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Heidegger's Conversations:
Relationality, Language, and Ethics

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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Abstract

Heidegger's Conversations: Relationality, Language, and Ethics

By Katherine Davies

In this dissertation, I articulate a dialogical or conversational ethics underlying Martin Heidegger's thinking. I argue this despite the fact that Heidegger's philosophy is generally regarded as exclusively dealing in ontological philosophy, not ethics. Indeed Heidegger himself disavowed ethics as his primary concern, writing in 1945 in his "Letter on Humanism" that "[i]f the name 'ethics,' in keeping with the basic meaning of the word ἦθος, should now say that ethics ponders the abode of the human being, then that thinking which thinks the truth of being as the primordial element of the human being…is in itself originary ethics. However, this thinking is not ethics in the first instance because it is ontology." Nevertheless, and perhaps even despite Heidegger's own self-interpretation, I argue that his philosophy demonstrates a glaring ethical character. To show this, I turn to the series of five "Conversations"—*Gespräche*—Heidegger wrote in the 1940s and 1950s. Although the Conversations have begun to be mined for their rich philosophical content by commentators, these is, as of yet, no philosophical literature specifically approaching the form of the writing of the Conversations in such a way as to explicitly question its capacity to elucidate Heidegger's ethics. In order to explore this ethical dimension of Heidegger's philosophy, I offer a set of close readings of these Conversations not so much for what they explicitly *say* as for what they unavoidably *show* regarding the centrality of ethics for Heidegger. Each Conversation stages an interaction between various characters, their environment, and their cultural, historical, and political context, which is useful for illustrating a Heideggerian ethics of relating to others. Language, as a philosophical topic, also plays a substantial role in Heidegger's body of work. Since the Conversations take place principally through the exchange of language, my dissertation proposes a Heideggerian sense of dialogical or conversational ethics wherein language, particularly poetizing language, assumes a central role in how we learn to relate to others properly.

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For Conversations Past and Those Yet to Come

Introduction

Conversation as Living Metaphor

This dissertation is built on my intuition that conversation is or—in its best instantiations—can be its own living metaphor. This is to say each exchange of a conversation, each line of dialogue, in turn leads to a further reply, question, or exchange, which leads to an another, and another. Conversation is unparaphraseable, yet we nevertheless relentlessly attempt to paraphrase our own thoughts and those of our conversational partner(s) as we are conversing. Computers, for instance, can simulate linguistic interchange (as we learn from Searle,) but they can never carry on a conversation. We are interested in, even driven to conversations, because we never know their content in advance or how they will unfold. A genuine conversation cannot achieve the logic of a dictionary entry. Instead, conversation is the name we give to an encounter which may surprise, delight, perhaps infuriate, be edifying, lead to our utter undoing, or extend a comforting sentiment. It does all of this, however, by eluding expectation. Anticipation, or the lack thereof, implies a temporal setting capable of bearing the nature of conversation as one which unfolds. It also implies the company of an other—or at least of otherness—which can interfere with me, calling my attention away from the well-worn treads of my habitual ways of thinking and noticing the world. Even in the soundless conversation of me with myself in thinking, Hannah Arendt calls our attention to how the otherness of ourselves which we encounter in thinking is perhaps even the originary political moment, inaugurating our impetus to come to terms with the presence of the other.

Alexander Nehamas, taking his cue from Stanley Cavell, wonders about metaphors. He thinks we come to understand metaphors by attempting to paraphrase them. He writes, "the paraphrase of a metaphor has a very special feature…the paraphrase is itself full of metaphors each one of which may require, in certain circumstances, its own paraphrase."[1] Metaphors are not similes. Similes, relying on the likeness of representation, "are open ended, yet when they are expanded, they are closed."[2] The vast terrain opened by metaphor raises more questions than it answers. Nevertheless, this open-ended quality of the metaphor nevertheless certifies the integrity of the thought which called for the metaphor in the first place. If the metaphor's paraphrase manages to culminate, terminating each paraphrase it has spawned and incorporated, the metaphor has died; "a metaphor whose meaning we can fully express in different words, belongs in a dictionary; it has become a cliché or turned into one of those countless expressions we use without a second thought and call 'dead metaphors,' which is itself a dead metaphor."[3] When the termination of each paraphrase is *not* accomplished, or accomplishable, however, the metaphor is and remains alive. Nehamas writes, "a living metaphor is inexhaustible. And since the full meaning of a living metaphor is always just beyond my grasp…no other words can do what a living metaphor does: a metaphor is irreplaceable…there is always more to find in it."[4]

Nehamas does not speak about conversation in relation to metaphors, but he does speak of friends. What is true of metaphors, he writes, "is also true of our friends...I am ready to change my desires, to let their lives and loves and dreams, their sorrows and disappointments affect, and sometimes become, my own, and so I am willing, even eager, to

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[1] Alexander Nehamas, *On Friendship* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 122.
[2] Nehamas, 123.
[3] Nehamas, 124.
[4] Nehamas, 124.

change myself as a result of coming to know them."[5] What Nehamas understands of the transformative power of friendship, I also take to be true of authentic conversations. We may, on the basis of one conversation, hear a call such as Rilke's—"You must change your life"—and adjust. This transformational power of conversation may be a result of a logically reasoned argument my interlocutor presents to me and which I accept on this basis alone. Indeed, this may form the foundation of much academic, philosophical interest in dialogue. Philosophers are no strangers to arguments. We rely upon the argumentative form to organize our thoughts, to shape them into something coherent, and to facilitate (easier) communication of those thoughts to others. Often we fashion these arguments in lived relations by way of arguing, both with each other and with ourselves. This interplay of explication, debate, and attempts to persuade are not insubstantial for philosophical pursuit. However, the emphasis on the finished production, over and above the activity of producing, can overshadow the necessarily relationally-based process through which that production took place, running the risk of relegating that relationality to the realm of the merely preliminary.

At the dawning of the Western philosophical tradition, Plato philosophized almost exclusively by way of thinking with others. His dialogues were not simply exercises in deducing true propositions in the wake of dismantling false or only partially true ones. Rather, he came to grips with the people with whom he was dialoguing in their psychological complexity, age, gender, erotic desires, fears, religious beliefs, capacity to be self-deceptive, and political commitments. For Plato, working towards discovering the most abstract truths was inherently entangled with the most particular complications of individual people. And this relation—between the abstract and the concrete—was hewn, toned, and tested through

[5] Nehamas, 132.

the exchange of language between the interlocutors, rendering not only an expression of their philosophical interest and commitment, but also a pronouncement upon their character and virtue. Dialogue was an ethical enterprise as much as a theoretical one. Though his predominance is inescapable, Plato is not the only philosopher across the centuries to have employed the dialogical form in his philosophical writing.

Heidegger's Conversations

On March 23, 1945, Martin Heidegger wrote a letter to his wife Elfride,

> [I]n the last few days I've gained such remarkable momentum that I'm almost completely oblivious to food & sleep. I suddenly found a form of saying I would never have dared use, if only because of the danger of outwardly imitating the Platonic dialogues. I'm working on a 'conversation'; in fact I have the 'inspiration' – I really have to call it this – for several at once. In this way, poetizing & thinking saying [*das dichtende und denkende Sagen*] have attained a primordial unity, & everything flows along easily & freely.[6]

Although they comprise some of his lesser known works, Heidegger also elucidated his philosophical ideas by constructing spoken interchanges between two or three characters. Between 1944 and 1954, Heidegger wrote five such pieces, calling them "Conversations." In this letter, Heidegger differentiates between Plato and himself by labeling Plato's works as "dialogues" and his writings as "conversations." Heidegger worries specifically about being compared to Plato in his writing, but claims to have found a "primordial unity" of poetizing and thinking in his conversations which drives his desire to write in what he describes as an effortless compositional experience. The form of writing, or "saying" as Heidegger describes

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[6] *Martin Heidegger: Letters to his Wife, 1915-1970,* selected, edited, and annotated by Gertrud Heidegger; translated by R.D.V. Glasgow (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010), 187.

it, itself seems to be philosophically, and not just rhetorically relevant. Drew Hyland comments, "The letters testify that Heidegger was *not* doing what other philosophers before him and after Plato had done…each of whom, in effect 'gave a try at dialogue' almost as a passing fancy…It was clearly a necessity of thought that led him to his turn to dialogue[7]…which he thought represented a very important opening along his path of thinking."[8] In this dissertation, I aim to unfold the philosophical, and specifically ethical, scaffolding of the impetus for Heidegger's writing his Conversations as an avenue to satisfy my contention that (perhaps) conversation can be its own living metaphor.

Just what was this "important opening" of which Hyland speaks? What did this literary and philosophical form of structuring his thinking make possible that other forms had not yet made readily available? In other words, on what philosophical basis did Heidegger find himself impelled to write these Conversations? It is important to notice that Heidegger explicitly rejected the term "dialogue," describing his rationale in his first Country Path Conversation, the "Triadic Conversation," he wrote in 1944. The Scientist at one point asks the Guide, "could authentic conversation and what you understand by that be any different from what one customarily conceives of as 'dialogue'? After all, it belongs to a conversation that it is a conversation about something and between speakers."[9] The Guide replies in the negative, "Yet a conversation first waits upon reaching that of which it speaks. And the speakers of a conversation can speak in its sense only if they are prepared for

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[7] Hyland here refers to Heidegger's works as 'Dialogues,' a characterization I will argue Heidegger explicitly rejects in favor of the term 'Conversation' on linguistic, philosophical, and philosophical-historical grounds and which I begin to explain just below.

[8] Drew Hyland, "Heidegger's (Dramatic?) Dialogues," In *Research in Phenomenology* Volume 45. Issue 3 (2015): 343.

[9] Martin Heidegger. *Country Path Conversations*, Translated by Bret Davis (Bloomington; Indiana University Press, 2010), 37. Published in German as Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, volume 77; Feldweg-Gespräche (1944/45),* 57.

something to befall them in the conversation which transforms their own essence."[10] 'Dialogue' is prematurely oriented by a concept or a problem, by being "about something," and an accompanying assumption that that concept or problem is already accessible or available to us. This risks brushing over the most essential part of what Heidegger means by "conversation," namely an activity in which one is oneself ontologically implicated in the course of discussion. This is a practice that is qualitatively different from merely dissecting a concept from which one considers oneself removed, or removable. To think of conversation in this way is an error that Heidegger understands as "technological" in nature.

What Heidegger here draws our attention to in philosophical terms, what is at stake in drawing his distinction between "conversation" and "dialogue," seems to resound with Nehamas' thinking of the inexhaustibility of living metaphor and with my own understanding of conversation as a living metaphor for itself. It would also harmonize with Cavell's understanding of philosophy itself; "for me there is no itinerary, say no approach, to philosophy; rather philosophy comes upon me, approaches me, like a conversion."[11] Whether it takes the form of a conversion or conversation with another who approaches me in speaking with me, perhaps it is no accident that philosophizing first emerged as a practice of exchanging language—understood in an expansive sense including gesture and comportment which I will read Heidegger as contributing—with an other. I wonder why this process in which we push our ideas into sentences aimed at being intelligible, perhaps with the goal of persuading another of the worth of those ideas, is so valuable for the venture of thinking.

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[10] CPC: 37, GA 77: 57.

[11] Stanley Cavell, "Naughty Orators: Negation of Voice in Gaslight" *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 64.

Ed Yong, summarizing recent findings in the field of psycholinguistics in an article for the *Atlantic*, explores the implications for the remarkable speed at which human beings converse with one another. Yong writes of the back-and-forth pattern of conversation, "On average, each turn lasts for around 2 seconds, and the typical gap between them is just 200 milliseconds—barely enough time to utter a syllable."[12] This length of time, according to Dr. Stephen Levinson, is the "minimum human response time to anything"[13] including making very basic yes/no choices. The proliferation of possibilities for how to respond to an interlocutor's assertion in a conversation necessitates, he argues, that we begin planning our response as our conversational partner is speaking. The reason there are not larger gaps of time before we respond, Yong writes is "because we build our responses *during* our partner's turn. We listen to their words while simultaneously crafting our own, so that when our opportunity comes, we seize it as quickly as it's physically possible to."[14]

This near simultaneity of listening and preparing to speak—pre-speaking as listening, as I might put it—is not so very far from Heidegger's understanding of conversation in the "Western Conversation." He there claims, "*Denn Gespräch ist nur Gehör. Doch laß uns hören*"[15] or as I would translate "Then, conversation is only listening. It is that which first lets us hear." It might be argued that planning one's response to our conversational partner while they are speaking is, at the least, impolite and, in its more serious instantiations, perhaps negates the legitimacy of listening to the other entirely. Perhaps we are called upon to pay close attention to our conversational partner's speaking precisely because conversation

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[12] Ed Yong, "The Incredible Thing We Do During Conversations," *The Atlantic*, January 4, 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/01/the-incredible-thing-we-do-during-conversations/422439/
[13] Yong, "The Incredible Thing We Do During Conversations."
[14] Yong, "The Incredible Thing We Do During Conversations."
[15] GA 75: 190.

signals the necessity of our response. Conversation compels (and thus perhaps also enables) us to truly listen in the first place.

What originally called my attention to conversation as a subject with potentially significant philosophical bearing was its unique capacity to endure a wide range of types of human interaction, ones which extend far beyond arguing and debating. It began with a curious interaction in the *Gorgias*. After Socrates has rehearsed another wave of arguments designed to persuade his interlocutor—Callicles—not only that the good life and the life of pleasure are different but that pursuing the good life is preferable, Callicles replies to Socrates, "I don't know Socrates—in a way you seem to me to be right, but the thing that happens to most people has happened to me: I'm not really persuaded by you."[16] Callicles sees and admits to following Socrates' arguments. Yet despite his seeing the rightness of Socrates' conclusion, he also is not persuaded. *Logos* on its own is not enough. And if that's all that philosophy offers, presenting varieties of arguments for simple assessment, it will also fail in the face of this utterly perplexing unhinging of that which is rational and that which is persuasive. This is a paradox for with which even the philosopher cannot contend—what to do when someone both agrees and disagrees with the truth in the same breath.

That this conflict can emerge so effortlessly in a dialogical text, but perhaps could only in a stilted manner or with difficulty be directly confronted in a monological text, is striking. Perhaps this is because the dialogue is able to enact that which it expressly says. This landscape of dialogue is ethically infused on at least two levels. A relation is enunciated between the theoretical content and the dramatic unfolding or the temporally organized

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[16] Plato, *Gorgias*, 513c.

performance of the dialogue. If only on a meta-textual level, claims about how philosophical topics ought to be discussed are embedded within the exchanges, whether intentionally or not. Further, dialogue takes place between two or more characters, setting forth a terrain of intersubjective relations as well. That I here turn to Heidegger's Conversations, and don't remain with Plato or include Augustine, Locke, Berkeley, or Hume as writers of dialogue, is due to my contention that Heidegger is also aware of this oddity of conversation. On my reading, Heidegger is also aware that moments such as Callicles' unhinging of persuasion from understanding are not merely philosophically tangential, but central to the thinking endeavor itself.

Where Plato's Socrates turned to myth in an attempt to reach Callicles, I read Heidegger as offering an alternative conversational avenue, one which is made possible on the basis of his philosophical project as a whole. I will argue that part of his approach rests on an emphasis on and attention to affect. This emphasis, pregnant with philosophical import, tends to the feelings and emotions of one's conversational partners just as much as it does to their reasoning and judgment. Affect, as the psychologist Silvan Tomkins defines it, captures a relation between events in the world. It captures emotions and the intricate biological patterns certain events trigger in us. Tomkins analyzes nine affects, including joy, desire, and sadness, as well as the particular facial and bodily responses these affects typically engender. I will not be employing "affect" in Tomkins' sense, which is closely tied to the biological and anatomical. Instead, I follow Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg in understanding affect more expansively as "the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension…Indeed, affect is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion

in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations."[17] Affect, as I will use the term, is that which exceeds, challenges, and shapes that which we know through what we may articulate as feelings, intuitions, and other trans-rational sensations. My argument is that Heidegger is particularly sensitive to the role of affect in episodes of conversational philosophizing. Insofar as this problematic illuminates how power dynamics are negotiated in conversation, I take this project and its topoi to have implications beyond Heidegger scholarship. Indeed, such questions and their attendant insights ultimately bear upon how we evaluate and work toward the inclusion of the voices of those most vulnerable to exploitation and silencing, especially given the current configuration of social and political forces.

While the anchoring of my interest in the topic of conversation spans the history of philosophy as well as the ethical, ontological, and social and political dimensions of philosophical inquiry, I also have written this dissertation with the aim to contribute directly to Heidegger scholarship. Such contributions are (at least) threefold. First, I aim to show that Heidegger's Conversations are unique in his corpus insofar as in each text we witness a double performance: one in which Heidegger develops certain key philosophical concepts through the conversation of his characters and another in which his characters perform those very philosophical concepts. That Heidegger is writing in a performative mode, I believe, at least contributed to the impetus he felt for the philosophical necessity of this form of composition. Second, in unpacking how the philosophical concepts pertaining particularly to what I will call "relationality" and "language" are both developed *and* performed, I also argue that Heidegger is gesturing toward how his thinking might be enacted in the realm of

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[17] Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," *The Affect Theory Reader*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 1.

human interaction, i.e. in what might be understood as an ethical domain. While Heidegger explicitly rejected that his thinking has an ethical application, I attempt to show that, perhaps even despite his best efforts, the effect of his thinking has concrete resonances in the realm of values and norms. That these effects may remain at the level of the meta-ethical, I well grant. But nevertheless they remain. And third, perhaps most ambitiously, I aim to unfold a close reading of these five Conversations as not merely a hodgepodge collection of some texts Heidegger wrote during a decade of his career on a variety of topics. Rather, I argue that these texts are necessarily and internally related to one another—given the performative philosophizing their shared literary form makes possible—and that together they unfold the possibilities of a Heideggerian ethics of conversation, the omission of even one of these five texts would leave incomplete.

Since this dissertation is written as a set of close readings of these select five texts (which, of course, draws upon further texts from Heidegger and others to elucidate), it does presuppose a familiarity, on the part of the reader, with these Conversations and the chapters are intended as companion pieces. Perhaps these chapters can (feebly) stand on their own without such acquaintance. But, without a doubt, reading these readings will be a qualitatively different experience for the reader who knows these Heideggerian texts.

I must also elucidate the intention behind the tripartite subtitle of this project. Philosophically, the emphasis on relationality and language takes it cue from Heidegger himself. In his final Conversation, he wrote that his entire career could be summated as working out an understanding of "the problem of language and of Being."[18] Relationality, on my reading, detects Heidegger's most distinctive contributions to the thinking of Being.

[18] Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," 6.

Language is the concurrent domain of my investigation into each of these texts. On my reading, this pairing of these philosophical obsessions, in turn, performs its ethical implications. Each chapter follows (nearly) the exact same organizational structure. After a brief introduction, I provide a philosophical summary of what I understand the salient and unique features of each Conversation to be accompanied by a literature review which engages relevant commentators. I then offer sections discussing how Heidegger develops and presents his thinking of relationality and language in each Conversation. I draw each chapter to a close with a section attempting to show how the performance of relationality and language in each Conversation yield a set of ethical considerations, or at least open a set of ethical questions. I then briefly conclude each chapter, situating my reading in each chapter in relation to the next installment of Heidegger's Conversational texts.

In short, this dissertation unfolds and explores my suspicion that the multidimensional philosophical accounts of relationality and language which Heidegger's characters develop are performed concretely by those characters as they discuss them. Whether Heidegger's intentions surrounding such performance are null (and this performance is thus inadvertent), carried out with full awareness, or somewhere in between, is something we cannot know. Nor, do I argue, are Heidegger's authorial intentions necessarily philosophically relevant. As they are engaging in a practice of speaking and listening to one another, perhaps even simultaneously, it seems to me unavoidable that the thinking of the interlocutors in Heidegger's Conversations breathe philosophical life into their practical, ethically-inflected dealings with one another and with their world. They do so in a way which models for us how Heidegger (or Heidegger's philosophy) thinks we ought to dwell as and among human beings.

Chapter Summaries

In lieu of summarizing each chapter in detail (since, in principle, the genre of the close reading makes this exceedingly difficult), I will instead briefly trace the narrative arch which my reading details. I trace a self-referential whole to which these texts uniquely and necessarily contribute, and I argue that Heidegger outlines a set of considerations pertaining to how to initiate, sustain, and determine the limits of an ethical practice of conversation.

In the first chapter, I offer a reading of the "Triadic Conversation" which, by way of articulating Heidegger's relational notion of *Gelassenheit*, culminates in what I call "collaborative poetizing." This shared mode of inhabiting language, I argue, bears testament to how Heidegger demonstrates that resistant interlocutors, such as the Scientist, might be engaged as multidimensional beings who exist as rational beings, but who are also affected by affect which merits and receives philosophical care Heidegger demonstrates through his Guide and the relational climate generated between all three characters as they converse.

If the first "Triadic Conversation" offers a performance of Heidegger's approach to resolving disagreement, the second "Tower Conversation" articulates how to sustain a climate of collaboration, once it has been established, even in the face of the strange(r). In the second chapter, I read this Conversation—as it develops notions of our proper comportment and sensitivity toward how we constitute our relation to nature, strangeness, and art—as thoroughly poetic and grounded in language (even, and especially, when it distresses us). I argue that the "Tower Conversation" ultimately unpacks and elaborates a mode of Heideggerian philosophical friendship.

The third chapter continues following Heidegger in articulating this climate of collaboration between philosophical interlocutors in the "Evening Conversation." My reading in this chapter revolves around a potentially surprising Heideggerian claim; an insight is not, and can never be established as, an insight unless and until that insight is shared with another in conversation. This necessary sharability of insight is presented as the healing antidote which recuperates relationality in the face of devastation and evil which foreclose it. Silence and the personal composition of poetry are both developed as resources in pursuit of this healing. Furthermore, I explore how the healing the interlocutors in this Conversation articulates and performs broader social and political implications latent within Heidegger's thinking.

The "Western Conversation" is currently untranslated in English. As such, I take time in the fourth chapter to first introduce and situate this text in its historical and scholarly scene. In many respects, this Conversation is a veritable mash-up of Heidegger's previous writings on the poet Hölderlin but with one marked difference, perhaps arising from its post-war context—the absence of any and all references to the Germans. I suggest that this Conversation, which shares its characters (or at least the names of its characters) with the preceding "Evening Conversation," could be read as an alternative version of the third Country Path Conversation. This Conversation instead turns to a practice of interpreting Hölderlin's poetizing, through a sustained meditation on a relationality attenuated by love. Here love is understood as a mode of accessing and sharing a shared history, culture, and language. Hölderlin thus provides an avenue by which Heidegger circumvents the political sphere in favor of undertaking the task to learn to dwell beautifully in the oscillation of poetizing language.

In the final chapter on the Heideggerian Conversation entitled[19] "Dialogue on Language," I argue that Heidegger performs, perhaps inadvertently, the limits of conversation, demonstrating the danger inherent in too readily relying on language's capacity to simulate translation. In this Conversation, which unfolds between an unabashedly personified Heidegger and a Japanese Interlocutor, I trace Heidegger's most mature thinking of relationality (in the context of the corpus of his Conversational texts) as what he calls the two-fold of Being and beings. That this two-fold emerges as mediated through language gives rise to these interlocutors' worry that their different languages (namely German and Japanese) may necessarily entail that Being is figured differently for each interlocutor. In their quest to determine whether there are as many "houses of Being" as there are distinct human languages, I argue that Heidegger's (mis)appropriation of various Japanese cultural themes performs a significant danger of conversation, namely cursorily surmising agreement when significant difference remains unaccounted for, which permeates all conversation, not merely cross-cultural exchange. This (mis)appropriation I nevertheless argue ultimately provides the strongest case for Heidegger's conversational ethics yet.

Over the course of these chapters, I hope to show that these five Heideggerian texts, in a way which (perhaps) sets them apart from other dialogues written by figures in the Western philosophical canon, perform their conversations as living metaphors. They do this in ways which carry implications for the field of Heidegger Studies, but which also can contribute to our consideration of how we ought to undertake conversations with others. Perhaps those contributions even extend to how we ought to carry out, as Plato put it, the

[19] A translation with which I will take issue.

"soundless dialogue of me and myself" in our own practices of thinking. If we take Heidegger to be, in part, reformulating this Platonic insight in writing that "We—human beings—are a conversation," then nothing less is at stake in learning how to properly converse than ultimately knowing who we ourselves are and, therefore, the bounds (or boundlessness) what we might ever hope to become.

Affecting Persuasion in Heidegger's "Triadic Conversation"

> It's not easy for the participants to define jointly what they're undertaking to discuss…if they're disputing some point and one maintains that the other isn't right or isn't clear, they get irritated, each thinking the other is speaking out of spite.
> –Socrates to Gorgias

> I don't know, Socrates—in a way you seem to me to be right, but…I'm not really persuaded by you.
> —Callicles to Socrates

Heidegger's Conversations are an anomaly in his philosophical corpus. He wrote treatises, essays, and lectures by the dozens. However, his texts which stage dramatic interactions between characters are relatively unknown. There are only five spanning the decade between 1944 and 1954. Since Plato, philosophers have generally shied away from composing dialogues, perhaps fearing comparison between their work and Plato's—a concern which Heidegger himself expressed[20]—or perhaps because other literary forms lent themselves to expressing their philosophical ideas more fluently. Yet Heidegger found himself impelled to try his hand at this form of writing, telling his wife in a letter than he was inspired to write in this form. Why?

Heidegger's first attempt is entitled in translation "Αγχιβασίη: A Triadic Conversation on a Country Path between a Scientist, a Scholar, and a Guide,"[21] written between 1944 and 1945. The genre of the Heideggerian Conversation shares a literary form with the Platonic Dialogue. Yet the mode of exchanging and testing of ideas is more far

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[20] *Martin Heidegger: Letters to his Wife, 1915-1970,* selected, edited, and annotated by Gertrud Heidegger; translated by R.D.V. Glasgow (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010), page 187.
[21] Martin Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, Translated Bret Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010). Published in German as Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, volume 77; Feldweg-Gespräche (1944/45).*

reaching than the strict Socratic *elenchus* in which beliefs and arguments are pushed to their limits in the quest for truth.[22] The Heideggerian Conversation is deeply invested in the human beings who are conversing. Their thoughts are deeply engaged, but the feelings and affects which arise in tandem with their thinking are as seriously treated as the philosophical content, perhaps most especially in the "Triadic Conversation."

The very human breakdowns[23] which are brought to the fore are both narratively and philosophically indispensable to their subsequent breakthroughs as the three characters—the Guide, the Scientist, and the Scholar—walk down the country path at night. I will argue these three interlocutors' collaboration, as they learn how to speak, think, and poetize together, delineates a practice of conversational ethics which underlies Heidegger's relationally infused and language-oriented thinking of Being. I will go on to argue that this "collaborate poetizing," as I will call it, indicates a dimension of Heidegger's substantial consideration of affect which has been largely overlooked.

In sketching out the mutual human needfulness and bearing of thinking and affect illuminated in the "Triadic Conversation," I first gather the scene and important themes undergirding this text, introducing the characters, their historical, social, and political context, and the geographical and philosophical route of their conversation. I then elaborate, in depth, on some key philosophical themes of the conversation, including releasement or *Gelassenheit*, which I show are enacted by the conversational partners in the same moment that they are thought. As they come into an increasingly proper, releasing relation toward

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[22] This is not to say that Plato only cared about pursuing truth in a deductive way in his work. I would argue decisively against such a reductive reading. The point here is that the *elenchus* pervades Plato's corpus in such a way that there is no avoiding this method in grappling with his thinking.

[23] For an insightful and provocative biographical and philosophical account of the role of the "breakdown" in Heidegger's work and personal life around this time, c.f. Andrew Mitchell's article "Heidegger's Breakdown: Health and Healing Under the Care of Dr. V.E. von Gebsattel" *Research and Phenomenology* Volume 46, Issue 1: 70-97.

one another, the modes of language in which they can relay their ideas relax and broaden to include the poetic. Ultimately, I argue their "collaborative poetizing" diagnoses a proper, ethical comportment they hold out toward and receive from another.

The Setting: From Cognition to Poetizing to Ethics

The three characters of the "Triadic Conversation" are *der Forscher, der Gelehrte,* and *der Weise*,[24] or the Scientist, the Scholar, and the Guide. The Conversation opens with the Scholar remarking upon the triad's prior meeting;

> Scholar: This past autumn we met for the first time on this country path. That meeting was a splendid coincidence, for I owe a precious inspiration to it: an old Greek word occurred to me, which since then seemed to me to be a very appropriate name for what we are seeking.[25]

In these first lines of the conversation, we already are met with many of the themes which permeate their subsequent discussion: meetings, the country path itself, coincidence, what is later revealed as a fragment from Heraclitus, words and naming, appropriation, and seeking as a relation toward something which remains yet unidentified.[26] However, these themes and this remark weaving them together do not simply appear *ex nihilo*. The Scholar is reminding the Scientist and the Guide of their previous meeting and pointing towards the relational and

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[24] As I discuss below, in the selection of the "Triadic Conversation" which Heidegger published in 1959 in the collection entitled *Gelassenheit*, Heidegger renamed *der Weise* to be *der Lehrer*, the Teacher, a modification which brings this first Country Path Conversation more into thematic uniformity with the second and third Country Path Conversations which both explicitly discuss or involve the teaching or the teacher significantly.

[25] Country Path Conversations (hereafter CPC): 1, GA 77: 3.

[26] This opening indication of important themes is not limited to the "Triadic Conversation." All these themes are reprised and developed further in the second and third Country Path Conversations. I will argue that these three conversations were not simply written in rapid temporal succession, but that they in fact constitute a trilogy of texts which are also in conversation with one another, constituting a philosophically significant narrative arc. See chapters 2 and 3, over the course of which I offer evidence for this reading.

historical continuity they share and have successfully taken up in the past.[27] Clearly these three share common interests and have undertaken a discussion altogether, even if their preceding conversation was not definitively successful, as they still "are seeking." Remembering and sustaining supportive relations for human thinking across time are explicit topics late in the exchange, but they are already indicated, at the outset, to be concrete conditions of the discussion itself.

The Scientist introduces himself in replying to and attacking the Scholar. The Scientist thinks that "coincidence" can only be a negative phenomenon. He describes what the Scholar calls coincidence as a mere "gap that still remains in our chain of explanations,"[28] which could be remedied if we only understood causality scientifically. The Scientist describes their prior meeting as a "distraction"[29] for each from "his daily work"[30] which, at least for the Scholar and Scientist are professional and disciplinary in nature. We can presume sufficient formal commonality in their daily work which would offer a firm basis for their prior conversation that aimed to develop a definition of "cognition"[31] which is reprised as the explicit project of the "Triadic Conversation."

Despite this stated conversational goal, the Guide's spoken foray into the conversation does not address, acknowledge, or even remotely engage this theme. He

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[27] This situation for their meeting, as already a re-meeting, distinguishes it from many other dialogues written in the western philosophical tradition, primarily those written by Plato. Many of those dialogues are primarily concerned with solving a problem or producing a definition. In some cases, the interlocutors come to a consensus on the broad strokes of a theoretical framework meant to conclude the dialogue. Usually, however, these dialogues begin (and then abruptly end) in a confrontational, aggressive disagreement which one can hardly imagine would lead to a willing, subsequent exchange in the future. Heidegger is already situating his "Triadic Conversation" in a decidedly different mode. Heidegger's Conversation grapples with strong disagreement, but of the type which allows for a sustained, relational continuity among the conversational partners who are working through those disagreements by way of a commitment to pursuing understanding coupled with a sensitivity to how that understanding is pursued, in this case the interlocutors themselves and their affect.

[28] CPC: 1, GA 77: 3.

[29] CPC: 1, GA 77: 3.

[30] CPC: 1, GA 77: 3.

[31] CPC: 1, GA 77: 3.

remarks instead that "the coolness of the past autumn is still present to me."[32] He is apparently reminiscing upon the environmental context of their prior meeting. This leads the Scientist to accuse the Guide of retaining "little"[33]from their prior conversation and of not having paid much attention to it, instead being more interested in a "feeling for nature."[34] The Scholar remembers the Guide as seemingly only interested in "walking"[35] rather than contributing to their conversation. The Guide does not meet either of these charges, continuing to offer poetic descriptions of summer and fall as he encountered them on the country path walk, from which he claims he was not "distracted enough"[36] to converse with them the year prior. Was the Guide merely silently accompanying the Scientist and Scholar the year before, savoring the natural environment as the others delved into tedious theoretical discussion? We are not told. But what we do know is that at the very least, the three have come together again to attempt their task again.

The interlocutors rely heavily on their preferred modes of thinking and styles of argumentation. The Scientist works in theoretical physics and the technological, practical applications derived from scientific theory.[37] The Scholar is well-versed in a historical approach to philosophy and is able to recite and apply concepts elucidated by Leibniz,[38] Kant,[39] and Plato.[40] The Guide, on the other hand, gives no such indications as to his profession, aside from a brief mention at the beginning by the Scholar that the Guide spends

[32] CPC: 2, GA 77: 4.
[33] CPC: 2, GA 77: 4.
[34] CPC: 2, GA 77: 4.
[35] CPC: 2, GA 77: 4.
[36] CPC: 2, GA 77: 4.
[37] CPC: 3, GA 77: 5.
[38] CPC: 34 GA 77: 52-3.
[39] CPC: 62-3, GA 77: 97-8.
[40] CPC: 58, GA 77: 91.

his days engaged in philosophical work.[41] We have no indications, however, that he works in a classroom or has had students.[42]

The poetic outbursts from the Guide continue to highlight the disjoint between the three interlocutors. The radical differences between their approaches to the endeavor of thinking emerge and are reflected in their varied approaches to language. The Scientist is invested in methodological, inductive, and deductive sorts of arguments which relate to logical principles. The way he speaks follows this pattern of tracing premises and accepting or rejecting conclusions only on the basis of their merits. The Scholar is interested in a historiological approach, which brings to bear a genealogical approach to language. He works to relate ideas which surface during the conversation to the thinking of major figures in the western philosophical tradition and freely associates the ideas of others with his own. The Guide, however, waxes poetic in way which is initially opaque, challenging, and even offensive to his conversational partners. These are the characters such as Heidegger sees fit to describe them.

I turn now to unfolding and elaborating key aspects of the philosophical terrain of the "Triadic Conversation" with the aim of showing how these features contribute to the fostering of an affective atmosphere which makes "collaborative poetizing" possible. The interlocutors begin in aiming to define human cognition. This quickly becomes a critique of the relation between science, in this case physics, and technology. The Scientist argues technology is merely an iteration or application of theoretical physics. The Guide suggests instead that theoretical science results from a technological mode of thinking in which humans conceptualize the world as merely objective and objectifiable. He argues that

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[41] CPC: 2, GA 77: 4.

[42] Although, as I mentioned above, when Heidegger revised the last quarter of the "Triadic Conversation" for publication nearly fifteen years later, he changed the name of the Guide to the Teacher.

representational thinking which conceptualizes objects solely based on their use-value is not the only—or even the most— "useful" mode of thinking. This turns to a critique of notions of nearness and farness at work in representational thinking insofar as they are grounded in an investment in objective space. Next, the debate revolves around distinguishing two kinds of relations, the identical which "enables what are similar or identical to be—precisely as such—by themselves as separate, and so to be without belonging together"[43] whereas the self-same is "belonging-togetherness"[44] which can only take place based on difference.

The interlocutors then set down the path of defining thinking by setting it in contradistinction to willing. This parsing comes to a head when the Guide startles his interlocutors again. He interjects that the only thing he wants or wills to learn in their conversation is not the definition of cognition, but rather, paradoxically, "non-willing."[45] Discussing the will as that which scaffolds our aims and objects leads to a grappling with *Gelassenheit* and a description of the human as a horizonal being. Our horizonality is always situated in relation to the ineludible horizon. What the human being can understand is always contingent and relational, never absolute as theoretical science purports to promise. Because the thinking, willing, perceiving horizon of the human delimits that which lies on either side of it and because the horizon's very existence as relational is predicated upon a difference anchored by a relation to the human being, the Scientist says of the horizon that if it is "itself supposed to be the selfsame with itself, then it must itself be, as it were, an other."[46] The very being of the human being—as inextricably tied to the beyond of its horizon of understanding—is already other to itself. It calls for a comportment toward its own otherness to constitute itself.

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[43] CPC: 25, GA 77: 39.
[44] CPC: 25, GA 77: 39.
[45] CPC: 33, GA 77: 51.
[46] CPC: 62. GA 77: 97.

This orientation of the otherness inherent to the particularly human way of being leads to a reprise of the discussion of nearness and farness. Now the interlocutors grasp that farness (but not a placeless, absolute objectivity) is required to catch sight of the nearness of our essence as human beings. This nearness not only applies to the human being, but to the essence of any being which the human seeks to understand. In the project of learning to think essences, we must relate to that essence with the help of a third component. This third behaves as a rubric of intelligibility which may in some sense belong together with that essence, but is nevertheless essentially other to it.[47] This requires *Gelassenheit* or releasement which is a "letting be" of things such that one is able to participate in the task the Guide delineates; "[w]hat I really will in our meditation on thinking is non-willing."[48] This leads to a discussion of releasement in terms of an open-region[49] of thinking in which "the essence of thinking is not determined from thinking"[50] alone, but rather is depicted as a motion of "restless to and fro between yes and no."[51] It is this restless movement[52] within which the human must learn to wait while also acknowledging the impossibility of the objectivity of representational thinking which the Scientist and Scholar could not even begin to question at the beginning of the "Triadic Conversation." This narrative, performative evolution of the

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[47] It is worth explicitly noting that this triadic relational structure seems to be duplicated in the triadic assembly of the interlocutors themselves.

[48] CPC: 33, GA 77: 51.

[49] It is the coupling of *Gelassenheit* and the explication of the open-region of thinking which Bret Davis takes to comprise the two main themes of the "Triadic Conversation" (CPC Translator's Preface, xii-xiii). There is already a body of literature mining *Gelassenheit* particularly for its philosophical relevance for the development of Heidegger's thinking, notably Bret Davis' excellent book *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to 'Gelassenheit'* (Northwestern University Press, 2007), to whom I will largely defer in this matter of scholarly import. While I agree that these are major topics developed in the conversation, especially when the conversation is treated exclusively as a container for Heidegger's philosophical ideas, I will go on to argue that the relations which must be constituted between the interlocutors, the human beings discussing those ideas in a temporal, historical, language-based, and political context, add an additional dimension to the thinking we witness unfolding in all of Heidegger's Conversations. In other words, I argue that treating the Conversations as dialogical modes of presenting material which might also come out in a monological treatise or essay misses something essential about the implications and consequences of Heidegger's conversational texts.

[50] CPC: 80, GA 77: 123.

[51] CPC: 80, GA 77: 123.

[52] This swinging, dynamic motion is reprised and expanded in detail in the third Country Path Conversation and the fourth "Western Conversation," c.f. chapters three and four.

interlocutors' understanding follows upon and reinforces the philosophical theorizing of this very same movement.

The final lines of the "Triadic Conversation" are also a poetic meditation on nature. They at once resemble and are as different as possible from the Guide's poetic descriptions at the conversation's outset. This poetizing brings into focus the night and its relation to the light of the stars. It is not the Guide alone who initiates and sustains this poetizing. All three interlocutors' contributions flow together, harmonizing and blending with the others' tone and timbre. In this spontaneous, collaborative performance, their formerly distinct voices become nearly indistinguishable, save by the titles Heidegger indicates before each interlocutor's lines. Drew Hyland remarks upon the "inspired self-referential closing"[53] of this conclusion. In addition to elegantly and compactly revisiting many of the conversational themes, these lines also show that the interlocutors themselves have been transformed in their encounter with these themes.

I argue that this is also a unique instance in Heidegger's thinking of poetry emerging in a collaborative, relational context. This collaborative poem, as I would like to call it, provides a standpoint from which to consider the role of otherness in Heidegger's work at this time. This becomes most apparent by noting and tracing the way styles and modes of language unfold between interlocutors in the pages leading up to it. This transformation has not been strictly individual, or even something which coincidentally occurred for each in tandem with the others. They have been transformed by entering into a deeply relational, conversational engagement with one another. Their collaborative transformation is not limited to their grasp of the philosophical or ontologically-based content of the conversation. They also find

[53] Drew Hyland, "Heidegger's (Dramatic?) Dialogues." *Research in Phenomenology* Volume 45. Issue 3: 354.

themselves transformed in their capacity to relate to each other—a register I argue is certainly ethical.

Though I am here developing a reading which distinguishes ethical implications of Heidegger's Conversations, in his "Letter on Humanism," written in 1946 (several years after the "Triadic Conversation"), Heidegger explicitly eschews ethics, claiming that ethics has no central philosophical concern for him. He claims an ethical focus would detract from a proper, ontological focus thinking of Being and its relation to beings, including human beings. He does offer one concession, however. He writes, "[i]f the name 'ethics,' in keeping with the basic meaning of the word ἦθος, should now say that ethics ponders the abode of the human being, then that thinking which thinks the truth of being as the primordial element of the human being…is in itself originary ethics. However, this thinking is not ethics in the first instance because it is ontology."[54] The abode of the human being, as we find it defined by one of the very first philosophers of the Western tradition, is delimited by both our capacity to speak and with politics. Embedded within both famous Aristotelian definitions of the human being is the presence of others. One cannot be a speaker of language only to or with oneself, nor can the political space emerge in isolation. Neither could it be that Heidegger's understanding of the abode of the human being would omit other human beings. It is this aspect of our abode which it seems Heidegger is intent upon directly confronting, elaborating, and dramatizing in his Conversations.

This thinking of ethics is first engaged, I argue, in how Heidegger names his characters. The interlocutors are never referred to by personal names, nor is almost any other biographical information divulged. This authorial decision is not limited to the "Triadic

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[54] Martin Heidegger, "Letter On 'Humanism'," *Pathmarks*, edited by Willian McNeill. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 271.

Conversation," but extends through all of Heidegger's five Conversations. This is a striking difference between Heidegger's Conversations and the Platonic Dialogues. Hyland comments that the personal specificity of interlocutors "forms part of the dramatic existential concreteness of Plato's dialogues…Each character is a specific individual with a specific personality, whose personality usually plays a significant part in the events of the dialogue."[55] Of course this is not true for all Platonic Dialogues,[56] but the typical grounding of Plato's characters in politics, histories, and social milieus stands in stark contrast to Heidegger's Conversations.

The lack of personal names and socio-historical identities, however, does not thereby foreclose the animacy of Heidegger's characters. All three bring distinct concerns and ways of conveying their ideas to bear on their conversation. The Scientist and the Guide, for example, participate in highly affectively-charged exchanges. Even though the Scientist seems to be the most comfortable with direct, aggressive confrontation, none of the characters are shy about sharing what they think and feel with the others. Hyland notes "a certain tension and almost animosity that occasionally arises early on between the guide and the scientist."[57] Although this is one of the most obvious and powerful examples of affective exchange between Heidegger's conversational partners, it is far from *the* singular instance.

