism born in the theological technology of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* comes to its fullness. The phrase, published posthumously in 1954, had been jotted down sometime between 1934 and 1937 by Edmund Husserl. It is found in an extraordinary passage in his text on the crisis of Western science.⁸³ There in reflecting on the modern relation between God, mathematics, and philosophy, and on the grounding of the infinite knownness of the real in God, Husserl characterizes what Heidegger, at about the same time, was beginning to call the fulfilled essence of nihilism.

From its Greek beginnings, Husserl writes, philosophy has pursued the ideal of the complete rationality of the real, ideally expressible in a universal science. However, the fulfillment of that ideal became possible only with the discovery of modern mathematics. "Is not nature in itself thoroughly

the meaning of human <@ØH, as Aristotle argues in the first two chapters of the *Metaphysics*: Human beings, by nature, desire to know and see God, they are drawn towards the divine (cf. ¶Df: g<@<: *Metaphysics* 7, 7, 1072b 3) and already implicitly know God, even if only as the first principle of everything that is. In Aristotle's view, our anticipation of the divine opens up the whole world of entities as possible objects. We can "have" entities only because we already in some way "have" and indeed "are" God, the ultimate gĒ*@H BD@"4DgJ` <. And here lies the intimation of fulfilled technology. Our knowing of the world through God is modeled on God's knowledge of everything through himself. God has the world perfectly because he has himself perfectly, and we have the world imperfectly because we, as *in via*, have ourselves and God imperfectly,

And the same applies analogously to the kind of knowing that governs JXP<O. To invert Vico: It is not that we know what we make but that we make what we know. But the knowledge that governs our making must be taken in its full sweep, right up to the divine apex. The ideal that governs both the theological model of knowing the world and the technological model of shaping the world is the theological ideal of transparent self-possession.

The third way: Insofar as both hg@8@(46Z and JXP<O are "intellectual" performances, they are both modes of •8Zhg4", as Aristotle implies at the end of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Z, 2. Therefore, the issue common to both of them is the accessibility of entities in their @ÜF\ ". In his early courses (and also at the end of *KPM*) Heidegger translated @ÜF\ " into German as *die Habe*, not only "the had" (i.e., that which is had) but also the "hadness" of entities-as-had. The beingness of entities does not lie behind or within entities or override them, but is simply *the fact that and the way in which they are had at any given moment*. But what theology shows is that the highest mode of disclosure is "self-disclosure" and that the highest mode of "having" is "self-having," <`OF4H <@ZFgTH, which in turn functions as the desired paradigm for all modes of disclosure and all modes of having which fall short of that ideal.

These ways of arguing that theology is the first technology and technology the last theology are only variations on Heidegger's theme of metaphysics as onto-theology. They allow us to see the history of metaphysics, and therefore of nihilism, as the exfoliation of a theological secret. *Die Technik* as the last epoch of metaphysics is only the final form of theology understood as : 4: ZF4H J@Ø hg@Ø, *imitatio Dei*, and theology, as the knowledge of everything through God as the ultimate gĒ*@H BD@"4DgJ` <, is the governing paradigm of technology understood as a movement towards complete possession of the world.

⁸³*Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie, Ergänzungsband. Texte aus dem nachlass 1934-1937*, ed. Reinhold N. Smid (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993), p. 67. ET *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy* tr. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 67.

mathematical?" he asks. "Must it not also be thought of as a coherent mathematical system?"⁸⁴ The answer is yes, because in some way the complete mathematical rationality of the world, as a created universe, is grounded in God's achieved comprehension of everything:

Compared to the absolute knowledge we ascribe to God the creator, one says to oneself, our knowledge in pure mathematics has only one lack, i.e., that, while it is always absolutely self-evident, it does require a systematic process in order to bring to realization in cognition, i.e., as explicit mathematical knowledge, all the shapes that "exist" in spatiotemporal form.⁸⁵

What, then, is the universal science corresponding to the new idea [of rational, scientific philosophy] -- when conceived of as ideally complete -- except *omniscience*? This actually is a realizable though infinitely distant goal for philosophers -- realizable not by an individual or by the current community of researchers but certainly realizable in the infinite progression of the generations and in their systematic investigations. One takes it as an apodictic insight that the world is in itself a rational systematic unity, within which every individual thing must be rationally determined down to the last detail. The systematic form [of the world] (its universal essential structure) is what is to be attained -- in fact, for us it is already ready and known in advance, at least insofar as it is purely mathematical. The point is only to determine it in its particulars -- which unfortunately [sic!] can be done only through induction. This is the path -- infinite, to be sure -- to omniscience. Thus we live in the blessed certainty of a path that progresses from what is close at hand to what is far off, from what is more or less known to what is as yet unknown -- an infallible method for broadening knowledge, such that truly everything in the totality of entities has to become known in its complete "in-itself-ness" -- in an infinite progression.⁸⁶

And accompanying this progress in knowledge is a progress in technical mastery:

Along with our growing and always more perfect cognitive power over the universe, we also achieve an ever more perfect mastery over our practical environment, a mastery that expands in unending progression. This also involves a mastery over our own human being insofar as it belongs to the real world around us, i.e., a mastery over ourselves and our fellow human beings, an ever greater power over our fate, and thus an ever fuller "happiness" taken as rationally conceivable for us. Then too, as regards value and the good, we can know the true in itself. All the foregoing falls within the horizon of this rationalism as its obvious consequence for us. Thus we truly are the image and likeness of God. Just as mathematics speaks of infinitely distant points, straight lines, etc., so analogously one can say metaphorically that God is the "*infinitely distant human*." In fact, correlative with their mathematicization of the world and of philosophy, philosophers have in a certain sense mathematically idealized themselves and, at the same time, God.⁸⁷

⁸⁴*Krisis*, p. 55.33-35; *Crisis*, p. 55.

⁸⁵*Krisis*, p. 55.24-29; *Crisis*, p. 55, translation slightly amended.

⁸⁶*Krisis*, pp. 66.21--67; *Crisis*, p. 65, translation slightly amended.

⁸⁷*Krisis*, p. 67.15-32; *Crisis*, p. 66.

It would be difficult to find a clearer vision of the "theologian" as mathematicizing technician -- or in this case, as philosopher -- marching shoulder to shoulder with Jünger's worker into the infinitely distant goal of the God-man. But the vision had already begun to come into focus at least a century earlier. David Strauss understood himself to be merely drawing the inevitable conclusion from Hegel when he wrote at the end of *Das Leben Jesu*:

When it is said of God that he is a Spirit, and of man that he also is a Spirit, it follows that the two are not essentially distinct. [...] Is not the idea of the unity of the divine and the human natures a real one in a far higher sense [than in traditional Christology], when I regard the *whole race of humankind* as its realization...?⁸⁸

And Feuerbach, in the first thesis of his *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*, reduced the whole of metaphysics (and not merely, as he thought, the program of modernity) to an epigram that might serve as epitaph: "The task of the modern era [indeed, of all Greek-Western history] was the realization and humanization of God -- the transformation and dissolution of theology into anthropology."⁸⁹ It is this theological-technological project (which some call "nihilism") that comes to expression in the formula: "*vollendeter Naturalismus = Humanismus, vollendeter Humanismus = Naturalismus.*"⁹⁰

VII Some Conclusions

Heidegger's discussion of nihilism moves between two foci: historical-cultural nihilism and the essential *nihil* that makes it possible. The latter refers to the hiddenness intrinsic to appropriation (cf. Heraclitus' *ἡ ἀλήθεια κρύπτεται*), which is ultimately responsible for the widespread overlooking or "forgetting" of appropriation. This overlooking/forgetting in turn leads to historical-cultural nihilism, the ever-increasing technological domination of the world by what Jünger calls "the worker," and thus the increasing withdrawal not of all modes of beingness (which is impossible so long as human beings exist) but of the "natural" mode of beingness, *ἡ φύσις* *qua* nature, in favor of *ἡ τέχνη*, human production. Technology's growing domination of the globe leads to the exclusion -- almost the abolition -- of nature. We may draw some conclusions from this view.

1. The intrinsic withdrawal of being-itself is *for the sake of* the endless accessibility of entities. Without the withdrawal intrinsic to *Ereignis*, entities would not be disclosed at all, and humans would not be human. If historical-cultural nihilism means the total availability of entities to human engagement

⁸⁸*The Life of Jesus*, trans. George Eliot (London: Chapman, 1850), pp. 777 and 780, emphasis added.

⁸⁹"Die Aufgabe der neueren Zeit war die Verwirklichung und Vermenschlichung Gottes -- die *Verwandlung* und Auflösung der Theologie in die Anthropologie." *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Werner Schuffenhauer (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970), IX [Kleinere Schriften II (1839-1846), ed. Werner Schuffenhauer and Wolfgang Harich], 265. The italics appear in the first edition (Zürich/Winterthur: Comptoir, 1843) but are dropped in the reworked, final edition in *Sämtlichen Werke* (Leipzig, 1846).

⁹⁰Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke* (Berlin: Dietz, 1968ff.), Ergänzungsband (Schriften bis 1844, Erster Teil, 1968, p. 536 (*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, manuscript 3). (In MEGA: I/2, 263).

and manipulation, then such "nihilism" is in fact the *gift* of the appropriation's self-concealment. Far from having a philosophically negative connotation, historical-cultural "nihilism" is the positive outcome of *Ereignis*, and Heideggerians would do well to stop using the word "nihilism" for this gift of appropriation -- hence the scare quotes, or better a cross-out. What Heidegger means by essential nihilism is not historical-cultural nihilism.