For Hyland, the Heideggerian characters are "largely without developed personalities."[58] He goes on to argue "they represent, and I think Heidegger's point is that he wants them *only* to represent, certain *types*, certain standpoints, certain disciplines: scientist,

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[55] Hyland, 345.
[56] Hyland specifically points to the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Law*s as notable exceptions.
[57] Hyland, 345-6.
[58] Hyland, 345.

scholar, guide."[59] Hyland is not the only commentator to understand Heidegger's naming of his characters in this way. Francisco Gonzalez offers a similar explanation, claiming that "while there are different interlocutors in these dialogues, they are never different individuals with names, but only general types."[60] Hyland goes on to argue that because the characters are types—and only types—Heidegger is better able to demonstrate the philosophical idea of releasement at work for the characters themselves. He writes, "what Heidegger is moving toward in the conversation, that 'letting go' that is releasement to the open region, is not a matter of a certain personal quality. Indeed personal qualities are precisely what must be *left behind* if we are to hope to attain to releasement."[61] Hyland interprets the omitting of such personal qualities from the start to buttress this performance of *Gelassenheit* in the "Triadic Conversation."

There are, to be sure, characteristics of each interlocutor's professional, disciplinary standpoints which are loosened and ultimately abandoned over the course of the "Triadic Conversation." But the characters are never really "personal" to begin with, except in the vaguest sense. I instead would read this lack of detailed, described personality to be accomplishing its own philosophical and ethical work. While each of the characters becomes less and less beholden to their 'type,'—ultimately their voices blend into what I will call "collaborative poetry"[62]—I do not take their strong identification with those types at the outset to indicate that we are not to pay careful attention to the development of their modes

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[59] Hyland, 346.
[60] Francisco J. Gonzalez, *Plato and Heidegger: A Question of Dialogue,* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 277.
[61] Hyland, 346.
[62] Hyland also offers a striking analysis of the ending of the "Triadic Conversation," writing "[a]s the conversation continues, they even forget who it was who introduced this or that point…they gradually start filling in and completing each other's sentences" (346).

of relating to one another, which I do not see as qualitatively different from what might be detected under the rubric of personality. Just because certain data—like the family ties, political affiliations, and historical significance often given by Plato about his characters—is lacking does not, on my reading, reduce Heidegger's characters to mere instances of types.

Where Hyland notes the tension and animosity between the Scientist and the Guide, I would show an even richer landscape of fear, anxiety, loss as well as patience, concern, and genuine sensitivity to alterity which I find indispensable for understanding the conversation's philosophical accomplishment. The lack of pre-given personalities hyper-exposes the interlocutors' most intimate affects as each struggles to learn to speak with the others. Heidegger designs the interactions between his characters such that they take place in a situation in which both they and we (as readers) have limited acquaintance. But is this not the most ordinary sort of ethical situation in which we find ourselves on an everyday basis? Comporting ourselves properly towards others is much easier when we already know those others well, when they are family members or friends, for instance. Practicing an ethics toward those about whom we know very, little save what we can gather in real time as we interact with them, is much more challenging. Heidegger's characters meet each other and we meet them—as little more than strangers who find themselves thrown together for a time.

I argue this lack of "personal" details about Heidegger's characters to leave us more beholden to the ethical claims they are making on each other and, in turn, on us as readers. Perhaps we are more vulnerable to these calls in this situation than if we felt like we already had familiarity and could predict or understand what their needs and motivations of those implicated in the interaction might be. Does not one of the most pernicious ethical wrongs

we can commit revolve around presuming to already know and understand the other? Avital Ronell argues that as soon as we presume to know the other, we are ready to kill them, as either philosophical or political subjects.[63] Could Heidegger, in refusing to give us the personal markers we are accustomed to use in orienting our dealings with others, be demarcating a performative clearing, as he theorizes the "clearing of the open-region of thinking," for a more ethical relation to emerge, in which we must pay attention to the other as other,[64] not simply as a personality?

My reading will venture further than Hyland or Gonzalez in arguing that the lack of personal names of Heidegger's characters play a positive, critical, and ethically-laden role in the movement towards learning and practicing *Gelassenheit*. I would ask, along with Hyland, "do we, in those extraordinary experiences in which we move toward something like releasement to the open region, 'leave behind' our selves, literally our person-alities?...Or do we rather leave behind a certain – perhaps deceptive – *mode* of self-hood…in favor of a more *authentic* mode of self-hood, a selfhood that is *relational*?"[65] This movement of each character leaving behind their specific type is undoubtedly crucial to the "Triadic Conversation" and I will argue that this movement toward relationality culminates in their triadic, collaborative poetizing. But I read this practice of learning to "leave behind our selves" as narratively originating for Heidegger in the ways he chooses, as author, to structure the literary form of his Conversations, specifically in naming his characters, prior to the discursive development of any philosophical content.

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[63] *The Examined Life*. Astra Taylor. Avital Ronell. Zeitgeist Films, 2008. Film.
[64] This comportment is the mode of ethical inflection Krzysztof Ziarek will argue is unfolding in Heidegger's thinking, to which I will refer below. For example, Ziarek writes "at stake is not so much thinking otherness as letting otherness be" (*Inflected Language*, 61).
[65] Hyland, 347.

In addition to the features of the characters I've just discussed, the setting—both the time and place—which Heidegger selects for the "Triadic Conversation" is also philosophically significant. The Conversation takes place on a country path, the same country path on which the three interlocutors conversed the year before, most likely in the Black Forest.[66] Nature is not restricted to the set dressing of the conversation, but it also may fulfill a significant philosophical function. Hyland wonders, "is there something about the country path, something about being *away* from the city, that alone makes possible the kind of insights, the kind of transformation, toward releasement to the open region, which the country path conversation opens up? Is there something about the city, the polis, about the political in this broad sense, which is *inimical* to such opening?"[67] What might nature offer for Heidegger which the political—ever-present and symbolized in the city looming on the horizon of this nature walk—would threaten?

It may be useful to think about Heidegger's setting in reference to typical Platonic Dialogue settings. With the significant exception of the two dialogues about *eros*,[68] Plato's dialogues take place in public spaces and engage lively public debates, grounding them even more thoroughly in politically textured economies of philosophizing. Platonic Dialogues also

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[66] Given the time and date stamp of the "Triadic Conversation"—Messkirch, 7 April 1945—it is possible that this country path was the same pathway which Heidegger himself reflects upon walking, both in his childhood and as an adult, in *Der Feldweg*, written between 1947 and 1948, just after the composition of the Country Path Conversations, and translated as "The Pathway" (Martin Heidegger, "The Pathway" trans. Thomas F. O'Meara, O.P in *Heidegger: The Man and The Thinker* ed. Thomas Sheehan, Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1981, 69-72). In this text, Heidegger describes walking along a path that leads out away from Messkirch, towards the forest Ehnried and which finally curves back toward town. The pathway takes its sojourners through fields and nature, but also carries Heidegger through his own memories of his father, mother, and the games he would play in his childhood. This short piece also mentions Eckhart, the simple, technology, Being, and the playful relation of the natural seasons to one another—all themes which figure significantly in the Country Path Conversations.

[67] Hyland, 347.

[68] Although I will not have time to develop an analysis here of why Plato sets his dialogues discussing desire in private or natural settings, just as Heidegger sets his conversations about learning to will non-willing similarly, I find this dramatic indication of a possible mode of relation between *eros* in Plato and *Gelassenheit* in Heidegger provocative, compelling, and worthy of further consideration; c.f. chapter four for my reading of how I argue the "Western Conversation" recovers a Platonic conception of *eros* which Heidegger employs in developing his own articulation of relationality as capable of figuring itself as a kind of released love.

generally take place when someone with a question interrupts Socrates as he is already on his way walking somewhere, bringing the speakers to a halt. We find the opposite in Heidegger's "Triadic Conversation." Hyland notes that the characters in the "Triadic Conversation" "repeatedly…allude to the country path as what *enables* the movement not only of their bodies on the path but of the path of their thought toward releasement."[69] Their movement initially out into nature, away from and later back toward (but never all the way back to) the city, is hardly an accidental or a random authorial decision on Heidegger's part.

Indeed, the point on their path at which they are furthest away from human habitation on the path just before it curves back toward home, at the apogee of their travels,[70] is the moment in which their collective insight into *Gelassenheit* solidifies.[71] Their conversation also ends upon their return to the town.[72] Hyland takes this to indicate "the very possibility of this released thinking, this 'other beginning,' *must* take place by leaving behind the city and the metaphysical thinking that defines it."[73] Indeed, the furthest distance from the city at this moment cannot be ignored. Additionally, I read the philosophical content developed within the conversation on the theoretical level is also being enacted and performed within the conversation itself. *Gelasseneheit* is doubled in the "Triadic Conversation;" releasement is both abstractly thought *and* concretely performed. Near the beginning, the interlocutors discuss the possibility of understanding nearness and farness—indeed distance itself—without relying upon an objective, representational model of space.

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[69] Hyland, 348.
[70] It seems that the three begin their conversation on the path just outside the city, traveling away from it and then circling back towards home once they have grasped this critical notion. This indicates that the city and the symbolic presence of the *polis* serves as the omnipresent backdrop to their conversation, regardless of the dormancy of this reference in the first Country Path Conversation. As I will argue, the background symbol of the political in this first installation of the Country Path Conversations emerges in the foreground of the third Conversation of this trilogy.
[71] CPC: 70, GA 77: 108.
[72] CPC: 99, GA 77: 151.
[73] Hyland, 349.

The problem, as the Guide presents it, is that they cannot distance themselves from their own thinking activity to then objectify that thinking. Therefore, they cannot give something like the scientific definition of cognition for which the Scientist is searching on both phenomenological and logical grounds.[74] This leads the Guide to propose that perhaps "nearness neared and farness furthered"[75] without needing to be understood under an objective, spatial rubric. The Guide further suggests, "perhaps even space and everything spatial for their part first find a reception and a shelter in the nearing nearness and in the furthering farness."[76] Neither the Scientist nor the Scholar are able to grasp this notion, calling it "enigmatic."[77] This is "beautiful"[78] for the Scholar, but the Scientist finds it "oppressive."[79] It is at this moment they notice they had halted inadvertently on their path, struggling to comprehend that enigma in a scientific mode. Once they start walking[80] again, they "let the enigma of nearness and farness rest and leave it on its own,"[81] eventually returning to it in a less representational way later.

Movement along the country path, specifically the human activity of walking, is indispensable for the thinking activity Heidegger is depicting in narrative form. In returning to the topic of the enigma, the Scientist revives it saying "Thinking would then be a coming-into-nearness to the far."[82] Nearness and farness are inseparable from one another. Nearness

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[74] CPC: 18, GA 77: 28.
[75] CPC: 19, GA 77: 30.
[76] CPC: 19, GA 77: 30.
[77] CPC: 19, GA 77: 30.
[78] CPC: 19, GA 77: 31.
[79] CPC: 19, GA 77: 31.
[80] The importance of motion as it is supportive of thinking and poetizing, of swinging and swaying over and above walking, begins to come into focus in the third Country Path Conversation, but is most fully articulated in the "Western Conversation" as I will discuss at length in chapter four.
[81] CPC: 20, GA 77: 32.
[82] CPC: 75, GA 77: 116.

is a relation to farness and farness is that which intrudes upon nearness.[83] To understand why *Gelassenheit* appears on the country path furthest from human habitation, we must read in a Heideggerian way. I would wonder that perhaps even when they are furthest from the city, the political, as such, is nevertheless necessarily near. Adhering to the implications of this path of thinking, it is precisely in being at the greatest distance from the city that they are also "coming-into-nearness" with it. Though the three interlocutors are on a country path, they are not in an environment free from the mark of human beings. There is no possibility of objectifying our thinking activity since we cannot help but think about our own thinking save by subjectively engaging that which we aim to objectify, betraying our status as condemned to be relational, as it might be put. There is a path in the natural setting of the forest, clearing forth a way for the human to pass through, the very existence of which indicates that there have been humans who have done exactly that before. The path elaborates itself as historical and political, in at least this one sense. The country path is still demarcating the human relation to and within nature, carved out by the very organization of the human being by the other human beings the precede, accompany, and descend from the individual. The human being is a political being. There is no hard and fast distinction between the polis and the forest—the political and the natural—at least not one we can think.[84]

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[83] This theme of the mutual necessity of nearness and farness, which I have only cursorily sketched here, will be returned to and further expounded in much more depth in my second chapter concerning the "Tower Conversation." Another helpful resource for understanding Heidegger's thinking of farness and nearness is the "Point of Reference" in Heidegger's 1949 Bremen Lectures wherein we find a more seasoned articulation of the insight which is still in formulation here in 1944-5.

[84] At the very end of the manuscript of the "Triadic Conversation," after the conversation itself has ended we find a postscript. Heidegger writes,

> An essential thought, which was touched on during this conversation, has not yet been further considered. It concerns the question of in what way nature, in allowing the objectification of its domain, defends itself against technology by bringing about the annihilation of the human-essence. This annihilation in no way means the elimination of the human, but rather the completion of his will-essence. (CPC: 103, GA 77: 157)

Granted, the city, which here appears as set dressing, and the political dimension of life it symbolizes in the "Triadic Conversation" are not explicitly discussed except as a geographical and temporal limiting marker of their philosophical discussion. However, these themes are rehearsed in the "Evening Conversation" which concludes the trilogy of the Country Path Conversations. The subtle but insistent appearance of the figure of the city here in the "Triadic Conversation" should act as an indication that we out to prepare ourselves to confront these questions.

A final clue in which we might encounter the shadow of the political in this Conversation is a claim which resounds both in Heidegger's work on the poet Hölderlin,[85]-- which will be featured in the "Western Conversation" –also echoes across the "Triadic Conversation." Near their outset, the Guide tells his conversational partners, "[p]erhaps the human in general is not at home in his house."[86] The Scholar replies, "[t]hat would mean that the human does not know his own habitat, so that he would be missing from his own premises."[87] The Scientist then remarks, "[f]aced with the unhomely essence of the human,

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Nature, in allowing itself to be represented, objectified, and harnessed by the technological efforts of the human will, simultaneously defends itself against these very attempts. Clearly, nature does not eliminate the presence of the human, nor the technological relation he constitutes with nature. What nature does seem to accomplish, however, in allowing the willing, dominating project of the human to complete itself in the objectification of nature, is the erasure of the human being as what we might call trans-technological, i.e. as being capable of bearing relations to nature which are not merely technological in structure. Early in the "Triadic Conversation" just such a dimension or power of nature was briefly mentioned, but left behind in favor of other topics. We might also want to consider the reference to the "hidden power of nature" early in Being and Time. A question I cannot pursue here is this: If nature is also capable of "allowing" and "defend[ing]" as human beings are, even if we accomplish this inceptual thinking of nature, and let it be what it is, where might we find ourselves if nature itself is defensive, hostile, and aggressive, more akin to Hobbes' state of nature, albeit in an ontological valence? What if nature's "open-region," perhaps thought as nature's practice of *Gelasseneheit* toward us—which already fashions it under a political guise—in fact produces our technological response toward it, such that it may mount its defense?

[85] See especially Heidegger's 1942 lecture course "Hölderlin's Hymn 'The Ister'" section nine and ten, which discuss the necessarily relation between the homely and the foreign as well as the human being as the uncanniest of the uncanny.

[86] CPC: 24, GA 77: 37.

[87] CPC: 24, GA 77: 37.

which is now dawning upon us, one could begin to feel uncanny."[88] It remains possible that the human has not yet experienced an authentic relation to human habitation. Perhaps going out into nature, beginning to feel the uncanniness of what it means to dwell as a human, is precisely the experience which might highlight the political aspect of human being. This political way of being might invite him to turn back homeward, toward a concern for the polis and the wellbeing of the human fellows therein, a concern we will find explicitly addressed in the "Evening Conversation."

The "Triadic Conversation" takes place in nature, but also is set at night, distinguishing itself again from the typical Platonic Dialogue daytime setting.[89] The conversation begins as evening is falling and gains momentum and clarity as the night deepens. Initially the interlocutors worry about this:

> Guide: Before we realized it, the evening twilight has called forth the night.
>
> Scientist: We are also nearing the place where our accustomed path turns and heads into the forest.
>
> Scholar: And our steps will be doubly unsure on the forest path at night.
>
> Scientist: Which is why I would like to propose that we turn around and take the path home.[90]

Yet, they choose to press on. They decide to not use their proposed return journey to merely "talk about daily necessities and current affairs,"[91] nor do they feel they would be able to retrace the main points they had made in their conversation before returning home. Instead they follow the Scientist's insistence that they "trust the sureness of [their] accustomed

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[88] CPC: 24, GA 77: 37.
[89] Again, we find a significant exception to this in the *Symposium*, a dialogue also concerning *eros,* which takes place at night but also still within the confines of the *polis*. The *Phaedrus* takes place at high noon but we encounter these Platonic interlocutors outside the city walls. Both of Plato's erotic dialogues are thus 'displaced' or 'out of joint' in one or another way.
[90] CPC: 45, GA 77: 72.
[91] CPC: 46, GA 77: 72.

step…As well as the near farness of the stars over the land"[92] to guide their journey. Hyland comments that this decision "explicitly ties the theme of night and its effects to the content of their conversation."[93] In a way, the interlocutors seem to use a Platonic, metaphysical notion that light is that which makes possible sight and, therefore, understanding. Night would purportedly make walking and seeing no longer possible. Hyland answers, "Yes, night obscures; it makes seeing more difficult. But strangely, in another register, it also can contain a remarkable brightness. It makes visible the stars, the very stars that, in the other brightness of day, remain hidden."[94] What is hidden in the day, in the everyday mode of seeing, is made visible only at night. The Scientist even credits this celestial context as the source of his insightful description of what the Guide had been struggling to articulate as he tries to decide whether *Gelassenheit* is a *willing* of non-willing, which is itself still a willful act, or a willing of *non-willing,* which simply does not pertain to the will:

> Scientist: Am I right to assume the following determination of the relation between the one and the other non-willing: You will a non-willing in the sense of a renouncing of willing, so that through this renouncing we can let ourselves engage in—or at least prepare ourselves for an engagement in—the sought-for essence of that thinking which is not a willing.
>
> Guide: Not only do you assume correctly, but you have— "by the gods," I would say, if they had not flown from us—found something essential.
>
> Scholar: If any of us were in a position to mete out praise, and if this were not to run contrary to the style of our conversations, I would be tempted to say now that you have surpassed both us and yourself with this interpretation of the ambiguous talk of non-willing.
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> Scientist: That I succeeded in this was not due to me, but rather to the night which has in the meantime fallen upon us, and which compels concentration without using force.[95]

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[92] CPC: 47, GA 77: 74.
[93] Hyland, 352.
[94] Hyland, 353.
[95] CPC: 69, GA 77: 107.

The Scientist—the most skeptical, oppositional member of the conversation—ultimately stumbles upon the best description of the conversation's core insight. He attributes this discovery not to himself, but rather to the night itself which, as Hyland elaborates, "calls for us to increase our focus, in order precisely to see, and it does so without using force. It rather, one might say, invites us to increased focus, it calls forth that focus in us – again, in order to see what is hidden. Moreover, by making us slow down our pace, it 'allows us time to ponder.'"[96] Contrary to the Platonic trope of light as the metaphorical cause of that which makes understanding possible,[97] it is rather night and darkness which are needed so that the points of light which do emerge are graspable as such. Might the night be Heidegger's reinterpretation of Platonic light? "Night thus shows us the other side of visibility and invisibility, of revealing and concealing, that is, of ἀλήθεια,"[98] answers Hyland. Night itself is further the subject-matter of the collaborative poetizing the interlocutors enact in the final lines of the "Triadic Conversation," which I elaborate upon shortly.

The final[99] important dimension of the setting of the "Triadic Conversation" is the historical moment in which Heidegger explicitly situates and dates the piece: Messkirch, 7 April 1945. The entirely of the setting presented thus far must be contextualized thereby. Hyland writes, "[a]ny actual conversation along a country path in southern Germany during those days would surely have been interrupted by bombs and anti-aircraft fire, as the Allies bombed Freiburg and the surrounding area into devastation."[100] The town and walk in the countryside presented in the "Triadic Conversation" does not accurately represent historical

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[96] Hyland, 353.
[97] Which was perhaps signaled by the Guide's use of the common phrase Socrates utters in the dialogues: "by the gods" (CPC: 69, GA 77: 107).
[98] Hyland, 355.
[99] Literally final, since Heidegger offers the time and date after the final lines of conversation on the last page of the "Triadic Conversation."
[100] Hyland, 350.

reality as it existed at that time and place. The political situation of the country would have eclipsed the human experience of nature itself. Any actual attempt to view the stars was more likely terrifyingly interrupted by an attack of airplanes and bombs. Hyland asks, "Why did Heidegger do this, if not to make as explicit as possible the very abstraction from the political that the content of the conversation and its course seem to demand?"[101] I would pose the question differently. What if, rather than a move towards political abstraction, Heidegger's historical anchoring of his "Triadic Conversation" in this time and place is instead meant to indicate an inexorable grounding in a historical and political relation? How would we then be called forth to interact with those whom we are trying to learn to speak together with if, in our very farness from human habitation, we might find ourselves in the nearest position from which to address it or, perhaps even better, to be addressed by it? Can Heidegger exclude this historical and political referent without thereby inexorably entangling himself in it, particularly given his understanding of the dynamic, necessary relation between what is far and what is near? Although these questions are merely hinted at in this Conversation, I wager that we must bear these questions forward into the terrain of the trilogy of the Country Path Conversations.

Relationality: Releasing Conversation

The Scientist's description of *Gelassenheit* focuses on the "relation" between "non-willing" and the willing which is "not a willing."[102] His thinking approach to releasement is not, or no longer, an intensely analytical elaboration of each version of willing in isolation

[101] Hyland, 350.
[102] CPC: 69, GA 77: 107.

from the other, as though they were separate and separable "objects" of thought. This scientific, representational thinking has been set aside in favor of a thinking which is attentive and responsive to the relational character of the movement of thinking. The three interlocutors are walking along the country path and cannot complete their journey without having covered that distance by the means they have available, namely their embodied, walking movement which is both a capacity and a limitation for them. Likewise, the Scientist comes to accept the dual nature of the path of thinking—as both limiting and enabling—such that "non-willing" is related to what is "not a willing" for the human, thinking being. Insofar as the human being is "horizonal" in carrying its finite capacity to see beyond itself wherever she might go, the human relation to *Gelassenheit* itself is mediated through a phenomenological relation to being itself. The Guide remarks, "What has the character of a horizon is thus only the side turned toward us of a surrounding open, an open which is filled with outward views into outward looks of what to our representing appear as objects."[103]

To take the relation between the horizonal human being and that which appears within our horizon to be one merely characterized by the subject which represents those objects to itself misses the essence of this phenomenological structure though it is correct in identifying the subject/object relation as one of its possible manifestations. This is indeed one way which this relation could be traced; it is characterized variously by Heidegger as "representational," "scientific," or "technological." It is also deeply and inherently willful. Representationality bends and confines that which appears in the "surrounding open" into mere "objects" which we then know, manipulate, and use for our own purposes.

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[103] CPC: 72, GA 77: 112.

As an alternative, the "willing which is not a willing" would constitute a different kind of relation to whatever might appear in the "open" and indeed even to the "open" itself as the field or, as Heidegger calls it the "region"[104] of appearance. This other relation I follow Andrew Mitchell in calling "relationality." Mitchell explains, "relationality requires that we think existence, whether that of the subject or the object, as opened into a world beyond it and as inherently defined by this exposure, both affecting the world and being affected by it in turn."[105] This reciprocal affection—between the being of either what we might call subjects, objects, or the mutual entanglement of the two—unfolds a terrain in which everything is mediated by that which lies beyond it, including for the thinking human being, its own horizon of thinking. The very delimitation of the beyond, as beyond whatever is found here, begins to fall out of focus. Per Mitchell, finding oneself in a situation of relationality with what appears in the open region is "to be so essentially tied to what lies beyond it so as to be unthinkable apart from it."[106]

But just because relationality does not allow a thinking of isolation in this relational context of mediation, relationality does not thereby render absolute ontological unity of all with all ala *Monadology*. Difference nevertheless persists. Early in the "Triadic Conversation," the interlocutors distinguish between what is "identical" or "similar" and what is "selfsame." The Guide says, "[s]imilarity or identicalness enables what are similar or identical to be—precisely as such—by themselves and separate, and so to be without belonging together."[107] If we presume objects are radically separate, they are also incapable of entering into relation. Identical objects cannot relate to one another. They would simply become replaceable,

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[104] CPC 73, GA 77, 112.
[105] Andrew Mitchell, "Heidegger's Poetics of Relationality" in *Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays* edited Daniel O. Dahlstrom (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 217.
[106] Andrew Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger*, 7.
[107] CPC: 25, GA 77: 39.

empty placeholders for use-value as we see described in Heidegger's various writings on technology.[108] The alternative is a notion in which "[s]elfsameness would then be…belong-togetherness"[109] as the Scholar tentatively suggests. This belonging together takes place across a terrain etched with difference, but not absolute, radical difference. This difference is permeable, in a sense, but only insofar as it maintains its character of difference. Relationality could then be described as the farness of otherness entering into a nearness to thinking.

This otherness is not localizable to the otherness of beings or even of human beings, however. Mitchell further fleshes out his definition of relationality, "To think things as relational means that no thing exists independent of another and that to ex-sist is already to be held out and supported by a context."[110] Independence here is not exchanged for dependence, but for support. Each thing and person relies upon, and is thus supported in this relation by, each other. Just as each brick of a building relies upon that below it and supports that above it, together the entire context of the relationality of beings builds and sustains the world which makes possible such reliance.[111] A brick isolated from all other bricks is no longer a brick in a meaningful sense. It must belong together with other bricks to accomplish its task.

This relationality, furthermore, is not restricted to beings. In the *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger writes, "Being itself is the relation to the extent that It, as the locality of the truth of being amid beings, gathers to itself and embraces ek-sistence in its existential, that is ecstatic, essence."[112] This twist constitutes the thrust and movement that Heidegger's

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[108] See especially the "Bremen Lectures" and the "Question Concerning Technology."
[109] CPC: 25, GA 77: 39.
[110] Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger,* 15.
[111] This is conceptually in the same neighborhood as Arendt's notion of the "world" which is constructed by the human activity of "work" in *The Human Condition*.
[112] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 253.

thinking of relationality seeks to trace. Relationality describes the proper comportment of beings toward one another. But this very relationality also pertains to Being itself which makes possible the relationality of beings and, as that possibility, belongs to that which lies beyond it. The relation of relationality is neither objectifiable or representable. No longer are human beings trapped in a horizonal, perspectival mode of being which would presuppose that what "is" beyond the horizon "ex-sists" in the same way as that which is within it at this moment, in this place, and for this particular thinker. Rather, Being itself, its "essence" is also horizonal and shot through with relationality.

Given this ontological pitch, impelling a proper understanding of relationality, we might turn to *Gelassenheit* to figure both existence itself dropping off—or withdrawing—beyond our limit of thinking and that receding itself affecting that which appears. Mitchell writes, "[t]his ambiguous position…is not something to flee from but rather is itself the human essence that allows admittance into the open."[113] When relationality seems to threaten to undo itself nevertheless extends the invitation toward releasement. *Gelassenheit* is a reciprocally affecting opening out onto the open which then opens back upon this opening.

The German term itself first arose and was popularized by Meister Eckhart. His usage indicated a renunciation of an individual will in favor of accepting the will of God.[114] It is also, as Bret Davis notes, "a quite common German word that conveys a sense of 'calm composure'."[115] Neither of these ways of understanding *Gelassenheit* capture what Heidegger is trying to think in his attempt to twist free of the domain of will altogether. The critique

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[113] Andrew Mitchell, "Praxis and *Gelassenheit*: The 'Practice' of the Limit," in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, edited Raffoul and Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 327.
[114] See Bret Davis' "Translator's Forward" to the *Country Path Conversations*, xi.
[115] Bret Davis, "Will and *Gelasseneheit,*" in *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts*, edited Bret W. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2014), 169.

Heidegger launches (against Nietzsche's will to power, explicitly) is that willing aims to absolutely negate the difference of whatever it represents to itself. The will wills the identical, it can never will the self-same. As Davis puts it, in willing "[one] stands outside oneself, but the aim of this *ekstasis* of willing is always to incorporate the other back into one's own domain"[116] which he terms a "circling movement of *ecstatic-incorporation*."[117] This is precisely the inverse of what a thinking of relationality would seek to articulate and allow to unfold. It is the pinnacle of a technological, representational appropriating of the world with no safeguard to protect anything from its reach, even other human beings. The beyond which might affect the here and now is incorporated into the will rather than allowed to flow on unabated, or "let-be" in the mode of *Gelassenheit*.

Setting oneself to will to overcome this mode of willing is contradictory and nihilistic. It constitutes Heidegger's overarching rejection of Nietzsche's thinking as metaphysical in the extreme. The Scholar articulates the dilemma in the following way;

> Non-willing still signifies, on the one hand, a willing, in that a *No* prevails in it, even if it is in the sense of a *No* that directs itself at willing itself and renounces it. Non-willing in this sense means: to willfully renounce willing. And then, on the other hand, the expression non-willing also means: that which does not at all pertain to the will.[118]

The Guide responds to the Scholar in wondering if "perhaps we come nearer to it through a willing in the first sense of non-willing."[119] Davis explains that this "transitional 'willing non-

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[116] Davis, "Will and *Gelasseneheit,,*" 173.
[117] Davis, "Will and *Gelasseneheit,*" 173.
[118] CPC: 69, GA 77: 106.
[119] CPC: 69, GA 77: 106.

willing' should be understood as a renunciation of willing that prepares for letting oneself into an engagement in the essence of thinking, which is not a willing."[120]

This renunciation is the first, but hardly the last moment[121] of *Gelassenheit*. The will is a human mode of relation with which we are perhaps most comfortable. But willing does not exhaust human capacity. In this way, *Gelassenheit* and relationality are at least complementary and at most necessarily interrelated. *Gelassenheit* names the human-most mode of affecting and being affected by that which lies beyond us. Hope remains that even a technological, representational, willful mode of engagement with the world might stumble upon this possibility. The Scientist himself seems to enact this very possibility, voicing this description near the end of the "Triadic Conversation"—

> Releasement, as the releasing of oneself from transcendental representing, is in fact a refraining from the willing of a horizon. This refraining also no longer comes from a willing, unless a trace of willing is required to occasion the letting-oneself-into a belonging to the open-region—a trace which, however, vanishes in the letting-oneself into, and is completely extinguished in authentic releasement.[122]

In further fleshing out how both *Gelassenheit* and a Heideggerian thinking of relationality bear out and within the "Triadic Conversation," it worth a moment to pause and wonder why Heidegger wrote Conversations at all. Although not his first theoretical grappling with conversation or the only instance of the composition of a philosophical conversation, the "Triadic Conversation" is the most substantial illustration[123] of Heidegger presenting a conversation and demonstrating how he thinks they might be carried out properly. The Scientist complains to the Guide, at one point, that he is again leading their discussion off

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[120] Davis, "Will and *Gelasseneheit,*" 176.
[121] CPC: 79, GA 77: 121.
[122] CPC: 92, GA 77: 142-3.
[123] As measured by number of pages, at least.

course by not "staying focused on its thematic object"[124] of defining human cognition. Although this may have been the Scientist's focus, the Guide approaches the conversation differently. The Guide replies that since their previous conversation—which had taken place one year prior, on the same country path—he had only "attempted to learn but one thing."[125] This "one thing" is not a "thematic object," but rather "[t]he art-or the forbearance, or whatever you would like to call it-of speaking together in conversation."[126] The Scientist's thematic object is decidedly not that which the Guide is trying to learn, both abstractly and concretely speaking. The bulk of their discussion consists in the Guide trying to suggest to the Scientist that scientific, analytic precision may not yield the truest statements. The "Triadic Conversation" is the Guide's attempt to practice this new art of speaking together. The Guide hardly spoke in their previous conversation,[127] which invites us to pay closer attention to when, how, and why the Guide speaks with the other interlocutors in this conversation.

After this strong clash between the Scientist and the Guide about the proper scope of a scientific orientation to conversations,[128] the Guide is prompted by the Scholar to more fully flesh out his aim in participating. The Guide additionally describes forbearance in the following way, "[w]hat I really will in our meditation on thinking is non-willing."[129] This statement ignites one of the major conceptual and philosophical points of the entire text—*Gelassenheit*. The Guide, responding to the Scientist chastising the Guide for not being forthright with his intention at the beginning of the conversation, claims that "perhaps one

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[124] CPC: 29, GA 77: 45.
[125] CPC: 29, GA 77: 46.
[126] CPC: 30, GA 77: 46.
[127] CPC: 2, GA 77: 4.
[128] CPC: 32, GA 77: 49-50.
[129] CPC: 33, GA 77: 51.

could doubt whether a conversation is still a conversation at all if it wills something."[130] The Scientist takes this claim as, in part, a rearticulation of the Guide's approach that "we should leave a conversation to itself."[131] However, the Guide retorts, "But what is the conversation itself, purely on its own?"[132] even though the Guide evidently does not think that conversation can have a will of its own and still be a conversation. Would the conversation, then, merely drift aimlessly and amorphously? The Guide does not seem to see any contradiction between his own aim in the conversation—willing non-willing—and the art of speaking together in a conversation which must nevertheless remain will-less. How are we to understand this? Somehow, it seems, the wills of the various interlocutors are integral for practicing the art of forbearance.

The Guide continues, telling the Scientist,

> You evidently don't consider just any mere speaking with one another to be a conversation. A speaking with one another can be found in every chat, discussion, debate, or negotiation; in a broader and vaguer sense these too are "conversations." Yet in the emphatic sense of this world we mean something else. Albeit what we mean is difficult to say. But it seems to me as though in a proper conversation an event takes place wherein something comes to language.[133]

Speaking to one another in a way which merely uses language as a tool for communication does not constitute a conversation. Authentic conversation can only take place if and when something "comes to language" and is allowed to do so by the presumed speakers of that language. The Guide goes on, "I would like to say that the essence of an authentic conversation is determined from out of the essence of language. Perhaps, however, it is the

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[130] CPC: 36, GA 77: 56.
[131] CPC: 36, GA 77: 56.
[132] CPC: 36, GA 77: 56-7.
[133] CPC: 36, GA 77: 57.

other way around."[134] Although it is not an unequivocal claim, the Guide suggests that not only is the possibility of conversation based on language, but that perhaps the very possibility of language is itself based on a conversational relation between the naming that takes place in language and that which exceeds language's very naming activity. Put another way, language—in its saying—is always in conversation with the unsaid. Not to say the unsaid once and for all, but to remain properly related toward it, constituting a relationality in which each reciprocally affects the other. Conversation is now not simply an art of forbearance in relation to others, but may be the very medium of language itself within which otherness may also play a prominent role.

This instance in the "Triadic Conversation" is not the first time in which this relation between conversation and language had appeared in Heidegger's work. Heidegger's 1936 essay "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" discusses the following line of Hölderlin's poetry: "…Since we have been a conversation/And able to hear from one another…"[135] Heidegger analyzes a preceding verse in which Heidegger argues Hölderlin shows that language primarily supports human beings having and experiencing a world. He writes, "[l]anguage is not merely a tool which man possesses alongside many others; rather, language first grants the possibility of standing in the midst of the openness of beings. Only where this is language, is there world."[136] Heidegger then explores the notion that language is already conversational in essence. Heidegger interprets Hölderlin's poetry as follows:

> We—human beings—are a conversation. Man's being is grounded in language; but this actually occurs only in *conversation*. Conversation, however, is not only a way in which language takes place, but rather language is essential only as conversation. What we usually mean by "language," namely, a stock of words and rules for

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[134] CPC: 36, GA 77: 57.
[135] Martin Heidegger. "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" in *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*. Translated by Keith Heller (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), page 56.
[136] Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," 55-6.

> combining them, is only an exterior aspect of language. But now what is meant by "conversation"? Obviously, the act of speaking with one another about something. Speaking, then, mediates our coming to one another.[137]

Human beings are essentially speakers of language. According to Heidegger, language is not a tool deployed in conversation. Language is rather already conversational, perhaps staging a space of encounter between the 'named' or 'said' and the 'not yet named' or 'never to be named' or 'remains unsaid.' Put another way, speaking is already an act of addressing and listening to others whether that alterity takes the form of other human beings or the otherness of unthought ontological concepts. Conversation, then, consists in the exchange of the event of language in relation with otherness.

But eight years later in 1944, Heidegger rejects that notion that the term "dialogue" is interchangeable with "conversation." In the "Triadic Conversation," the Scientist admits the Guide's description of an authentic conversation eludes him. The Scientist attempts to clarify, asking, "could authentic conversation and what you understand by that be any different from what one customarily conceives of as 'dialogue'? After all, it belongs to a conversation that it is a conversation about something and between speakers."[138] The Guide replies decidedly in the negative; "Yet a conversation first waits upon reaching that of which it speaks. And the speakers of a conversation can speak in its sense only if they are prepared for something to befall them in the conversation which transforms their own essence."[139] The Guide understands "dialogue" to be prematurely oriented by a concept or a problem in being "about something" and an accompanying assumption that the concept or problem is already accessible or available to us. This further implies that all that is required is a mere

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[137] Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," 56.
[138] CPC: 37, GA 77: 57.
[139] CPC: 37, GA 77: 57.

technological solution rather than any further effort to more deeply understand the philosophical presuppositions and underpinnings supporting its appearance. This direct, unthinking confrontation is at the expense of the more serious concern of conversation, namely the bringing together of speakers through the mutual or collaborative beholding of something coming into language on its own terms, so to speak. This cannot occur without those who it essentially transforms. What the Guide understands as "dialogue" risks omitting the most essential aspect of conversation Heidegger is developing: namely ontologically implication within in the course of conversation on the part of both the would be subject and object of the conversation. This replaces merely dissecting a concept from which we consider ourselves to be removed, or removable. In a sense, the entire project of the "Triadic Conversation" is the unseating of this technological, representational error.

Just why is it that Heidegger insists on drawing such a strong distinction between "dialogue" and "conversation"? It is worth paying attention to the 'Ge-' prefix of *Gespräche*, indicating the gathering force which Heidegger attends to across his philosophical corpus. His decision to use *Gespräche* rather than *Dialog* also points toward the philosophical reasons he selected that term. But the philosopher most famous for taking up the dialogical form is Plato. In a letter Martin Heidegger wrote to his wife Elfride on March 23, 1945 which specifically address Heidegger's Conversations, this fateful name emerges:

> in the last few days I've gained such remarkable momentum that I'm almost completely oblivious to food & sleep. I suddenly found a form of saying I would never have dared use, if only because of the danger of outwardly imitating the Platonic dialogues. I'm working on a 'conversation'; in fact I have the 'inspiration' – I really have to call it this – for several at once. In this way, poetizing & thinking saying [*das dichtende und denkende Sagen*] have attained a primordial unity, & everything flows along easily & freely.[140]

[140] Martin Heidegger, *Letters to his Wife,* 187.

In this letter, Heidegger starkly differentiates between Plato and himself. He labels Plato's works as "dialogues" and his writings as "conversations." In this letter, Heidegger worries about the implicit comparison with Plato, but claims to have found a "primordial unity" of poetizing and thinking in his conversations which drives an effortless compositional experience. The form of writing, or "saying" as Heidegger describes it, seems to be philosophically, and not just rhetorically relevant. Hyland comments, "The letters testify that Heidegger was *not* doing what other philosophers before him and after Plato had done…each of whom, in effect 'gave a try at dialogue' almost as a passing fancy…It was clearly a necessity of thought that led him to his turn to dialogue[141]…which he thought represented a very important opening along his path of thinking."[142]

Hyland suggests that this necessity results from Heidegger's later realization, which would have to be understood against Heidegger's earlier writings on Plato[143], that Plato and his own projects and interests were radically aligned with one another's. Hyland posits, "the dialogue form enabled Plato to allow to emerge in his writing more than could be articulated as the propositional content of the sentences he wrote."[144] This "more" is generated, on Hyland's reading, "in the interactions of the characters, in the place and time of each dialogue, in the contrast or symmetry between word and deed, even in the occasional silences of this or that character."[145] This leads Hyland to suggest that "Plato could allow to show forth something like what Heidegger himself has called 'the unsaid;' he could allow

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[141] Hyland and Gonzalez refer to Heidegger's writings as "dialogues" even though all five of the conversations find the word Gespräche in the title, perhaps for facility in comparing them to Plato's works. I, however, will refer to Heidegger's writings exclusively as Conversations, following Heidegger's own stated preference to distinguish himself from Plato's writings.
[142] Hyland, 343.
[143] Including "The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and *Theaetetus*" and the reading of Plato he develops in the "Nietzsche Lectures," among others such as the seminar on Plato's *Phaedrus* (which is yet untranslated.)
[144] Hyland, 343.
[145] Hyland, 343.

what is hidden from explicit articulation to show forth, but show forth *as hidden*…[this feature of Platonic dialogues] is just what Heidegger now comes to appreciate, and why he turns to the dialogue form to 'say the simple.'"[146]

Gonzalez provides a further argument that Plato also perhaps figured into Heidegger's thinking later in his career very differently. He also shows how Heidegger's own rigid thinking of the distinction between "dialogue" and "conversation" may have loosened and shifted. Heidegger deploys Socrates' critique of writing in the *Phaedrus* as an afterward to his 1957 lecture series *Basic Problem of Thinking* and comments in the following way,

> He, the poetic master of the thinking word, indeed speaks here only of writing, but at the same time indicates what repeatedly struck him anew along his entire philosophical path, namely, that what is thought in thinking cannot be stated. It would be rash, however, to conclude that therefore what is thought cannot be spoken. Instead Plato knew *this*: that the task of thinking is to bring into the vicinity of thought through speech what is unsaid, and indeed as the matter to be thought. Therefore, even in the texts Plato himself wrote we can never directly read what he thought, even though they are written dialogues: dialogues that we only rarely succeed in releasing into the pure movement of collected thinking because we too eagerly and erringly search for a doctrine.[147]

This bringing into the vicinity that which lies beyond the dialogue itself lends support to the idea that relationality is at the core of Heidegger's shifting understanding of "dialogue," "conversation," and language more broadly. Heidegger again is holding together thinking and poetizing in his description of Plato whereas in his 1945 letter to his wife he attributed those characteristics to his own writing of the three Country Path Conversations. He also here comments on writing in dialogical form. But rather than mentioning dialogue only to note the danger that others might find in Heidegger's own writing mere imitation, Heidegger now describes those same dialogues as capable of saying "through speech what is unsaid,"

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[146] Hyland, 343-4.
[147] Heidegger, *Basic Principles of Thinking*, trans. Andrew Mitchell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 124-5. GA 79: 132-3.

just as Hyland suggested. Gonzalez writes of Heidegger's use of this afterward to his lecture series— "This is the closest Heidegger ever came to understanding the philosophical significance of Plato's decision to write dialogues. It is perhaps also the closest he ever came to appreciating the indirect saying that characterizes dialectic as a mediation between what is said and what must remain unsaid."[148]

We know from other letters Heidegger wrote to his wife in 1954[149] that Heidegger had plans to write a book devoted to Plato. He wanted to dedicate the work to Elfride. Whether this book would have contained a revision of his earlier readings or an entirely new approach to the Platonic Dialogues, we will never know. Perhaps Plato was the teacher Heidegger never surpassed or maybe he was simply one conversational partner among many. Nevertheless, his influence upon Heidegger's own Conversations cannot and should not be overlooked.

What we do learn from Heidegger's own reflection on the shifting relation he traces between "dialogue" and "conversation," and the accompanying relation he traces between Plato and himself, is that the speaking together which takes place in allowing language to emerge as already conversational in essence is an instance of Heidegger's understanding of both *Gelassenheit* and relationality. What releasement means in the context of an actual conversation unfolding—in real time between interlocutors—is the allowing of language, specifically the language of others, to emerge. This is precisely what Heidegger himself later acknowledged to be the proper comportment out of which we ought to enter into conversation with the Platonic Dialogues, namely by "releasing into the pure movement of

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[148] Gonzalez, 264.

[149] He mentions on May 4 "in Plato I've now made a decisive discovery, which gives me new heart to believe that I shall eventually produce the Plato book after all, which I still harbour as an early promise for you" and reiterates his plans in a May 19 letter.

collected thinking" their conversational essence which necessarily unseats the search for a Platonic doctrine. *Gelassenheit* is not merely a practice in which we might engage concerning other things, human beings, or even Being itself, but also with texts.

Recalling relationality, as Mitchell defines it, describes any situation of mediation in which one party bleeds out into a beyond which then reciprocally affects it, *Gelassenheit* is perhaps the best if not *the* exemplar of what it might being for the human, thinking being to allow itself to become involved with the beings around it in the most proper way. However, the human's being is multidimensional. The reciprocal affectation of beings in relationality and *Gelassenheit* is demonstrated in the "Triadic Conversation" insofar as the characters argue with and convince one another of new ideas or of accepting new ways of thinking. This kind of affecting takes place largely on what we might call a rational level. But, the philosophical novelty of Heidegger's Conversations—what the form of writing itself allows or compels to be brought to the fore—is that human beings cannot engage with other beings on a *uniquely* rational level. Rather, in the Conversations, this relationality is enacted on the affective level as well and is traced in the emergence of what appears in language by way of the feelings and collective emotions of the various interlocutors. Heidegger also elaborates how these affects in turn affect those affects of the other interlocutors, making possible (or not) the very operation of thinking at all. Before turning to a close reading of the role of this relationality of affect in the "Triadic Conversation," however, I first turn to coming to grips with language in the Conversation.

Language: Collaborative Poetizing

Heidegger writes in 1936, "language is essential only as conversation."[150] Conversations, however, take place between—and are anchored by—people who are localized by temporal, spatial, historical, embodied, gendered, and cultural specification. These differences are often a breeding ground for conflict. It seems the characters of the "Triadic Conversation" come together already embroiled in such a conflict. Just how is it that these radically different figures, who start out with such refractory views and modes of understanding, can come together to converse?

Perhaps we ought to move backward, taking the concluding moments of the "Triadic Conversation" as our touchstone. I wonder if the closing of the "Triadic Conversation" is not only inspired and self-referential in its engagement with poetry, as Hyland suggests—performing that which it presents—but also that these pages are perhaps *the* unique instance of Heidegger's thinking of poetizing and language emerging in a concretely collaborative, relational context. A careful unpacking of the stakes of this "collaborative poetizing," I venture, may even stabilize and articulate the role of otherness in Heidegger's thinking generally. In approaching this collaborative poetizing, I first turn to Krzysztof Ziarek's analysis of the structure of language in Heidegger in *Inflected Language: Toward a Hermeneutics of Nearness.*[151] I will return to the "Triadic Conversation" better equipped to unpack the stakes of this collaborative poetizing by tracing the moments in which affect indicates transformational moments reformulating the relations between the interlocutors.

In his defense of Heidegger's later works from the charge of an ethically eviscerated logocentrism, Ziarek insists on the importance of Heidegger's movement away from a

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150 Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," 56.
151 Krzysztof Ziarek, *Inflected Language: Toward a Hermeneutics of Nearness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

thinking of ontic-ontological difference toward a thinking of nearness, a theme we find rehearsed in detail in the *Triadic Conversation*.[152] Ziarek writes that in *Being and Tine* "the difference between Being and beings is so radical that it is no longer perceptible as difference (SZ, 9/BT 29). As *Introduction to Metaphysics* repeatedly suggests, difference can open itself only upon a plane of belonging-together…(IM,144)."[153] What remains, Ziarek argues, is an understanding of difference as necessarily contextualized by nearness. Ziarek calls this dynamic the "infold"[154] which operates according to the logic of correspondence or *Entsprechung.*[155] Tracing the nearness of beings to our thinking, *entsprechen* then takes shape in our language-based response, in *aussprechen*[156] or speech. The fold between Being and beings,[157] allows for correspondence via the human being insofar as she speaks, namely insofar as she listens to and voices language.

Ziarek develops a tripartite understanding of Heidegger's conception of language; language encompasses "the saying, the between, and the sounded word."[158] He understands "the saying" of language as an appearing or a nearing, rather than as a linguistic mode of signification which would be predicated upon an ontology of difference. The "sounded word" is the human response, the resaying of this appearing, the apprehending and voicing of what has already appeared in "the saying."[159] In addition to the saying and re-saying sounding of words, Ziarek considers the interval which separates the saying and the sounded word—"the between"—as the most essential to language.[160] He writes, "[t]he most

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[152] CPC: 19, GA 77: 30.
[153] Ziarek, 28.
[154] Ziarek, 37.
[155] Ziarek, 30-1.
[156] Zuarek, 40.
[157] I will return to discuss this "infold" between Being and beings in depth when Heidegger develops his theory of the "twofold" in the *Conversation on Language* in chapter five of this dissertation.
[158] Ziarek, 31.
[159] Ziarek, 30.
[160] Ziarek, 32.

important aspect of this relating, however, is that the saying and the apprehending are not 'coupled' once and for good. This belonging-together, in order to be a genuine passage from the saying to the apprehending, has to happen 'anew' every moment."[161] The notion that a tool, such as a dictionary, could fix or freeze definitions as meanings of words is thoroughly rejected. Herein may be found a temporal, spatial, historical, embodied, gendered, cultural, etc. space in which the conversational essence of language might be located. Language here must be enacted by speakers, but speakers who are not themselves agents of speech. Rather these speakers are first and foremost receptive hearers. This account of language also fits nicely alongside the notion of the selfsame from the "Triadic Conversation" in which belonging-togetherness is only possible on the basis of a holding together of difference—an act which already implies a non-necessity and thus a non-scientific (as the Scientist would have understood it) approach.

On Ziarek's account, Heidegger's conception of language is then an opening to this fully relational dynamic of beings showing—and thus saying—themselves[162] to the human who in turn fulfills her role as speaker "in answering, saying after, 'countersaying,' or 'listening saying.'"[163] In the "Triadic Conversation," the Guide describes an answer as "the counter-word"[164] and performs this mode of answering concretely in the conversation, further grounding the notion that language and conversation have a much more intimate relation in Heidegger than one may suspect. The space of coupling, of the saying and the sounded word, is the space of gathering, of *legein*.[165] This gathering must be responsive and attentive to that which lies beyond itself. *Legein* later became *logos*. Heidegger combats several common

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[161] Ziarek, 32.
[162] Ziarek, 34.
[163] Ziarek, 30.
[164] CPC: 15, GA 77: 23.
[165] Ziarek, 35-38.

misconceptions of language in his essay "Language" such that "speaking is expression"[166] or that "speech is regarded as an activity of man"[167] or that "speech is a presentation and representation of the real and the unreal."[168] The alternative mode of thinking about language relies instead upon this gathering which is a listening. This listening can hear only because the saying of Being is already in the form of language. Here it is not inappropriate to recall to the 'Ge-' prefix of *Gespräche*, indicating the gathering force that Heidegger also seems to be criticizing the term *Dialog* for minimizing.

Insofar as the voiced aspect of language is a countersaying—a form of nearing that which it hears—Ziarek argues that otherness is inherent to Heidegger's understanding of language. He writes that *Entsprechung* "encodes the Heideggerian 'hermeneutics' of otherness, not as an interpretation but rather as a letting-be, a listening response escaping the polarity of the passive and the active into the modality of the middle voice."[169] This is the middle voice we also hear in *Gelassenheit* in the "Triadic Conversation." Because the human, sounded word is always only a response, it cannot capture the alterity of the originary saying. Ziarek argues rather that it is the task of language to shelter and remain the guardians of the otherness of beings.[170] In effect, what Ziaerek calls the "ethnicity" of Heidegger's thinking of language lies squarely in that "the other is never asked to give up its otherness…Nearness…prevents any dialectical[171] completion of the movement."[172]

If we would consider a thinking which is fundamentally structured according to a relationality to otherness as concerned with ethics, then on Ziarek's account Heidegger

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[166] Heidegger, "Language," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 190.
[167] Heidegger, "Language," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 190.
[168] Heidegger, "Language," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 190.
[169] Ziarek, 39.
[170] Ziarek, 55.
[171] This would be a point on which Ziarek and Gonzalez would differ. Whereas Gonzalez does identify the relation between the said and unsaid to be dialectical, Ziarek here claims they are not.
[172] Ziarek, 59.

qualifies.[173] Since Ziarek finds otherness most clearly figured in Heidegger's account of language,[174] he writes, "I cautiously call here this inflection by nearness, which underlies Heidegger's problematization of traditional philosophical distinctions, the 'ethicity' of language."[175] Ethics, as a traditionally demarcated philosophical approach, has aimed to think otherness insofar as it generates prescriptive, normative rubrics according to which we ought to pre-structure our interactions with others. Whether this is the cultivation of virtue in oneself, an attempt to root out all selfish motives from the human heart, or a decision theory which aims to maximize pleasure and minimize pain, these traditional ethical approaches encounter the other only after these habits or calculations have been made. They *think of* the other without *thinking* the other. For Heidegger thinking *Gelassenheit*, "at stake is not so much thinking otherness as letting otherness be."[176] And why would we limit the letting of otherness be in *Gelassenheit* to things or concepts? Why not also extend this practice to other human beings as well?

For Heidegger, the most genuine letting be of this otherness in the realm of language manifests as either thinking or poetry.[177] Ziarek writes, "Heidegger remarks that poetry and thinking dwell in nearness because they are both modes of the saying, that is, of presencing as the showing saying."[178] It is in this "neighborhood" of poetry and thinking, as he refers to it in the *Beiträge,* where the saying, the between and the sounded word emerge according to their ethicity. These are also the two very notions he referenced in his letter to Elfride

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[173] If ethics are rather relegated to that which produces normative, prescriptive claims, then we should clearly not count Heidegger's account of language as ethically-inflected.
[174] Ziarek also argues that Heidegger's thinking is primarily a thinking of language. See the "Introduction" to *Inflected Language* for his thoroughgoing argument.
[175] Ziarek, 62.
[176] Ziarek, 61.
[177] For an explanation of the precise roles of *Dichtung*/poetry and *Denken*/thinking (and why they are distinguished along these lines,) see Ziarek's *Inflected Language*, 23-33.
[178] Ziarek, 29.

describing what Heidegger-as-author experienced writing conversations—poetizing and thinking—and the Conversations are the only Heideggerian texts in which distinct 'others' appear and co-exchange language.

If the notion that we find an ethnicity of thinking latent within Heidegger's concern for language is viable, then the "Triadic Conversation" and the relations developed therein between the three interlocutors seems well-poised for special consideration.[179] The most significant aspect in which the Guide marks his departure from the methodology of the Scientist and historiology of the Scholar is the ease in which he takes poetic, conjectural sorts of thoughts seriously. While a small poem is used as a hermeneutic resource to elucidate philosophical content near the end of the conversation,[180] the poetic as such permeates the contributions, first of the Guide and finally of all three interlocutors' concluding remarks. They explicitly poetize the nearness of the night while also drawing out the emerging nearness of the thinking of the interlocutors to each other, collaboratively poetizing their conversing thoughts. I here quote their poetizing at length:

> Scholar: Αγχιβασίη—going into-nearness—the word of course in no way means the essence of modern research, be it that of the natural sciences or be it historiological research. But the word can, entirely from afar, stand as name over our walking course today—
>
> Guide: a course which escorted us deep into the night—
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> Scientist: a night which gleams forth ever more magnificently—
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> Scholar: and over-astonishes the stars—
>
> Guide: because it brings near the distances of the stars to one another.
> […]

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[179] Ziarek does not mention the "Triadic Conversation" explicitly in offering his analysis of Heidegger's thinking of language. Although this does not detract from his account, I believe an analysis of the rich philosophical and performative content of the "Triadic Conversation" would strengthen and lend nuance to his reading.

[180] CPC: 94, GA 77: 144-5.

> Scientist: The night is the seamstress who in sewing brings near. She works only with nearness, which furthers farness.
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> Scholar: If she ever works and does not rather rest—
>
> Guide: while she astonishes the depths of the height—
>
> Scholar: and in astonishment opens up what is closed shut—
>
> Scientist: and so like waiting harbors the arrival—
>
> Guide: if it is a released waiting—
>
> Scholar: and the human-being remains *a*-propriated *into* there—
>
> Guide: *from* where we are called.[181]

Not only do many of the load-bearing thoughts from their preceding conversation resurface, but the "betweeness" crucial to both Ziarek's account and to the explicit philosophical import of the "Triadic Conversation"[182] takes center stage. Ziarek focuses on the between as that which separates the saying and the sounded word in language. Indeed, poetizing is engaged as a mode of description here which attests to the comporting of a proper human relationality to and with language in this moment in the "Triadic Conversation." But this is not limited to an individual human being's encounter with and response to language. Rather all three interlocutors poetize together, collaboratively.

The three conversational partners had very distinct styles of speech at the beginning of their encounter. The Guide provided opaque, poetic interjections, the Scientist attempted to construct arguments in a definitively logical or deductive framework, and the Scholar relied on referencing other historical thinkers to do his speaking for him. By the end, it is difficult to distinguish any distinct personalities or styles of speech in the collaborative poem. This seems to signal a mutual, reciprocal affectation of each upon and with the other. The

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[181] CPC: 102-3, GA 77: 156-7.
[182] CPC: 80, GA 77: 123.

interlocutors have entered into a mode of relationality with one another in which the "betweeness" which separates and yet allows each of them to belong to each other is emphasized in the concreteness of the figures as much as in the abstract content of their conversation.

While Ziarek notes that the final step in the ethicity of language, the vocalization, carries connotations of both allowing something to be heard and of tuning that vocalization in a certain way,[183] he does not develop the ethicity of this tuning further. In the "Triadic Conversation," not only does the content of the Guide's contributions unfold many of the philosophical bearing points, but also the tuning, what might constitute the cultivation and acknowledgement of feeling or affect inhering in his prodding, seems to be even more crucial.

Poetry, thinking, and nearness all make significant appearances in the "Triadic Conversation." Ethics or ethicity do not, at least not explicitly. However, I nevertheless would argue for a reading of the "Triadic Conversation" as a conversation which takes place between others and which performs or reflects the releasement which takes place in "betweenness,"[184] which constitutes a coming to engage in a relationality toward otherness. In this form of writing, Heidegger offers a rare glimpse at his version of how a performance of relationality between human beings ought to be sought. Although Heidegger himself clearly must have dealt with students and interlocutors who disagreed with him in his teaching and other daily interactions, his writing typically presents his own view point and little more. The treatises, lecture notes, and essays all centerpiece Heidegger's own voice. In his Conversations, however, and in the "Triadic Conversation" in the greatest length,

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[183] Ziarek, 34.
[184] CPC: 80, GA 77: 123.

Heidegger is forced to construct and address the viewpoint of his critics and then show us how he might engage with and persuade such figures. I wonder if Heidegger's Conversations, while avoiding any explicit treatment of ethics, instead perform the cultivation of a practice of a conversational ethics.

Ethics: The Affect of Learning to Speak Together

Many of Heidegger's commentators have shied away from claiming that Heidegger's thinking contains an ethics and others have outright rejected this proposal. But as we have seen, Heidegger does gesture towards his fundamental ontological project containing, or at least not necessarily excluding, what he calls "originary ethics."[185] Jean-Luc Nancy understands this domain to run counter to the generally accepted interpretation, writing that it is "not only that the thinking of Being involves an ethics but, much more radically, that it involves itself as an ethics. *'Original ethics' is the more appropriate name for 'fundamental ontology.' Ethics properly is what is fundamental in fundamental ontology.*"[186] If ethics is what is fundamental to Heidegger's fundamental ontology, we ought to look toward relationality and *Gelassenheit* as evidence to support Nancy's reading. In discussing *Gelasseneheit*, Davis conjectures, "[p]resumably, *Gelassenheit* also names our proper comportment to one another. This would undoubtedly involve attentively letting others be, rather than either passively neglecting or actively 'leaping in' and taking over their existential concerns (SZ 122). Unfortunately, the

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[185] Martin Heidegger, "Letter On 'Humanism'," 271.
[186] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Heidegger's 'Originary Ethics'" in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), pages 78-9, italics original.

later Heidegger had precious little to say about ethics."[187] While Heidegger appears to never explicitly connect *Gelassenheit* and ethics, Davis does acknowledge that this comportment would presumably extend to our engagement with others. Ziarek ventures further, insisting "the ethical and the ontological are the two sides of *Gelasseneheit*, with a thin and fragile boundary that readily blurs itself, forcing, as Heidegger would say, an unexpected, perhaps even unprecedented, 'poetic' rigor upon thinking."[188]

An interrogation of the comportment toward and engagement with others in a poetic mode—which I read as taking place in the "Triadic Conversation"—is an appropriate site from which to confront Heidegger's thinking with these questions. From the outset of the "Triadic Conversation," we know that these interlocutors are coming together for a second time,[189] an event we could hardly imagine occurring after some of the confrontationally-charged Platonic dialogues.[190] Enough good will had been fostered in their prior interaction such that they chose to reunite and converse together anew. The saying bounded within the "Triadic Conversation" is already a re-saying, indicating that the interlocutors demonstrated a recognition of the value of each other's contributions in their prior conversation.

This is particularly apparent in the developing affective economy of their conversation. I argue here that the Guide, in enacting conversationally that which they are discussing, both practices and enables his interlocutors to engage in an ethical conversation. Although the Scientist and the Scholar display frustration when the Guide challenges them and their attempts to demonstrate another thinking mode which bypasses their disciplinary frameworks, the Guide never shames his interlocutors in their struggle to comprehend or

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[187] Davis, "Will and *Gelassenheit,*" 180.
[188] Ziarek, 14.
[189] CPC: 1, GA 77: 3.
[190] The *Gorgias* will be the example I will turn to presently to more fully formally distinguish the Platonic Dialogue from the Heideggerian Conversation.

displays hostility to their active resistance to understanding the Guide's contributions. Rather, the Guide responds primarily by asking for patience. At one moment, the Guide responds to the Scholar and Scientists rejecting a distinction he is trying to draw between annihilation and destruction on the basis of their own failure to understand by saying, "[i]f you both think this, then I can only ask for your patience, which you might have not only with me, but also with yourselves, in order to learn."[191] Here, patience, both with oneself and with others, is signaled as at least as important as the comprehension of theoretical concepts in what it means to learn. A little later, the Scientist realizes that what seemed to him earlier in their conversation to be non-sequiturs were in fact more deeply related to their conversation than he had comprehended and the following exchange takes place:

> Scientist: Yet we have already spoken in detail about this; which is why I would also like to admit now that our earlier discussion, despite the sense of having gone astray that may have adhered to it, was not entirely futile.
>
> Guide: Nothing is in vain in such conversations.
>
> Scientist: Although now and then they become tremendous tests of patience.[192]

The Guide does not tell the Scientist "I told you so" or chastise him for not seeing the relevance of their preceding exchange at that time. The Guide expresses that nothing about their conversation, including presumably that the Guide himself had to wait for his conversational partners to be able to come to hear him, was useless. The Guide again demonstrates his commitment to learning the art of forbearance, of speaking together in conversation,[193] rather than snatching up bits of truth as quickly and ravenously as possible.

The Guide also demonstrates his commitment to learning the patience needed to speak together with others by conceding points to his interlocutors:

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[191] CPC: 12, GA 77: 18.
[192] CPC: 43, GA 77: 69.
[193] CPC: 30, GA 77: 46.

> Guide: The human only ever loses that which he does not yet properly *have*. Yet he 'has' only that to which he belongs.
>
> Scholar: Now I too must confess that everything escapes me when I try to think what you just said. So I think it would be beneficial for me to bring our conversation back again to its path.
>
> Guide: I am happy to entrust myself to your guidance, so long as you take into account that my interspersed remarks will sometimes slow down the course of our conversation.[194]

The result of this conversational aside is not that the Scholar rejects the Guide's seemingly strange notion about how ownership unfolds for the human being, nor that the Guide abandons his thought. They compromise in realizing that what is "beneficial" is neither reducible to, nor exclusive of the perspective of any single conversational partner. This would perhaps constitute the proper rubric for assessing the capacity for giving or receiving "guidance" if the philosophical content of the conversation were the only relevant consideration. The Guide, however, submits to guidance. What he is guided toward is not his own thought, but rather into a more trusting, patient relation with the Scholar. Affective investment in their relationship leads to the Scholar later grasping and utilizing this insight, which he previously could not understand, as he learns to see it emerge against a new horizon.

The affect interwoven throughout the conversation is not always positive. After his exchange with the Scholar, the Guide comes into a more aggressive conflict with the Scientist. The Guide claims, "it seems to me that if thinking is our activity—if we are active in it and are ourselves the thinkers—then we don't have any possibility of distancing ourselves from thinking."[195] The Scholar adds, "we are also in fact, strictly speaking, not near

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[194] CPC: 6, GA 77: 10.
[195] CPC: 18, GA 77: 28.

to it"[196] either. The Scientist reacts negatively, and strongly so, to the possible failure of the scientific, representational framework in which the object is always objectifiable and, therefore, wholly separable from the researcher. The Scientist attacks the Guide's assertion because it fails to accord with what he understands representational thinking as capable of accomplishing:

> Scientist: Then the talk a moment ago of nearness and farness to thinking has in fact no sense at all…Now I hardly know anymore where I am.
>
> Guide: I don't know this at all anymore. Thinking is to us neither near nor far. It is also not an object.
>
> Scientist: …To think something, which is not an object, as nearer or farther away is a trick that I can't seem to pull off.
>
> Guide: You are successfully thinking, without it needing to be a trick.
>
> Scientist: I don't see this.
>
> Guide:…I do not want to remain fixed on this statement. I am happy to concede to you that in this conversation we have distanced ourselves from thinking.[197]

Rather than insisting it is possible to think in a way not overdetermined by a full-scale investment in objectivity, the Guide senses that becoming "fixed" is what is most inimical to the conversation, over and above the Scientist not grasping his point. In fact, if the Scientist had grasped his "statement," this would indicate a fixity of his understanding which would undermine non-representational thinking. Both the Guide and the Scientist notice that they don't know "where" they are anymore. For the Guide, this disorientation is a measure of a certain kind of success. The Scientist, however, is not yet able to recognize the lack of bearings as indicative of thinking. The interlocutors are neither correctly comporting themselves toward what is given to them to think, nor are they engaging yet in this proper

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[196] CPC: 18, GA 77: 28.
[197] CPC: 18, GA 77: 28-29.

comportment towards each other. The double measure of relationality required in conversation—in both speaking together and speaking about something—has not yet taken place.

The Guide also offers copious praise when contributions are particularly insightful. He celebrates their newfound ways of seeing as sincerely as if they were his own breakthroughs. In one such moment, the Guide asks the Scientist, "Can you ever with your own methods—that is, with the methods of physics—investigate the essential structure of physics?"[198] The Scientist replies that he could not, particularly eloquently, "it would entail having to make physics as a science into an object of a physics experiment, in order to gain well-founded physical knowledge of the essence of thinking in physics."[199] The Guide responds, "I have in fact never heard such an excellent formulation of the difficulty that prevails here."[200] The Scientist replies, "I am extraordinarily pleased by your approval."[201] The excitement exchanged between the interlocutors here is not simply an adornment,[202] or a non-essential addition, to their conversation, but seems to be the very condition of the possibility of an open, free conversational space in which the learning benefit of the group is taken up as being of equal importance as any other aim.

The Guide also does not aim to catch his interlocutors in their misuse of a word or argument or let technical errors impede their discussion. He allows for reformulation of their thoughts and the unmaking of previous assertions without repercussions. This conversational practice stands in stark contrast to the Socrates of many of Plato's Dialogues.

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198 CPC: 23, GA 77: 36.
199 CPC: 23, GA 77: 36.
200 CPC: 23, GA 77: 37.
201 CPC: 23, GA 77: 37.
202 The question of the relation between adornment and that which it adorns is explicitly taken up in the Conversation (CPC: 31, GA 77: 47-8).

At one point, the Scientist is suddenly able to think what it could mean to wait in and for a non-representational thinking. The Scholar and Guide straightaway ask him to describe how he came to this realization. The Scientist responds "I'll try, if I don't have to run the risk that you will right away pin me down to particular words"[203] as he himself had tried to do to both the Scholar and Guide earlier, faulting their terminological choices rather than allowing an open conceptual space for their thinking to take shape in its movement, not in its fixity. Rather than responding in a quid pro quo mode, reminding the Scientist that he refused this to them just before, the Guide replies, "That is really not the custom in our conversations."[204] The Scholar confirms this practice, "Rather, we see to it that we freely move in words."[205] This generosity, which is deployed to support a sort of freedom to play with language in a conversational space capable of also bearing an affective overflow, again demonstrates that the affective dimension of the conversation between the interlocutors is in no way a mere philosophical afterthought on Heidegger's part.

This mode of relationality—involving care and attention directed toward the interlocutors' feelings concerning the directions in which the conversation meanders and unfolds—is particularly decisive when the more negative affects arise. In discussing the role of speculation as a mode of investigating technology, the following exchange takes place:

> Guide: Presumably we know so little of technology precisely because of our anxiety about speculation and its atmosphere. We think that knowledge about technology comes to us from descriptions of its procedures and reports of its achievements.
>
> Scholar: Then where does our anxiety about "speculation" come from?
>
> Scientist: From the obvious uselessness of speculation in the face of which we fear that we will fall into vacuity with it.[206]

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[203] CPC: 76, GA 77: 117.
[204] CPC: 76, GA 77: 117.
[205] CPC: 76, GA 77: 117.
[206] CPC: 5, GA 77: 9.

In responding to the Scientist, the Guide could have argued about why speculation is not useless or highlight the sorts of theoretical work it can accomplish. Instead, the Guide's concern converges on the mention of fear. He wonders what this fear indicates, "So everything useless is fearsome, insofar as we take the useful as that which *alone* is valid and pacifies us with its validity. But what is the useful useful for?"[207] The Guide ultimately raises an argumentative question. Yet he does so through noticing that this abstract question elicits an affectively negative, fearful response which also must be acknowledged and addressed so that the Scientist can continue "speaking together" with them.

Not only is this fear acknowledged, but it must also be remembered, studied, and learned just as seriously as their arguments. When discussing the essence of the human, the Scientist again expresses a feeling of uncanniness; "Faced with the unhomely essence of the human, which is now dawning upon us, one could begin to feel uncanny."[208] The Guide responds reassuring him, "[t]hat may well be. But this is not an occasion for fear,"[209] clearly referencing the fact that the Scientist had responded with fear before and wanting to appropriately register his affective response in this instance. Indicating significant growth over the course of their conversation, the Scientist replies, "It is rather an occasion for astonishment."[210] His sense of feeling overwhelmed has transformed from fear into astonishment. The Guide explicitly comments on this affective transformation before returning to any philosophical content; "Fear clouds sight, Astonishment clears it."[211]

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[207] CPC: 5, GA 77: 10.
[208] CPC: 24, GA 77: 37.
[209] CPC: 24, GA 77: 37.
[210] CPC: 24, GA 77: 37.
[211] CPC: 24, GA 77: 37.

The last major site of the Scientist's resistance to learning non-representational thinking takes place late. The Scientist expresses this defensiveness not in terms of the determinate, or objectively oriented affects of fear or astonishment, but rather expresses feeling emptiness and loss. This indicates he is in the final throes of the transformation towards relinquishing the rigid, scientific conceptual framework he employed unquestioningly at the beginning of the conversation:

> Scientist: Then what you will to do is to completely discard the observations of physics and the scientific explanation of the world?
>
> Guide: I will—as you know—only non-willing.
>
> Scientist: That I know and yet do not know. This nighttime conversation on a country path is showing me ever more clearly that we are moving entirely outside of the workshop of science, so that here I must put my scientific work and its horizons off to the side; and this calls forth in me a feeling of emptiness. On the other hand, it is precisely in the hesitancy of conversation that I sense that we are going toward something by drawing back from it. But then suddenly…I am overcome once again by an impatience with our tedious talking. I then prefer to stick with the clarity of scientific questioning, only in the end to once more let myself engage in waiting.[212]

The statement "I know and yet do not know" coupled with the Scientist's elaboration of why and how his struggle to mourn the loss of his professional, conceptual footing perhaps demonstrates the fundamental difference between the Platonic Dialogue and the Heideggerian Conversation. In Plato's *Gorgias*, we find Callicles making an almost identical statement to Socrates, saying "I don't know Socrates—in a way you seem to me to be right, but the thing that happens to most people has happened to me: I'm not really persuaded by you."[213] This is Callicles' final, frustrated attempt to attack Socrates' position concerning what it means to live a good life because it turns his own beliefs upside down. Callicles resorts to claiming he can see the reason in Socrates' argument but that reason alone does

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[212] CPC: 86, GA 77: 133.

[213] Plato, "Gorgias," Trans. Donald J. Zeyl. *Plato Complete Works*, Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), 513c.

not persuade him. Something fundamental is lacking. Unhinging what it means to know something and then being persuaded by that knowledge—pulling apart his very rational capacity at the seams—is Callicles' last possible resort in his argument with Socrates, inaugurating the final defeat of the dialogical aim to reach truth in the *Gorgias*.

The Scientist's statement that he knows and does not know, that his very thinking capacity to know something is pushed to its breaking point, is not a death rattle of their conversation, but rather an indication of narrative progress. The entire conversation has been supported by an economy of free play of language. It did not behold the conversational partners to arguments that, given the shifting horizon of the conversation, may no longer situate the conversation in the most appropriate way. But perhaps most significantly, their conversation was as concerned with the affects of the interlocutors as with the correctness of their arguments. This lead to a radically different outcome. Perhaps this was what Heidegger thought Plato was lacking. Instead of Callicles' reaction of shutting down and refusing to speak with Socrates further, the Scientist is open to the Scholar and the Guide reminding him of the thoughts he had agreed with several moments before. This leads to the Scientist to ask his interlocutors to help him[214] back through and into thinking. The Scientist has experienced asking for and receiving help to be an acceptable conversational request, indicating a care and attentiveness of an affective relationality subsisting between them which values and seeks to foster both the felt and philosophical wellbeing of the interlocutors.

I have here traced the affective relations concretely enacted between the interlocutors and the modes of language they call upon with increasing comfort and ease as

[214] CPC: 86, GA 77: 134.

they speak together in Heidegger's "Triadic Conversation." These affects mutually bear upon and diagnose each other in their sojourn of thinking together. As these relations and modes of language come into a proper relationality with one another, a practice of conversational ethics emerges in Heidegger's thinking. By this, I mean that what is at stake in a Heideggerian approach to thinking is not just an ontological pursuit, but that the affects of the particular interlocutors are of at least equal importance. Any thinking which takes the situated, uniqueness of particular persons into account seems to be ethical in essence.

However, in tracing the affects of the "Triadic Conversation," I do not thereby intend to identify a causal relation between feeling and thinking, but rather I take the feelings the interlocutors express and discuss to be symptomatic of the larger project of coming into a proper, more ethical comportment both with Being and other beings, including human beings, one which does not simply get at the truth of Being, but one which deeply cares about and is attentive to the wellbeing of the particular beings involved in that pursuit. Although the Scientist enumerates the "main faculties of the soul: thinking, willing, and feeling"[215] and then the interlocutors go on at great length to explicitly discuss thinking and willing. Feeling in a specific mode of Heideggerian conversational ethics, is still very much present in the "Triadic Conversation." In fact, the Scholar mentions that perhaps it would have been possible to derive similar conclusions "by way of distinguishing thinking from feeling."[216] The Guide responds positively to this prospect, which would provide an alternate path for their thinking over and above distinguishing thinking and willing, as they had done. Although this philosophical possibility it is not raised to the explicit, discursive level, feeling is not then left by the wayside. Rather, it consistently positions and contextualizes the

[215] CPC: 33, GA 77: 52.
[216] CPC: 47, GA 77: 75.

philosophical, ontological discussion within a more fully human sense of what it means to be receptive to a thinking which is highly dependent upon the affect, feelings, and trusting care, or lack thereof, toward others.

Conclusion: Teaching and Learning a Heideggerian Ethical Comportment

In 1959, Heidegger published an excerpt of the *Triadic Conversation* in the collection entitled *Gelassenheit*. He renamed this excerpt "Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking." While the *Triadic Conversation* spans some one hundred and fifty-nine pages, this excerpt makes up less than one fourth of this length and some of the content undergoes significant alteration.[217] Most significantly, for my purpose, one of the interlocutors is renamed. Originally, we encounter the Guide—*der Weise*—in the *Triadic Conversation*. In the subsequent edited excerpt, Heidegger reconsiders his decision, changing the Guide to the Teacher—*der Lehrer*. Although Heidegger might not have articulated the figure in the "Triadic Conversation" as a teacher in the first instance of composing this text, his retrospective reconsideration and rewriting indicates that teaching was indeed the mode of relation he was struggling, in part, to articulate in the "Triadic Conversation."

This reconsideration happens after Heidegger himself is reinstated as a teacher. Heidegger begins his first lecture course after this reinstatement in 1951-52, entitled *What Is Called Thinking?*,[218] by interrogating the related tasks of learning and teaching. Learning,

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[217] At two points, Heidegger substitutes "Truth" and "World" where he originally referred to the "Open Region"

[218] Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?,* translated by J. Glenn Gray (New York; Perennial, 2004). Published in German as Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, volume 8; Was Heisst Denken? (1951-52).*

Heidegger writes, "means to make everything we do answer to whatever essentials address themselves to us at a given time."[219] The example he provides speaks to the experience of a cabinetmaker's apprentice. In learning this handicraft, the apprentice must not only "gather knowledge"[220] and "gain facility in the use of tools,"[221] but additionally must practice allowing himself to relate to his material instead of simply doing violence to the wood, literally bending and shaping it to his will. Heidegger writes, "he makes himself answer and respond above all to the different kinds of wood and to the shapes slumbering within wood—to wood as it enters into man's dwelling with all the hidden riches of its nature. In fact, this relatedness to wood is what maintains the whole craft."[222] Relationality is found at the very basis of the possibility of learning, supporting the teaching engagement in the first place. This fundamental yielding to the address of whatever lies beyond, of whatever is still other to our learning, is learning itself. Thus in Heidegger's conception of learning, we find three elements: an inherent relation, an address which takes place in some form of hearing of language, and an otherness which must then demand an ethics in our relation to it.

Learning does not, however, necessarily follow from any situation in which we find these three conditions of relationality, language as address, and ethical comportment toward otherness. The apprentice, by definition, is supported in leaping into that which he does not yet comprehend, into a landscape of loss and strangeness, by a teacher. This figure is necessary because leaping into an entirely new way of relating stands "[i]n contrast to a steady progress, where we move unawares from one thing to the next and everything remains alike, the leap takes us abruptly to where everything is different, so different that it

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[219] Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 14.
[220] Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 14.
[221] Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?,* 14.
[222] Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 14-5.

strikes us as strange."[223] Learning cannot unfold per any notion of progress or necessary, directly causal unfolding of that which came before. It is instead a radical encounter with strangeness and strangers,[224] a shift in our understanding of our relation to what could later be described under the rubric of knowledge and tools we might gain as a secondary result of our learning.

In her reading of Diotima's Ladder, Martha Nussbaum Plato's notion of education in a similar way— "Education is being turned round, so that you do not see what you used to see."[225] This description of education or learning also takes place by emphasizing the negative, the not seeing, and the abandonment of a prior perspective. Heidegger likewise emphasizes a radical break in our accustomed modes of thinking to find what might have seemed familiar as something which begins to address us in terms we suddenly might find utterly foreign.

However, this teaching figure cannot be understood as a storehouse of information or as a translator to whom we outsource mere conversion between the languages of the familiar and the foreign. Heidegger writes, "[t]eaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn…The teacher is ahead of his apprentices in this alone, that he has still far more to learn than they—he has to learn to let them learn."[226] Teaching, for Heidegger, is decidedly not an authoritative imparting of information from teacher to student. Rather, a teacher cultivates their own responsive attunement which is attentive to the learning of their student, the learning which the teacher himself is still undergoing.

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[223] Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 12.
[224] Themes which I will consider in greater detail in reading Heidegger's "Tower Conversation," in which both "the strange" and an embodied stranger appear. See chapter two.
[225] Nussbaum, Martha, *The Speech of Alcibiades: A Reading of Plato's Symposium*, Philosophy and Literature, Volume 3, Number 2, Fall 1979, page 148.

[226] Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 15.

The relationality at play is multiplied for the teacher, expanding the teacher's own endeavor to learn and expose himself to that which might teach him in his teaching relation to the student. However, the relationality of those who are attempting to maintain an openness to losing their conceptual ground calls not only for an ontology to explain this possibility, but also an ethics which might support the address and response between the teacher and learner. In a sense, the stakes of this relation delineate a very unequal balance of power. The student is lacking not only conceptual content, but also the conceptual vocabulary to articulate this lack and the sensitivity to even register this lack in the first place. The teacher is thus in a position of power over the student from the outset and must himself navigate this dynamic ethically.

Among several tasks, the teacher must oppose the student, fighting against the entrenched patterns of thinking which preemptively close off learning. Heidegger writes, however, "[t]he opponent's role is not the thinking role. Thinking is thinking only when it pursues whatever speaks *for* a subject."[227] He continues, remarking on a thinking which remains entrenched in the polemical as already "failing from the outset to assume the attitude of thinking."[228] Opposition to the familiar, mere difference *from* that which is already understood, cannot be the modality of teaching. Rather, the ontological, thinking relation between the human being and being itself is always already an ethical relation grounded in a non-oppositional stance. The teacher's unique and immensely difficult challenge is to conjure a space in which he can present difference *for* his student and *for* himself. Thinking, as such, is lost without this concrete, situated relation to and for the other.

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[227] Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?,* 13.
[228] Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 13.

This teaching presentation of the strange as strange for others requires much more than a mere sound theoretical grasp on ideas. Given the dynamic, relational structure of *Gelassenheit*, this definite, fixed sense of understanding is expressly not the purpose of Heidegger's undertaking. But insofar as learning and practicing *Gelassenheit* is a collaborative endeavor in the "Triadic Conversation," the Guide, or the Teacher, must practice and exemplify releasement both toward and with his ideas, but also toward the Scholar and the Scientist. As Davis notes, the term *Gelassenheit* is still "a quite common German word that conveys a sense of 'calm composure'."[229] Given my reading of the crucial role of affective relationality in the "Triadic Conversation," this meaning of the term cannot be dismissed. It is the Teacher's task to practice a calm, patient attentiveness as much as it is to think in the first place. And perhaps it is the ethical task, par excellence, to couple thinking with others in this occupation.

The figure of the Teacher or teaching are explicit in all three Country Path Conversations, written in rapid succession alongside and shortly after the "Triadic Conversation." In the "Tower Conversation," the figure of the Teacher reappears. As I will show, however, this Teacher occupies the role of the student, primarily, learning how to welcome the stranger as strange. In moving beyond an antagonistic, combative initiation of the teaching-learning relation in the "Triadic Conversation," I will argue that Heidegger explores how to both teach and learn in the context of a much friendlier comportment. The third "Evening Conversation" closes, after searching for healing amidst the devastation of the political scene of Germany, with an extended discussion of teaching and learning to come to grips with the sharability of insight—a moment in which a healing experience of one interlocutor is shared in a full-bodied sense with another interlocutor, leading the

[229] Davis, "Will and *Gelasseneheit*", 169.

interlocutors to speculate that perhaps an insight is not yet an insight until it is taught and learned in relation with others.

Moving onward into this trilogy of conversational engagement, I will be closely tracing teaching as perhaps performing as a candidate of what ethical engagement with others might concretely articulate itself as for Heidegger. Beyond this conversational trilogy, I will also explore how a historical, cultural figure whose work is grounded in language—in this case the poet Hölderlin—can function as a teacher within the mode of poetizing within language in the fourth "Western Conversation." Finally, I will depict some of the limits of this conversational ethics centered around teaching and learning in a conversation between a teacher and a teacher/student who attempt to engage in cross-cultural conversation in the "Dialogue on Language." In this final conversation, I will argue that Heidegger demonstrates the danger of premature agreement as potentially challenging the ethicality of the teaching relation, especially when it is so firmly rooted in language difference. The subsequent four chapters, then, will continue to expand upon and shape the affective, collaborative relationality which poetizing marks as ethical in Heidegger's first "Triadic Conversation."

Toward Welcoming the Strange(r): Picturing Heidegger's "Tower Conversation"

> In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflexibility…Else, to-morrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our opinion from another.
> -Emerson

> Forgetfulness is not just a *vis inertiae*, as superficial people believe, but is rather an active ability to suppress, positive in the strongest sense of the word
> -Nietzsche

If the "Triadic Conversation" elaborates the ethics of conversation with a resistant interlocutor—which is to say someone who has come to the conversation with the intention of defending an already entrenched ideology—the second of Heidegger's country path conversations, entitled "The Teacher Meets the Tower Warden at the Door to the Tower Stairway," explores a different conversational mode and its accompanying set of ethical tasks. This text sets forth a conversation which is already underway in multiple senses. It covers a huge amount of philosophical terrain quickly and ends by abruptly leaving its readers behind just as a new phase of the discussion commences for the interlocutors. The snippet we readers are privy to has begun before we join it and presumably continues after we part ways with it. Rather than spectating upon a completed, resolved debate as we did in the "Triadic Conversation," we perhaps ought to understand our position peering into the

"Tower Conversation" to be one of a guest invited merely for a time at the pleasure of our hosts.