2. Thus in Heidegger's philosophical view, essential nihilism has nothing essential to do with a given ratio between nbF4H and $\text{JXP} < \text{O}$, nature and technology. z! 8Zhg4 , taken in its second sense as the self-presentation (disclosedness) of entities, is a matter of their intrinsic intelligibility, not their supposed exhibition of "natural" $\text{gE}^* \text{O}$. Essential nihilism is (A) fundamentally a matter of the intrinsic hiddenness of appropriation, and (B) derivatively a matter of the resultant overlooking of appropriation; but in neither case is it necessarily a matter of the domination of nature by technology. One can be an essential nihilist in nbF4H -rich and $\text{JXP} < \text{O}$ -poor ancient Greece as much as in today's nbF4H -poor and $\text{JXP} < \text{O}$ -rich North America -- Antiphon is proof enough of that. One can limit technology and restore the powers of nature without ceasing to be an essential nihilist (i.e., without overcoming one's oblivion of appropriation). And even if one sees and resolutely embraces appropriation, one can never overcome essential nihilism in its fundamental sense of the intrinsic hiddenness of appropriation.

3. Thus nihilism is not proportionate to the degree of human understanding of and control over entities; it is not a zero-sum game in which the advances of humanization comport the forced retreat of being-itself. One can posit, affirm, and build a world that is completely knowable, and in principle completely controllable, by human beings while remaining resolutely true to appropriation. And we are familiar with all sorts of mystical worldviews (perhaps even that of the dying Aquinas) which, insofar as they are oblivious of appropriation, would differ very little, in Heidegger's view, from the materialist worldviews of Antiphon or Stalin.

4. The self-coincident and all-knowing God, far beyond appropriation, is presumably the only one who would overcome essential nihilism; but for human beings, appropriation, insofar as it "loves to hide," marks a certain death of God. *Moritur* $< \text{OF4H} < \text{ZFgTH}$, *incipit* $\text{6X} < \text{TF4H} \text{6g} < \text{fFgTH}$, a groundless self-emptying in favor of endless knowledge and manipulation of the world. Thus the Heideggerian discourse on the triumph of historical-cultural "nihilism" should change its lugubrious tones and become an Ambrosian *Exultet* to the *felix culpa* of a historical development that at last has opened our eyes to the *nihil* that is the essence of being-itself and the unsurpassable fate of human beings.

5. *Ereignis* entails that everything is comprehensible, except the comprehensibility of everything. This formulation might raise the specter of eventual totalization and closure, but it actually asserts the opposite. It refuses a notion of being-itself that lies back behind $\text{JXP} < \text{O}$, whether behind artifacts in some pristine nbF4H , as Antiphon would have it, or behind "the worker" in the area of a "non-technological" *Dasein*, as Right Heideggerians argue. The point, rather, is to salvage the 8Zh0 from a spectrum of absurd positions -- whether "in its own proper dwelling place" ($\text{•gA...} | < \text{J} \pm \text{@k6g} \backslash ' \text{ } ^a * \text{D}' \text{ } ^{91}$) in some "beyond," or at the edge of this world where human performance supposedly runs out of steam, or on a vertical axis that intersects and interrupts history -- and to reinscribe it where it belongs: at the heart of *Ereignis* and thus as the enabler of endlessness and untotalizability within the horizontal project of the historical engagement with and technological humanization of the world. This "economizing" of the 8Zh0 confirms the finitude both of human being and of all forms of beingness precisely by generating an infinity of possibilities for the reshaping of the

⁹¹Plotinus, *Enneads*, IV.8.6.

world. It shows that the "mystery" of *Ereignis* inhabits technology and empowers historical nihilism. Therefore, we live into that mystery not by being less nihilistic but more.

6. Just as the locus of the mystery shifts to the horizontal and historical, so too our engagement with nihilism must shift from the "what" to the "how," from discourse about the *essence* of nihilism to decisions about how best to carry out its infinite tasks. This is clearly not Heidegger's move, but it should be our own.