This formal quality of the "Tower Conversation" resonates with the content of the text as well. Not only might we as readers conceive of ourselves as guests for a fraction of the conversational interactions, but the Guest—*der Gast*— is one of three interlocutors in the text. The Tower Warden—*der Tūrmer*—and the Teacher—*der Lehrer*—are apparently the two main characters, however, with the Guest only appearing in the very last pages. The drama of this second Country Path Conversation is bidirectional. Along one axis, the Tower Warden is just setting out to meet the Guest, walking out the door at the base of his tower, when the Teacher appears on the scene, unannounced, to continue a conversation they had shared the night before. The Teacher is distressed so the Tower Warden invites him to walk and talk as he sets out on his errand to fetch his friend. The dramatic arc, then, is the journey of these two *toward* the Guest. This sojourning toward the Guest, however, is bidirectional; it is also a journey *away* from the tower and a mysterious picture in the tower room—the purported cause of the Teacher's distress. Yet, as we will see, drawing near to something is hardly tantamount to grasping it more fully nor does fleeing equate being free from that which one might attempt to use distance to escape. As Heidegger elaborates and illustrates in the "Tower Conversation," these seemingly contradictory trajectories are ultimately shown to be self-same.

The "Tower Conversation" is not oriented by an explicit problem or as a polemic against any expressed ideology. In the "Triadic Conversation," we encountered a preoccupation with understanding the nature of "cognition" and the scientist's resistance against considering any challenging of his belief in science. The orientation of this

conversation is subtle, nuanced, and precarious. No longer is a clear objective sought—perhaps that of persuading an interlocutor or of somehow cultivating a conversational space in which an insight takes shape for the first time. The task of the "Tower Conversation" is much greater. Rather than engaging in something akin to philosophical combat, Heidegger's characters here are already working in a collaborative, mutually supportive matter. They are uncovering and tarrying with difficult thoughts which must be generated, supported, and critiqued by the questioners working together and supporting one another in this project as it demands mutual vulnerability and trust.

This medium of collaboration which underlies and supports the "Tower Conversation" provides a natural, subsequent installment in the Country Path Conversation series. In the "Triadic Conversation," just before *Gelassenheit* is first introduced, the Guide tells his interlocutors "I don't want to go forth 'against' anything at all. Whoever engages in opposition loses what is essential, regardless of whether he is victorious or defeated."[230] If we are to take this sentiment seriously, the ultimate achievement of the collaborative poetizing concluding the "Triadic Conversation" is merely the prerequisite for the Guide to move beyond any oppositional stance. He does not only wish to think about *Gelassenheit,* but to practice it as well. To deploy *Gelassenheit* beyond strictly theoretical consideration, all conversational partners must learn to let themselves engage in its concrete practice. Such a shared endeavor we might understand as articulated under the guise of a relationship of philosophical friendship. The "Triadic Conversation" highlighted ethically practicing an open, affective responsiveness to what lies behind and beyond ideology. Yet clearing the space for this kind of thinking is not enough. One must then push onward into the reaches

[230] CPC: 33, GA 77: 51.

of this clearing, to practice inhabiting it. This is precisely the scene of the "Tower Conversation."

Teaching, in this conversation, is figured differently than it is in the first Country Path Conversation. In the preceding conversation, the Guide, later recast as the Teacher when Heidegger revised it for publication, as I discussed in chapter one, is the philosophical leader of the conversation. In the "Tower Conversation," this is reversed. It is the Tower Warden and, to a lesser extent, the Guest who seem to be philosophically guiding the Teacher. Perhaps teaching, understood in a Heideggerian way, must be at least as open to assuming the role of learning at any moment.[231] Heidegger seems to imply that a teacher, perhaps even more than a student, must practice preemptively questioning her own understanding and of seeking out others with whom to continue that questioning.

Practicing vulnerability, as the pedagogue, is crucial. If the two Teachers in the first and second Country Path Conversations are to be taken as belonging together, then the Teacher in the "Tower Conversation" expands upon this depiction. The Teacher, as I will show, proactively discloses his own proclivities toward doubting that which he has seemingly already learned. The Teacher does not avoid revealing his own desires to return to a foundational, metaphysical explanatory power to the Tower Warden *after* recognizing its limitations and even its danger. He knows these desires are flawed. He also unflinchingly acknowledges he nevertheless finds them recurring. To admit one is erring and expose oneself to further critique and examination is admirable, to be sure. But it is also valuable for philosophical pursuit. This practice of vulnerability, which is perhaps demanded of a teacher,

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[231] The indication toward the possibility, which I argue reading the two competing depictions of the Teacher together renders, that both teaching and learning are integral to a Heideggerian understanding of teaching are explicitly expressed in the first of his 1951-52 lectures entitled *What is Called Thinking?* This pronouncement, that "[t]he teacher is ahead of his apprentices in this alone, that he has still far more to learn than they—he has to let them learn" (WCT, 15).

enacts a pedagogical relation based in openness, honestly, and bravery in the face of exposure. He must constantly be on guard, keeping watch for his own thinking blunders. But not only this, when the Teacher encounters his mistakes, he is further required to draw others' attention to his failures. He is asked to animate his thinking, whatever courses it may take, for his conversational partner. In the same breath, he must trust that his failures are not fatal and that embracing his own deficiencies is the prerequisite for doing so in any friendship he might take up with another, including potentially pedagogical, philosophical relationships with those who would learn.

In the "Tower Conversation," I argue we are privy to eavesdropping on the Teacher learning how to accomplish precisely this task. The Teacher practices this in his already established friendship with the Tower Warden and in venturing a new friendship with the Guest. In what follows, I will first indicate the central events and philosophical topics of the conversation. I then turn to an exploration of the modes of relationality concerning the "strange" developed in this piece, including most importantly the relations between the picture in the tower room and the notions of science and technology, and art which the interlocutors discuss on their walk. I then articulate how the dramatic and philosophical import of the picture is not limited to the vectors of relationality it circulates. Further, I argue that the picture as art-work ought to be understood as an instance of poetizing, and thus the foil for the involvement of language as a central theme of the "Tower Conversation." This account culminates in my argument that following out these intimations culminates in an ethically inflected reading of the "Tower Conversation" in which welcoming the other as strange is articulated as the particularly Heideggerian ethical task.

The Setting: From Wonder to Welcome

"Der Lehrer trifft den Türmer an der Tür zum Turmaufgang," entitled in translation "The Teacher Meets the Tower Warden at the Door to the Tower Stairway,"[232] takes place outside,[233] somewhere in the German countryside. While the "Triadic Conversation" takes place at night, this Conversation takes place during the day. As Drew Hyland argued,[234] the lack of sunlight was philosophically significant in the "Triadic Conversation" because it highlighted the dynamic between the concealment of the sun and the unconcealing of the stars, a dynamic the interlocutors were struggling to grasp. Perhaps the daylight setting of the "Tower Conversation" denotes a more advanced level of conversation, which does not require the aid of darkness to help illuminate the important points of the thoughts with which it grapples.[235]

A tower stands tall in a field. This is the home of the Tower Warden[236] in which he carries out his daily tasks. The Conversation begins at the base of this tower, at the doorway.

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[232] Also translated in Bret Davis' collection of GA 77 *Feldweg Gespräche,* entitled *Country Path Conversations*, hereafter CPC.

[233] All save the last of Heidegger's Conversations take place outside. There are significant philosophical reasons why the final "Dialogue on Language" instead unfolds in a home. Please see chapter five for this analysis.

[234] Hyland, 352-3.

[235] See, for instance, CPC: 69, GA 77: 107 for this discussion of the role of the power of the night to guide the conversation, specifically by compelling concentration.

[236] In his "Translator's Forward" to the *Country Path Conversations,* Bret Davis wonders if the Tower Warden isn't in fact Goethe's Faust or perhaps a metaphorical representation of academic philosophers who dwell in ivory towers (CPC, xvi-xvii). Sylvia Benso, in her lecture entitled "When Heidegger's Tower Dweller Takes a Walk: On Thinkers, Poets, and Mysterious Guests in Heidegger's Second *Country Path Conversation* (GA 77)" delivered at the Collegium Phaenomenologicum in Citta di Castello, Italy in July 2013 conjectured that the Tower Warden might instead be Hölderlin. I prefer instead to approach the identity of the Tower Warden as a interlocutor for the Teacher, first and foremost, in order to unpack the ethics of the conversational engagement which unfolds between the three.

Or rather, this is where it appears to begin. The Teacher arrives and, instead of first greeting the Tower Warden, dejectedly remarks "So I have come then too late."[237] This remark is neither a clear statement, nor exactly a question. It is rather an appeal. The Teacher's remark does not formally demand an answer, yet it somehow opens outward to a hoped-for response from the Tower Warden. Happily, the Tower Warden welcomes the appeal with the question "For what?"[238] From this exchange, the conversation unfolds.

Yet this apparent origin is deceiving. Just as the "Triadic Conversation" was a re-saying or a conversation which was itself a continuation of at least one prior conversation between that group of interlocutors, we learn at the outset that the "Tower Conversation" is the latest in a series of conversations between them.[239] We are lead to presume the Teacher and the Tower Warden have spoken together on several occasions. This familiarity and implicated friendship would also provide an explanation for the lack of formalities between them which we might expect at the outset of an encounter between strangers, colleagues, or mere acquaintances.

We also learn these two figures had just been together[240] in the tower room the night[241] before. This meeting was overlaid with the Teacher's perplexity and distress aroused

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237 CPC: 105, GA 77: 163,

238 CPC: 105, GA 77: 163.

239 The Teacher refers to a thought on the first page of the "Tower Conversation" which "reveals itself ever more clearly to me each time we converse." (CPC: 105, GA 77: 163) and at several points later in their conversation. The Tower Warden reminds the Teacher that they had discussed the need for an "extensive emplacing discussion…with our neighbor" (CPC: 114-5, GA 77: 176) which hints at the shadowy presence of yet another interlocutor (at least another who, unlike Heraclitus and Nietzsche who are referenced, has had embodied conversations with our characters). The Teacher also complains to the Tower Warden just a few pages later that he finds "it difficult to follow your thoughts every time you present the relation of science and technology in this manner." (CPC: 116, GA 77: 179)

240 CPC: 108, GA 77: 167.

241 That their prior meeting was shrouded in darkness could help us further situate our own reading of the daylight setting of the "Tower Conversation," as necessarily preceded by the night and the focused concentration which it aided. This nighttime to daytime transition could also indicate the interconnectedness of the "Tower Conversation" between the project begun in the first Country Path Conversation, with the added challenge that we cannot rely upon the night to organize our relation to the generated and explored insights.

by the picture—*das Bild*—hanging on the wall. Conspicuously, the picture is never described at all; it is present only as absent. We never discover if it is a painting, drawing, or a photograph, nor what it does or does not depict. All we know is that it was a recent gift[242] to the Tower Warden from the Guest[243] and that this gift has caused the Teacher deep "unrest throughout the day"[244] as he contemplated the picture following their preceding nighttime discussion.

The Teacher describes his distress in terms of feeling a need to "solve the wondrous [*das Wundersame*]"[245] he senses emanating from the picture. The Tower Warden critiques this impulse. He intimates the Teacher only feels this distress because he presupposes that the wondrous is something to be solved, i.e. because of the "manner of thinking within which we move."[246] This manner of thinking indicates one possible arrangement in which a question is expected to be met with an answering solution. The Tower Warden claims an alternative manner of thinking is prior to wondering. This alternative he delineates as a thinking in the context of "the strange [*das Seltsame*]."[247] The strange opposes the wondrous in that it "arouses our questioning"[248] with a "hint[ing] back into itself."[249] This self-referencing introduces sense of self-relation which is based not on the introduction of an external solution, but rather on a perception and understanding of the thing on its own

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We must respond to and properly replicate for ourselves the task nature, as the domain of the night and day, previously carried for us. This challenge first unfolds in response to this picture, this piece of art.
[242] CPC: 109, GA 77: 169.
[243] For an illuminating discussion of who or what this Guest might instantiate in this conversation, c.f. Holger Zaborowski's article "Origin, Freedom and *Gelasseneheit*: On Heidegger's Second 'Country Path Conversation."
[244] CPC: 105, GA 77: 163.
[245] CPC: 105, GA 77: 163.
[246] CPC: 105, GA 77: 163.
[247]CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.
[248] CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.
[249] CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.

terms. The Tower Warden understands the wondrous[250] as calling for the human to fathom and quantify that which it indicates in the search for a solution. The strange, on the other hand, presents us with a "mere find"[251] which invites us to tarry with and remain sensitive to its enigmatic, self-referential, and self-sufficient character.

The Tower Warden is sensitive to what appears to him. He resists his desire to wonder about what he observes, remarking, "[p]erhaps we overestimate the role to be played by…the work of our representing,…remaining insensitive to that which touches us inconspicuously. He who lives in the height of a tower feels the trembling of the world sooner and in further-reaching oscillations."[252] Already this movement of "rising up," the *Aufgang* in the title of the "Tower Conversation," which the tower makes possible is denoted as fruitful for nurturing this sensitivity. The sensation of a tall building shaking and moving would likely cause distress, perhaps even fear,[253] which would immediately claim the full attention of those affected. Such an experience, we might imagine, may have a two-fold effect. First, stability of the ground which one most takes for granted, is suddenly cast into doubt. Second, any number of dangerous, even abyssally-inflected possibilities suddenly emerge;[254] one might fall from height, something might fall on one, one might need to move quickly to safer ground, one's life might be in jeopardy, or any of these possibilities might

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[250] It would be remiss to note that it seems Heidegger here is working, again, to differentiate himself from Plato, seeming to reference here Plato's famous line in his dialogue the *Theaetetus* that "philosophy begins in wonder" (155d) which is later reiterated by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*. However, this attempt seems to have the effect that, at the same time, Heidegger's conversation is, in some way, continuing or reattempting the same project which also drove Plato, despite the apparent critique that Plato (or the standard interpretation of Plato's writings) was misguided in this task of philosophizing.

[251] CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.

[252] CPC: 105, GA 77: 163.

[253] This could be understood to be a sustained interest in the affect of fear, which the Scientist repeatedly experienced in the *Triadic Conversation*, across at least the first two Country Path Conversations. Here, just as in the first Country Path Conversation, the sensation of oscillation, and the fear thereby engendered, is symptomatic of a loosening up of thinking—precisely the opening up of something like a clearing in which *Gelassenheit* becomes possible.

[254] Themes relating to the abyss and danger are here hinted at, but taken up in philosophical detail in the fourth and fifth Conversations. See my chapters four and five.

merely be threatened. In any case, these oscillations[255] which are physically more pronounced from a height such as a tower refigure and recast the totality of the lived possibilities of whomever might dwell in such a tower, perhaps functioning as a metaphor for the movement of thinking required to initiate and sustain the clearing in which *Gelassenheit* might commence. These oscillations trouble the Teacher at the beginning of the conversation. He worries that abandoning wondering would imply to "all willing-to-know…[being] shaken from the ground up."[256] By the concluding pages of the conversation, however, the Teacher and the Tower Warden agree "mere shaking brings about nothing."[257] Shaking on its own is not enough. This shaking must additionally be recognized as strange, the stakes of which I will elaborate on shortly.

To this point in the Conversation, the interlocutors have been standing at the doorway of the tower. It is here that they could easily choose to climb the stairs and "rise up" to where they could attain a new sensitive awareness and attentiveness to their ground. They instead decline this invitation. In discussing the picture, specifically the Teacher's apparently negatively-tuned affective response to the picture, the Tower Warden and the Teacher begin walking away from the tower through the fields to the country path.

The purpose of this walk is twofold. First, what seemed initially to be an odd initiation of their conversation on the part of the Teacher (which took the form of an appeal) we learn shortly was appropriate because the Tower Warden was clearly on his way out the door to meet his Guest, the third interlocutor in this Conversation. The Guest's function and presence is not alluded to in the title of the Conversation. Although the Guest

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[255] Oscillation and swinging, specifically the oscillation and swinging of poetizing language, will be a central theme in the fourth, "Western Conversation." Please see my chapter four for a detailed analysis.
[256] CPC: 105, GA 77: 163.
[257] CPC: 127, GA 77: 195.

first speaks, in the sense of contributing comments and responses in the conversation, only in the final three pages of the "Tower Conversation," his influence is felt much earlier. The picture, which the Teacher finds so unsettling, was a gift from the Guest to the Tower Warden. Although the Tower Warden warns the Teacher that the Guest cannot possibly have the knowledge the Teacher seems to desire in order to solve the problem of the picture and, in this sense, is as little related to the picture as either of them, the Guest's presence and influence remains invariably implicated by the picture. Wherever the interlocutors grapple with the picture and how they should come into proper relation with it, they are also contending with the implied approaching of the Guest into their conversation.

The second reason the Tower Warden and the Teacher set off on a walk is to view the tower[258] from a distance. The tower is already a prominent theme from the first page. On the one hand, the tower appears as a challenge to the interlocutors. It invites them to climb up into its tower room to re-confront the picture. On the other hand, the tower indicates the possibility of a mode of sensitivity toward the ground upon which it rests. It seems the interlocutors themselves are striving to emulate just such a sensitivity to the strange—to the ground of thinking as suddenly and entirely strange—in their thinking.

The Teacher had come to climb up the tower stairs to continue the conversation from the preceding night about the picture just as the Tower Warden had climbed down to go out to meet the Guest.[259] This confrontation made possible by the bi-directional[260]

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[258] The Tower Warden also remarks at another point that the picture and the tower ought to be thought together in their strangeness as well: "We should not separate the strange of the picture and the strange of the tower" (CPC: 111, GA 77: 171).
[259] CPC: 108, GA 77: 167.
[260] This illustration of bi-directional motion, and the subsequent reiterations of this dynamic, are revisited extensively in the "Western Conversation" as it reprises the theme of the river flowing both downstream but also back to its source without contradiction which is first developed in his Hölderlin lecture courses in the 1930s.

possibilities of the stairs leads to a discussion of the "selfsame,"[261] reprised from the "Triadic Conversation" in a much more condensed form.[262] It is the Teacher who offers the description of the selfsame; "Upwards and downwards belong to one another, not as two separated pieces, but rather in the sense that to the upwards belongs already the downwards, and the downwards in its manner unfolds in itself the upwards."[263] The Teacher grasps and articulates this insight, with help from a fragment from Heraclitus,[264] fairly easily. But when the Tower Warden asks him further if this selfsame belonging-together of the upward and the downward pertains only to the interior of the tower in a way which the stairs, as a symbolic propaedeutic,[265] seem to help the Teacher think, the Teacher does not understand how this belonging-together might extend beyond this strict instantiation. He laments that this "strangeness of the tower remains in the dark for me."[266] The Tower Warden responds, "This does not allow itself to be easily said from the foot of the tower. It would be better for us to catch sight of the tower from a distance."[267]

The tower, as the site which articulates the necessary relatedness of the upward and downward, makes possible and participates in that which can only with great strain be found upon close examination, or so the Tower Warden seems to suggest. Instead, a distancing from the tower is needed so as to draw nearer to its essential nature. The apparent

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[261] CPC: 108, GA 77: 167.
[262] This relative brevity may be indicating a more advanced level of comprehension and familiarity with the thought, at least in its explicit articulation and formulation, if not the meaning contained therein.
[263] CPC: 108, GA 77: 167-8.
[264] Whose fragment bookends and guides the entire "Triadic Conversation" in its mutually implicated concealment and unconcealment to and for the interlocutors.
[265] Silvia Benso argues that the stairs are also an indication of the poetic inflection of the project of the "Tower Conversation" since the building of stairs are depicted as the very activity of poetry itself near the end of Heidegger's 1942 lecture course *Hölderlin's Hymn Der Ister.* Although I will not pursue this potential additional interpretation here, please see Benso's reading on page 22 of her lecture notes "When Heidegger's Tower Dweller Takes a Walk: On Thinkers, Poets, and Mysterious Guests in Heidegger's Second Country Path Conversation."
[266] CPC: 108, GA 77: 168.
[267] CPC: 109, GA 77: 168.

geographical distancing results in a phenomenological nearing to that which seemed to be left behind. The dynamic, necessary relatedness of distancing as nearing and nearness as yet still distant surfaces repeatedly in the conversation, not the least of which as that which undergirds the definition of the human being the interlocutors develop as "the one who sojourns."[268] Sojourning—*Aufenthalt*—carries valences of taking up a temporary residence, but also the structure in which one would stay temporarily.[269] The human being is that which, as temporary requires a more permanent place in which to dwell. But this sheltering permanence of place is only figured as such because of the temporary nature of the being which requires it. The human being is that being whose temporariness and permanence both work to cancel each other out while remaining mutually needful of one another. Thus, the human being is, both in regards to location and duration of time, coming from elsewhere and already on the way out despite also being somewhere. The human being is the instantiation, par excellence, of transition and transit which nevertheless fosters a sense of belonging, however temporarily, wherever she finds herself.

This seemingly paradoxical holding together of both the cultivation of place as well as motion toward and away is performed within the "Tower Conversation." The "Triadic Conversation" unfolded in motion, save for a few moments when the conversation ran into serious difficulties in which the interlocutors halted on the path, trying to concentrate on the problem at hand without moving, which was ultimately counterproductive in that confrontational context. The "Triadic Conversation" also took place entirely on a country path. The "Tower Conversation," however, moves much more fluidly between moments of stillness and motion. It begins with the interlocutors standing at the base of the tower before

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[268] CPC: 119, GA 77: 182.
[269] See Davis' Translator's Footnote 7 on CPC: 118 for a more detailed analysis of the German term.

they strike out toward the country path. They presumably walk for a good while before even reaching the path,[270] instead striking out on their own trajectory through nature without needing the pre-determination of a path, at least for the beginning of the conversation.[271] The Teacher and Tower Warden also remark that the pauses in their walk broaden, rather than narrow, their thinking. For the Scientist and the Scholar, physically stopping had the effect of philosophically halting their progress in thinking. However, the Teacher remarks to the Tower Warden, "[t]he field through which the country path leads, where we become aware of just a bit of the abundance – a bit that is shown by its simple vistas."[272] The Tower Warden responds, "[v]istas which, against our expectations, bring us to halting stays [*Aufenthalten*] in the course of our conversation."[273] The Teacher completes their exchange, "[w]hich in no way do I feel are delays."[274] The impelling ever onwards of the interlocutors in the "Triadic Conversation" has here transitioned into a more relaxed imperative, one which allows for a measure of self-determination of the sojourners themselves in their sojourn. Even in halting, the sense of nevertheless being in motion, of arriving and departing, nearing and distancing are built into their conversation.

The Tower Warden's final spoken contribution in the "Tower Conversation" further accents how seeming contradictions can make sense if allowed to rest in themselves properly

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[270] Another important dimension of the transition between the Teacher and Tower Warden walking in the fields to their continued travel on the country path is that the Teacher, struggling with feeling as though human thinking can never reach its own inception, does not notice that they have arrived to the country path. They agree to leave this decision about the human's access, or lack thereof, to the inception open for a later time since, as the Teacher says, "we should avoid always letting new questions push us forward and drive us from the path" (CPC: 115, GA 77: 177) to which the Tower Warden responds, "Do you not notice that we are already walking on the ever reliable country path?" (CPC: 115, GA 77: 177) both foreshadowing the paradoxical status of the path as somehow both a path and not a path and reprising the central issue of the "Tower Conversation" of the importance of the "mere find" (CPC: 106, GA 77: 164) as opposed to a rigorous understanding. The Tower Warden here seems to be indicating to the Teacher that what is sought after may already lie at our feet, if only we take notice of it.
[271] CPC: 111, GA 77: 171.
[272] CPC: 120, GA 77: 184.
[273] CPC: 120, GA 77: 184.
[274] CPC: 120, GA 77: 184.

in their strangeness. He remarks that "to walk on the country path means that it is no longer necessary to make one's way on this path."[275] On its face, this statement makes little sense. How can one walk on a country path without making one's way on that path? Walking, as they had done for the latter part of the conversation on the country path, is a means by which an almost endless number of destinations are possible. One can choose to walk along a country path if the chosen destination aligns with its route. However allowing the path to select the destination is decidedly not what is here happening with the interlocutors. Their route has become their own as they have walked it and nothing about the country path has determined that in advance for them. In an odd development, then, the country path is revealed as not a country path at all, or at least not insofar as a path pre-structures the journey.[276]

The Tower Warden's remark comes on the heels of the final, and perhaps most dramatically significant, twist in the plot—encountering the Guest. This remark also only be possible in the wake of this encounter. The alleged motivations of the walk were to go out to meet the Guest and to catch sight of the tower from a distance. The Teacher also mentions that he was eager to leave the picture behind since it distressed him so. The Tower Warden tells him this means they must expressly *not* leave the topic of the picture and its effect on the Teacher. This is accomplished in the conversational exchange, but also the motion away from the picture insofar as it is also bringing the picture into proximity with its source—the

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[275] CPC: 131, GA 77: 202.

[276] Benso, in her lecture, offers an alternate translation and interpretation of the closing line of the Tower Conversation which she argues shows that "we are still (and always) on the way and more way needs to be cleared out or opened up (*bewegen* also means to clear a path where there is none) even when we surmise the strange because surmising the strange is no guarantee of being guided by the strange" (Benso, Lecture Notes, 13).

Guest himself.[277] In this sense, the Guest and the picture are both ontologically involved in the Teacher's struggle to let go of the wondrous in favor of the strange.

At first, the Teacher hopes the Guest will explain the picture to him, a hope the Tower Warden does his best to suppress.[278] Continuing to wonder about the picture, the Tower Warden warns, obstructs the picture's strangeness from appearing and sustaining itself. The Tower Warden does not deny that the Guest has a special relation to the picture, one that is characterized by "acquaintanceship"[279] rather than "expertise,"[280] but encourages the Teacher to be patient and wait because it is only "when the moment is favorable, the guest will tell us himself whether and how he has an acquaintanceship with the picture in the tower room."[281]

Without any clear objective to be executed upon meeting the Guest, the Teacher repeatedly expresses anxiety. He worries that he does not know how the Guest will be assimilated into their conversation. Upon discussing the insight that "modern science stems from the essence of modern technology"[282] rather than the reverse,[283] the Teacher tells the Tower Warden "[f]or me much would depend on this clarification, But will we have managed to do so by the time we encounter your guest?"[284] This question implies that the Teacher is operating on the presupposition that because they alone have been discussing these questions, then they alone are able to make sense of their queries.[285] He seems to think

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[277] CPC: 109, GA 77: 169.
[278] CPC: 110, GA 77: 170.
[279] CPC: 110, GA 77: 170.
[280] CPC: 110, GA 77: 170.
[281] CPC: 111, GA 77: 171.
[282] CPC: 116, GA 77: 179.
[283] Which similarly appears as it does in the "Triadic Conversation" but in a greatly condensed version which is facilely grasped by the interlocutors.
[284] CPC: 117, GA 77: 180.
[285] A moment, perhaps, in which Heidegger is performatively raising the question of whether we, as guests invited to eavesdrop on Heidegger's own thinking, are able to see or be concerned by what impels him.

that these questions could only appear to those actively wondering about them and thereby not to those who might already be more practiced in remaining sensitive to the strange. This indicates that the Teacher is still struggling to leave wondering behind, even though he in principle has conceptually accepted its import.

This struggle is not restricted to the practical implementation of a conceptual acceptance which any generic thinker might have in any ahistorical context. The Teacher is untimely engaged in an ethical struggle as well, in constituting his own relation to the concrete other of the Guest. The Tower Warden responds to the Teacher's concern about the intrusion of the Guest into their conversation; "Don't worry. He can listen, and indeed do so with such courteous anticipation that, for me, because of this prevailing gesture and attitude of his, he is the guest *par excellence* [*der Gast schechthin*]."[286] What makes the Guest a guest *par excellence* is his comportment of being first and foremost a listener. He is sensitive to the language he finds surrounding him. The Teacher, however, does not have experience with this figure, never having met the Guest before, and finds it exceedingly difficult to trust the Guest's basic disposition as the Tower Warden presents it.

The need for trust, and the vulnerability and exposure such a need indicates, appears beyond the anxiety surrounding the Guest's impending arrival. In discussing the possibility of thinking non-representationally and non-metaphysically, the Tower Warden remarks, "we still lack the trust, or even the proper aptitude for this trust in what carries and what calls on non-metaphysical thinking."[287] The trust which is lacking for this "other thinking"[288] in its conceptual articulation is also lacking in the concrete relation between the Teacher and the

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[286] CPC: 117, GA 77: 180.
[287] CPC: 122, GA 77: 187.
[288] CPC: 122, GA 77: 187.

approaching Guest. The Tower Warden is prodding the Teacher to understand what it means to allow the Guest to approach.

The Guest may be welcomed not as a problem to be solved, but rather in all his strangeness, as he is indeed a stranger to the Teacher. For his part, the Teacher must come to recognize that he is related to the Guest. This relatedness is illustrated both by the picture and at the broadest possible ontological and ethical designation of two sojourning human beings encountering one another as such. The challenge for the Teacher lies in the invitation for him to "walk away from" both his wondering thinking of the picture which so distressed him and his wondering and anxiety surrounding his attempt at pre-structuring his encounter with the other. The Teacher must reach beyond his worry about who and what the Guest is. Instead he must simply receive the Guest himself in all his strangeness—for him to be a Guest, he must first be a Stranger.

This theme of coming to properly relate to the human being—in addition to pictures and towers and thinking in general—is not merely raised with regard to concrete others, i.e. thinking beings found in bodies distinct from our own, but also in regard to our self-relation. Although it is exceedingly difficult to find our way with respect to how we should relate to another person, the Tower Warden claims that it is even more difficult to properly relate to ourselves[289] because when we look to discover "where we truly already are, stands initially our ego [*Ich*]"[290] which deceives us as to the true nature of our existence. The Teacher asks, "[t]hen when do we experience where we truly already are, if no such greedily drilling dissection of the human[291] ever reaches his essence? Must we not rather look away from

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[289] CPC: 112, GA 77: 172.
[290] CPC: 112, GA 77: 172.
[291] Nietzsche, in his essay "Schopenhauer as Educator," likewise advises strongly against drilling into one's psyche in an effort to determine our true self. He claims that one might do oneself irreversible harm. Instead,

ourselves in order to find ourselves where we truly are?"[292] Our selves are conceived, not in terms of "what" we are but the terrain, the "where" and, if we take the notion of sojourning seriously, the "when" of our whoness. This terrain is expressly not discovered by looking directly at ourselves, of closely examining what we take to be ourselves, but rather by looking "away from ourselves" do we discover its constitution as fundamentally relational.

This looking from a distance with the effect of nearing, the Tower Warden tells the Teacher "brings us before the unapparent, for example the tower or the picture."[293] He might well have continued, including the relation between self and other. The content of what is examined fades with distance in the same moment that its distinct shape, as it is related to that which found in its vicinity, comes into sharper focus. Nearing and distancing are fundamentally and necessarily relational. This dynamic also brings the interconnectedness of things and humans with other things and humans to the fore, leaving the metaphysical conception of objects or bodies behind. This phenomenological approach does not remain merely ontological, however, or at least not ontological in the sense of entities in their relation to one another, but extends into the terrain of the relations the self constitutes, both with itself and others. This interrelation with otherness at both the purported internal and external level even more urgently invites us to think about the ethical stakes of this dynamic as well.

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he recommends a different approach, one that is inherently and thoroughly relational: "Let the youthful soul look back on life with the question: what have you truly loved up to now, what has drawn your soul aloft, what has mastered it and at the same time blessed it? Set up these revered objects before you and perhaps their nature and their sequence will give you a law, the fundamental law of your own true self. Compare these objects one with another, see how one completes, expands, surpasses, transfigures another, how they constitute a stepladder upon which you have clambered up to yourself as you are now; for your true nature lies, not concealed deep within you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least above that which you usually take yourself to be" ("Schopenhauer as Educator," 129).

[292] CPC: 112, GA 77: 172.

[293] CPC: 112, GA 77: 172.

Relationality: Picturing Wonder and the Strange

The "Triadic Conversation" works to ground Heidegger's thinking of *Gelassenheit,* or releasement, as a mode of relating to things, people, and insights which is neither entirely active nor thoroughly passive. As Bret Davis explains, "Heidegger does not want to simply reverse positions within this domain…from active assertion (willful projection) to passive deference (will-less reception. Rather, insofar as releasement as 'non-willing' (*Nicht-Wollen*) would 'not belong to the domain of the will' as such, he is attempting to twist free of this very dichotomy."[294] Whereas *Gelassenheit,* as a possible attunement which transpires dissociated from the domain of the will, is figured as closer to the human being, Heidegger's relational ontology extends without bias across the range of all beings in their being.

In chapter one, I began by offering a brief sketch of Heidegger's thoroughly relational ontology. I then showed how *Gelasseneheit* as the human-most mode of affecting and being affected by that which lies beyond us, expands upon how the human being might participate in this relationality. The "Triadic Conversation," however, carries this theorizing even further. Not only is relationality and the attunement of *Gelassenheit* theorized over the course of the interlocutor's discussion, it is also performed and illustrated by way of the emergence of and engagement with affect, particularly affects which arise in the context of resistance and debate.

The majority of the "Tower Conversation," however, unfolds between speakers who are more fundamentally at ease with one another. The Tower Warden and Teacher seem to agree on much and share a commitment to learning to think in the mode of *Gelassenehit*. But

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[294] Davis, "Translator's Forward" to *Country Path Conversations*, xi.

a serious difficulty with such a shared commitment is that simply deciding to think and speak with one another in this way is precisely that which would undermine such a venture. Decision in a willful register contradicts this very impulse. Instead, I argue the "Tower Conversation" explores the tenor of vulnerability which would sustain such an undertaking. Desiring the good for another just as you would for yourself ala Aristotelian conception of complete friendship would be far less of a struggle if what is good is relational and thus affects one and the other in the same instance. Perhaps we glimpse how relationality, *Gelassenheit*, and the practice of vulnerability in the context of a philosophical friendship would be figured according to Heidegger's view in the "Tower Conversation."

In much the same way that the "Triadic Conversation" has an affective, performative dimension to its philosophical content, the "Triadic Conversation" likewise performs its content. In this case, however, there is no great ideological polemic. Instead, nature enters into Heidegger's relational ontology. The interlocutors wonder what nature is, but also how human beings ought to relate to nature. Science and technology, on the one hand, or art on the other are presented as competing modes of 'picturing' nature; "wondering" about nature is seemingly overtaken by technological thinking whereas art and poetizing seem to better guard nature as "strange." The "Tower Conversation," however, performs a further complication, interrelation, and perhaps even mutual contamination between "wonder" and the "strange." As the interlocutors find themselves entangled in the incessant oscillation between these ways of thinking, they make mistakes. But in practicing vulnerability with one another—and each with himself—they sustain the clearing for dwelling with these insights once the initial violence of opening that place has been accomplished. That this unfolds in and through nature is the thesis developed in the "Tower Conversation."

After this initial exertion to divest themselves of technological thinking a thinking of nature is a natural place to turn next. While it is not until the "Tower Conversation" that nature is thoroughly engaged, it initiated in the first Country Path Conversation. At the very end of the manuscript of the *Triadic Conversation*, after the conversation itself has ended we find a signed postscript[295] from Heidegger to the reader. He writes,

> An essential thought, which was touched on during this conversation, has not yet been further considered. It concerns the question of in what way nature, in allowing the objectification of its domain, defends itself against technology by bringing about the annihilation of the human-essence. This annihilation in no way means the elimination of the human, but rather the completion of his will-essence.[296]

Nature is not merely an environmental victim of technology. It seems to somehow consent to being represented, objectified, and harnessed by the human will or allowing the human forging of this technological representation. However nature, Heidegger maintains, in allowing this, simultaneously defends itself against these very attempts, perhaps by reducing the human himself to a standing reserve in the technological endeavor. Clearly, nature does not eliminate the presence of the human, nor the technological relation he constitutes and imposes on his relation to nature. Precisely in being objectified, nature hides.[297] This concealing is another instantiation of nature preserving itself as such. In allowing the willing, dominating project of the human to complete itself in the objectification of nature, perhaps nature accomplishes the erasure of the human being as what we might call trans-technological, i.e. as being capable of bearing relations to nature which are not merely

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[295] The only such postscript to appear in any of the five Conversations. There are supplemental notes appended to several of the others, but nothing which is both signed and included within the body of the text itself.
[296] CPC: 103, GA 77: 157.
[297] Heraclitus is invoked at several points in the "Tower Conversation." (c.f. CPC: 106, GA 77: 165 and CPC: 121, GA 77: 186). The explicit disclosure of a fragment of Heraclitus (as that which drives and guides the Scholar's understanding of thinking) also frames the dramatic development of the "Triadic Conversation" (CPC: 1, GA 77: 3 and CPC: 99, GA 77: 151-2).

technological in structure. Nature itself may be the site which fosters the possibility of relationality emerging as such, instead of being distorted via the domination of the human will—a project which works to radically obscure, and not merely conceal, that we nevertheless remain out of control in terms of what may and does essentially affect us and what we conversely affect in the world. Early in the "Triadic Conversation" a hidden power of nature was briefly mentioned, but left behind in favor of other topics. I argue that the "Tower Conversation" resuscitates this exploration.

The interlocutors work out two different possibilities for thinking nature. On the one hand, they realize they may "wonder" about nature. The wondrous is related to the "habit of questioning"[298] which "follows our will to fathom and substantiate"[299] in which science, technology, and metaphysical thinking are shown to share later in the conversation. The Teacher, after very little prodding form the Tower Warden, determines they "have to let the wondrous, and the craving to fathom it, pass by."[300] *Gelassenheit*, or "willing non-willing"[301] as it was described in the "Triadic Conversation," is the comportment or attunement which seeks to let these habits pass by, and is thus presented as the antidote to wondering. The alternative is denoted by the "strange." The strange, as that which operates without immediate reference to the will and appears "singularly and then suddenly,"[302] is aligned with fostering *Gelassenheit*. Such a posture yields to the strange resting in its strangeness. Potentially this recognition of nature's self-relation—which superseded the merely humanly conjectured, monolithic technological representation of nature—may permit

[298] CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.
[299] CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.
[300] CPC: 107, GA 77: 166.
[301] CPC: 38, GA 77: 59.
[302] CPC: 106, GA 77: 165.

us some familiarity with nature as the site which would preserve and shelter the human practice of *Gelassenheit*.

This depiction of the wondrous and the strange, however, could easily lead us astray. It would seem, in being alternatives to one another, they are also mutually exclusive. The nuance of the *Tower Conversation* is in folding this depiction back on itself, showing how both technological and non-technological thinking are thoroughly natural. Both interlocutors agree that the wondrous is tethered to the habituation towards willing. The Teacher claims, "we hold this willing to be thoroughly natural"[303] and the Tower Warden responds, "[y]et we leave what is natural to itself, as though it has always been what is right."[304] Posing the question of the natural in this way involves three presuppositions. First, nature is that which we hold it to be, implying that the human consideration of nature constitutes nature as such. Second, even though we hold nature as something (namely, natural), we also leave it to itself as self-completing and self-sufficient despite the prior human involvement with it. And third, we perceive an inherent rightness or truth in nature as it presents itself in this paradoxical valence. Nature thus inherently belongs to and with the human being on all three counts.

Ontologically, nature and the human being are already co-implicated. In considering either wonder or strangeness as two of the further, and perhaps thereby more obvious, ways of tuning this belonging-together of the human and nature, we also find nature adjectivally infiltrating considerations of the will: "we hold this willing to be thoroughly natural." What, then, are we to make of the naturalness of the will? It seems more immediately obvious to connote willing with wondering. The wondrous must be let out of its strict parameters of willing by way of a practice of *Gelassenheit*. This transformation of the wondrous by a proper

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[303] CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.
[304] CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.

letting be of the natural by the human sounds remarkably like the phenomenological description of the strange the Tower Warden previously offered. Is it the case that wondering is only natural insofar as it leads to an encounter with the strange? It seems not. The very next exchange in the conversation indicates the threatening collapse of these two into one another. After the Teacher figures "nature as such belongs in the wondrous,"[305] the Tower Warden hints that nature belongs "[p]erhaps even in the strange,"[306] which the Teacher then concludes by remarking "And is therefore nothing less than natural."[307] This seems to indicate that nature is not as closely, or exclusively aligned with willing as it appeared at first blush, and is somehow able to bear and nurture *both* the wondrous and the strange as competing and interrelated.

This theoretical exploration contesting the contradictoriness of a contradiction, travels the path not taken in the "Triadic Conversation." It is also, in my estimation, the engine of Heidegger's "Tower Conversation," elucidated on at least two simultaneous levels throughout the conversation. For example, the competing possibilities for the natural to equally support these seemingly diametrically opposed ways of approaching things, ideas, and other people are not only fleshed out at the discursive, conceptual level of the "Tower Conversation." They are also performed between the interlocutors.

The initial exchange between the Tower Warden and the Teacher concerns the Teacher wondering about the picture which caused him so much unrest. The Tower Warden initially rebukes the Teacher, saying "I scarcely still think of paying attention to something wondrous in order to solve it."[308] In dismissing the Teacher's wondering, he works instead to

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[305] CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.
[306] CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.
[307] CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.
[308] CPC: 105, GA 77: 163.

indicate the strange as a more properly bearing the Teacher's thinking of the picture. Several pages later, however, directly after the Teacher has come to grips with the necessity to "let the wondrous, and the craving to fathom it, pass by…" realizing more fully "…it is this will that is the danger"[309] the Tower Warden critiques the rebuke he himself had just offered. Of this danger, the following exchange takes place:

> Tower Warden: I myself fell prey to it when we met a moment ago. You came to solve the wondrous that had unsettled you all day long.
>
> Teacher: And you pulled me away from that.
>
> Tower Warden: Because of a haste that is difficult to recover from, a haste which never once wishes to abide with, to behold, what this wondrous might be.[310]

The Tower Warden's impulse to dissuade the Teacher's willing desire to solve the picture was itself governed by the Tower Warden's will, a will which overlooked allowing a reception of the wondrous as itself strange. Even though it was to delineate the strange, the Tower Warden's path was willful all the way down. He hastily presupposed the meaning of the Teacher's wondering and dismissed it as unimportant. It is this haste, which conceals itself as such, which is potentially dangerous, much more so than wondering.

Critiques of modes of thinking abound in the first "Triadic Conversation." The Scientist, in particular, rejects the Guide's poetic approach to thinking and is not shy about sharing his opinion. But these critiques are not, or not yet, produced by and directed toward the interlocutor himself in the "Triadic Conversation." The supportive context in which an interlocutor could preemptively say 'I was wrong' (rather than remaining in a defensive mode of debate), had not yet come to fruition. Due to the combative context, there was no space

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[309] CPC: 107-8, GA 77: 166.
[310] CPC: 108, GA 77: 167.

to cultivate a sensitivity to one's own errors. But the Tower enables a sensitivity to the oscillations of its own ground. Here, in the *Tower Conversation*, the Tower Warden does not only discursively outline the conceptual apparatus which a practice of *Gelassenheit* would require. He also enacts *Gelassenehit* in the conversation itself. He proactively reveals and admits that his *willing* of non-willing had, in the first instance, willed the rejection of the wondrous too quickly. This hastiness had disallowed the exploration of whether willing the *non-willing* could perhaps unfold from the seeds willful wondering might contain.

Although the relation between the picture, on the one hand, and science and technology on the other are not explicitly discussed, nor is their relation to nature indicated, I argue that Heidegger is tracing these relations performatively in the "Tower Conversation." Near the end of the conversation, in the course of one of the reprises concerning science and technology, these domains are cast in terms of alternate worlds. In speaking of pursuing a meditating, non-technological thinking which would shake "science and technology's claim to truth,"[311] the Tower Warden tells the Teacher "[t]he technological-scientific world is in no way an artificial one, nor is it a natural one; it is rather the consequential configuration of the metaphysical representation of the world."[312] The Teacher responds, "such that in it nature and art both disappear-"[313] Technology, and the human will from which it is sourced, is destructive. This capacity to make nature and art "disappear" leaves them more vulnerable. However, the nuance of the "Tower Conversation" is its thinking that nature, in its belonging together with the human, already involves some measure of a willful relation to the human being. And although this complexity makes it more difficult to tease out the distinction between nature and nature as it is represented by the willful human being, it does

311 CPC: 126, GA 77: 194.
312 CPC: 126, GA 77: 194.
313 CPC: 126, GA 77: 194.

not thereby discharge the importance of this task. The error science and technology make and perpetuate—rather than self-correct as the Tower Warden did[314]—in claiming truth for their respective domains, is precisely the erasing of its tracks, so to speak. It intervenes upon nature and then denies this very intervention. Nature, in retaliation withdraws.

In discussing the shaking of metaphysical representation, again using the foil of the structure of the Tower itself, the Tower Warden says, if they mean to uproot the technological-scientific merely in favor of what preceded it, "[l]ittle would be achieved thereby. For the natural world-picture-as one still calls it for short, without being clear about what is here called nature-was presumably pillaged from the technological scientific world-picture, because it did not have its own provenance as its own."[315] Continuing the theme that nature is only depicted as natural through and by is relatedness to the human capacity for representing, or "picturing," the fantasy of pure, unmitigated access to nature is here explicitly crushed. What Heidegger here calls the natural world-picture[316] is derived from the technological-scientific world-picture. To conceive of nature in itself leaves it without provenance for the human; the fantasy of non-relational purity is the epitome of technological desire though it might appear to be an environmental utopia.

Heidegger's interlocutors discuss a natural world-picture, *never* nature itself. This already indicates the "picturing" of which the human is capable, perhaps even of the metaphysical representing of which the human is capable should he risk the annihilation his own essence if he allows it to totalize rather than oscillate within his interpretation of nature.

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[314] This refocuses the issue as one of the temporality and relative permanence of error, rather than the ontology of the error.

[315] CPC: 127, GA 77: 195.

[316] This depiction of world-pictures draws upon the analysis Heidegger developed nearly seven years earlier in "The Age of the World Picture" in which he claims that "the world has become a picture" ("The Age of the World Picture," in *The Heidegger Reader*, 222).

Picturing is derived via the technological, productive, willful impulse of the human and, as such, can fall into the trap of allowing this impulse to become all consuming. This would lead to one particular picture—the thoroughly technological view of nature—appearing as though the will were the only possible human mode of relating to it. The picturing practice is perhaps *the* human practice because it can forget itself, hide from itself. It can forget that it is only one possible picture, constructed from a particular time and place, and that that which it pictures necessarily supersedes it.

This willing impulse to dominate nature can lead to the mistaken notion that nature has thereby been turned inside out, harnessed, and stands utterly available to us. But this conception of the natural world-picture has merely been "pillaged" from the technological-scientific world-picture. Of the provenance of natural world-picture itself, which is to say mere nature before it has been subjected to the picturing of the human, the Tower Warden says it "remains distant, because the provenance itself kept itself concealed."[317] What technological representation conceals is nature's own self-concealment—it forgets that nature exceeds its notions of it—while simultaneously purporting to be able to fully objectify nature. The technological-scientific world-picture, in depicting nature as a natural world-picture, omits that nature is not reducible to the picture or the representation we might make of it. This is despite that the human is already involved in rendering the world, as a picture, at every stage, whether this rendering take its cue from wondering or the strange. What is lost in the exclusively technological representation of nature is precisely *not* the fact that human beings are doing the picturing or representing activity, but rather the sensitivity towards the non-totality of our picture of the natural world. Our belonging to nature is not constituted by our dominating nature so much as the reverse, whether or not we choose to

[317] CPC: 127, GA 77: 196.

acknowledge this. For this, perhaps we need to climb the Tower's stairs, to feel the oscillations which suddenly might dislodge our presuppositions just enough.

Language: Art as Poetry

Not only does technological representation threaten the effective disappearance of nature, but also of art.[318] That Heidegger chose to describe both the technological-science world picture and the art-picture in the tower room using the same term—*das Bild*—cannot be overlooked. Central to my reading of the "Tower Conversation" is that the picture itself, as articulated in its relation to the Guest and, further, its framing and generating power for the conversation between the Tower Warden and the Teacher perhaps unfolds how picturing artistically resists picturing in a technological mode.

The picture was a gift from the Guest to the Tower Warden. The Teacher had seen it the night before in the Tower Warden's tower room and it caused him distress. We have no indication of what this picture might depict. It is concealed. Initially the Teacher wanted to erase this concealment, to force the picture to make itself available to him, so that it would supply the solutions to his questions. The Teacher first approached the picture in a technological, willful manner. But, perhaps the picture can also be approached non-representationally, in a way which would preserve all its strangeness. Perhaps art is our doorway to coming to better grips with the oscillations which we require to think of nature, naturally. Again, it seems Heidegger is figuring the task of the human being in relation to nature in the "Tower Conversation" as being for us to recognize nature as that which

[318] CPC: 126, GA 77: 194.

supersedes our technological representation of it while nevertheless always being constrained by some sort of human, picturing, representing activity. The question then becomes can the human being picture nature non-representationally? Can the picture, as art, indicate this possibility?

In the previous chapter, I argued that the success of the "Triadic Conversation" was marked by the three interlocutors' collaborative poetizing at the end of the conversation. Poetizing there functioned as symptomatic of *Gelassenheit*, of non-representational thinking. Even though language and poetry are hardly explicitly discussed in the "Tower Conversation," they still play a critical role in indicating this other thinking. They do this, I argue agreeing with Silvia Benso's considerations, precisely by way of the picture. Benso argues[319] that to understand the role played by poetry[320] in the "Tower Conversation," we must first turn back to the "Origin of the Work of Art." In this essay, Heidegger tells us in art what is at stake is "the disclosure of the particular being in its being, the happening of truth."[321] Here we should understand the proper relation of particular beings to Being as the central concern. If the picture in the "Tower Conversation" is indeed an art work, then it ought to disclose its relation to being—the role which I have argued has been assigned to nature in this Conversation. Further, Heidegger claims in the "Origin of the Work of Art" that "*all art*, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is, as such, *essentially*

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[319] Silvia Benso, "When Heidegger's Tower Dweller Takes a Walk: On Thinkers, Poets, and Mysterious Guests in Heidegger's Second Country Path Conversation," (lecture delivered at Collegium Phaenomenologicum, Citta di Castello, Italy, July 2013). Benso has graciously provided me the text of her lecture for use in this dissertation though it remains as yet unpublished.

[320] As I indicated in a footnote above, Benso makes a strong case for the Tower Warden to be representative of Hölderlin himself since he lived in a tower while he was being cared for in his madness and because Hölderlin's *Gesellshaft* was found in 1943, just before the composition of the "Tower Conversation" (Benso, 16-17) among other textual resonances Benso traces between this conversation and other texts Heidegger produces concerning Hölderlin. Although I am not arguing for the identity of the Tower Warden and the identify of Hölderlin to be read as completely coinciding in the *Tower Conversation*, I find Benso's suggestion provocative and I am ultimately in agreement with the conclusions about the stakes of poetry and language we should understand as operative in the "Tower Conversation."

[321] Heidegger, *Origin of the Work of Art,* 36.

poetry."[322] If the picture as art work is properly disclosing its relation to nature, then the mode of that disclosure is a poetic one. As Benso notes, Heidegger does give a privileged role to poetry narrowly understood because of the explicit role of language as both material and mode,[323] or to *Poesie* rather than *Dichtung.*[324] However, for Heidegger, all art works—pictorial or visual arts included—disclose truth poetically and thus are ontologically related to language as that which speaks to or addresses the human.[325] The picture has clearly addressed the Teacher in some respect, as is indicated by the lingering affect which holds the Teacher in relation to it, and as such can be understood as operating according to the logic of language, understood from a Heideggerian perspective.

If we can understand the picture as emblematic of the poetic, we can also, I propose, trace the proper relation of the human to nature following the same logic as the relation unfolded between the picture and the interlocutors in the "Tower Conversation." The picture took center stage in the conversation the evening before between the Teacher and the Tower Warden. That the picture itself, as poetic, functions according to the logic of re-saying insofar as its emergence into language has already taken place and this discussion is formed on the basis of its memory and reanimation. Its artistic force can thereby be read according to the same logic as the poetic re-saying of language which Ziarek indicates and which I outlined in the previous chapter. What is incumbent upon us in deploying language as a poetic re-saying is that we first and foremost listen.

The importance of listening is emphasized repeatedly in the "Tower Conversation." First, as discussed above, the Guest is described by the Tower Warden as "the guest *par*

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[322] Heidegger, *Origin of the Work of Art,* 70.
[323] Benso, 4-5.
[324] As Ziarek distinguishes them, and which I referred to in chapter one.
[325] One of the claims Heidegger develops in his essay "Language."

excellence"[326] because listening is his "prevailing gesture and attitude."[327] It is this capacity of the Guest to listen which presents the greatest challenge for the Teacher to accept and trust in anticipating the Guest's arrival. Second, the Tower Warden laments that humans have forgotten how to listen; "the human has long forgotten how to listen to the mysteriously working enabling-capacity of language."[328] If the Guest can listen, what he is listening to is presumably this "enabling-capacity of language." And, if we can associate the picture with the Guest (as the origin and giver of the picture) and take seriously the notion that as art the picture is ontologically poetic, then this enabling-capacity must also be understood as the poetic origin of language as such.

To listen means to listen for the poetic mode shooting through language which explodes our understanding of language as a mere tool for communication.[329] As Heidegger writes in "Language," "We are always speaking, even when we do not utter a single word aloud…We speak because speaking is natural to us."[330] If we hear the full force of the word "natural" in Heidegger's description of the human relation to language, the invitation is also extended, it seems to me, to think of the non-annihilating relationship between the human and nature in the medium of language. Specifically, by understanding nature from a poetic perspective of letting nature be in the same moment that we relate ourselves to it (or "picture" nature.) Perhaps there is an underlying environmental dimension to the "Tower Conversation" which would be fruitful to explore. However, I will leave this aside in favor of tracing the possible ethical implications of this theory of poetic relationality indicated by the concrete relations of the interlocutors in the "Tower Conversation."

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[326] CPC: 117, GA 77: 180.
[327] CPC: 117, GA 77: 180.
[328] CPC: 118, GA 77: 181.
[329] Heidegger, "Language," 190.
[330] Heidegger, "Language," 187.

The Ethics of Welcoming the Strange(r)

In the *Tower Conversation*, listening does not merely remain an ontologically salient, theoretical topic of conversation. Before it is explicitly raised, listening—specifically listening to an other—is also performed by the interlocutors. As the Teacher and Tower Warden are discussing the relationship the Guest does or does not have to the picture—is he an expert on it? Or merely acquainted with the picture in the mode of being receptive to its message?[331]—the following exchange unfolds. The Teacher at first wants to meet the Guest because he believes the Guest "will be able to give me some direct information about the picture."[332] The Tower Warden dissuades the Teacher from merely thinking about the Guest as a receptacle of information which would solve the picture as though it were a mathematical problem. The Teacher then asks, "But perhaps he will show us the strange"[333] a hope which the Tower Warden hastens to squash even more; the strange, even less than the wondrous, cannot be made apparent at will.

The Teacher, refusing to give up, insists "[y]et if he gave you the picture, he must have certainly had an acquaintanceship with it."[334] At this point, the conversation abruptly shifts course. The Tower Warden asks, "How did you come upon this word?"[335] referring to acquaintanceship or *Kundschaft*. The pace of the conversation is radically altered by this question. Clearly something is at stake in this word, both as a description of the relation

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[331] CPC: 110, GA 77: 170.
[332] CPC: 110, GA 77: 169.
[333] CPC: 110, GA 77: 170.
[334] CPC: 110, GA 77: 170.
[335] CPC: 110, GA 77: 170.

between the Guest and the picture, but also perhaps in the Teacher's own relation to this word. The Teacher admits "I once found it used in your speech. At the time I was unable to hear it with sufficient clarity, but since then it has continued to strike a chord in me."[336] *Kundschaft* is re-said, remembered, and reappropriated from the speech of his friend the Tower Warden. It is an instantiation of relationality, or attests to such relationality. The word itself was a gift which had not articulated itself as such prior to that moment. That it was this particular word the Teacher came upon, both previously and in the moment of struggling with the Guest's relation to the picture, highlights listening as listening to otherness, but otherness as something operating according to the logic of relation.

The Teacher and the Tower Warden continue discussing the finer points of the acquaintanceship the Guest has with the picture,[337] stressing the importance of reception over any sort of willful dissection of the picture. The Tower Warden emphasizes that the Guest's relation to the picture cannot be forced, but rather must be allowed to emerge in its own way, in a mode which sounds like *Gelassenheit*. He tells the Teacher, "[w]hen the moment is favorable, the guest will tell us himself whether and how he has an acquaintanceship with the picture in the tower room."[338] After the Tower Warden explicitly gestures towards the requisite patience the Teacher must have in this manner, the Teacher responds several lines later "I have again let the feeling of unrest that the picture brings me run its course."[339] The Tower Warden responds, "[t]his letting is good."[340]

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[336] CPC: 110, GA 77: 170.
[337] The Tower Warden is careful to establish that the kind of acquaintanceship the Guest has, namely that the Guest does not have acquaintanceship of the picture which would be tantamount to expertise, but rather may have acquaintanceship through the picture which marks the reception of its message (GA 77, 170, CPC 110.
[338] CPC: 111, GA 77: 171.
[339] CPC: 111, GA 77: 171.
[340] CPC: 111, GA 77: 171.

This is the only place in the "Tower Conversation" where the interlocutors makes a direct, explicit value judgment. Even the will is only ever characterized as a "danger,"[341] never something bad or evil.[342] The letting, the releasement which is "good," is not declared to be such because the anxiety surrounding the picture for the Teacher is now absent, as if maintaining a calm composure even in the face of what might pique our interest or concern is the objective. Rather, it seems crucial to the releasement which the Teacher first seriously struggled with, feeling the desire to wonder about and hopefully solve the problem of their source. The Tower Warden also made an error in willfully dismissing the wondrous the Teacher initially brought to his attention, effectively treating the wondrous with a merely inverted modality of wonder; dismissing something as not interesting out of hand is still caught up in the logic of the will and thus in technological thinking. The Tower Warden initially did not recognize wondering itself as approachable as itself strange and thus capable of bearing a message like the picture. But he corrected himself several pages later, proactively admitting his error to the Teacher in a moment of practicing vulnerability and trust toward his philosophical friend. The Teacher is also called upon to learn and practice this. To let this feeling of unrest pass by, the Teacher first recognizes himself committing a willful error before he can compensate in turning toward and into a practice of *Gelassenheit*.

What the conversational partners seem to learn from this interaction, I argue, is that judging an instance of the human involvement with a situation or event as "good,"—clearly an ethical or ethically valued concern—centers upon the right sort of listening to the broader sense of what Heidegger means by language. Listening can extend across topics raised by science and technology, nature, pictures, and the language of the other—an even more

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[341] CPC: 108, GA 77: 167.

[342] "Danger" is discussed in much more detail in the "Dialogue on Language" and the fifth chapter of this dissertation. "Evil" is likewise treated in the next "Evening Conversation" and by my accompanying commentary.

explicitly ethically charged relation. That the Teacher listened to the Tower Warden in some conversation long past, listening even to a word which he admits made no sense to him then, which was then prompted its re-saying. This reappearance then incited a releasement into what is judged to be "good" or ethical in nature. Even if the picture is merely a picture and not indicative of any specific relation between the interlocutors and the picture, this call[343] to listen recurs when the Tower Warden calls upon the Teacher to listen to and come to trust the Guest's listening capacity. In so doing, he also lets the anxiety surrounding the Guest's arrival into their conversation pass through and by. The relation constituted by listening is at once based in language, perhaps even poetic language, and inextricably grounded in properly encountering otherness.

This other is most clearly performed for us, in the "Tower Conversation," by the Guest, with whom the Teacher, despite his preparation, attempts to make a "mistake."[344] Once the Guest finally appears, he tries to break off the conversation with the Tower Warden, ostensibly to be able to properly meet and welcome the Guest into a conversational space in which the Teacher deems him more able to share. In attempting to meet the Guest in a hospitable way, the Teacher learns the true mode of welcoming the strange as the strange(r). The Guest says, in the final line of the "Tower Conversation," just as it seems their conversation takes off around another bend beyond which we readers are no longer able to follow, "the three of us are in the same condition, and there is no reason to break off the conversation you have begun."[345] The slippage between the pronouns "you" and "us" performs and attests to this welcoming gesture. The recognition of the sameness (but not

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[343] Of course, one of Heidegger's earliest collection of thoughts on a topic which indicates his thinking concerning ethics more broadly, namely sections 54-60 on the "Call of Conscience" in *Being and Time* also functions according to a call which, though silent, unfolds in the register of language.
[344] CPC: 131, GA 77: 202.
[345] CPC: 131, GA 77: 202.

identicalness[346]) of their condition is the precondition of what it means to trust enough to extend this welcome to strangeness. This relational possibility signaled between "us" and "you" nevertheless hardly loses its character of yet remaining distant and an absolute identification is never accomplished. The Guest is finally allowed to be recognized as strange and even as a Stranger (perhaps his concealed title.) He is not thereby mined as a resource in the task of solving the problem of the picture, indeed once they encounter each other the picture is not even raised as a topic of conversation. The Stranger is, quite simply, someone with whom we become acquainted.

Conclusion: Friends in Thinking

This posture of reception of the Guest as Stranger is also already a repetition of an encounter bespoke by the interlocutors earlier in the "Tower Conversation." Recall the setting of this conversation differs substantially from that of the "Triadic Conversation" in which the trajectory of the interlocutors' relationships was initially and for the most part characterized by opposition and debate. In this second Country Path Conversation, however, the interlocutors push on into the clearing. They are not partners in combat, but rather partners in thinking—perhaps philosophical friends—who must learn to become self-critical and trust in practicing vulnerability and seeking out and receiving help from one another. This set of conversational practices involve not only the other found in the conversational partner or partners, but also implicate oneself in a deeper way. The Tower Warden warns that our most persistent obstacle in this venture is "ourselves, for there,

[346] C.f. the distinction between the "same" and "identical" in the "Triadic Conversation" (CPC: 25, GA 77: 38-9).

where we truly already are, stands initially our ego, or if you still wish to name it so, our existence."[347]

We must instead learn to remain in a relation of distance from—and thus be capable of approaching—ourselves, perhaps in the very mode of welcoming we find with the Guest. In welcoming ourselves as strange, perhaps even as a Stranger to ourselves, we must constantly turn back and towards ourselves: "*From everywhere we must continually turn back to where we truly already are*"[348] which very well may be the *ethos*, understood as the dwelling place or abode, of being as I will explore in this next chapter. It may also be the turning back toward the strangeness of nature, or pictures, and of strangers turned guests, all of which are—and ought to be recognized as—astonishing.

[347] CPC: 112, GA 77: 172.
[348] CPC: 115, GA 77: 176, italics original.

The Politics of Waiting: Learning Healing in Heidegger's "Evening Conversation"

> Is there something to be gained from grieving, from tarrying with grief…[i]s there something to be gained in the political domain by maintaining grief as part of the framework by which we think our international ties? …The attempt to foreclose that vulnerability, to banish it, to make ourselves secure at the expense of every other human consideration, is surely also to eradicate one of the most importance resources from which we must take our bearings and find our way.
> -Judith Butler

> Is evil-doing, not just the sins of omission but the sins of commission, possible in the absence of not merely "base motives" (as the law calls it) but of any motives at all, any particular prompting of interest or volition?
> -Hannah Arendt

The final installment in the Country Path Conversations is a mediation on devastation, evil, and how we ought to recover—as a collective—over and through time. The "Evening Conversation" rehearses previous themes explored in the first two Country Path Conversations. However, it also inaugurates an explicit working through of shifting terrain which becomes increasingly precarious with the introduction of the political scene

The first Country Path Conversation, the "Triadic Conversation," takes place with a group of three interlocutors who hold vastly divergent positions in the domains of scientific inquiry, intellectual historicality, and poetizing. Moments of disagreement, digression, and emotional outbursts punctuate their discussion. In the end, however, these interlocutors mutually participate in collaborative poetizing. This indicates their ideologies have been set aside, or at least that they have run up against the limitations of the explanatory power of

those ideologies. It also shows that their resistances to fully embracing the scope of questions and insights which might challenge the basis of their ideological structures have been discharged. As I argued, the Heideggerian attention to affect illustrates how one might throw a bridge over the gulf between diametrically opposed ideological positions. They instead come to learn patience for and with one another.

In the second Country Path Conversation, the "Tower Conversation," the Teacher learns to assume the posture of learning. The assumption of this role is enabled by his friend the Tower Warden as they walk together to go out to meet the Guest. As the figure who has already grasped the limits of particular view points and has had experience wrestling against habitual ways of thinking, the Teacher is left to here grapple with the proper attunement of the ownership of his task. He must learn to sustain his welcoming comportment toward that which is strange in the world, in others, and in himself. Together, the Teacher and Tower Warden learn how to welcome the strange, in the context of a trusting friendship, without thereby de-strangifying that which emerges.

The third and final Country Path Conversation, the "Evening Conversation," is neither a scene of philosophical combat nor a meditation on how interpersonal friendship cultivates a tarrying with what is strange. Healing and learning how to wait upon that which heals are featured. The healing illustrated in the Conversation, at first, seems to uniquely belong to one of the two interlocutors. As the Younger Man shares his experience with the Older Man, healing is ontologically unfolded to be essentially relational, social, and even political in its import. Here, Heidegger grapples with the fact that we are not alone in the human world, that our very plurality, the groups which form in the context of this plurality, and even national organization essentially spring from our grappling with what it means to be as human beings. Heidegger here articulates learning as a communal and community-

building task. To heal is to heal our relationship not only with Being itself—as we might expect given Heidegger's philosophical, ontological commitments—but our relationship with Being implicates our relation with other human beings as well.

The Setting: A Collective Antidote to Evil

Unlike the first and second Country Path Conversations, the third Conversation "*Abendgespräch in einem Kriegsgefangenenlager in Rußland zwischen einem Jüngeren und einem Ältern*," entitled in translation "Evening Conversation: In a Prisoner of War Camp in Russia, Between a Younger and an Older Man," the setting of this Conversation is very precise. This specificity operates on two levels. Meta-textually, Heidegger locates and dates the writing of the "Evening Conversation," at Schloss Hausen in Donautal on May 8, 1945. He also adds a postscript; "On the day the world celebrated its victory, without yet recognizing that already for centuries it has been defeated by its own rebellious uprising."[349] Whether or not the completion of the "Evening Conversation" actually coincided with V-E day, the unconditional surrender of Germany, and the ending of WWII, Heidegger's decision to date this text is among one of his more blatant political moments within his writings which typically eschew politics in favor of a thinking of ontology. Among the "Supplements" directly following the Conversation, Heidegger also writes, "[t]he War at an end, nothing changed, nothing new, on the contrary. What has long subsisted must now noticeably come

[349] CPC: 157, GA 77: 240.

out."[350] One of the ways what is old must noticeably come out in the "Evening Conversation" is, perhaps counterintuitively, through silence and the ontological status of silence which I argue below.

In the Conversation's historical and geographical setting, the immediate political context is implied on the textual level as well. The two interlocutors are German prisoners in Russia, captured in the aftermath of a massive political upheaval and, presumably, a war which they lost. An important biographical detail never explicitly appears, but nevertheless undergirds Heidegger's composition of this Conversation, setting the personal and the political on a collision course. In 1945, during the writing of the "Evening Conversation," Heidegger's own sons, Jörg and Hermann[351], were missing on the Eastern front. Their whereabouts were unknown to their parents for some time while they were held in a Russian POW camp. That Heidegger wrote a conversation explicitly set in a Russian prisoner of war camp during the time they were missing—which explores philosophical themes such as evil, waiting, pain, healing and how all of these relate to what it means to be a human being—could not but be (in addition to a philosophic and virtuosic exercise) also the exposure of some connective tissue between Heidegger's personal life and his thinking. Yet the bearing between concrete embodied life and thinking—the interrelation of human events requiring an ethical response and philosophizing as such—is nowhere better attested to in Heidegger's Conversations than at this authorial moment. Even the healing process undertaken by the interlocutors themselves unfold this necessary connection between first-person, phenomenological experience and the sharing, community-fortifying implications of such a seemingly private event.

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[350] CPC: 157, GA 77: 240.

[351] C.f. Hermann Heidegger's book entitled *Heimkehr 47. Tagebuch-Auszüge aus der sowjetischen Gefangenschaft* which detailed his experience as a prisoner of war.

While the setting is clearly drawn from Heidegger's personal life as it was intertwined with and deeply impacted by the political status of his country at that time, there are no further obvious indications that the characters are direct representative of his sons. The Conversation takes place between a Younger Man and an Older Man. Heidegger again evades giving details about the characters, beyond these titles. As I've discussed in previous chapters, this bare confrontation may seem to attest to Heidegger's ineptitude in constructing as animated of interchanges as a Platonic Dialogue accomplishes, for instance. This may very well be. However, this lack of the full-bloodedness of these characters may instead invite us—as reader—to come to terms with these characters on the terms of the exchange we witness between them and only on this basis. The demand to confront others as near strangers in this way is a near daily task for many of us. The absence of any basis, beyond the age and sex, upon which to prejudge these characters, or to understand who they are or what their particular histories may be beyond the setting in which we find them extends a unique invitation. I wonder if it this construction which withholds personal details about these interlocutors invites us as readers into what I will understand as a particularly Heideggerian sense of ethical engagement with these characters. We can make no assumptions, have no expectations, and make no prejudgments about their personalities or beliefs. The lack of proper names or distinct personalities may gesture toward a Heideggerian precondition for ethics: we must prepare ourselves for an encounter with the other as they are, not as we imagine or expect them to be. We must engage in a practice of *Gelassenheit* with the other.

What we do gather about these characters from their titles is their relationship to time.[352] The explicit appearance of a temporal designation—Evening—in the title of the Conversation supports and reflects the focus on temporality.[353] Presumably one man has lived longer than the other. Yet the length of a life relative to clock or calendar time does not necessarily yield a correspondingly more mature understanding of the world—often the Younger Man seems to articulate more well-formed ideas than his Older fellow prisoner.[354] Nevertheless, temporal designations are vital to figuring the tenor of the relationship between these two characters. These titles, as grammatical comparatives, are necessarily relational in significance. One cannot be older or younger without demarcating, and thus establishing a temporal relationship with the other. While relationality is crucial to both the philosophical and performative dimensions of both the "Triadic Conversation" and the "Tower Conversation," it is not until the third Country Path Conversation where the characters' necessary relationality to one another is embedded in their titles, over and above their occupations or other more detailed descriptions of their feelings, histories, or interactions with one another.

These temporally-related characters are in a prisoner of war camp. The topic of confinement is close at hand as is the desire for and awareness of the supposed freedom which lies beyond the enclosure of the camp. The two men begin their conversation when the Younger Man acutely recalls his prior freedom on the other side of the bars. It is his desire to be reunited with this freedom which is so painful for him. It is this pain which diagnoses the need for healing. The Younger Man then tells the Older Man, "[a]s we were

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[352] This is opposed to the indications toward occupations we find in the titles of the interlocutors in the first and second Conversations such as the Scientist, Teacher, and Tower Warden.

[353] Though temporality as such appeared, both briefly and in more substantive ways, in both preceding conversations (the tracing of which I had to pass over in favor of exploring the ethical implications of the performative dimensions of these texts), it is not until this third Conversation that confronting this topic is philosophically unavoidable.

[354] CPC: 142-3, GA 77: 218-221.

marching to our workplace this morning, out of the rustling of the expansive forest I was suddenly overcome by something healing. Throughout the entire day I meditated on wherein this something that heals could rest."[355] The Younger Man does not claim that the expansiveness of the forest caused his healing, but does specifically associate the "rustling" of that space as a supportive context for a healing possibility.

This rustling of healing is also described as a movement which "swings [*schwingt*] out into a concealed distance, but at the same time swings back to us again, without ending with us"[356] and as a "self-veiling expanse."[357] These descriptions allay the interpretation that sheer spatial magnitude alone is sufficient to provoke this experience. Both interlocutors confirm this understanding would be inadequate. Tracing movement across space, which is inherently also temporal, provides this possibility for the Younger Man[358] which, as the Older Man explains "frees us while we are here—between the walls of these barracks, behind barbed wire—incessantly run up against and wound ourselves on what is objective."[359] Because the expanse of the forest is rustling, swinging, and self-concealing, the attribution of the cause of the healing phenomenon to objective space is untenable. As Mitchell explains, "[t]he expanse does not give itself completely, it veils itself, and in this withdrawal and veiling, it is nothing

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[355] CPC: 132, GA 77: 205.
[356] CPC: 132, GA 77: 205. This language of "swinging" and "oscillation" which also translates the German verb *schwingen* is developed in much more detail in Heidegger's fourth "Western Conversation," which is the subject of the following chapter. Both Conversations utilize this verb starting on their first pages.
[357] CPC: 132, GA 77: 205.
[358] This emphasis could be read as setting Heidegger's understanding of the relation between space and freedom in relief against something like Kant's analysis of the Sublime in the *Critique of Judgment*, for instance. It is not the sheer mathematical magnitude, or even the implicit threat to our existence contained "in" the forest's expanse which somehow calls to mind freedom and thus our moral character. Rather it is the proceeding of what is described as the "self-veiling" or "concealing" activity of this space which allows the human to wait upon and therefore think about it. This perhaps also provides a vantage point to read Heidegger's critique of mere "capaciousness" against Hannah Arendt's depiction of the "capaciousness of thinking," which seems to find its footing in her reading of Kant's Third Critique as an ethical and political, rather than an aesthetic analysis. in her essay "Thinking and Moral Considerations" as well. However, I must leave the working out of this connection for another project.
[359] CPC: 132, GA 77: 205-6.

wholly present, in neither a spatial nor a temporal sense."[360] This movement is spatial and temporal and is performed within the text by the geographical and physical confines of the camp and the temporalized characters themselves as they react to temporalized and temporalizing concepts later in the Conversation such as waiting, coming, and "older" and "younger" definitions of the human being.

To argue the "Evening Conversation" is devoted to elucidating the Younger Man's healing would be only partially correct. The Older Man evades espousing any causal notion of the *forest's* expanse and healing in explaining "[t]he healing expanse is not that of the forest, but rather, the forest's own expanse is let into what heals."[361] The expanse might be figured as a forest, but it might also emerge in relation to the sky, or the sea, or even perhaps a desert. This dislodges the healing expanse from the physical forest—from any sense that it was produced by the forest, and from any necessary uniqueness of that experience arising only in that time and place for that individual. This dislodges healing from its particularity which opens the possibility of healing to a much broader possible audience. As I will show shortly, Heidegger is here working to think through the philosophical and ethical stakes of what it means for human beings to share their experiences with one another.

That our individual experiences are not strictly relegated to their physical or singular occurrences, is perhaps the most compelling and surprising insight Heidegger develops in the "Evening Conversation." In the "Triadic Conversation," collaborative poetizing is symptomatic of the interlocutors' mutual, concurrent ontological resolution of their debate, resulting from tarrying with and detangling their preceding conflict. The "Tower Conversation" affirms the courage, trust, and vulnerability one must nourish in friendships

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[360] Andrew Mitchell, "Heidegger's Breakdown: Health and Healing Under the Care of Dr. V.E. von Gebsattel," in *Research and Phenomenology* Volume 46, Issue 1 (2016): 77.
[361] CPC: 133, GA 77: 206.

which involve teaching and learning comportments toward one another. But the "Evening Conversation" supplies the key toward understanding just how central the other is for the venture of thinking. Heidegger here articulates how it is that an insight can only be assessed to in fact be an insight.

The insightfulness of an insight is confirmed by establishing whether the purported insight can, through conversation, be formulated and shared with others, sparking the same insight for them. In one of the key passages of this text, the Younger Man tells the Older Man, "[t]he more essential an insight is, the greater must also be the tact with which it awakens in fellow humans the knowledge that grows from it."[362] Whether an insight is essential, i.e. whether it is an insight at all, can only be ascertained in and through the community we share with other human beings. Heidegger does not here claim that an insight must be sharable with our conversational partner alone. Rather, the test is open to any and all "fellow humans." This implies that the entire human community is the potential rubric for determining the essentiality of the insight of any single human being. Perhaps Heidegger is here suggesting that human beings are not able to fully grasp, trust, and sustain the essentiality of any insight we may happen upon without sharing and discussing that insight with others. In this case, healing, if it is understood to function as or flow from an essential insight into our proper relation to the world or thinking or Being as such, is only allowed to rest in its assured essentiality when it is shared, both discursively and participatorily, with others.

I read the central drama of the "Evening Conversation" as the unfolding the philosophical stakes of this sense of communion and community built around the sharing of insights with one another. The Younger Man aims to share, in conversation, the healing that

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[362] CPC: 139, GA 77: 215.

befell him so that the Older Man could also be healed. If we are to take Heidegger seriously in linking the verification of an insight to capacity of that insight to be shared with others, we cannot understand "something healing" to have essentially touched the Younger Man if that experience is not then successfully shared with his conversational partner. This sharing is in no way subsequential to healing, but part and parcel of the confirmation of that healing experience as something deeply transformative, rather than a merely fleeting illusion of temporary pain relief.

The mutual involvement in "something healing" originates in the Younger Man's account that some aspect of the expanse of the forest "brings to us something freeing."[363] As the Younger Man indicated, both men were marching through the forest to their workplace. On this march, they, to some degree, had a shared experience. They are both prisoners, thus not free, and both occupied the same physical, geographical space of the forest, participating in an embodied march through it. Yet the Younger Man is careful to use the first person plural "us" in describing to whom precisely the sense of freedom culled in healing is granted. Further, he uses a present tense subjunctive verb[364] to temporally locate the potential for this shared access to something freeing.

The Older Man marched through the same place, playing basically the exact same role as the Younger Man[365] in their march. And yet the Older Man missed out on the healing at time and place. The two had radically different experiences on that march. Yet the Younger Man grammatically depicts his temporally specific, first-person experience as current for—and indeed already involving—the Older Man. Between these characters, one

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[363] CPC: 132, GA 77: 205.
[364] "*Das Geräumige…bringe uns etwas Befreiendes zu*" (GA 77: 205).
[365] Which may call to mind Heidegger's analysis, in the Bremen Lectures for instance, of the standing reserve and the apparent replaceability of all the resources technology places at its disposal. In this context, the differences in firs-person experience between the Younger Man and the Older Man contest technology's claim on and attempt to transform the human being into such a devastated, reduced state of being.

presumably has experienced more time, i.e. is older, and the other hopefully has more time yet to experience, i.e. is younger. In grounding the healing experience as an experience for "us," the Younger Man is sharing an aspect of their morning march which the Older Man apparently neglected. The Younger Man claims, "out of the rustling of the expansive forest I was suddenly overcome by something healing."[366] This suddenness is temporally embedded. The difference between their experience in the morning is reiterated in the evening and is articulated not as based on spatial location, but as a temporally demarcated dimension of the experience. In other words, an inseparable from the healing was the "suddenness" of its arising. Without temporality, there would be no surprise or the suddenness of being overcome by something new, different, and unanticipated would be impossible. The Older Man confirms a sense that they two belong together in relating to the healing, despite their radically different phenomenological accounts on their morning, replying that the forest's expanse "leads *us* out and forth."[367]

The interlocutors add a further condition for possibly sharing in this healing. The Older Man explains the "expanse provides us with freedom. It frees us while we here—between the walls of these barracks, behind barbed wire—incessantly run up against and wound ourselves on what is objective."[368] They also share the experience of being wounded and in pain. This shared wounding, symbolized by the confining apparatus of the camp, shows that objectivity is damaging to human beings and that human beings take full part in the action of wounding themselves, running headlong into its barbs. This common pain, however, is not for nothing. It also becomes the foundation upon which the healing is sharable. The Younger Man later tells the Older Man "healing draws near and is granted to

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366 CPC: 132, GA 77: 205.
367 CPC: 132, GA 77: 205, emphasis mine.
368 CPC: 132, GA 77: 205-6.

us."[369] The Older Man attempts to correct him; "You say 'to us,' and yet this healing was granted only to you."[370] The Younger Man, again marking the temporal context, responds, "[b]ut on this same day I would like to share it now with you, because I have long sensed clearly enough in our often-interrupted conversations during breaks in the fighting, in our quarters, on marches, and now here in this camp, that you are pained by the same wound."[371] The Younger Man wants to share the healing with his friend,[372] expressing a desire[373] for him to gain some relief, despite their mutual silence about this pain. They share a long history with one another and have clearly developed a sensitivity[374] to one another, being familiar with the meaning of each other's silences.

The bars of the camp are the metaphorical causes of this wounding, but what is the original source of this wounding which needs to be healed? The interlocutors describe it as a "devastation"—*Verwüstung*—which the Younger Man mentions they decided "on the march into captivity…not to talk any more about this devastation for a long time."[375] The Older Man attributes the occasion of their shared wounding as "a blinded leading-astray of our

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[369] CPC: 142, GA 77: 219.
[370] CPC: 142, GA 77: 219.
[371] CPC: 142, GA 77: 219.
[372] Although we can surmise, based on the history here directly referenced by the Younger Man, that the two are and have been friends for some time, by the end of the Conversation, the Older Man explicitly tells the Younger Man that part of what they had learned throughout the evening was that they "must attempt to tell friends what is given to them to think for a long time ever anew" (CPC: 156, GA 77: 239) which draws out and sustains the theme that this endeavor is indeed one of friendship which I argued was initiated in the "Tower Conversation."
[373] The desire which the Younger Man expresses cannot be a willful sense of desire which already purports to know its object in advance (which would indicate a metaphysical thinking at work). Rather there seems to be a releasing sense of desire at play here, one which Heidegger later articulates as the resolution of desire into "love" in the "Western Conversation" which I will develop in chapter four.
[374] Feeling was discussed at length in the "Triadic Conversation" (esp. CPC: 33, GA 77: 52 and CPC: 47, GA 77: 75.) Likewise the cultivation of sensitivity (esp. CPC: 105, GA 77: 163) was of paramount importance in the "Tower Conversation." The comportment the Younger Man seems to bear toward the Older Man here seems to cursorily and indirectly draw upon the moves Heidegger's character is making, illuminating his reference points for the reader.
[375] CPC: 133, GA 77: 207.

own people…[which] is too deplorable to permit wasting a complaint on,[376] despite the devastation that covers our native soil and its helplessly perplexed humans."[377] Their wound is shared because they belong to the same native or national group in being the same "people." Additionally, they have, individually, chosen to cope with this wound by remaining silent about it. Can a community be born out of a shared commitment to silence? Perhaps this silence is the only possible or appropriate response to what the interlocutors describe explain as "evil,"[378] the next substantial topic as the interlocutors continue their conversation.

Once the interlocutors have established both their shared pain and the potential for the healing to potentially be shared (articulated in their delineation of the "people" Heidegger is interested in understanding), they turn to unpack the source of their pain, woundedness, and devastation—evil or *das Böse*. Heidegger is quick to claim "evil" need not be understood on exclusively moral terms. The interlocutors agree "the devastation of the earth and the annihilation of the human essence that goes with it are somehow evil itself."[379] The devastation is, at this point in the conversation, relegated to the earth, yet this earthly devastation leads to the annihilation[380] of the human as well. The Younger Man is quick to clarify, "[b]y evil, of course, we do not mean what is morally bad, and not what is reprehensible, but rather malice."[381] This further delimiting of evil or malice as non-moral is

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[376] Determining whether this is perhaps the closest thing readers of Heidegger might hope to find to explain or justify Heidegger's own silence surrounding his involvement with politics in Germany is beyond the scope of my concern with this text at this time. I do, however, believe that scholarly attempts at understanding Heidegger's silence would do well to take the discussion of silence in "Evening Conversation" into account.
[377] CPC: 133, GA 77: 206.
[378] CPC: 133, GA 77: 207.
[379] CPC: 133, GA 77: 207.
[380] This language also recalls the footnote at the end of the "Triadic Conversation" in which Heidegger claims that nature defends itself via accommodating the human being's self-annihilative impulses. Although I, again, do not have the space to embark upon this exploration here, it undoubtedly would be fruitful to analyze whether technology, politics, or nature end up wielding potentially greater damage to the human being.
[381] CPC: 133, GA 77: 207.

crucial. The Younger Man wonders if "even morality, for its part, together with all the peculiar attempts to envision a world-order and make certain of a world-security for the national peoples by means of morality, are only a monstrous offspring of evil."[382] The interlocutors critique Nietzsche[383] for attempting and ultimately failing to do this. They determine that the realm of the "will to power," figured as the "beyond" of morality, is rather the purest manifestation and affirmation of moral thinking.[384] What lacks in a merely moral conception of evil, it seems, is a standpoint or a ground upon which an analysis or critique of morality itself could be launched. This is precisely Heidegger's project in developing evil as an ontological concept.

The interlocutors then turn to this elucidation. To "think of malice on the basis of something other than morality,"[385] the men turn to a discussion of the ontology of malice. The Younger Man explains, the "essence of evil is the rage of insurgency, which never entirely breaks out, and which, when it does break out, still disguises itself, and in its hidden threatening is often as if it were not."[386] The insurgency of this devastating evil is never completely revealed, even when its effects seem to be unleashed in full fury. There is something always in reserve about it, something that, even in its apparent exhaustion, continues threatening ever more and more annihilating power. Malice is not self-annihilating.