From his early course on the phenomenology of religion (1920-1921)⁹² up through his last writings, Heidegger remained ever focused on the eschatological and its essence. I do not mean the so-called "eschatology of being" (*Holzwege*, 301f.), according to which *Ereignis*, long overlooked, is supposed to have dispensed in the present epoch the most extreme possibility of beingness. Rather, I draw on the original sense found in the 1920-1921 course, where the eschaton, no longer a mythical supernatural event at the end of time, is understood as the always arriving but ever unfathomable enabling power by which humans are drawn into realms of significance, and in the face of which they live in utter uncertainty. The words "eschatology" and "eschatological" have to do with living into and out of appropriation, the ultimate, unsurpassable *factum*. In short, eschatology means *Geschichtlichkeit*. But when it came to the question of "what is to be done?" the best Heidegger could offer was a meta-ethical redoubling of his eschatological vision: an assertion that human being is pulled into the mystery of appropriation (μῆ@H • <hDfBâ * "\: T<), and a purely formal-empty protreptic to *Gelassenheit*, that is, to letting oneself be pulled into that mystery: (X<@4' @f@H |FF\ : "hf<. "*Werde wesentlich!*" "Become what you already are."⁹³

This move is hardly sufficient to the claims made on us by thinking and acting, not only in terms of political responsibilities but first of all in terms of philosophical ones. Indeed on its *own* terms Heidegger's reflection on the essence of nihilism demands the dismantling of both the hypostasized utopia and the ahistorical obligationism to which the Right and Left Heideggerians abandon the eschatological, and instead its reinscription in the concrete order of power -- economic, social, political, and ideological (including the philosophical-ethical) -- where alone the future of "nihilism" (should we chose to use this unfortunate word) will be decided. Such a reinscription does not require in the first instance the elaboration of new political philosophies or schemata of moral obligation. Those either will or will not come in their own good time. The first step, rather, is to recognize that whereas the *essence* of nihilism can be worked out in the realm of thought, the actual course of historical-cultural "nihilism" -- that is, the future of the humanization of nature and naturalization of man -- is decided not in classrooms or philosophy conferences, not in libraries or texts. It is being decided in the hills and the streets, in the boardrooms and the *maquilas*. Anything philosophy has to say must come as a reflection on that.

To return to Heidegger's demand that he be read as a *homo philosophicus* rather than as a *homo politicus*: The present reflection on the essence of nihilism via a reflection on *nbF4H* and *JXP<O* suggests the conclusion that what Heidegger has to say about the essence of nihilism -- important though it might be -- cannot realistically serve as a philosophical platform for grounding political options. One would no more want to take Heidegger's reflections on the essence of nihilism as the basis for a concrete political action than one would want to take the apocalyptic discourses

⁹²"Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion" in his *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, GA 60 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1995).

⁹³Respectively: Pindar, *Pythian Odes*, II, 72, in *The Works of Pindar*, ed. Lewis Richard Farnell, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1932), III (*The Text*), 56; and *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, GA 56/57, p. 5, citing Silesius.

attributed to Jesus of Nazareth as a blueprint for running a revolution. You may not like technology and its products, the possibilities it opens up at the expense of the ones it closes off. You may not like the current constellation of the management of technology or the distribution of its effects. But Heidegger's ideas on technology and nihilism -- for whatever light they may shed on the question of the $\mathbb{N} \setminus \{F\}$ -- will not help you one bit with the $\mathbb{O} \mathbb{B} @ \mathbb{A} @ <$, at least not insofar as that $\mathbb{O} \mathbb{B} @ \mathbb{A} @ <$ has to do with changing the real powers that drive $\mathbb{J} \mathbb{X} \mathbb{P} < \mathbb{O}$ today. Taken strictly, Heidegger's discourse will not even encourage you to work to change it. For that, other strategies and other tactics are required, and they do not come from Heidegger.⁹⁴

This essay has sought to be one thing only: a philosophical propaedeutic to understanding Heidegger's political "error" of 1933 -- and one's own political errors today. If we bracket for now the other and more interesting reasons that Heidegger may have had for joining the National Socialist German Workers Party, if we focus only on the philosophical justifications that he gave *ex eventu* for his choice, it seems Heidegger joined the Nazis because he thought they could help to overcome nihilism. If we remain at the superstructural level of philosophical discourse, we may say that his error was not that he picked the wrong party for overcoming nihilism but that he thought nihilism could be overcome at all.

⁹⁴Heidegger does have a lot to say about the concrete constellation of technology -- e.g., the massification of modern society, the mechanization of production, or (to use one of his favorite tropes as a synecdoche) the transformation of the Rhine into a waterway for barges. But none of these or his other personal opinions about modern society and politics, which are virtually always negative, have any philosophical or philosophical-political importance. If anything, they encourage a withdrawal from the theoretical and practical tasks that the current constellation of technology confronts us with. Of course, while Heidegger's personal opinions about modern society, industry, and politics are not *philosophically* interesting, they do tell us a lot about *him* -- as a provincial Catholic from rural southern Germany, as an unreconstructed Wilhelmian and discontented survivor of the First World War, as an unbending conservative with a particular political and social ideology. To get to the philosophically interesting issues one must ask different questions. Does Heidegger's reflection on nihilism, for all its insightfulness, run the perennial metaphysical risk of confusing the "history of being" with the concrete history of the world? Did he confuse the so-called *Verwindung* of nihilism with human liberation? Or if his thought is innocent of such confusion, what can it tell us about that latter topic?