What is most striking about this description of the ontology of evil as malice is that, beyond the use of terminology like "insurgency," "rage," "threatening," etcetera, this sounds

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[382] CPC: 135, GA 77: 209.
[383] CPC: 135, GA 77: 209-10.
[384] The Younger Man elaborates this critique as follows: "Nietzsche of course interpreted morality – that is to say, the Platonic-Christian ethical doctrine together with its later secularized forms, for example the rational ethics of the Enlightenment and socialism – as appearances of the will to power. He situated his own thinking in a 'beyond good and evil.' But Nietzsche did not recognize that this 'beyond' or 'thither side' – as the realm of a pure will to power, that is, of a will to power that has come into its own – would have to remain only the counter-world to the Platonically thought world…then the realm of pure will to power is least of all a 'beyond good and evil' – if there otherwise can be at all a beyond-evil" (CPC: 135, GA 77: 209-10).
[385] CPC: 134, GA 77: 207.
[386] CPC: 134, GA 77: 208.

eerily like the self-veiling rustling expanse of the forest which is never entirely self-present and brings the unexpected suddenly to those who cross its path. The difference between the concealment of something healing and something devastating lies in the last clause of the Younger Man's depiction; namely, that the self-concealing of the essence of evil "is often as if it were not." The ontological mode of evil, the concealment inherent to its depiction, is one of self-denial. It exists in hiding and threatening as if it did not hide at all, as if there were nothing hidden about it, as if it were purely self-identical and self-available. The essence of evil is in its purported limitlessness because that which is self-identical, as we will see, aims to incorporate all difference into its identicality with totality as its ultimate aim. This very lack of any boundedness indicates that what separates evil from healing is that evil is incapable of entering a relation with anything beyond it. As Mitchell depicts Heidegger's oft rehearsed thought, "the limit is not the end of a thing (at least not in this conception of "end"), but its beginning…As a limit, its ending is simultaneously an opening."[387] Evil, in denying its end, also undermines its own beginning.

Evil devastates, essentially. It devastates even itself in hiding its own activity of hiding from itself. This is both its radicality and ultimate, inauthentic self-identicality.[388] Why is it that the rustling, self-veiling, swinging in which something healing emerges does not participate in the same essential activity? Hyland used the starlight of the night sky stretching out over the *Triadic Conversation* to explain the unconcealment of self-concealment as self-concealing.[389] Likewise is this self-veiling forthright in disclosing its ontological, relational

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[387] Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger,* 14.

[388] I would like to here make reference to a piece I know Robert Bernasconi is currently developing on the topic of evil in Heidegger which specifically discusses the "Evening Conversation" and the "Letter on Humanism." I was fortunate enough to attend a Heidegger Circle meeting in which he presented a paper entitled "The Malice of Rage: Schelling, Heidegger, and the Phenomenology of Evil" which, as it was presented at that time, I believe would lend support to my interpretation here. Unfortunately, he has not yet developed a version for publication.

[389] Hyland, 353.

status. Nothing about the swinging motion is reduced to our knowing relation to it. Rather it "swings out in a concealed distance, but at the same time swings back to us again, without ending with us."[390] Its involvement in the distance is concealed, yet in its elucidation as concealed, this very essence is also unconcealed. It returns to us, but is never exhausted in our understanding of this return. This excess seeks our accommodation, even in transcending our grasp. This is a relation which calls for patience. Healing's concealment is patient. Just as the virtue most sought after by the Guide in the "Triadic Conversation" was patience, healing here is also articulated as a practice of waiting, Heidegger's purported antidote to evil to which I turn shortly.

Evil can be understood as essentially self-closing to the possibility of there being anything beyond itself. Healing, on the other hand, is self-opening to otherness. It is tempting to comprehend the healing of a wound as the mending of a proper limit between body and world. Despite the temptation, however, Heidegger issues a challenge to think of this mending as an opening. This is because the limit as such is that which supports the opening of a relation to anything whatsoever. Mitchell argues, "[h]ealing is not a restoration to a lost integrity, but an acceptance that healing never comes, or is only ever coming, is an infinite task at the heart of finitude (to call it asymptotic is to privilege completion too much). Instead of trying to restore oneself to go it alone, to heal is to let oneself be borne by the world. To heal is to open."[391]

This simultaneous mending and rending of a proper kind of opening is described by the interlocutors throughout the "Evening Conversation" as a kind of waiting. The Younger Man tells the Older Man that since his healing experience in the morning, "I am now able to

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[390] CPC: 132, GA 77: 205.
[391] Mitchell, "Heidegger's Breakdown: Health and Healing Under the Care of Dr. V.E. von Gebsattel," 80.

say to you: Waiting is letting come."[392] They detect waiting as pivotal to further explore why it would have been inappropriate to conceive of evil under a moral framework. They rehearse their earlier critique of Nietzsche, rejecting him because he offers no standpoint from within morality to gain a proper vantage point upon it. The temptation one may fall prey to if one conceives of evil only as moral is, as the Younger Man puts it, "to get over it"[393] as though it were that easy[394] —the desire for this easiness is also a symptom of devastation.

Instead they must learn to tarry with the devastation, remaining open to that which nevertheless ignores them. The Older Man speaks for both, saying, "[w]e would rather learn to simply wait until our own essence has become noble and free enough to aptly comply with the mystery of this destiny."[395] Their destiny is to be healed, to accept that the they must allow the world to bear them and sometimes to harm them. Waiting is then at the heart of this attempt to simply learn from this evil. In waiting, the attempt is launched to engage with evil without thereby falling prey to its operative logic in relating ourselves to it, despite its tendency to consume and sever all possible relations.

The interlocutors draw an important distinction in their attempt to understand and define waiting between "waiting [*Warten*]" and "awaiting [*Erwarten*]." The Older Man, in attempting[396] to answer a self-imposed question, says "[i]nsofar as we wait for something, we attach ourselves to something awaited. Our waiting then is only an awaiting."[397] This preemptive attachment to the awaited object leaves the very waiting enterprise disinherited. Inverting Meno's Paradox in which Plato argues that in posing a question, we must already

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[392] CPC: 141, GA 77: 217.
[393] CPC: 140, GA 77: 216.
[394] CPC: 139, GA 77: 215.
[395] CPC: 140, GA 77: 216.
[396] The very attempt to answer this self-imposed question of whether he himself was waiting or awaiting within their conversation complicates and illustrates the performative dimension of their conversation as well.
[397] CPC: 140, GA 77: 217.

in some sense know or be equipped to recognize the answer when we encounter it, Heidegger here argues that waiting, if it already knows or is attached to its object in advance, fails at its own waiting task.

Purely waiting is at least precarious, at worst doomed from the start. The Older Man clarifies further, "[p]ure waiting is disturbed—because in pure waiting, it seems to me, we wait upon nothing."[398] The purity of waiting is troubled by how they conceive of this nothing. Nothing resists being waited upon. When understood properly,[399] nothing is un-objectifiable and thus nothing upon which we could await (or wound ourselves.) Yet it is nevertheless a something. Put another way, "nothing" is not a place holder for "anything," nor is it a surrogate for an absolute relativity or interchangeability. The Older Man then remarks, "[h]ow strange this is, to wait neither upon something nor upon nothing, and yet nevertheless to wait."[400] The use of the term "nothing" in this remark is striking. The meaning has shifted from the sense in which the Older Man used it immediately prior. In the Older Man's first remark, in purely waiting "nothing" is precisely that which was waited upon. Moments later, "nothing" no longer adequately captures this waiting dynamic. Waiting is reframed as waiting "neither upon something nor upon nothing." The term "nothing" performs its transmutation accompanied by proper human waiting.

Heidegger places the word "strange" in the Older Man's mouth, recalling the discussion of the distinction between what is "strange" and "wondrous" in the "Tower Conversation," which I argued staged a brawl with Plato's famous definition of philosophy as beginning in wonder. In this prior Conversation, strangeness acts as a legend for recognizing this dynamic, though there it hinges upon of what can be considered "natural."

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[398] CPC: 140, GA 77: 217.
[399] The Younger Man uses the capitalized "Nothing" to explain that if we objectify Nothingness in this way, we would objectify nothing, thus awaiting it an unauthentic mode (CPC: 140, GA 77: 217)
[400] CPC: 140, GA 77: 217.

Strangeness is neither something, nor nothing, but rather as the Tower Warden tells the Teacher, "It is everything."[401] Waiting is also everything—not something, nothing, or even anything, but only everything. It is everything because it is mobile, it could be, and thus in some sense is, potentially everywhere. That which is waited upon is on the move. It engages us on both spatial and temporal registers, requiring our complete attention to trace it. That which is waited upon is never still. At least never still enough for us to objectify. It requires waiting as the proper human mode of enduring temporality.

This dynamic is brought to the fore by the interlocutors' archetypical example of this sense of waiting—death. In discussing devastation earlier, the interlocutors depict one of its most severe consequences. Devastation even removes the possibility of dying, perhaps the most distinctive articulation of human temporality. In describing devastation as a functional desert in which life—understood as being—is radically unsupported, the Younger Man says, "[t]he desolation extends so far that it no longer even allows any perishing."[402] To perish, speaking loosely, would mean to fully transition from one ontological state into another. Transition presupposes difference. Yet the essence of devastation is that it is all encompassing, self-identical, and ultimately that it stills any and all motion which could lead to such a transition. It cancels all difference. The Younger Man explains, "any and all possibilities for something essential to arise and bloom in its dominion are suffocated at the root."[403] Not only is what is essential barricaded from approaching the human in devastation, but the metaphorical bars of this ontological camp are themselves on the move, extending ever outward until they smother the existence of difference, of any state in which the human would not be confined.

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[401] CPC: 106, GA 77: 164.
[402] CPC: 137, GA 77: 212.
[403] CPC: 136, GA 77: 211.

Perhaps the most essential feature of the human being is not simply our capacity for death, its necessity. Although it may seem like the protection against perishing propagated by devastation is something preferable to the precarity of looming danger, Heidegger rejects this approach. Later in the "Evening Conversation," the two interlocutors begin discussing the definition of the human being. The Younger Man offers his interpretation of the definition of the human being as the "thinking being"[404] which he remarks was transposed into a reductive sense of the human's "rationality"[405] as its defining feature with radical consequences. The Older Man then offers a competing—what he calls older and more poetic[406]—definition of the human being as "ὁ Θνητός, as the mortal in distinction to the immortals, the gods."[407] In grappling with what it means to purely wait, the interlocutors question this requisite waiting. They find its length cannot be determined in advance, if it is a pure waiting:

> Younger Man: To simply wait, as though this compliance were to consist in waiting; and to wait for so long, as though waiting would have to outlast death.
>
> Older Man: Death is itself like something that waits in us.
>
> Younger Man: As though it waits upon our waiting.[408]

Waiting for death is waiting in a double sense. Without requiring us to accept it or even consciously be aware of it, our death is always waiting for its emergence, inviting us to in turn wait upon it. We cannot "await" death because we never know when or where we will find it, nor do we have any notion of what it will be like to experience death in its

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[404] CPC: 143, GA 77: 221.
[405] CPC: 143, GA 77: 221.
[406] The Older Man explains, "The older characterization of the human s the mortal is, by contract, more typical of the poets, which you can still see from Hölderlin's poetry" (CPC: 144, GA 77 222), a figure who emerges in full force in the next "Western Conversation."
[407] CPC: 144, GA 77: 221.
[408] CPC: 140, GA 77: 217.

occurrence. This is not only because the vast majority of people do not have multiple experiences of dying, as if death were something experiencable just as we have experiences of anything else, but because, as Heidegger described in *Being and Time* "[w]hen Dasein reaches its wholeness in death, it simultaneously loses the being of the there."[409] The only possible configuration of a relationship between us and our death is something like a mutual, if not yet reciprocal waiting.

Heidegger could be read as here responding to Plato's other famous depiction of philosophizing in the *Phaedo* as a "practice for dying"[410] signaling a preference for this articulation over and beyond the depiction of philosophy as shot through with wonder in the second Country Path Conversation.[411] Heidegger does reject outright the coincidence between philosophizing and thinking. However, it seems Heidegger would venture in response both an affirmation of death as central to the essence of being human while also resisting any temptation to believe we can grasp the essence of death ahead of time. Instead, Heidegger emphasizes a waiting for death as an exemplar of thinking itself. This waiting cannot be an awaiting, but rather a self-opening to the unknown, entirely "other" dimension of what waits for us in our own essence as mortal beings.

The interlocutors agree that one of the clearest symptoms of devastation having taken hold is that "it settles into the appearance of a secure state of the world, in order to hold out to the human a satisfactory standard of living as the highest goal of existence [*Daseins*] and to guarantee its realization."[412] This security of the world is articulated by a devastated sense of the world as the most necessary. In doing so, it attempts to foreclose the

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[409] Being and Time Section 47, GA 238, pg. 229
[410] *Phaedo*, 64a.
[411] Perhaps Heidegger is engendering an even more subtle commentary here, engaging in a dynamic between these two definitions which runs parallel to the critique and then ultimate mutual reciprocity he performs in this Conversation between the older and younger definitions of the human being. A working out of this intuition will be left for another project.
[412] CPC: 138, GA 77: 214.

possibility that existence (*Daseins*) could even find itself caught up in being there (*da sein*) for anything which does not expediently contribute to the unrelenting realization of this "highest goal." Being, insofar as it is the primary concern of the human being, is precisely what is at stake in this opposition. Ought we simply "exist"? Or should we try to "be there" despite the "emptiness"[413] that is not quite something or nothing which we would face in that endeavor?

Youthfulness stands as a challenge to closed systematicity through its "impetuosity for what is coming,"[414] for what we might describe as a playfulness in attentiveness, in receptivity, and above all in thinking. The young person is the person who waits and resists this imposition of expectation onto their perceptive apparatus. There are no rules yet. The game of thinking, in this sense, is open to everything it encounters. It is everything. The suspension of the activity of anticipating or expecting is not the nothingness of radical passivity. Rather it is an activity of allowing, of receptivity such that, as the Younger Man describes, "we already, in waiting on the coming, also grant to each thing an inlet."[415] This granting of an inlet is a far cry from passivity in the face of a certain understanding of nothingness. It is a task which requires full engagement, perhaps the most complete activity of which a human being is capable, as Aristotle suggested as one potential candidate for the best possible kind of human life. Being barred from this possibility caused their shared wound. They were wounded and caused pain because they were confined to merely objectively verifiable actions which explicitly support an economy of use and usefulness.

Waiting is also circumscribed in terms of what counts as "necessary" and as "unnecessary" by the interlocutors. The Younger Man gives the most succinct depiction of

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413 CPC: 149, GA 77: 229.
414 CPC: 143, GA 77: 220.
415 CPC: 148, GA 77: 228.

waiting as a "letting come [*Kommenlassen*]"[416] This letting does not give any content to this sense of what is coming, because, of course, this would transform waiting into an awaiting. Both interlocutors "are pained by the same wound"[417] which the Younger Man describes as being caused by the fact "that we were not permitted to be there [*da sein*] for the unnecessary"[418] and which the Older Man echoes, lamenting of his generation, "We were barred from being young."[419] What it means for time to be available, to have youth, to wait is to remain with "the fact that the unnecessary remains at all times the most necessary of all."[420] The Older Man describes a scenario in which those who should have been permitted to be and remain young were instead "overnight…proclaimed to be 'men',"[421] a designation which forced them to fit into and perpetuate a system dominated by a cultural obsession with usefulness and consumerism.

The true healing they are searching for is freedom from this constraint of being barred from dwelling with the unnecessary. The Older Man explains "[f]reedom rests in being able to let, not in ordering and dominating."[422] Ordering and dominating, although seeming to offer a radical sense of freedom to the one ordering and dominating even to the point of impinging upon the freedom of other humans or things, ultimately lead to a restricted and restrictive sense of freedom. This is because the possibility of responsiveness to otherness is absent when a technological rubric of absolute organization of that otherness inheres in the relation itself. Ordering and domination can only operate on the basis of making that which is encountered identical to their own purposes. In this sense, their operative logic mirrors the essence of evil or devastation. Identical-making is their directive.

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[416] CPC: 141, GA 77: 217.
[417] CPC: 142, GA 77: 219.
[418] CPC: 142, GA 77: 219.
[419] CPC: 142, GA 77: 219.
[420] CPC: 143, GA 77: 220.
[421] CPC: 142, GA 77: 220.
[422] CPC: 149, GA 77: 230.

Their opening toward the other engulfs it rather than learning to come into a relation of letting to and with it.

Letting, therefore, is freedom par excellence. They are free from the logic of ordering and domination, from devastation, from evil itself. They no longer are compelled to fight against their constraints—symbolized by the barbed fences of the camp—by, for example, as engineering more powerful constraints for their enemies. Rather, they are free to disengage from the intended effects of those constraints or to "abandon"[423] them as Heidegger describes it both in this Conversation and elsewhere.[424] Only in this sense can one be truly free to enter a relation with others and things predicated upon the letting-be of their difference. The Younger Man explains how this freedom is a sense of waiting which also heals; "What else could that which heals be, other than that which lets our essence wait. In waiting, the human-being becomes gathered in attentiveness to that in which he belongs, yet without letting himself get carried away into and absorbed into it."[425] The self-frustration of freedom as the freedom to order and dominate otherness is that its very impulse is totally self-absorbed in its task. It cancels itself. Only in waiting, thinking, and healing might difference or otherness as such emerge which detects the terrain of authentic freedom.

Once freedom has been broached in this way, the Older Man can finally share most fully in the Younger Man's growing understanding of the healing experience. He tells the Younger Man, "I am also learning now to more clearly sense how it was possible for that which frees to be occasioned for you by the abiding of the expanse of the forest, and how in

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423 CPC: 147, GA 77: 226.

424 Heidegger is here moving past his earlier attempts to "overcome" metaphysics, and metaphysical thinking to instead accomplish an "abandonment" of this logic. As we saw above, this is precisely Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche, that he thought he was opposing a mode of thinking but that in opposing it, he couldn't help but perpetuate it. Beginning especially in *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger works toward engaging this letting comportment, one clearly emerging from his thinking of *Gelassenheit*, as the comportment also proper to abandoning. The background of this history of this term for Heidegger, is, clearly, resounding out in his use of this term here in the "Evening Conversation."

425 CPC: 147, GA 77: 226.

that which frees what is healing could draw near."[426] His mode of sharing is learning, a way of relating to something which is dealt with in some detail at the end of the conversation and which I will discuss in depth in a later section. He is learning how to "sense [*ahnen*]" the healing. The cultivation of sensitivity was central to the "Tower Conversation" and we find it reprised and expanded here.

The Younger Man tells the Older Man, "[a]ccording to my unmistakable feeling, the healing that befell us rests not in that it freed us personally from an inner need, but rather in that it transplanted us into the knowledge that we, as those who wait, are now to begin to turn and enter the still-withheld essence of our vanquished people."[427] As I've indicated earlier, the key to understanding the full import of this this healing is to grasp that it is explicitly not personal or individual in nature. It is not the "I" who waits, but the "we."[428] We already saw above that the healing essentially is what impels the Younger Man to "like to share it"[429] with the Older Man. Beyond the disposition cultivated toward one with whom he seems to share immediate bonds, desiring to share—to move from the "I" to the "we"—also carries with it a momentum to turn toward the greater community of their "vanquished people," whoever might be included in such a group. What the feeling—the sensitivity toward what is healing—ultimately lays bare is the "knowledge" that the essence of their "people"[430] is withheld and that they must begin to turn toward and into it. The impetus to share experiences is not incidental to the particular relationship between the Younger and

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426 CPC: 150, GA 77: 230.
427 CPC: 153, GA 77: 234.
428 This is a point which Heidegger will also elaborate upon in the "Western Conversation" as he shows how poetizing, specifically Hölderlin's poetizing, enables this mutual waiting.
429 CPC: 142, GA 77: 219.
430 The notion of the "people" was crucial for Heidegger's readings of Hölderlin, and, in particular, the German people Heidegger reads the poet founding as a people. This notion is also vital for Heidegger in this Conversation. However, it is more interesting for the purposes and scope of this project to articulate how this "people" is refigured and de-Germanized, to some degree, in his next "Western Conversation" which takes place between the same characters, or at least characters with the same titles.

Older Man. It is greater than both of them, swinging out past them into the still concealed essence of their greater human community in its fractured state, attempting to heal them too. Nothing about this Heideggerian notion of healing is personal, or rather nothing about Heideggerian healing remains only personal and individual.

Temporal Relationality: From the Personal to the Political

The overarching drama of the "Evening Conversation" is the elucidation and accompanying sharing of the healing which overcomes the Younger Man before the conversation even begins. As I have attempted to sketch above, this sharing runs much deeper than one person articulating a narrative account of feeling healed which then sparks something approximating an empathetic response. Nor does sharing the experience before it is fully formed thereby cultivate the experience in and for both people. Rather, in the sharing the essentiality of the healing experience is first allowed an "inlet" for either interlocutor. As the Younger Man notices, "[t]he more essential an insight is, the greater must also be the tact with which it awakens in fellow humans the knowledge that grows from it."[431] Awakening the healing experience in the Older Man is in no way secondary or merely additive to the Younger Man's healing. It in the community that it constitutes between them whereby healing is first experienced as undoubtedly[432] essential.

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[431] CPC: 139, GA 77: 215.

[432] Before the interlocutors begin discussing the substantive issues surrounding the healing experience, the Younger Man relays that he worried his experience was a "mere deception" (CPC: 133, GA 77: 206) and was thus unable to trust it enough to benefit from the healing until he discussed what he thought had happened to him with the Older Man.

In the "Evening Conversation," Heidegger is making strides toward thinking of relationality, more broadly, in terms of an openness to and in which a swinging movement, which is both spatially and temporally figured, is enabled. A further performative dimension of this thinking is also apparent in this Conversation. The concrete relation enacted between these characters is, as has already been indicated, temporally marked. At the most literal level, all we know about these two men is that one has lived longer than the other. The difference between them—knowledge of the past confronting and being confronted by youthful vigor—gives them, in many cases, the grounds upon which to converse. Their personal relationship, however, is not the only terrain within which a Heideggerian notion of relationality is performed. As we will see shortly, their conversation is politically inflected insofar as their ages provoke different perspectives on world events. Additionally, a philosophical belonging together of the historically older and younger definitions of the human being is contested and rendered, ultimately tripling this temporally inflected relational dynamic theorized and performed in the "Evening Conversation" on the personal, political, and philosophical levels.

Within the personal domain, the Younger Man is more distressed and traumatized by the physical, spatial confines of the camp. The Older Man instead is seeking healing from the loss of his own youth. The elder only comes to the realization of this need in suddenly being confronted by the open, conceptual expanse the Younger Man seems to inhabit in his thinking habits. This contrast gives him cause to be made painfully conscious of his own temporal separateness from the almost reckless abandon of youth.

The Older Man remarks at several points upon the intellectual risks the Younger Man takes without seeming to even think twice. Whereas the Older Man is slow, plodding, methodical in the fashioning of his questions and comments, the Younger Man seems to

almost free associate his way through their conversation. In discussing the connection between evil and the will, the Younger Man suggests "[p]erhaps in general the will itself is what is evil."[433] The Older Man is shocked at this thought which seems to appear out of the blue. He replies to the Younger Man, "I shy from even surmising something so audacious."[434] His old age has perhaps so deeply affected him such that sharing all intuitions which might arise spontaneously strikes him as dauntless. The Younger Man replies, "I too only said 'perhaps,' and what I said is also not my thought, even though it has not let go of me ever since I once heard it. On that occasion, this thought was also expressed only as a surmise."[435] Not only is this suggestion merely a surmise, but it is not even the Younger Man's own thought. The Younger Man recalls and appropriates it as though it were his own with no concern its source ought to be cited as authoritative. Youth can say "perhaps" unabashedly. This "perhaps" is shocking to the Older Man and gives him the occasion to later lament that he realizes he was "barred from being young"[436] by the political designs which incited the first World War and which obligated he and his entire generation to pass over their youth altogether.

The seeming objectivity of the passage of time is perhaps an even more absolute constraint than spatial confinement within physical walls of a camp. Launching an escape attempt, by digging under, climbing over, designing a distraction and running from the guards, etc., is not utterly impossible. However, the passage of years does not seem to present the same possibility for assault. Time cannot be circumvented. Or can it? This comparative, temporal relation is already denoted in the very names of the interlocutors. Heidegger adds yet another dimension of the development of this temporal relationality in

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433 CPC: 134, GA 77: 208.
434 CPC: 134, GA 77: 208.
435 CPC: 134, GA 77: 208.
436 CPC: 142, GA 77: 219.

the Conversation in invoking the comparative temporal statuses of two definitions of the human being arising from the historical western philosophical tradition.

In the course of discussing the connection between "thinking"[437] and knowing "the necessity of the unnecessary,"[438] the interlocutors wander into an exchange concerning the definition of the human being. This exchange both highlights again this temporal relationality and indicates how something as seemingly objectively irreversible as the passage of time might nevertheless become healed. The Older Man comments that he never could understand how the western philosophical tradition "transposed"[439] "thinking" into "rationality," as though they referred to the same. The two men agree that the definition of the human being as the rational animal not only misses something essential about the human being—namely thinking as waiting, not merely as willing-to-grasp—but also that this the mode of philosophizing indicates it were "as if the Occident was unable to wait"[440] which dislodges any inclination to attributing waiting merely to the individual as such. The emphasis on the growing outward of insights from an individual to the larger group, be it political or philosophical in nature, is again brought to the fore.

The two men share this opinion that this is a serious fault of the western philosophical tradition, but the Older Man finds himself further "unsettled."[441] He tells the Younger Man,

> you focused only on the characterization of the human as the living being that thinks…But in the most ancient Greek world, the human was thought otherwise—namely, as ὁ Θνητός, as the mortal in distinction to the immortals, the gods. This characterization of the human seems to me to be

[437] CPC :143, GA 77: 221.
[438] CPC :143, GA 77: 221.
[439] CPC :143, GA 77: 221.
[440] CPC :143, GA 77: 221.
[441] CPC: 143, GA 77: 221.

> incomparably deeper than the one first mentioned, which is gained by means of holding in view the human by himself, isolated and detached from the great relationships in which he properly stands.[442]

The Older Man holds that this definition of the human as the mortal—as the being who is able to die in contradistinction to the gods who do not—is more primordial than the definition of the human being as the thinking being. He adds shortly that this "older characterization of the human as the mortal is, by contrast, more typical of the poets"[443] specifically mentioning Hölderlin, but presumably referring to the Pre-Socratics as well. His investment in this older definition of the human as "deeper" is rooted in a concern that the thinking being is understood as too "isolated and detached" from his proper relationships to the world. In this case the absolute, temporal limit of that relation to the world is indicated in its inevitable termination by death.

However, the Older Man's very characterization of this concern itself falls prey to its own critique. When the Younger Man asks why the Older Man has brought up this point about mortality, the Older Man replies "I would like to admit a fear, namely that you hasten by the older and deeper definition…in favor of the younger and shallower characterization."[444] He names a fear and a sense that something is amiss, but attributes its cause to be what he perceives to be the Younger Man's favoring of a shallower definition. What he fails to notice is his own mode of characterizing the older definition as "incomparably" deeper. For relationality to stand firmly within its bounds of remaining properly relational, an openness for comparability as such must be maintained in all circumstances. The Older Man instead portrays this more poetic definition as absolutely

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[442] CPC: 144, GA 77: 221-2.
[443] CPC: 144, GA 77: 222.
[444] CPC: 144, GA 77: 222.

more essential than the philosophical and historiological warped articulation of the human which is, in his opinion, "isolated and detached."

These tendencies toward understanding phenomena as absolute, isolated, or total indicate the reemergence of the devastation which has befallen them. What makes evil ontologically evil is precisely its desire to absolutely infiltrate, to reduce all difference such that the other becomes identical with itself. This can and must be resisted through a sustaining of difference, of exploring that and how comparisons can be detected among beings, generating connective, relational ontological tissue. The Older Man, however, is not the Scientist from the "Triadic Conversation" who believes an entrenched ideology. Neither is he the Teacher from the "Tower Conversation" whose ultimate task is one of learning to welcome a single stranger as a guest. Rather, the Older Man must harness affect and his friendship with the Younger Man for figuring the growing impact of his insight on the larger group of the "people." To do this, the interlocutors draw upon what their thinking predecessors in the prior two Country Path Conversations have learned, thus further articulating how these texts build upon and further develop each other.

They do this through an attentiveness to affect which also exemplifies the trusting relationship they clearly already have cultivated with one another. The Younger Man replies to the Older Man's fear that his thinking is superficial, not by defending himself or even by reminding the Older Man that they agreed just moments before on the faultiness of this younger definition of the human being. He does not take this attack personally. He rather responds by disclosing an affectively-registered experience of fear his is also having. The Younger Man replies, "I would like to also admit to you a fear, namely that we would have to sacrifice our night's rest and the conversation begun this evening were we to elucidate the

two definitions of the essence of the human and their relations in even a crude fashion."[445] While the Older Man's fear is professed to be based on a concern for a lack of attention being paid to the inherent temporal and relational aspects of the human being, it is the Younger Man's fear which grounds this fear in the concrete context of their conversation. He worries about how long it would take to fully think through the conceptual apparatus of each definition, implicitly temporalizing the conversation again while taking into account human limitations to thinking, such as the need to rest. The Younger Man's fear is a fear that thinking alone cannot arrive at the answer and that a renewed account of their concrete relationality is needed. The Older Man's fear reveals that a sensitivity to the relationality which surrounds the human is not sufficient either, but that thinking alongside the traditional version of thinking, namely philosophy, might also be necessary. Each, in effect, fears that their proposed definitions are insufficient. Their fears reveal a sensitivity which reflects that the other's definition lacking in their own.

Following in the wake of the affect and mutual sensitivity the interlocutors practice, the conversation further unpacks the issues this raises. The Younger Man proposes a thinking through, not of the two definitions in themselves, which would take far too much time, but rather focus on "the idea that the younger definition remains shallow in comparison to the older one."[446] The emphasis is on a bringing into relation of the two definitions, of comparing them precisely when the Older Man worried it could not be done. In this effort toward comparison, the Younger Man muses, "[o]nly the common interpretation of the essence of the human as the ζῷον λόγον ἔχον seems to me to be shallow. Yet if we finally earn to think that λόγος originally means gathering, then the definition of the human with regard to λόγος says that his essence consists in being in the

[445] CPC: 144, GA 77: 222-3.
[446] CPC: 145, GA 77: 223.

gathering, namely, the gathering toward the originally all-unifying One."[447] Shifting the emphasis onto gathering cannot help but indicate a relational essence within the gathering task itself.

Both the manner in which this content is presented—in not responding in a combative mode, but rather in maintaining sensitivity to the affective register without dismissing it—and the insight itself gives rise to the Older Man reconsidering his previous concern. He tells the Younger Man, "[p]resumably you did not at all hasten past the older definition in favor of the younger, but rather only more carefully considered the younger in order to be able to then more purely wait upon the truth of the older…the two essential definitions—which initially appear as almost incompatible, or at least as foreign to one another—basically think the selfsame."[448] The Older Man first recognizes that the Younger Man was not hasty at all, implicitly admitting that it was he who committed the error of hastiness, not his partner, even though the Younger Man did not ask for or even indicate the recognition of this error. He then parses the possibility that out of a careful consideration of the younger definition, a more genuine access to the older would be thereby opened. Of course if the temporal designations of these two definitions are cast as discreet points in time, it would be puzzling as to how a younger definition could reach back across time. However, it becomes clear that not only are the two definitions mutually implicated in an inherently comparative relationship which would grant a thinking access, but that even further these two definitions think the "selfsame." As Heidegger belabored in the "Triadic Conversation," the "selfsame" stands in stark contrast to the "identical." The selfsame requires difference upon and across which to sling and detect the relations which constitute

[447] CPC: 145, GA 77: 223.
[448] CPC: 145, GA 77: 223.

it. The identical rejects all difference, instead favoring an infinite self-replication which is explored in the "Evening Conversation" under the guise of devastation, rage, and evil.

Finally, the two interlocutors realize that if "thinking" is most purely "waiting," then dying is another articulation of this waiting which essentially brings the two definitions into relation with one another. The Older Man says, "the human is, as that being which can die, the being that waits."[449] Thinking and dying are both modes of waiting. If the most pure waiting is waiting for a "nothing" which is nevertheless "everything," than waiting for one's own self-absence is the only waiting which can, by definition, never out-wait itself.[450] The two definitions complete each other in their comparative relation, indicating a movement, perhaps even a swinging movement, between the definitions. Together, they articulate more about the essence of the human being than either in isolation. The interlocutors perform the relation between the definitions over the course of their conversation as much as they grasp the definitions themselves.

It is the double, and thus relational, sense of this thinking in which the philosophical content is developed as and through the interlocutor's performance of these concepts which clears the terrain in which in the sharing of the healing across the distance between the interlocutors, in their various political and temporal situations, is made possible. Whereas the Younger Man is wounded by the physical boundedness of the camp, the Older Man is coping with what we might also understand as a deeper wound, namely what he feels to have been the politically determined theft of the youthful period of his life. What is performed in what may seem to be a mere digression in the overall trajectory of the conversation points instead toward the possibility that relationality does not merely carry physical, psychological, or even philosophical valences, but is temporally engraved as well. The younger can draw

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[449] CPC: 146, GA 77: 225.
[450] Echoing, in many ways, sections 45-53 of *Being and Time*.

near to the older, to uncover and establish a relation to it, and even may reveal itself as the selfsame configuration. Perhaps this configuration further bears a revelation of the even greater sense of possibility which youth and age could approach if they can set aside their fears in coming together. The Older Man learns to surmise and take wild, loose stabs at thinking. The Younger Man benefits from the Older Man's accumulated knowledge. Youth is thereby able to deduce the depth of the traditional anchoring points of thinking which are then dusted off and set in motion anew. Time also can and must be healed.

In the "Evening Conversation," then, Heidegger explicitly develops a temporal dimension to his thinking of relationality in his Conversations. Although time was discussed briefly in the preceding two Country Path Conversations, it is not until the final installment of this trilogy that the temporal bearing is most fully delimited and performed. This is crucial if we understand the third conversation to focus on sharing and growing the power or "tact" of insights as not merely additive to Heidegger's thinking of what makes an insight essential, but to indicate in advance that very essentiality.

In other words, per Heidegger, an insight is not first grasped by one and then shared with others. It is rather in the sharing or sharability with another and then with a group that it first emerges as essential. This sharing of thinking with others seems to be exactly what was illustrated by the collaborative poetizing at the end of the "Triadic Conversation." The "Tower Conversation" is also peppered with hints as to how we might think of this sharing as potentially possible to undertake even with oneself in conjunction with a vulnerable, trusting friendship with another. This, it seems, draws out an often hidden dimension of Heidegger's project. The presence of others, and most importantly the distances they demarcate between thinking, mortal beings, is inceptually vital for the Heidegger's thinking, perhaps constituting its very engine. The "Evening Conversation" completes this point,

explicitly coupling otherness and essentiality in the dynamic of sharing while also indicating the effect an engagement and acknowledgement of the role of others in thinking produces in us—healing.

Language as Listening: Conversing and Poetizing

I have argued above that the sharing of healing is the central drama of the "Evening Conversation." Embedded within the interlocutor's temporally inflected relationship, much more is involved that might first appear. We also learn from the full title of the "Evening Conversation" that these two men share a national, cultural, linguistically-based, and historical identity. This shared identity has apparently suffered a great blow but nonetheless seems to bear promise for recovery. The individualized version of their suffering which results from the damage inflicted on this shared identity is clearly different. The Younger Man is pained by the bars which physically confine him in the prisoner of war camp. The Older Man seeks healing for his years which have slipped away. They have personal stakes in this healing process. Yet there is also a greater need for healing overriding their personal concerns which gestures toward their shared identity.

This shared identity is cultural, historical, linguistic, and political in nature. Although political affiliation is not mentioned in the "Tower Conversation," the walking which arcs out away from and then ultimately swings back toward a city in the "Triadic Conversation" signals that the *polis*[451] as at least makes up the background of the relation

[451] On my reading, thus, I hear resonances between my understanding of the importance of the appearance of the city as set dressing for Heidegger's first Country Path Conversation and Nancy's understanding of the *polis*;

performed between conversing, thinking, and the political organization of people at the outset of this trilogy of Conversations. The proper formation of this grouping of people as supported or hindered via the political is a theme which runs through the "Evening Conversation." The interlocutors discuss the impact devastation has, not just on individual human beings, but in the way it permits individuals to be separated off in "rank"[452] from one another, and thus (potentially inappropriately) grouped.

How the political as such is figured in Heidegger's work at large, especially in the shift between his work in the 1930s[453] to his post-war work, is not a project I am currently prepared to undertake here. In the next chapter, I will begin to gather evidence which may show that Heidegger's post-war interpretations of Hölderlin may provide a vantage point toward understanding the philosophical stakes of this shift for the trajectory of Heidegger's thought from the political writings of the 30s toward the increasing interest in poetizing after the war.

Limiting my scope, then, to reading the "Evening Conversation" on its own terms, I argue we here find Heidegger confronting belonging-together with a plurality of other human beings and how this belonging-together can be politically figured and implicated. I read him as doing so specifically through his discussion of the role of language. Heidegger's concern with language runs throughout all three Country Path Conversations. Yet in the final, third installment of this trilogy, language is explicitly involved in marking consensus, collaboration, proper attunement towards others, and inviting a relation to what lies near and

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"What does polis mean? I would say that polis is the name of the first togetherness in which no common ground of being together is given." (Nancy, *Being with the Without*)

[452] In differentiating those who believe the World War caused the devastation from those who see the reverse is much closer to the truth, "They are the angry functionaries of their own mediocrity, who stand lower in rank than the small and wretched who stand within their genuine limits." (CPC: 136, GA 77: 211)

[453] To undertake such a survey, one should especially consult Heidegger's seminar on Hegel's Philosophy of Right (GA 86), *Wege sur Aussprache* (GA 13), his essay on *Europa und die deutsche Philosophie* from 1937, especially GA 16, and the recently Black Notebooks. An excellent guide through the stakes of some of these texts is Peter Trawny's *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy,* translated by Andrew Mitchell.

yet still ever far from us. As we shall see, Heidegger also here articulates how a poetically attuned language's most proper dwelling is amid a historically situated people.[454] In this context that role is unfolded as one of healing devastation felt not simply in the ontological realm, or the personal experience of pain, but also in the shared identity of a national group of the German people.

At the closing of their conversation, the Younger Man and Older Man exchange expressions of gratitude toward one another for the discussion they just shared. They then proceed one another—but not *only* one another—goodnight. The Older Man says, "good night to us both and to all in the camp."[455] The Younger Man extends and completes the sentiment, "[a]nd to the homeland the blessing of its destined assignment."[456] Restricting their acknowledgement to one another, or even to those who share their present state of being prisoners[457] in the camp is not sufficient. Their mutual concern and involvement, which has been developed and honed throughout the conversation, can only properly be articulated if it accounts for everyone who bears a relation to their homeland. They mark out their relation to their larger political (but also historical, cultural, and linguistic) community in these final moments of the Country Path Conversations, further implicitly arguing that healing cannot be properly understood as healing unless and until it is shared. As we shall see further, perhaps this sharing is not only accomplished in the conversation which swings back

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[454] In the "Triadic Conversation," I have argued that the collaborative poetizing which closes out the conversation marks the consensus between the interlocutors as to the status of their thinking. In this piece, however, the historicality of the interlocutors is underemphasized. It is not until the "Evening Conversation" where Heidegger finally succeeds in articulating the temporal, historical, cultural, linguistic, and political situatedness of poetizing itself, indicating the interconnectedness of the philosophical content of the Country Path Conversations.

[455] CPC: 157, GA 77: 240.

[456] CPC: 157, GA 77: 240.

[457] And perhaps also to those who are holding them captive who, presumably, would be just as confined by the camp, and the political developments which called for it, as the prisoners.

and forth between interlocutors, but also within the larger poetic conversation between poets and historical peoples.

Language is explicitly tied to temporality[458] and a selfsame relationality[459] in the "Evening Conversation." Yet before it is explicitly theorized, language is nevertheless at issue in the opening moments of the Conversation. The Older Man tells the Younger Man, "I know how strictly you bury in your silence all the adversities that have befallen us here these past months."[460] This turn to silence is a decision they share and thus both understand despite never having directly spoken of it. The Older Man continues, remarking that the "blinded leading-astray of our own people is too deplorable to permit wasting a complaint on."[461] This decision toward silence is not an abstention from language, but a more explicit decision they have both taken to cope with their pain. Perhaps, even, this silence says more than words ever could. Yet for the healing to take hold, silence, or at least that version of silence, must be set aside. It cannot be set aside to make recourse to language which would aim to make their pain explicit. This would amount to treating their pain as an object[462] which would involve a devastated metaphysical thinking which aims to make all experiences objectively and equally available for use. Approaching language in this way, as merely a tool for communication, is far from a proper involvement with language. Rather, they are seeking a different kind of engagement with language such that their conversation might come to bear out their waiting as pure waiting.

The mode of inhabiting language they are hoping to accomplish is figured in two ways in the "Evening Conversation," first as conversational, then as poetic. They discuss

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458 "time and the word are in their essence more intimately kindred than humans may have yet sensed" (CPC: 148, GA 77: 228).
459 "Each of these sentences, which call to one another, says the selfsame." (CPC: 150, GA 77: 231)
460 CPC: 133, GA 77: 206.
461 CPC: 133, GA 77: 206.
462 Heidegger, in some ways, repeats his exploration of how pain and language are co-implicated in his later essay "Language" c.f. PLT: 201-203.

how they might articulate healing as an attunement of waiting upon a coming which waits upon them. The Younger Man first explains, "what heals can also never be set forth in propositional statements."[463] Propositional statements—the truth value of which can be (only) either affirmed or denied by relying upon logical analysis, for example—is precisely a technological comprehension of language. In technological language,[464] not only are the objects represented linguistically engulfed by the standing reserve, the truth or falsity of the statements of technological language is also supposed to be available in advance of coming to grips with the thing itself. It is the inverse of the patience the Guide calls for in the "Triadic Conversation" or the waiting which is emphasized here. As I explored above, the use or definition of the term "nothing,"—as that which was waited upon—was almost immediately re-signified. Its meaning moved or was mobilized. But this resignification did not merely resituate the meaning of the definition in the same way. Rather, this re-signification initiated a movement—which could perhaps be described as a swinging movement—between the two significations in which neither fully captured it. The two meanings entered into conversation with one another, we might say. It is the dynamic between them, the relation which is therein initiated and sustained, in which the word enters into a poetic—because not propositional—conversation with itself. If this is accomplished, its meaning could not be captured by a merely true or false statement.

The Older Man confirms this conversational interrelation of language with itself. He responds to the Younger Man's claim that healing cannot be described in propositional statements saying, "rather [what heals] can only be conversationally surmised, as happened

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463 CPC: 150, GA 77: 231.

464 C.f. Heidegger's later lecture "Traditional Language and Technological Language" for a more mature, concise account of a technological approach to language.

just now with us."[465] Conversation, as such, is not only the mode of language which manages the economy of healing in supporting the possibility of surmising. Conversation also unfolds temporally. Conversations happen in real time, in the now and the "just now" as the Younger Man indicates. They are also concretely and specifically located between individuals; here the Older Man notes the conversation happens "with us." This specificity of individuals in their temporal situation is also rehearsed and doubled in a conversation within the conversation which also, curiously, unfolds between interlocutors without names. The Older Man recalls this conversation for the Younger Man within their conversation, sharing a memory stemming from the years which pained him but which now seem healed "by soothing, but never removing the pain" [466] associated with them. He tells the Younger Man:

> Older Man: But as a good night parting, and perhaps also as a thanks, I would still like to relate to you now a short conversation between two thinkers. In my student days I copied it down from a historiological account of Chinese philosophy because it struck me, though I did not quite understand it earlier. This evening it first became bright around me, and probably because of that, this conversation also occurred to me. The names of the two thinkers escape me.
> The conversation goes like this:
>
> > The one said: "You are talking about the unnecessary."
> >
> > The other said: "A person must first have recognized the unnecessary before one can talk with him about the necessary. The earth is wide and large, and yet, in order to stand, the human needs only enough space to put his foot down. But if directly next to his foot a crevice were to open up that dropped down into the underworld, then would the space where he stands still be of use to him?
> >
> > The one said: "It would be of no more use to him."

[465] CPC: 150, GA 77: 231.
[466] CPC: 150, GA 77: 230.

> The other said: "From this the necessity of the unnecessary is clearly apparent."[467]

The necessity of the unnecessary, as it is rehearsed in this anecdote,[468] has been something which has remained buried in the Older Man's memory all these years, though it may have seem to have first emerged newly in their current conversation. Somehow the Younger Man's sharing of his healing with the Older Man has re-activated this memory, drawing out the pain in a safer, soothing context.

In the "Evening Conversation," this memory of a conversation, or rather the temporalized remembering of it which is performed, acts as a summing together of the deepest concerns of their time together. It comes out of the Older Man's personal history—as evidenced from its emergence from his memory—and is "historiological" in its own right. The philosophical notions of the necessary and unnecessary are here recounted by nameless figures who are also only presented by their relation to each other and to their national, cultural identity, just as Heidegger's characters. This closing of the "Evening Conversation" does not offer conclusions, but rather echoes the path along which their conversation had traveled. This doubling-resonating reflects their journey as both not yet finished, but nevertheless complete unto itself.

Engaging in conversation is, thus, one way, but not the only way, language can properly cultivate a practice of waiting upon that which waits upon us. The Younger Man also puts forth another alternative. He responds to the Older Man's comment about conversational surmising as fundamentally different from the production of propositional statements by replying,

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[467] CPC: 156, GA 77: 239.

[468] As Davis relays in a translator's note (CPC 156) this snippet of conversation can be found in chapter 26 of the *Zhuangzi*. I read this invocation to foreshadow Heidegger's more in depth engagement with Eastern thinking which will also form the context for his final conversation which I will discuss in chapter five.

> Younger Man: Or perhaps also in the manner in which I initially attempted to say it for myself, when, without their being willed, the following words spoke themselves to me:
>
> > First in waiting
> > do we come into our own,
> > granting to every thing
> > the return into resting.
> >
> > Like the tender
> > sound of old master violins,
> > which passed away unheard
> > from instruments in hidden cases.[469]

Clearly also rehearsing philosophical themes from their conversation, the Younger Man offers his own poem. Yet he does not directly claim authorship of it. The compositional experience he recounts is one of merely taking down the words in writing, as though he were listening in on someone or something else speaking the poem to him.[470] He does not even initially call it a poem, but rather something he merely tried to "say" even while the words seemed to speak to him. This notion that "language speaks"[471] more than we speak language is rampant across Heidegger's work at this time, as well as later in his career. The explicit content of the poem reverberates with the themes discussed over the course of the conversation such as waiting, resting, and owning. There is something about waiting in which we both know its "sound" which is nevertheless "unheard" and "hidden" because it cannot objectify itself without risking falling prey to becoming an awaiting.

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[469] CPC: 150-1, GA 77: 231-2.
[470] Perhaps this is also how Heidegger experienced the effortless compositional experience of writing this very same Country Path Conversation.
[471] Heidegger, "Language," 205.

The Older Man remarks upon the Younger Man's poem; "I have often pondered whether your thinking is not in fact a concealed poetizing."[472] The Older Man bypasses the effort to understand the poem as a poem to instead comment on the thinking which supports the poem.[473] The Younger Man, seemingly confused, attempts to clarify, "You mean that I poetize because I now express what we are attempting to say with the help of verses and rhymes."[474] Depicting poetizing as language which merely exemplifies traditional conventions of poetry—such as verse and rhyme—is precisely not the Older Man's intention. He responds, "I do not in fact mean that; for I know very well that verses and rhymes do not attest to what is poetical, and that even genuine poets can fall prey to their verses and rhymes."[475] The very conventions of poetry endanger the poetizing they may potentially bear forth. The typical formal structure of the poetry runs the risk of overshadowing poetizing in much the same way in which Heidegger seems to worry in the "Letter on Humanism" that a focus on ethics might endanger his focus on ontology.

Poetizing, over and above the facile process of composing verses and rhymes, is more deeply related to thinking, or to the bearing (as both that which carries and that which serves as a point of reference) of a certain kind of thinking. The Older Man continues his explanation, "I surmise that the poetizing of your thinking lies rather in that it is a waiting."[476] While the Older Man's conversation is recalled from the past, the Younger Man's perhaps more youthful poetizing is future-oriented, waiting for a coming, the coming of a thought or an insight. This surmising also shows that it is not that the poem or the poetizing of the Younger Man represents waiting or even dramatizes it. Rather his poetizing thinking *is*

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[472] CPC: 151, GA 77: 232.
[473] Perhaps implicitly hinting that thinking is an older pursuit, whereas poetizing is youthful.
[474] CPC: 151, GA 77: 232.
[475] CPC: 151, GA 77: 232.
[476] CPC: 151, GA 77: 232.

a waiting. Immersing himself in language in this way is selfsame with the waiting which heals them. Nothing about the poetizing which supports the Younger Man's poem sets forth propositional or technological statements. Rather, it bears the very swinging motion of a conversational thinking which also heals. Yet if this poetizing *is* waiting, then as the interlocutors agree earlier in the "Evening Conversation," this poetizing and thinking must be shared to come to most deeply engage with its essentiality. If the poetizing hits upon an essential insight, then to work against the narrowing of propositional language, "the greater must also be the tact with which it awakens in fellow humans the knowledge that grows from it."[477]

In the next section of the "Evening Conversation," precisely who the "fellow humans" are in the confrontation with insights springing from poetizing is most fully fleshed out. In responding to the Older Man's depiction of his poem as a waiting, thinking poetizing, the Younger Man replies, "[p]erhaps those among a people who poetize and who think are none other than those who in the noblest manner wait, through whose present-waiting-toward the coming the word attains to the answer of the human-being and thus is brought to language."[478] Poetizing, thinking and waiting are raised to the level of "a people" as though these receptive activities cannot even be articulated when restricted to only pertaining to isolated individuals. Bringing the word which itself waits—swinging between that which is present and that which is still coming—into language is situated as possible only within and for a grouping of people.[479]

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[477] CPC: 139, GA 77: 215.
[478] CPC: 151-2, GA 77: 232-3.
[479] These themes are explicitly and extensively worked through in Heidegger's lectures on Hölderlin's poetry. The fourth chapter of this project engages how these concerns are revisited, augmented, and ultimately revised to erase any and all reference to this people as "German" in *das abendländische Gespräch* Heidegger will write several years after this present *Abendgespräch,* for which the resonances of the titles with one another perhaps ought to give us pause in how we read these texts as interrelated.

Within the scope of this very cursory discussion, however, the Older Man and the Younger Man traverse highly imaginative terrain, attempting to envision who this waiting people might be, which, of course, is clearly impossible if their waiting upon this people is not to fall into the trap of awaiting. Nevertheless, they attempt to theoretically explore this futural hope. They wager this people "would have to remain indifferent to whether others listen to it or not"[480] because not everyone has the ears to hear and appreciate non-propositional language. This people "could never have any time left over for comparing itself with others"[481] because this sort of comparison would rely upon metaphysical, objectifying presuppositions. This group also would be "entirely unusable to others…yield[ing] nothing tangible that could be of use for progress and raising the achievement curve, and for the brisk pace of business"[482] because it would have rejected the category of "use" insofar as use metaphysically claims to be the most useful. The Older Man asks the Younger Man, after a hint he drops about this waiting being the healing balm for the "essence of our vanquished people,"[483] "You mean that by becoming those who wait, we first become German?"[484] Exactly which term, "German" or "those who wait," is a synonym for the other is a highly salient question. What it means to be German here has been contested throughout their conversation. These waiting Germans cannot be those who they are now. They have not yet learned to wait. They must yet "become" those who wait. Understood in this way, becoming German would be to become those futurally-deferred beings who wait, poetize, and think properly. These beings would not political in *any* currently recognizable way, nevertheless an authentic politics would be their reward, in some

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480 CPC: 152, GA 77: 233.
481 CPC: 152, GA 77: 233.
482 CPC: 152, GA 77: 234.
483 CPC: 153, GA 77: 234.
484 CPC: 153, GA 77: 235.

sense. The Older Man claims, "we cannot become German—which means those who poetize and think, that is, those who wait—so long as we chase after the German in the sense of something national."[485] Rather, they would be a suprapolitical, poetically organized community, perhaps hinting at Heidegger's vision for an alternate version of Plato's *kallispolis* derived, not from the highly educated philosophers grasping the Forms and then directing the city, but gleaned from the cultivating poets poetizing waiting upon that which is yet coming.

Both the conversational and poetic possibilities of language play a role in the sharing of the essentiality of the insight that learning to wait is also what ultimately heals. This impulse toward sharing bears the hope of one day contributing to the founding of a people—a supportive community of listeners and speakers who echo in conversations with each other what is spoken to them by language. Because this listening and speaking is not possible in isolation and because one can never quite be sure of the essence of an insight without attempting to make it legible to an other in conversation, community, or at least the possibility of this community, is indispensable. Conversation, poetizing, and thinking all begin to converge upon one another in the hope of "becoming German" in the poetic utopia these (very differently) concretely located, historicized interlocutors have just generated with one another.

Ethical Waiting

[485] CPC: 154, GA 77: 236.

In the "Evening Conversation," poetizing as a group which is deeply situated in its relation to its temporal, historical, linguistic, and political context is that which holds the hope for healing. Their homeland's *ethos* must first become poetic and conversational if they are to take up the task of re-appropriating the political domain, post-devastation. But what determines the perimeter of this task? How are we to understand the comportment these interlocutors must practice in the onto-poetic-political project of concretely healing themselves and, de facto, this community? What are the Heideggerian ethics of responding to devastation?

As I have begun to indicate above, there are many implicit issues in the "Evening Conversation" which could be thought to invoke an ethical register. First, the way the characters are titled but a fuller character sketch is lacking guides us into a relation with them which is uniquely focused on what and how they disclose within the bounds of their conversation and only herein. Oftentimes, the presuppositions and projections which we bear out towards others scaffold our relations with others in non- or un-ethically. If in an ethics we seek to first encounter the other as other, Heidegger has here composed a scene of an encounter between his characters and his readers in which we must learn to relate to his characters by trusting in the abundance of who they are without directly encountering it. What we might initially think of as a flatness or colorlessness of the Older Man and the Younger Man, or of any of the characters who appear in the Conversations, instead I argue ought to be taken up as an ethical challenge to us readers not just of texts but of the others we encounter on an everyday basis who are, to us, likely little more than strangers. Practicing welcoming these strangers as guests regardless of how much we know about their background, interests, and cares is an invitation Heidegger's seemingly lackluster presentation of his characters extends to us.

A second ethically valued dimension of Heidegger's Conversation lies in how Heidegger treats human beings in their groupings with one another, both in how he figures more inauthentic "ranks"[486] and in the more authentic "people who poetize."[487] Differentiating between these two ways groups of human beings relate to one another raises the question of an ethical encounter with social and political power. Finally, third, Heidegger directly confronts the problem of evil. In the history of the Western philosophical tradition, the problem of evil has been explored in political, ontological, and theological terms.[488] Heidegger is interested in thinking the problem of evil "on the basis of something other than morality."[489] This other basis is, for Heidegger, an ontological comportment of waiting. Yet regardless of Heidegger's attempt to thoroughly ontologize the stakes of the problem of evil, ethical implications are nevertheless embedded within this classical problematic.

Waiting, as the antidote to the devastation which leads to the implementation of ranks of people who are thereby commuted into mere technological resources rather than the self-concealing beings they are, may be primarily ontological, but it cannot remain exclusively ontological in its impact. This is because the comportment or attunement of waiting must be undertaken by concretely situated beings who are properly attentive to Being as something itself always still coming. What the interlocutors call for is not and cannot simply be an understanding of Being as that upon which we patiently wait. Doing so would be to treat Being as an object to be known, to "await" it rather than simply "wait," and to miss altogether the swinging motion of a proper poetic or conversational relation we ought to practice. The Younger Man rather situates this understanding as a mode of relation,

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[486] CPC: 136, GA 77: 211.
[487] CPC: 151, GA 77: 232.
[488] We might turn to Hannah Arendt, Plato, Aristotle, or Augustine to procure an example of any of these approaches to the problem of evil in the western philosophical tradition.
[489] CPC: 134, GA 77: 207.

not of representation, in reminding the Older Man "we are speaking here only of a predicament of human understanding in relation to being, not of being itself."[490] Understanding being itself is not their task. Rather coming to the proper terms with how human understanding relates to being is.

This proper relation between human understanding and Being is elucidated throughout the "Evening Conversation" as one that can best be figured as learning. Waiting and tarrying with the devastation is depicted as the only non-moral mode of engaging with it. Attempting to "get over"[491] evil already betrays having been fully implicated by its logic. The Older Man, in depicting the nuance of what it could mean to wait alongside evil, explains, "[w]e would rather learn to simply wait until our own essence has become noble and free enough to aptly comply with the mystery of this destiny."[492] Their destiny is to become German, to become a poetizing people. Waiting itself is something which must be learned.

Learning to wait for and as a community of people is therefore the ethical comportment embedded within the relation between human understanding and Being. Near the end of the conversation, the Older Man, in discussing the interrelation between freedom and healing, tells the Younger Man, "I am also learning now to more clearly sense how it was possible for that which frees to be occasioned for you by the abiding of the expanse of the forest, and how in that which frees what is healing could draw near."[493] He does not say that he knows how this healing was occasioned, but rather that he is learning, perhaps in a poetic or conversational mode which is at once recognizable and yet never disclosed in its objective entirety.

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[490] CPC: 138, GA 77: 213.
[491] CPC: 140, GA 77: 216.
[492] CPC: 140, GA 77: 216.
[493] CPC: 150, GA 77: 230.

The proper *ethos* of the human being, then, is to work to understand in the mode of learning. Not a learning which merely awaits an answer, but what which is itself a proper waiting. Yet, as we have already seen, this learning comportment cannot take place in isolation. The interlocutors must wait upon each other in conversation just as poetizing is a practice of a people waiting upon language to say itself to the thinking, human being. The homeland must also support the human being as the terrain of dwelling. This ethically-inflected mode of practicing assuming the stance of a learner is ultimately an onto-political project.

Conclusion: Teaching Conversation

Learning cannot take place without some direction, some guidance provided by the figure we traditionally would call the teacher. The proper relation between teaching and learning has been a guiding thread running through each of the Country Path Conversations. Heidegger, in revising his first "Triadic Conversation," renamed the Guide the Teacher. In the "Tower Conversation," the Teacher is a character who is primarily engaged in learning, enacting the properly Heideggerian task of teaching outlined in the first lecture of *What is Called Thinking?*

The "Evening Conversation" also ends in an extended meditation on the proper interrelation between teaching and learning, foreshadowing the analysis we find in the 1951/52 lecture course. In discussing the devastation, the Older Man remarks, almost as an aside, "what will be most difficult is to show, without haughtiness, the devastation to those who are affected and, without the slightest trace of paternalism, to give them advice for the

long meditation which is required to become familiar with the devastation as an event that prevails outside of human guilt and atonement."[494] The "most difficult" aspect of these interlocutors' entire endeavor is—in sharing the insight they have come upon with others in their community and thus grounding it in its essentiality—to convey the ontological content with the appropriate sort of affect, a challenge Heidegger began sketching out in the "Triadic Conversation."

Heidegger, through his character of the Older Man, is here articulating a pedagogical ethics. Teaching is to take place "without haughtiness" and "without the slightest trace of paternalism" on the part of the instructor. It is the task of the teacher, above all, to prop the student up with the gift of "advice." This advice helps them to see their own learning task to be one for which they should not feel "guilt and atonement" for being obliged to undertake. The greatest difficulty, after all, is not finding yourself in a devastated, technological mode of thinking. We can cope with this, perhaps through accepting the pain and grieving what it has caused us to lose. Rather, our most challenging task is to cultivate the appropriate affect for teaching others in learning how to think "other"wise. This is neither exactly a task of persuasion, nor quite one of representing truth as such. It is rather a practice of sensitivity to the human being not just as a thinking being, but also a feeling being where the perhaps the greatest obstacle in the imperative to "learn to simply wait"[495] is not a lack of understanding, but frustration, anticipation, or exhaustion.

This learning and teaching is not and cannot be artificially bounded by a classroom or even by a conversation between interlocutors. Rather this Heideggerian version of teaching is to be increasingly and seamlessly shared on an ever increasing scale. In drawing the *Evening Conversation* to a close, the Older Man remarks, "[t]hus, we must learn to know

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494 CPC: 140, GA 77: 216.
495 CPC: 140, GA 77: 216.

the necessity of the unnecessary and, as learners, teach it to the peoples."[496] The Younger Man replies, "[a]nd for a long time this may perhaps be the sole content of our teaching: the need and the necessity of the unnecessary"[497] The content is relatively simple to articulate. What cannot be articulated is how to remain waitful. This inability subsists not simply at the level of content, but at the practical, concrete level of interaction between learning and teaching. The Younger Man continues, "Learning is waitful when it is a seeking, and teaching is waitful when it remains an advising."[498] Waiting, as illustrating the necessity of the unnecessary (that which exceeds the logic of order and domination), is both the content of teaching and learning and the affective mode through with the seeking and advising of those roles must be accomplished.

If done properly, the exchange between the teaching and learning people grounds relations of friendship. The Younger Man, in summarizing their ethical imperative for the last time, tells the Older Man, "after this evening that now means: we must learn to wait."[499] The Older Man replies, "[a]nd we must attempt to tell friends what is given to them to think for a long time ever anew."[500] In articulating both the presupposition and implication of this pedagogical ethics, who we are left with are "friends" not simply on the individual level we saw performed in the "Triadic Conversation," and perhaps not even on level of self-relation explored in the "Tower Conversation," but also on the social and political dimensions of what it means to live as a human being dramatized through the sharing in this "Evening Conversation." Heidegger will carry this social and political emphasis forward into especially cultural and language-based senses of community as he embarks upon a closer and closer

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[496] CPC: 155, GA 77: 237.
[497] CPC: 155, GA 77: 237.
[498] CPC: 155, GA 77: 238.
[499] CPC: 156, GA 77: 239.
[500] CPC: 156, GA 77: 239.

engagement with Hölderlin as the poet of the German people in the "Western Conversation," to which we turn next, and ultimately toward the most radically "other" encounter the German people, as western, might ever face—the east—in the final "Dialogue on Language."

Poetizing Love: Beautiful Dwelling in Heidegger's "Western Conversation"

> In a way, Phaedrus, writing has a strange character, which is similar to that of painting, actually. Painting's creations stand there as though they were alive, but if you ask them anything, they maintain quite a solemn silence.
>
> -Plato

> When I contemplate the physical spaces that articulate the letters 'I love you' in a written text, I may be led to think about other spaces, for example the space that lies between 'you' in the text and you in my life. Both of these kinds of space come into being by an act of symbolization. Both require the mind to reach out from what is present and actual to something else.
>
> -Anne Carson

In English translation, the three Country Path Conversations and the final "Dialogue on Language" are currently available. If I were to read only these four texts together, I would be able to argue that the first three Country Path Conversations are clearly thematically related. Their rapid, successive composition and mutual inspiration[501] attest to this, as does their shared investment in understanding teaching and learning. In the preceding three chapters, I have argued that a narrative and philosophical trilogy can be traced in these Conversations. In the first, a combative, belligerent debate resolves itself into agreement. Heidegger accomplishes this through tending to the affect of the interlocutors as well as employing a staging of collaborative poetizing in drawing the Scientist, the Scholar, and the Guide together. The second Country Path Conversation performs a reversal in which

[501] As Heidegger's letter to his wife concerning the rapid writing of the three Conversations detailed (*Martin Heidegger: Letters to his Wife 1915-1970*, 187).

Heidegger shows how deeply the Teacher must practice remaining in a posture of learning. The Teacher must also be the student not only to properly welcome and initiate philosophical friendships with a strange Guest, but also to learn how to tarry with such friendship with the Tower Warden. The third Conversation further explores how the human relational bond might be wounded, but nevertheless recuperated with the help of others. Here, Heidegger seems to suggest that the human community of those this relationality sustains might be extended and shared to encompass even an ideal of political community through a practice of sharing insights and healing together through conversational sharing. In this way, Heidegger builds and shapes the three Country Path Conversations as what I have called a "trilogy" of texts. We first explore, with Heidegger, how one might overcome adversity, then practice maintaining a posture of welcoming and friendship toward an other, and ultimately articulate this Heideggerian-inflected way of relating to the human as nevertheless ultimately community-building.

Heidegger's final, "Dialogue on Language," however, seems to be cut from a different cloth. It was written nearly a decade after the three Country Path Conversations and, as I will elaborate in detail in the following chapter, engages a Japanese interlocutor who comes from a radically different cultural, historical, and linguistic context and rehearses a retrospective and autobiographical Heideggerian perspective on his own writings and career. Reading these four Conversations together—the Country Path Conversations and the "Dialogue on Language"—would seem to be motivated by little more than a grouping of these writings based on their mere formal resemblance as conversational texts which take place between two or more characters.

However, Heidegger wrote five Conversations. His fourth conversation is entitled "*Das abendländische Gespräch.*" In translation, "The Western Conversation" though the word for "evening"—*Abend*—unabashedly resounds in the German word for 'western' or, alternately, 'occidental.' This suggestion that the western land is also, or contains, the land of the evening is crucial for the unfolding of the content of this text and for establishing its clear relationship with the third Country Path Conversation. It was composed between 1946 and 1948 and indicates that the conversational form was not merely a site of momentary inspiration in 1944/45 which was then revived briefly in 1953/54, but rather a sustained interest across a decade of Heidegger's thinking and writing. In addition to helping to introduce this text to an English-speaking audience, I will suggest in this chapter that the fourth Conversation may provide the missing link between the Country Path Conversations and the "Dialogue on Language" toward showing how these five texts could to be read as building upon and shaping one another. Particularly, this fourth Conversation draws upon themes developed in the preceding texts while setting up the turn he takes toward the East and the autobiographical in his final Conversation. Furthermore, I will also show how the ethics of conversation I argue Heidegger is (perhaps inadvertently) demonstrating in his other Conversations is also developed here, specifically concerning the significance of shared cultural, historical, and linguistic heritage as they are supportive for conversation as such. Heidegger's retrieval of Hölderlin enables conversations which approach what Heidegger describes as a poetizing saying. In developing my analysis, I will also unpack important philosophical themes Heidegger develops in this text including love, poetizing saying, beauty, becoming homely, and ultimately how dwelling, as a practice of harmonizing, ought to be accomplished.

The Setting: Interpreting Hölderlin, Again

"*Das abendländische Gespräch"* was written the most slowly of Heidegger's five Conversations. He composed this text over two years between 1946 and 1948. Volume 75 of the *Gesamtausgabe*, published in 2000, collects this Conversation together with additional texts concerning Hölderlin, including those written in the wake of the collapse of the Third Reich. As of the writing of this dissertation, the "Western Conversation" has not yet been translated into English, which is perhaps at fault for the fact that several leading Heideggerian commentators have not accounted for this text alongside Heidegger's other four Conversations. All citations to the text in this chapter are, therefore, my own provisional translations.

In his commentary on this Heideggerian Conversation (undertaken as part of a larger project to examine how Hölderlin was received after the extensive appropriation of his work by the Nazis), Robert Savage aims to trace the evolution of Heidegger's thinking of and with Hölderlin's poetry post what he calls the "the caesura of 1945."[502] Heidegger's interest in the poet began early in his career[503] and significantly continued up to and even beyond his death with the verses from the poet Heidegger selected to be read over his grave at his burial. Despite its longevity, Savage argues that Heidegger's philosophical engagement with the poet shifted dramatically after the end of World War II. Central to his reading is what he calls

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[502] Robert Savage. *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe: Heidegger – Adorno – Brecht.* (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 33.

[503] In the "Dialogue on Language," Heidegger shares with the Japanese Inquirer that he knew of Hölderlin's work since before WWI (GA 12: 88).

Heidegger's "other silence,"[504] namely the conspicuous lack of any references to Hölderlin in his public, politically motivated speeches during the war.[505] Of the prescribed list of cultural refences provided to party members to draw from for any public statements they might make, Savage notes, "Hölderlin's name alone fails to appear a single time in the speeches and public pronouncements made by Heidegger during this period. In a year in which, by the admission of even his most ardent apologists, Heidegger was wholly committed to the National Socialist cause, Hölderlin was passed over in silence."[506] Given Heidegger's deep philosophical engagement with the poet alongside the prominence of the use of Hölderlin's poetry in Nazi propaganda, Savage argues that Heidegger did not merely happen to omit Hölderlin, but that he instead deliberately avoided bringing the poet to bear on the political situation. This was despite the fact he was acutely aware that party members and especially young soldiers on the eastern front[507] were reading the poet with intensity. Drawing upon a Nietzschean sense of the "untimeliness"[508] of all genuine thinking, Savage argues that Heidegger refused to invoke Hölderlin in the context of the politics of his present day precisely because the poet's thinking had not yet found the proper time to be received.

However, within what Heidegger might have considered a more private sphere, namely in his teaching, Hölderlin figured prominently during World War II. He taught a lecture course entitled "Hölderlin's Hymns 'Germania' and 'The Rhine'" in the winter semester of 1934-35. The preliminary remark of this course also calls for a "silence" to be

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504 See pages 39-48 of Savage's book for a detailed analysis of this topic.
505 Savage does note two speeches, one for his own students and one for a lay audience in which he does discuss Hölderlin in 1934. Savage goes on to contend that these two instances were, in a way, meant to comment upon how and why Hölderlin was omitted from the general political material of his rectorate (Savage, 39-48)
506 Savage, 40.
507 The very location where the third Country Path Conversation took place, between characters with the same names, who were perhaps echoing the figures of Heidegger's own sons who went missing on this front at around this same time.
508 Savage, 42.

maintained surrounding Hölderlin, "especially now, when 'interest' in him is thriving."[509] In this course, Heidegger develops "poetizing" as that by which human beings receive the beckoning of the gods, the connection between poetizing and the historical, and Hölderlin as the poet of Germans. In the winter semester of 1941-42, Heidegger delivered a lecture course on Hölderlin's poem "Remembrance" which is currently being translated. In the summer semester immediately following in 1942, Heidegger delivered a set of lectures entitled "Hölderlin's Hymn 'The Ister'," punctuated by a reading of *Antigone*. In this course, Heidegger's considerations range from his thinking of Hölderlin's river as poetizing its essence non-metaphorically, the river as that which makes the land habitable, uncanniness, how foreignness and homeliness are necessarily related, and how poetizing itself builds stairs for the gods to descend. In 1944, Heidegger also published *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* which contained reflections of other instances of poetizing in Hölderlin's corpus, including the 1936 essay "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry."

The "Western Conversation" continues many of the themes from these wartime lecture courses and musings on Hölderlin. "The Ister" is of central focus in this Conversation, though nearly a dozen of Hölderlin's other poems are discussed. The relation between the homely and the colony is delineated as is the way in which the human beings and gods are drawn into relation via the poetizing of and through the river. The "Western Conversation" also foreshadows the thinking of Hölderlin's poetry Heidegger elaborates later in his career. For example, in his lecture entitled "Hölderlin's Earth and Heaven," versions of which were delivered four times between 1959 and 1960, Heidegger discusses a letter Hölderlin sent to Böhlendorff in which he writes to his friend that "the philosophical

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[509] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns 'Germania' and 'The Rhine.'* Trans. William McNiell and Julia Ireland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 1.

light around my window is now my joy."[510] Heidegger delineates this philosophical light as a reference to the Greeks on Hölderlin's part, writing, "[t]his light is that brightness which, in the capacity which permits reflecting, in the power of reflection, endows all that comes to presence with the brilliance of its presence. What is special about this light, that it is 'philosophical,' arises out of Greece, as its name *philosophy* discloses. There the truth of being originally opened itself up as the shining revelation of what comes to presence. There truth was beauty itself." [511] Greece, beauty, and even philosophical light hanging around Hölderlin's window as he writes a letter to a friend[512] are all explicit themes found in the "Western Conversation."

Beyond highlighting the lines along which Heidegger's thinking of Hölderlin progressed as it did during these years, the "Western Conversation" also evinces a development of Heidegger's thinking of the political sphere, specifically how the nation is constituted as national. The final Country Path Conversation, the "Evening Conversation," concluded with a reformulation of the essence of the nation and the national.[513] In delineating how waiting is that which makes a people properly poetic, the Older and Younger Men there agree that "by becoming those who wait, we first become German."[514] Yet they do not invoke that which is German in order to reference anything merely national. In fact, the two interlocutors agreed that the devastation which had befallen them was so total that even speaking "severely against the national" and to "still inveigh against the national" has become "unnecessary"[515] since this category has been so eviscerated of any

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[510] Heidegger, "Hölderlin's Earth and Heaven," in *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry,* trans. Keith Hoeller (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), 184.
[511] Heidegger, "Hölderlin's Earth and Heaven," 186.
[512] GA 75: 151.
[513] CPC: 153- 155, GA 77: 235-238.
[514] CPC: 153, GA 77: 235
[515] CPC: 153, GA 77: 235.

essential determining force. The "German" of which they speak instead indicates a hoped for ontological state of belonging to and with others, entirely circumventing such metaphysical[516] classifications. Instead becoming German in the third Country Path Conversation means becoming "those who poetize and think, that is, those who wait."[517]

The 'German,' on Heidegger's philosophical understanding of that identity, who most purely waits, and therefore most sincerely poetizes, is Hölderlin himself. That Heidegger's subsequent Conversation following the "Evening Conversation" is almost entirely devoted to this poet is a natural next step in his thinking. However, differences in the way in which Heidegger figures the German and the nation in relation to Hölderlin's poetizing in the wartime Lecture courses and essays versus in the post-war "Western Conversation" are striking. Even though in the mid-thirties Heidegger denotes Germanness as an "ongoing struggle" marked by "relentlessly questioning the meaning of being," in his wartime lecture courses Savage argues, "Heidegger still believed that such a conception of Germanness could be both instituted and liberated from the fetters of legalism through a quasi-artistic act of state-creation."[518] The explicit relation of Hölderlin to the German fades markedly in the post-war "Western Conversation." Savage notes, "[c]ertainly 'Das abendländische Gespräch' is underpinned by a grand narrative concerning the peregrinations of the world-spirit, one that is essentially identical to that developed in the wartime Hölderlin lectures, with the obvious exception that the Occident now stands in for Germany."[519] A politically-inflected historical place gives way to a practice of a geo-dwelling with a different

[516] C.f. CPC: 153-4, GA 77: 235.
[517] CPC: 154, GA 77: 236.
[518] Savage, 44.
[519] Savage 65.

sort of history which takes its cue from the sun[520] passing from the eastern, morning sky to the western, evening land. Savage concludes, "[t]he Swabian *Heimatsidyll* of 'Das abendländische Gespräch' rounds off the national *Bildungsroman* of the wartime lectures on Hölderlin, agonistic struggle subsides into an all-pervasive *Gelassenheit*, German submerges into the Occident, while pious thankfulness replaces questioning as the archetypal gesture of thought."[521]

For Savage, the "Western Conversation" marks a watershed moment for Heidegger, in which the "previously omnipresent reference to Germany"[522] is left behind. Within the context of the five Heideggerian Conversations, also, the "Western Conversation" acts as a pivot point. In this Conversation, the politically inflected symbols and discussions of the three Country Path Conversations give way to the explicit engagement with language, poetizing, and the cultural signification of the West as it stands in relation to the East, with which both this Conversation and the final "Dialogue on Language" concern themselves. The looming symbol of the city in the background as both the origin and destination of the first Country Path Conversation and the drama surrounding how to properly welcome the other and thus build community in the second Country Path Conversation which is in turn sustained and healed in the third Country Path Conversation entirely fades in the "Western Conversation." This discussion unfolds as far from a marking of a tangible concern with the political as any of Heidegger's Conversations. The *polis* is nowhere in sight. Keeping its

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[520] If, further, we were to take the "west" as it is developed as a concept in this Conversation to indicate also the western philosophical tradition (as the Scholar from the first Country Path Conversations seemingly invited us to do), then it is no mistake to also hear resonances between Heidegger's and Plato's sun. Savage argues, "'Das abendländische Gespräch' is an exchange with the Occident's other, the Orient, as well as an exchange about and of the Occident itself. Plato and Heidegger stand at the boundaries of the Occident, and it is at the boundaries, as Heidegger remarked in 1934, that the essential decisions fall." (64)

[521] Savage, 70.

[522] Savage, 81.

distance from a politicized homeland, Heidegger instead explores how to become homely in a poetizing which is nevertheless anchored by and through culture, history, and language.

Distance from the properly delineated political sphere among a corpus of conversational texts is merely one of the features the "Western Conversation" shares with another influential text in the history of philosophy. Although Plato's name is not mentioned, the resonances between Heidegger's Conversation and Plato's *Phaedrus* are by no means scant. That Heidegger would perhaps select the *Phaedrus* as the Platonic dialogue meriting response with one of his own Conversations would reconfirm his pronouncement in the Nietzsche lectures that the *Phaedrus* was the "most perfect"[523] of the Platonic dialogues. The *Phaedrus* is a dialogue for Plato too in which the distance from the *polis* is flagged as being of significant philosophical import, enabling Socrates' receptivity to the "madness..[which] is given as a gift of the god"[524] when he uncovers his head to relay the myth describing the human soul. Both the Heideggerian Conversation and the Platonic Dialogue depict walks shared between an older and younger man along the banks of a river, both are deeply invested in developing the related topics of love and beauty, and both centrally depict the proper relation between human beings and the gods. In the midst of an analysis of the πόλις as it related to his excurses on Sophocles' *Antigone*, Heidegger makes the following remark about the *Phaedrus*; "Insofar as Western metaphysics begins in Plato's thought, Plato also prepares the subsequent aesthetic interpretation of the beautiful and of art. Yet to the extent that Plato simultaneously stands in the tradition of the Greek thinking of the 'commencement' and is a transition, he also still thinks τὸ καλόν non-aesthetically."[525]

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[523] Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1 (Neske, 1961), 222.
[524] *Phaedrus,* 244a.
[525] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn 'The Ister'* trans. William McNeill and Julia Ireland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 88. GA 53: 110.

Heidegger here references the philosophical interpretive work of the *Phaedrus* as a moment in which the transition of thinking of beauty, which inaugurates the West as the West, is both aesthetic and non-aesthetic, both the moment in which metaphysics begins and has not quite begun. Perhaps it would be no accident that Heidegger invokes the transitional (and not metaphysical) nature of Plato's thought here, in the conversation which takes place outside the city walls.

In 1932, ten years before this remark in the Ister lectures, Heidegger devoted a lecture course exclusively to the *Phaedrus*. In the "Western Conversation," love and poetizing saying are held together in a way which echoes the central thesis of Heidegger's reading of the *Phaedrus*. There, Heidegger reads Plato's dialogue as not simply concerning love or beauty, but rather, as Gonzalez puts it as "an attempt to show that eros is the very essence of logos and that logos is thereby in its very essence dia-logue."[526] This claim that language is essentially dialogical sounds remarkably akin to his claim developed four years later in "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" in which he writes "[m]an's being is grounded in language; but this actually occurs only in *conversation*. Conversation, however, is not only a way in which language takes place, but rather language is essential only as conversation."[527] Of course here Heidegger thinks the conversational essence of language with Hölderlin and not with Plato. But then perhaps it is not so far-fetched to wonder if over ten years later, Heidegger would bring Hölderlin and Plato together in his own conversational writing, to render the philosophical connections between love, poetizing language, and their rootedness in a conversational dynamic.

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[526] Gonzalez, "'I Have to Live in Eros': Heidegger's 1932 Seminar on Plato's *Phaedrus*," in *Epoché* Vol. 19, Issue 2 (Spring, 2015): 1.
[527] Heidegger. "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," 56.

Within the "Western Conversation," there is no explicit naming of Plato or his dialogue the *Phaedrus*. However, Savage agrees that the resonances between the texts are clear, "[b]y transplanting Plato's riverine landscape to Swabia, by restaging the conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus on the banks of the upper Danube, Heidegger opens up his dialogue to the interpretation that every word is a response to his illustrious predecessor."[528] Indeed, the "Western Conversation" is not merely a conversation about the western lands or the western intellectual tradition, but rather its concern lies with tracing a traveling and transmission from the East to the West. The Younger Man tells the Older Man, "Greece is the world epoch in which not the first emergence and beginning, but rather the passing of the first beginning of the fire from heaven, hence the passing from the East to the West, takes place [*sich ereignet*]."[529] On Heidegger's reading (which is one of many, to be sure, which often seem to be at odds with one another), the oriental Plato has perhaps been mangled beyond recognition over the course of the transition of his thinking into its sedimentation as metaphysical philosophizing. Perhaps, by not naming Plato in this Conversation, Heidegger has taken the challenge which issues forth from Hölderlin's "Ister" to harken to the heavenly fire from Greece seriously.[530]

In the broadest possible terms, Heidegger's "Western Conversation" explores human dwelling and how we ought to accomplish this dwelling in a beautiful way through a poetizing inhabitation of language. In carrying out this task, Heidegger's engages in a

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[528] Savage, 60.

[529] GA 75: 141.

[530] I find Sean Kirkland's argument in his article "Thinking in the Between with Heidegger and Plato," in *Research and Phenomenology* vol. 37, no. 1 (2007): 95-111 extremely compelling. There he argues that Heideggerian non-metaphysical thinking might not be as at odds with Plato's philosophy, and might share resonances specifically with elenctic method of the early Socratic dialogues. I believe he is right and that, given his emphasis on thinking "betweenness" as a venture shared by these thinkers, that he might also draw upon the explicit discussion of the "between" in the middle dialogue *Symposium*. In any case, his intuition has also formed a point of departure for my own, which I explore here, that perhaps Heidegger is in conversation with the *Phaedrus* in the "Western Conversation."

relentlessly concrete invocation and digestion of Hölderlin's poetry. Savage describes the text as "quite literally a ramble on Hölderlin's poem, a thoughtful promenade that follows his word-traces and moves constantly in his spiritual and physical vicinity, an incessant being underway to a language appropriate to the poet's. Neither a journey (for it has no goal), nor a tour (for it does not return to its starting point), it is an *Erörterung* of 'Der Ister.'"[531] "*Der Ister*" does feature prominently in this conversation, but it is one of nearly a dozen of Hölderlin's poems, or drafts of poems, which are invoked over the course of their conversation.

The most properly human task, as it was conceived in the "Evening Conversation," was waiting and learning to wait. In the "Western Conversation," the task has developed further. Waiting is now described as a practice of dwelling on the earth as we wait upon the gods. That this indeed furthers this theme from the third Country Path Conversation is not only based on a continuity of philosophical themes but is also signaled by the two texts' use of the same characters. In both texts, we are confronted with a Younger and Older Man who have engaged in many discussions with one another previously. Savage goes so far as to posit that the sharing of the titles might indicate that these interlocutors are in fact the same characters. Perhaps, he wonders, they have simply have simply drifted off into a dream which follows upon the end of the "Evening Conversation" in which "the homeland [is] revisited by the protagonists in their thoughts as they go to bed."[532] Perhaps instead of a dream, the "Western Conversation" is a scene of the alternate reality these two characters might have found themselves in if, instead of following the political trajectory they had, poetizing as true "Germans" had been their course.

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[531] Savage, 66.
[532] Savage, 73.

Whether they are the same characters from the third Country Path Conversation or not, the titles of these characters also clearly invoke a comparative sense of temporal locatedness which I described in the preceding chapter. Similarly, there are moments in which the Younger Man's youth leads him to make bolder[533], less securely supported claims than the Older Man who expresses a preference for a slower, more methodical mode of analysis.[534] The originating event of the "Evening Conversation"—namely the healing which suddenly overcame the Younger Man out of his encounter with the expanse of the forest—took place in the morning. Even though that conversation unfolds in the evening, this narrative, temporal relatedness back to the preceding morning cannot be overlooked. The "Western Conversation" also takes place as night approaches and the morning is also a recurring trope throughout their discussion. In discussing the relation between the East and the West, Heidegger refers to each in two ways. He speaks of the Orient [*der Orientalishce*] and the Occident [*der Okzident*] alongside the East [*das Morgenland*] and the West [*das Abendland.*] Embedded within these geographical markers we find an etymological temporal designation. The interlocutors speak of a "passing from the eastern to the western"[535] of the sun as the "heavenly fire"[536] of the Greeks. Likewise, the passage of the Greek 'Ister' from the east to the German 'Danube' (which later became the 'Rhine') in the west is also developed[537] much as it was in the earlier Hölderlin lecture courses.[538] Though the eastern as such is necessary for the passage from east to west—the Older Man does insist this relationality comprises

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533 C.f. GA 75: 160.
534 The Older Man tells the Younger Man at one point that perhaps he is too old to follow the "youthful exuberance" of one of the Younger Man's bolder interpretive suggestion. The Younger Man replies "Don't say that…[m]aybe youth is never yet old enough to be young." (GA 75: 89)
535 GA 75: 141.
536 GA 75: 141.
537 GA 75: 171-173
538 Needs Reference.

"not two…but rather [one] fate which is sent from the Orient to the Occident"[539]—only the West is properly "historical."[540] In one respect, this is because the West is the geographical west, the land of the evening and thus the place of the gathering of the remembrance of what has come before. This is also an assessment the interlocutors develop on the basis of their extensive analysis of Hölderlin's poetry which they determine results from a fateful sending from the gods. It is the exclusive provenance of the western fate of poetizing to be properly historical[541] in its occupation. The temporal relatedness of these interlocutors, then, carries an additional valence of geographical, cultural, historical, and even language-based contextual embeddedness in the "Western Conversation."

These two interlocutors, however, seem to be talking to each other in a less significant sense than they are engaging with Hölderlin's poetry. The two characters' distinct identities are markedly less significant than those deployed in Heidegger's four other Conversations. Paramount, rather, is the interlocutors' investment in an interpretive engagement with Hölderlin. They agree with each other on most every interpretive attempt the other makes[542] so long as it seems to further their exploration of the poems. There is no stark disagreement as we saw in the "Triadic Conversation" or any indication that one interlocutor might be more knowledgeable about this or that topic or experience as unfolded in the "Tower Conversation" and the "Evening Conversation." Here, the interlocutors begin fluidly completing one another's thoughts and sentences beginning relatively early in the text, [543] as compared to the initiation of the same dynamic in Heidegger's earlier Country Path Conversations. It is rather Hölderlin, or Hölderlin's thinking and poetizing, who becomes

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[539] GA 75: 146.
[540] GA 75: 157.
[541] GA 75: 103,
[542] C.f. Savage 57-8.
[543] This dynamic begins earlier than two-thirds of the way through the text (GA 75: 142) as opposed to the final fifth of the first Country Path Conversation, for instance.

the third, most distinct interlocutor. The Younger Man remarks, "our conversation remains with the singing of the singer in thinking conversation [*Zwiegespräch*]."[544] The interlocutors are in conversation with one another, but this conversation is also in a second [*zweite*] conversation with the singer's singing. This indicates not simply a conversational gathering of their thinking with Hölderlin's poetizing, but a doubling of the conversational gathering itself. In other words, they are conversing with one another, but they are also interpreting Hölderlin. Interpretation is variously discussed as the human capacity to answer the appeal of poetizing,[545] as an echo and return to that which is to be found in the open of poetizing,[546] and as itself a renewed instance of a conversational thinking and poetizing.[547] Interpretation, then, has been made explicit as a mode of poetizing conversing, or at least as an engagement with language which is philosophically compatible with conversation.

The interpretive efforts documented and enacted in the "Western Conversation" are physically set on the banks of the river, along which the Older and Younger Men are meandering, seemingly without any goal or direction predetermined for their travels. By the end of the Conversation, we have, as Savage remarked, engaged in a lengthy "ramble"[548] on Hölderlin's poems, and from this we would surmise that the interlocutors have also covered a substantial amount of geographical terrain as well. After the Younger Man first indicates that their conversation takes place in the "evening of a kind day in the tending summer,"[549] the Older Man mentions that they are near the "familial house of your father"[550] in which the Younger Man seems to be living and in which he was "allowed the onset of the labor of the

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[544] GA 75: 158.
[545] GA 75: 63.
[546] GA 75: 65.
[547] GA 75: 70.
[548] Savage, 66.
[549] GA 75: 59.
[550] GA 75: 59.

word, of poetizing."[551] According to an editorial footnote,[552] this refers to the "Danube house" and accompanying sheepfold which was a historically extant house on the banks of the Danube river.[553] It was built in 1654 for the princes of Fūrstenberg and eventually was owned by the Heidegger family for several hundred years.

Heidegger, himself demonstrated a veritable attachment to this building and its history.[554] In an introductory comment to the "Ister" course,[555] Heidegger indicates that his own grandfather was born in a sheep stall on the property of this house while the Ister hymn was being written nearby.[556] Given this self-conscious connectedness to the poet, it is clearly also no mere accident that the "Western Conversation" breaks off, unfinished,[557] just after the interlocutors remark upon a similarly abrupt breaking off of Hölderlin's poetizing.[558] The personal, familial history Heidegger himself shares with this building complicates this setting, extending the faint autobiographical gesturing which is especially shared with the "Evening Conversation"[559] and foreshadowing his extensive autobiographical reflection in the final "Dialogue on Language." Confronted with this commingling of Heidegger's private and philosophical concerns, Savage asks, "[w]hat are we to make of these repeated attempts to interweave private genealogy and Occidental heritage, physical proximity and spiritual

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551 GA 75: 59.
552 GA 75: 59, footnote 1.
553 Heidegger also indicated in a location and date which ends the "Evening Conversation" that this Conversation was also composed in the Danube Valley, lending further support to the interpretation that these two Conversations are deeply related to one another or that Heidegger at least demarcated a geographical, if not yet philosophical, affinity between them.
554 Savage also notes that Heidegger wrote the following in a letter to Stadelmann just months before the "Western Conversation:" "Your lines from Tūbingen struck me like the voice of the poet from his tower by the native river. For the last half year I have sojourned in the land of my birth, at times in the most immediate stimulating proximity to the ancestral home of my forefathers in the upper Danube Valley below Castle Wildenstein. My thinking has gone far beyond mere interpretation to become a conversation with the poet, and his bodily proximity is the element of my thought" (Savage, 75).
555 Which Savage explains was inexplicably or inadvertently omitted from the GA volume (Savage, 75).
556 Savage, 75.
557 Heidegger handwrites the closing note "Not Completed." (GA 75, 196)
558 GA 75, 194.
559 Which, recall, was written about a pair of prisoners of war in Russia around the same time that Heidegger's own two sons went missing on the eastern front.

affinity, biographical coincidence and historical fate, Hölderlin's poetry and Heidegger's thinking, against the background of a shared topography?"[560]

Where Savage retrieves the political context of the writing of the "Western Conversation" for clues as how to answer this question, I instead turn to the content developed within the Conversation to begin to formulate a reply. As I have already indicated, dwelling is perhaps the most prominent, sustained theme of this text. The interlocutors reprise Hölderlin's line "Beautifully it dwells" continually throughout their conversation. As such, it should come as no surprise that a human mode of dwelling, symbolized by a house, would appear in the first several lines of their exchange. Even though it is the Younger Man's father's house, it is the Older Man who mentions the building and delineates its significance as marking an ancestral heritage and accompanying personal sense of history. This moment in the Conversation foreshadows a greater emphasis on the autobiographical articulation of a personal history which takes place inside a dwelling in Heidegger's fifth and final Conversation. In one section of the "Dialogue on Language," Heidegger seems to forsake traversing geographical landscape to instead journey across and retrace the temporal unfolding of his own career in a reflective mode. In the "Western Conversation," however, Heidegger has not yet settled within the home in his old age to traverse the travels of his youth in his memory alone. Here, still, the Younger and Older Men are engaging in an evening summer walk along the river, but they travel even further in their ponderings, discussing a wide variety of landscapes—from the desert, to the summit of the alps, to islands, and other rivers—which Hölderlin mentions in his poetry. They sojourn far and wide, embarking upon a relentlessly concrete interpretive quest to dwell within Hölderlin's poetizing.

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[560] Savage, 75.

The Relationality of Releasing Love

As I have argued in the preceding chapters, Heidegger's thinking of relationality is central in this decade in his career and especially evinces itself in his Conversations. Heidegger attempts to think non-representationally, non-scientifically, and non-technologically in unfolding the inherent relationality of "things" which are contextual and mediated by that which lies beyond them. This relationality of things stands in contrast to "objects" which are understood as self-contained and resist acknowledging how that which is other to the object supports and makes its subsistence possible. Kirkland articulates Heidegger's characterization of metaphysical thinking as proceeding from two positions; "First, the whole of what human beings experience and what calls forth human thought, Being, has been understood exclusively in terms of the presence and availability of present objects to be perceived, thought, or manipulated. Second, this tradition has understood truth in an essentially propositional sense, that is, as the correspondence or adequation of representations, judgements, or propositions to a reality constituted by these present entities."[561]

In the "Western Conversation," relationality is articulated by and through the river and the river-song, rehearsing a range of themes—those of the origin, making the land arable, and sending and receiving—much in the same way as the Hölderlin lecture courses. What newly emerges in the unfolding of Heidegger's post-war thinking of relationality—

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[561] Sean Kirkland, "Thinking in the Between with Heidegger and Plato," in *Research and Phenomenology* vol. 37, no. 1 (2007): 97.

alongside the interlocutor's metabolizing Hölderlin's poems in this Conversation—may speak to the curious intermingling of the philosophical fate of the west with Heidegger's own personal genealogical origins, namely Heidegger's exploration of love as a possible tenor of relationality. Lending further support to the interpretation that Heidegger is writing both in reaction to Hölderlin's poetizing, but perhaps also conversing with the shadow interlocutor of the author of the *Phaedrus*, the "Western Conversation" is the only of Heidegger's Conversations to take place so far out into the countryside that we glimpse not even a hint of the *polis*[562] as they traverse the banks of a river. But even more significantly, it is the only Conversation—and one of a very select few of Heidegger's writings—to feature love.

At the outset of the Conversation, the Younger and Older Man discuss a shy hesitation as proper to the human essence. This shyness and gentleness as proper for the human not only instantiates again the swaying of the saying of Hölderlin's poetry—which sustains his saying as poetizing—but also "*the relation [das Verhältnis]*"[563] which the gods perpetuate toward and with the human beings and which defines each as such through their relation to one another. What this relation—articulated as hesitation and gentle holding—shows is that, above all, "leaving as an allowing"[564] is made possible in such a receptive configuration. It also sets forth their task of entering into this relation not as one of

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[562] In the first Country Path Conversation, the city is both the originating point and ultimate destination of their walking journey. In the second, the figure of the tower and the overarching drama of figuring how to welcome the stranger both hint at the presence of other human beings for whose differences we must struggle to account. The third Country Path Conversation is explicitly politically imbued. And the final "Dialogue on Language" takes place in a home situated clearly located in the country of Germany. Though we hear early in the "Western Conversation" that they are near to the Younger Man's familial home, we never directly encounter any indications of the presence of others or the organization of their lives according to any group dynamics or concerns.

[563] GA 75: 61, italics original.

[564] GA 75: 64.

"bringing about…rash meaning"[565] but rather one of learning to wait, retreading terrain from the "Evening Conversation." The Older Man tells the Younger that in undertaking to interpret the river and the river-song, "[i]t almost seems as if the river spirit would first like the evening to cheer us"[566] before they would embark upon their interpreting. The time of day—the evening—is both that which could cheer these would-be interpreters, but also marks a limit about which they can do nothing but submit to what pleases the river and patiently wait for the passage of light and time.

Since the human being's essence gently hesitates to ever fully reveal itself, just as the poetizing language of Hölderlin's river song shyly sways, the interlocutors determine that there is a shared "element"[567] in which they both belong to one another. This shared element is called "former love [*einstige Liebe*]."[568] The interlocutors here only speak of love as inherently temporal. The Older Man tells the Younger Man that the water of the river flows out to an unexpected place but again also back to its source and that this mode of relatedness of the river forward and back "accompanies us evermore newly to return to think the relation…by which we interpret the riversong."[569] The Younger Man determines this relation to be one of love. The Older Man further clarifies "You mean former love, which calmly can gain admittance into what previously has-been and will come in the future. Former love is more remaining than the futilely attempted persistence of an easily sworn 'eternal love.'"[570] The temporal situatedness of this former love which both precedes and outlasts—thus contextualizing any and all unique expressions of love—stands in stark contrast to something like eternal love which eschews being beholden to temporality

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[565] GA 75: 63-4.
[566] GA 75, 64.
[567] GA 75, 64.
[568] GA 75, 64.
[569] GA 75, 64.
[570] GA 75, 64.

altogether. Like the river, this love both has-been and is yet to come, and its arrival is always nevertheless in the mode of already departing, flowing out to sea and back to its source without conflict.

What this embeddedness in and acceptance of the temporality of love ultimately delivers is releasement or *Gelassenheit*, which can only ever unfold temporally. The Younger Man responds to the Older Man saying, "In the element of the river spirit, the former love wafts to us through the heart and all desire drifts away in the releasement toward graciousness, which liberates all beings."[571] Love is therefore the mode of relationality which liberates, letting beings essentially be. Platonic *eros*, formulated as a persistent absence or a highly-charged lack, is recast as a depiction of *Gelassenheit* which nevertheless retains its loving character. This love which lets its beloved be is later articulated by the interlocuters as an ability or skill which the liking of love promotes, shown in part by Heidegger's recuperation of the etymological relation between liking [*Mögen*] and the verb 'to be able' [*vermögen*.] Ability, thus, is generated from the context of the liking of love. The Younger Man remarks, "Without the liking of love, we are able [*vermögen*] to do nothing."[572] As Mitchell articulates it, "[i]nsofar as the capacity (*Vermögen)* is a 'tending to,' it can be understood in terms of a liking or affiliation (*Mögen*)…The element loves what it enables."[573] Mitchell also points out that this relation between ability and liking was articulated by Heidegger several years after the "Western Conversation" at the beginning of the *What is Called Thinking?* lecture series: "The human can think insofar as he has the possibility [*Möglichkeit*] for this. However this possibi[ity] would not yet be concealed from us insofar as we are capable of it [*es vermögen*]. For we are capable of only that which we like [*mögen*; with

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[571] GA 75, 64.
[572] GA 75, 89.
[573] Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger*, 228-229.

which we 'affiliate']. But we like on the other hand truly only that which for its part itself likes us and indeed in our essence, in that it addresses our essence as that which holds us in our essence."[574]

What the liking of love perhaps most enables human beings to do, as the interlocutors describe it in the "Western Conversation," is to poetize. In the course of discussing Hölderlin's poem "The Love," the interlocutors determine that the language of the lovers is also "the saying of the poets."[575] The poets are the most capable, "dexterous [*geschicklich*]"[576] ones. That this loving, releasing ability resolves itself into poetizing also, on Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin's poems throughout the Conversation, makes possible a sending from the gods and a receiving on the part of the human beings. The medium of this sending and receiving is grace and is symbolized in the bridal festival which recurs throughout the "Western Conversation."[577] The Older Man tells the Younger Man that the festival of the gods and human beings would take place "in days of beauty."[578] The Younger Man responds, "These would be the days when the grace of the heavenly ones and the gracefulness of the mortals would greet one another in the bridal festival."[579] They must meet one another in the context of the bridal festival because the humans and gods are never permitted to directly interact.[580] The bridal festival marks out the distance between them just as much as it brings them together. This dynamic might recall the notion of the Between Heidegger developed in the *Contributions* which Kirkland summarizes as follows: "we must understand the Between, as Heidegger presents it...by the *movement towards*…But we must

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574 Mitchell's translation, (*The Fourfold*, 343).
575 GA 75, 120.
576 GA 75: 103.
577 C.f. GA 75: 105-131
578 GA 75, 120.
579 GA 75, 120.
580 GA 75: 136-7.

also see in the Between what distances…by the *movement away*, which is appearance's necessary and constitutive self-concealment behind the present beings it brings about."[581]

The interlocutors then explain how χάρις is here figured as "essential beauty,"[582] clearly foreshadowing a much fuller account of grace which Heidegger will develop in his final Conversation, the "Dialogue on Language." What is crucial to glean from this dynamic is that, while the humans and gods never directly interact with one another (and must engage exclusively in the mediated relation of sending and receiving[583]), nevertheless a certain "truth occurs [*sich ereignet*]"[584] in the wedding festival for which they must take such a long time in preparing.[585] This truth celebrates that even though the gods and mortals are concealed from one another, they are still inherently in relation to another because, as the Older Man realizes much later, "they [the gods and human beings] have a sense of their essence which is found in this: their living together…" a thought which the Younger Man completes, "…that as the dwelling ones will be founded in the bridal festival."[586] Despite their fundamental difference, the very concealment of the gods from human beings, and the accompanying need for a poetizing language which could gesture toward that to which it can never refer, is needful for the essential dwelling together of both human beings and gods in the beauty of grace. Unlike the struggle between world and earth Heidegger depicts in the mid-thirties in the *Origin of the Work of Art,*[587] in the late forties we instead find a placid scene depicting the mutual, graceful

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[581] Kirkland, 99.
[582] GA 75: 120.
[583] See GA 75: 92-93 for a fuller account of the distinction Heidegger draws between sending and dispatching, specifically depicting sending as that which remains sensitive to the need and concern of the recipient.
[584] GA 75: 131.
[585] GA 75: 131.
[586] GA 75: 154.
[587] "The opposition of world and earth is a striving…In essential striving, rather, the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their natures…In the struggle, each opponent carries the other beyond itself" ("Origin of the Work of Art" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 47-8).

greeting of the inhabitants—now of earth and heaven—in which poetizing language is sent and received.

As I will show below, this tranquility of the production of works of art extends also to the at least as significant reception of those works. But even at this point, that love has emerged as a possible tenor of relationality—as *the* attunement of a relationality which makes possible the poetizing greeting of the gods and mortals in the mode of an essential, beautiful dwelling—may lend strength to the reading that Heidegger is here responding to Plato. Or perhaps it does not. Regardless, it does not seem farfetched to imagine that this mode of relationality is concretely performed by Heidegger's characters, just as I've argued that it has in the rest of Heidegger's Conversations. We never discover whether the Older Man and Younger Man are lovers as is so strongly suggested of the parallel characters in Plato's *Phaedrus*. Perhaps instead they feel brotherly love for one another, as their mentions of multiple instantiations of their conversational engagements with another might suggest. Or perhaps Heidegger is, in subtracting the erotic tension from what could be understood as his recasting of Plato's text, performatively underscoring his philosophical point that in love, thought properly, desire is set aside in favor of releasement.

In any case, if we read Heidegger's conversations alongside one another—indeed, as I have hypothesized, as even in conversation with one another—Heidegger is perhaps opening the door to understanding how a concrete relationship which has worked through ideological differences (per the Triadic Conversation), learned how to sustain a friendship (per the Tower Conversation), and held onto one another for strength and healing in the face of devastation (Evening Conversation) might ultimately and effortlessly find that they love one another (Western Conversation.) The human bond that is forged through repeated

and sustained discussions of the poetical fate of the western philosophical tradition—and how one's own thinking is implicated in this trajectory—perhaps ultimately is one of love. This love could perhaps even be characterized, at the very least, as the engine of an intellectual genealogy if not additionally as a love reflective or productive of corporeal genealogy as well. Perhaps genealogy itself, ideally, is a relational expression of human bonds of love, whether that love leads to the birth of babies or thinking. And perhaps Heidegger's intermingling of his own personal genealogy and history with the fate of the philosophical west is therefore less an oddity and rather an homage to Plato's claim in the *Symposium* that we all desire to give "birth in beauty"[588] be it in body or soul.

Language: Poetizing the Sensual Abyss

Heidegger, however, strongly rejects the philosophical merit of this distinction between the body and the soul to which the Plato of the *Symposium* appears to adhere. The poet is, according to Heidegger, the "besouler [*Beseeler*]."[589] The poet's task would erase the purported difference between the soul and body. As unfolded in the "Western Conversation," this practice of besouling[590] instead extends the invitation for everything to become "spiritual,"[591] thus superseding any mere physical or metaphysical articulation.[592] Understood in one way, Heidegger unfolds the task of poetizing as the besouling of language

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[588] *Symposium*, 206b.
[589] GA 75: 144.
[590] Which harkens back to section 22 of the "Ister" Lecture course which also discusses the 'besouler."
[591] GA 75: 144.
[592] Heidegger also here indicates that this spiritual practice of besouling mediates singularity and plurality as well and draws them into relation with one another. (GA 75: 144-145)

such that the words themselves maintain the spatiality and temporality needed to oscillate in the "swinging" and "counter swinging"[593] of meaning. It opens up the space of a between for and within language. As we shall see, however, it is not simply the poetizing word which must be allowed to swing. The practice of interpretation must also let itself swing in response to the oscillating, poetizing word. This poetizing relationality, for Heidegger, constitutes beautiful dwelling in its fullest sense.

In the "Tower Conversation," the Tower Warden and the Teacher attempted to learn sensitivity to the oscillations of thinking. This dynamic was symbolized by the height of the tower which would allow it to shake more noticeably if the ground which it rested on in turn shook. The height thus implies the practice of cultivating a greater sensitivity to the ground and the ground as itself something precariously situated. What was, in the second Country Path Conversation, a concern with sensitivity has, in the "Western Conversation," further transformed—following the formulation of relationality as love—into a concern for sensuality. Language, as the Younger Man describes it, has an "abyssal sensual essence"[594] which they must learn to hear to properly experience Hölderlin's poetizing. This is because poetizing relies not merely on a denotative quality of language, but also unfolds in the "toning and lighting of the song."[595] This toning and lighting is not something at all additional or secondary to the language of the song itself,[596] but rather, as the Younger Man boldly surmises, is the "Ur-sound"[597] of all sounding and thus that which is essential for the interlocutors to hear. Throughout the Conversation, the interlocutors attempt to listen for

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[593] C.f.GA 75: 59.
[594] GA 75: 105.
[595] GA 75: 105.
[596] This claim shares strong resonances with the declaration, in the first Country Path Conversation, that adornment is in no way additional to that which it adorns but in fact is perhaps that which is most essential (CPC: 31, GA 77: 47-48) which also broaches a notion of the beautiful.
[597] GA 75: 170.

and decipher the grounding tone [*Grundton*][598] of the poems they encounter, searching perhaps for the ur-poem of all poems. [599] At one point near the end of the Conversation, the interlocutors even re-read a section of '*Der Ister*' and pay attention exclusively to the punctuation marks, noting how they function almost as musical notation in weaving the sounding of the words together with the appropriate pauses.[600] The spacing between the words is determined to be just as fundamental to the poetizing as the words themselves. It is the spatiality and temporality of the language which allows it to sway and oscillate.

This sensuality of language which supervenes and imbues language with the possibilities for meaning, superseding mere denotative indication, is found in the vicinity of the abyss. In the "Western Conversation," as the interlocutors are discussing arability and how the rivers make the earth arable for human beings,[601] the Younger Man invokes Hölderlin's hymn "Germania" which describes earth as that which bears the abyss.[602] The Older Man asks, "[w]hat is the abyss?"[603] which the Younger Man rebukes him saying "Directly, as you ask, can I not answer you, and less still you to yourself."[604] The earth bears the abyss and also human beings and rivers. Their understanding of the abyss is thus mediated by the earth and cannot be directly confronted. Instead, the Younger Man offers several lines from Hölderlin's hymn "Mnemosyne" which depict a limit belonging to the

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[598] C.f. GA 75: 68-70, 86, 98, 102, 112, 125, and 181.
[599] C.f. John Lysaker's analysis of the "ur-poem" to further elucidate the role of Heidegger's *Urton* in his overall reading of Hölderlin. Lysaker writes that the ur-poem is, in a sense, that which provides the thematic umbrella of a poet's corpus; "I claim that Heidegger *posits* and *seeks* an ur-poem because it is not as if the ur-poem is one poem among many. Rather, it lies unspoken within the language of the poem itself (or poems themselves—for an ur-poem is not limited to any particular poem) and stands in need of extraction or exposition." How does this extraction or exposition proceed? According to Lysaker, "the ur-poem can thus be *read* only via a 'clarification' of the language of the poem." (Lysaker, *You Must Change Your Life: Poetry, Philosophy, and the Birth of Sense,* 32)
[600] GA 75: 178.
[601] C.f. GA 75: 74.
[602] GA 75, 75.
[603] GA 75, 75.
[604] GA 75,75.

heavenly ones, something of which they are not capable, namely, reaching into the abyss.[605] The Older Man is then able to understand that "the *Human Beings* are capable of that which the gods are *not* capable. And the human beings are *sooner* capable of belonging in the abyss, as the root of their essence, which the earth bears."[606]

Human beings are able to live alongside the abyss because they in turn live upon the earth where the gods cannot. Following hints from both "Germania" and "The Ister" which relate the river closely to language,[607] the following exchange unfolds:

> Older Man: We can only surmise the essence of *human beings*, that the human lives in language, because it is the dwelling of his being that all his dwelling determines.
>
> Younger Man: And therefore also the building [of the dwelling] which can only rest on the arable.
>
> Older Man: Even if it belongs to the bearing of the arable of the abyss.
>
> Younger Man: So, surely, the building of human beings builds on the abyss.
>
> Older Man: This is certain.[608]

They surmise that human being lives in language just as the "Letter of Humanism" suggested with its famous phrase that "language is the house of Being" which Heidegger's final conversation will explore. Since the human lives in language, he must build his dwelling place on the abyss, on the uncertainty that perhaps the building of his home, the poetizing thinking which he undertakes has gone astray or is meaningless entirely, perhaps the ultimate threat of our impending death. Nevertheless the human must learn to be borne by that which nevertheless bears nothing. Later, the Younger Man reminds the Older Man that the

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[605] GA 75: 75.
[606] GA 75: 75, italics original.
[607] GA 75: 76.
[608] GA 75: 76.

mother earth is able to bear the abyss "because she is the daughter of the abyss, of χάος."[609] The effect of this genealogical relatedness of earth to chaos[610] also makes possible the relatedness of language to a sensual poetizing. The human being dwells in language, but this mode of dwelling is not one of surety or certainty. It is rather precarious. It demands "trust."[611]

Inhering in this precarious dynamic of ultimate exposure and trusting that which ought not to bear them and nevertheless building a way of life within that trust, the interlocutors go on to determine that this is the most sensual possible experience for a human being. The Older Man, echoing the Younger Man, claims, "[n]othing is more sensual than the building of the dwelling, i.e. both finding the place for the house and the right time to build it."[612] This home will not be able to take its foundation for granted, It knows that it is not built upon a sure ground. Rather, it must remain attentive and sensitive to its shifting terrain, perhaps even learning to sway and oscillate with it. Sensuality, understood as a marker for a properly released love, also applies to the relation between the human being and language. With the aid of the earth, the human dwelling—language itself—practices suspending itself over the abyss.

For Heidegger, this practice of self-suspending language is inaugurated in poetizing. In the impending withdrawal of the surety of ground, no particular meaning manages to fix itself, or remain fixed for long. History, culture, and even language itself are withdrawing along with whatever denotation the author may have intended for her language. Poetizing language is conscious of its terrain, of the essence of where it has set itself to build. The

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609 GA 75: 122.
610 See Drew Hyland's excellent essay "First of All Came Chaos," in *Heidegger and the Greeks* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) for an further exploration of the role of chaos in Heidegger's thinking.
611 GA 75: 76.
612 GA 75: 154.

resulting consequences of this poetizing are twofold. First, the poet sets the poetizing language into a swinging motion. From the outset of the "Western Conversation," we learn that what is distinctive about Hölderlin's poetizing, what marks it out as poetizing language, is that his "word swings" out across the landscape such that it is able to "resound toward"[613] the Younger Man. These spatial and temporal connotations of what it means to swing (insofar as a swing could not be captured in a single moment in time, nor in one point in space) inaugurate the terrain of poetizing itself which inherently refers to its place and time, in part by remaining entangled with its history, culture, and status of its own language which develops in such a context.

But the poetizing of the poet is not the only swinging of language which is at play. This is a double conversation—*Zweigespräch*. Second, interpretation, as the receptivity to the sending of the poetizing language contextualized within the shared history, culture, and language of the poet and interpreter must also swing. The Younger Man tells the Older that perhaps, "we interpret the river song in order to live in the pure care and attentiveness for the echo of the word."[614] The Older Man responds that it may be the case that "all interpretation is only an answering"[615] which becomes a preservation and commemoration of the swinging poetizing which gave rise to such an answering. The interlocutors go on to articulate this echo as the site of the "grounding tone"[616] of the poem, that essence of the poem which is the origin of its "rhythm" and even of its "silence."[617] The poem, on its own, cannot carry its capabilities to completion, which is to say its capacities are entirely derived

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[613] GA 75: 59.
[614] GA 75: 65.
[615] GA 75: 65.
[616] GA 75: 59.
[617] GA 75: 65.

from entering into interpreting conversation with a listener who likes, or perhaps even loves it.

What the interpreting listener does in hearing the echoing grounding tone of the poem is described by the Older Man as a "setting to music"[618] which he also elaborates as follows: "Interpretation sets to music, i.e. it pays attention to the grounding tone in the echo and leaves the song to linger in its intoning."[619] This interpretation as setting to music pays attention to the silence and the rhythm of the words as much as the exclusively linguistic, denotative content. Poetizing words are thoroughly relational to and with each other, but also to those aspects of the poem which lie beyond the words, or what we typically understand to exhaust the province of what words are and can do. This "setting to music" also involves the interpreter in generating the impulsion of the swinging of the poetizing, either keeping it going or newly inaugurating it. In this way, the Older Man concludes, "this setting to music is, as thinking, a poetizing."[620] Poetizing is thoroughly relational, involving a poet and an interpreter who, when they truly engage in this practice, end up hearing "the sounding of its sound would come out of its singing, it is harmony."[621] This is also, incidentally, the definition of conversation the interlocutors finally conjure near the breaking off of the "Western Conversation"; "Conversation is only a listening. It lets us first hear."[622] Poetizing—as always essentially a collaborative, conversational enacting of poetizing which was distinctly foreshadowed by the collaborative poem at the conclusion of the "Triadic Conversation"—is essentially a practice of harmonizing with and through that which the other contributes. Perhaps this relationality even ought to be thought of as a loving one.

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[618] GA 75: 70.
[619] GA 75: 69.
[620] GA 75: 70.
[621] GA 75: 193.
[622] GA 75: 190.

What this harmony entails is that both the poets and the interpreters and commemorators of the poetizing are less beholden to a strict fidelity to the words themselves, as they function denotatively, and more to the musicality of the poetry, to what Heidegger further describes in the "Western Conversation" as the "spirit"[623] which "in-spires"[624] poetizing language.

By way of this relational poetizing, harmonizing language is discussed at length in the "Western Conversation," the shifting terrain of the concrete possibilities for poetizing language are less fully fleshed out. Since Heidegger's interest in poetizing language rests in his thinking engagement with poetizing (and not rather as a poet who is then attempting thinking), this makes a certain amount of sense. However, the ripples of the effect of this theoretical articulation of language might nevertheless be detected within Heidegger's own writing. In the "Western Conversation," the interlocutors frequently discuss the various drafts and revisions Hölderlin produced in the process of composing his poems. That Hölderlin revised his poetry in no way reflects poorly on the poet, the interlocutors determine. Rather, the Older Man remarks at one point that in "comparing the first version with the second version, the altered version shows us something of the skillfulness…of the poet himself."[625] Since the subject matter, so to speak, of the poetizing is itself on the move, the poet also must spring to action to follow and approximate it. That this sometimes leads to entire revisions of poems attests to the poet's commitment to sustaining inspiration.

Just as Hölderlin is granted the grace to revise and reformulate his conversational poetizing,[626] the interlocutors grant themselves wide range to think with Hölderlin. The

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[623] GA 75: 144.
[624] GA 75: 144.
[625] GA 75: 153.
[626] Just as the interlocutors in the "Triadic Conversation" determined that they would not hold anyone to any particular formulations of their thoughts or arguments if they changed their mind or came to see from a new perspective.

interlocutors, in letting themselves into an interpretive relation with Hölderlin's poetizing, also engage in several revisionary gestures of their own. As the Older Man and the Younger Man turn and return to various topic over the course of their discussion, the fluctuating grammatical articulation of their considerations is highly tolerant of the development of ideas that are on the move. A topic which was the grammatical subject at one moment, then shifts into to an adjectival or adverbial modifier position even several exchanges later. Each site of concern, as it is developed, is brought into relation with other sites of concern without thereby undermining the conceptual analysis which introduced it in the first place. Both conversations unfolding within this conversation permit, even encourage, continual self-revision. For example, at one point, the following exchange unfolds as the interlocutors again return to the line from Hölderlin's Ister which poetizes of the river "Beautifully it dwells":

> Older Man: Incidentally, in my opinion…each word, if it is a word, is beautiful.
>
> Younger Man: Perhaps this beautiful word hangs together also with the dwelling.
>
> Older Man: This may be true since speech is the abode of the human. We are now trying to think the homely. The one who inhabits alone does not determine the homely, rather the surroundings also support the determination of the homely.
>
> Younger Man: The gifts of the surroundings neither can determine the dwelling alone. Rather these also are determined in the context of the dwelling itself, which of course the one who inhabits also never makes. It is rather the dwelling itself which overtakes these gifts and brings them to fullness.
>
> Older Man: Which gifts do the surroundings give now by which the dwelling of the stream is beautiful?
>
> Younger Man: With this we have reached a beautiful question.[627]

[627] GA 75: 176.

Over the course of this exchange, the term "beautiful" serves, in the line which they first aim to interpret, as an adverb, then as a predicate nominative which functions as a noun, and finally is unfastened from the context of the poem and its direct interpretation, instead inhering as a modifier to their own interpreting attempt. The interlocutors at no point are concerned that they have made an error in reasoning in allowing a grammatical modifier to become the subject of their query and then to further employ it again as a modifier in their own interpretive process, a move which might be criticized as symptomatic of circular reasoning. Rather, Heidegger is highly comfortable with the grammatical mobility of his concerns, encouraging their dislodging and reemergence in a harmonizing, thinking interpreting which is born out of the poetizing.

The fluidity of this grammatical dynamic could be indicative of a larger interpretive approach which Heidegger takes in building a poetizing, thinking dwelling for himself, particularly in the way the conversational structuring of his own writing tolerates this mobility. At one point in the "Western Conversation," the Younger Man says that the Ister-song names the site where the building of the dwelling on the banks of the river should begin. The Older Man corrects him saying "named and rather not named."[628] It is the proper to poetizing to show, but show as still concealed. To have the space and time in which to swing, poetizing language must both name and not name at once. One of the ways Heidegger seems to accomplish this setting-into-motion of poetizing language in his own writing builds upon the playful revisionary impulses of his characters.

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[628] GA 76: 165.

Harmonizing Ethics

Perhaps it is this harmonious setting into motion of poetizing, relational language which is both needful and supportive of human dwelling. Dwelling, for Heidegger, happens for the human being in language, especially poetizing language. It also takes place on the banks of the poet's river because the river is that which essentially "makes the land arable"[629] and thus suitable for human habitation. What we learn about dwelling particularly from the *Western Conversation*, is that it unfolds in poverty. Interpreting Hölderlin, the interlocutors determine that not only do the human beings dwell on earth, on the banks of the river, but that this place is also one of poverty. The Younger Man tells the Older Man, "The poor place is that where poverty lives at the time of the flourishing of silence."[630] Silence is that which poetizing also tend to and so we may also presume that this poor place of dwelling is in some way related to poetizing.

Heidegger seems to confirm this suspicion in a short lecture entitled "Poverty"[631] he delivered a year before he began writing this Conversation and which he delivered in the same castle mentioned at the beginning of the "Western Conversation." There, Heidegger works out several lines from Hölderlin concerning the spiritual, poverty, and wealth. He interprets Hölderlin's articulation of poverty as follows, "Be-ing poor means to be exclusively deprived of what is not needed; it means belonging of old to the unrestrained that liberates; it means residing in a relationship to that which liberates."[632] Poverty is freedom from that which is excessive, that which restrains or weighs one down. Poverty is

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[629] GA 75: 159.
[630] GA 75: 157.
[631] Heidegger, "Poverty," trans. Thomas Kalary and Frank Shalow. In *Heidegger, Translation, and the Task of Thinking: Essays in Honor of Parvis Emad* edited by F. Schalow, 2-10. New York: Springer, 2011.
[632] Heidegger, "Poverty," 7.

the wealth of freedom from that which is not needed.[633] The "spiritual" is that which mediates this configuration of poverty and richness, insofar as Heidegger interprets the dictum of Hölderlin on which the lecture is based; "For us everything is concentrated upon the spiritual, we have become poor in order to become rich."[634] The spirit and what constitutes the spiritual is reprised in detail in the "Western Conversation" and perhaps here also clarifies why and how poverty is resuscitated briefly in this text. However, also given the focus on love, one might also recall Plato's myth in the *Symposium* in which eros himself is the child of "*poros*" and "*penia.*"[635]

The *Symposium,* particularly this moment in Diotima's account, concerns love, but also bears upon beauty as standing in necessary relation to impoverished yet resourceful love. In Plato, beauty is the ultimate desire of desire itself. The dwelling which results from the released love between the human beings and the gods, expressed in the bridal festival which inaugurates the building of the dwelling place on the banks of the river, is further qualified in the Western Conversation. This dwelling must unfold as a beautiful dwelling. Savage writes that "[w]hereas the beautiful, for Socrates, serves as a guide to a place above the heavens, Heidegger's beautiful river directs his protagonists toward the earth, there to become homely in their historical being."[636] In discussing the essence of Hölderlin's poem "Bashfulness," the Younger Man describes the poem as what "poetizes the essence of the song…as history"[637] before the Older Man describes history as tracing "the retreat of the heavenly ones"[638] in relation to the human beings. If poetizing as history is that whereby

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[633] Perhaps it is only here where we finally gain a full understanding of the stakes of liberation, the need for which Heidegger articulated in its inverse in the "Evening Conversation."
[634] Heidegger, "Poverty," 3.
[635] *Symposium*, 203a-204a.
[636] Savage, 63.
[637] GA 75: 103.
[638] GA 75: 103.

human beings depict—and come to be homely and dwell in—their relation to the gods, the "Western Conversation" adds the additional requirement for this dwelling, following Hölderlin's line from "*der Ister,*" as one which must unfold in beauty.

The "Western Conversation" is not the only instance of Heidegger's corpus in which he discusses beauty. In the *Origin of the Work of Art*, for instance, Heidegger describes beauty (of a work of art) as that which determines "how self-concealing being is illuminated. Light of this kind joins its shining to and into the work. This shining, joined in the work is beautiful. *Beauty is one way in which truth occurs as unconcealedness*."[639] Here beauty is a symptom of the occurrence of truth as unconcealment. Nearly a quarter of a century later, in referencing light Hölderlin describes as pouring through his window in a "philosophical" way, which also appears in the "Western Conversation,"[640] Heidegger writes, "What is special about this light, that it is 'philosophical,' arises out of Greece, as its name *philosophy* discloses. There the truth of being originally opened itself up as the shining revelation of what comes to presence. There truth was beauty itself"[641] Spanning a large swath of Heidegger's career, then, beauty is related to the appearance and happening of truth. We might want to say that beauty detects truth.

In the "Western Conversation," Heidegger also discusses the unconcealment of truth. Here "truth occurs [*sich ereignet*]"[642] occurs at the bridal festival which weds the humans and gods as they learn to beautifully dwell on the banks of the river together. But simply relying on that which appears to be beautiful as the rubric of that which is true can be misleading. In the "Western Conversation," the interlocutors distinguish between two kinds

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639 Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," 54.
640 GA 75: 151.
641 Heidegger, "Hölderlin's Earth and Heaven," 186.
642 GA 75: 131.

of beauty, the kind which presupposes metaphysics and the kind which does not. This distinction is confirmed and expanded in Heidegger's final Conversation in which he rejects aesthetics as presupposing a distinction between the sensuous and suprasensuous. Alternatively, there remains a possibility to think beauty non-aesthically, as the Heidegger of the Ister Lecture course seemed to suspect Plato may have yet been doing in the *Phaedrus*.

In the "Western Conversation," the interlocutors distinguish these two kinds of beauty in discussing the river itself. It is the river, they determine from Hölderlin's poem who "lives beautifully."[643] The Older Man worries, however, that this self-evident declaration will seem too self-evident such that we will ravenously devour the scene with our eyes, as though it were merely a "impressive sight to take in."[644] The Younger Man ascertains his meaning, replying, "with this you indicate, that in this way we misplace beauty in the αἴσθησις and think beauty aesthetically"[645] to which the Older Man adds "You can also say: 'metaphysically.' The verses do not want to paint the natural beauty of this landscape and to thereby arouse and actively maintain the enjoyment of nature, rather –"[646] to which the Younger Man supplies the response, "Yes, rather…beauty approaches the dwelling of the river, not the feelings of the human beings would might merely be viewing it."[647]

Several philosophically vital moves have been made here. First, an understanding of the function of beauty to be that which merely draws the eye toward something pleasant or enjoyable presupposes an economy of metaphysical objectivity. This in turn would lead to an

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643 GA 75: 175.
644 GA 75: 175.
645 GA 75: 175.
646 GA 75: 175.
647 GA 75: 175.

even more radical version of consumerism[648] which would even reduce works of art and natural beauty to a standing reserve for our pleasure. Second, the verses of poetizing, which function according to the logic of setting-to-music and cultivating a harmonizing interpretation on the part of its listener, do not "want" to present the natural beauty of the river in a metaphysical way. Indeed wanting, liking, and the capabilities and possibilities which these engender are perhaps not possible on a metaphysical terrain. Metaphysics threatens the possibility of love. Third, the metaphor the Older Man uses to articulate his insight rests in distinguishing poetizing as a more musical practice from painting, which is presumably more metaphysically-inflected.

This fleeting, but unmistakable reference to painting deserves to be unpacked. That painting runs the risk of easily construing itself as representational is easy enough to understand. But using painting as a metaphor to launch a vital critique is not a new trick in the history of philosophy. It is employed, also briefly, but unmistakably in the *Phaedrus*. There Plato develops his critique of writing as that which threatens memory, but also the human capacity to ask questions and receive answers from texts. This is to say that Plato worried writing would threaten the possibility of conversation:

> Socrates: In a way, Phaedrus, writing has a strange character, which is similar to that of painting, actually. Painting's creations stand there as though they were alive, but if you ask them anything, they maintain quite a solemn silence. Speeches are the same way. You might expect them to speak like intelligent beings, but if you question them with the intention of learning something about what they're saying, they always just continue saying the same thing. Every speech, once it's in writing, is bandied about everywhere equally among those who understand and those who've no business having it.[649]

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[648] One which, perhaps, would resonate with Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of "mass culture" or the "culture industry."
[649] *Phaedrus*, 275d-e.

Written words cannot speak as a living being can, or rather, they seem to be saying the exact same things to everyone in exactly the same way. Heidegger expresses a similar worry at the outset of the Bremen Lectures, worrying that with the apparent erasure of distance which technology seems to promise, "What is this uniformity wherein everything is neither far nor near and, as it were, without distance?"[650] Uniform availability ultimately delivers no nearness, it does not speak *to* us, *toward* us as Hölderlin's poetizing. We can attempt to sing with the river song. We cannot paint with the painting. We need something "alive" as Socrates put it, or as Phaedrus just a moment later says that they need "the living and ensouled speech of a person who knows of which a written speech may justly be called a kind of image."[651] They need a conversational partner. Dwelling in conversation is that which beauty truly detects and this cannot be represented in an image.

My contention is that the interlocutors in Heidegger's "Western Conversation" have found just such a conversational partner in Hölderlin and that they are performing a practice of interpretation which, insofar as it is the speech of an other which is at stake, entails an ethics. We learn in this Conversation that "*Denn Gespräch ist nur Gehör. Doch laß uns hören*"[652] or as I would translate "Then, conversation is only listening. It is that which first lets us hear." We also learn that "language is the abode of the human."[653] That dwelling is first and essentially a practice of listening is perhaps the reason Heidegger chose to emphasize music and musicality so heavily in this text. But we also learn that listening itself is not enough, we must then interpret. This, the Older Man determines is what comprises the true answering of the appeal of poetizing. In leaning to dwell beautifully, he tells the Younger Man, "we speak now not anymore of the aesthetic of viewing and the pleasure of such viewing, rather we

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650 Heidegger, "The Point of Reference," *Insight Into That Which Is*, 4.
651 *Phaedrus*, 276a.
652 GA 75: 190.
653 GA 75: 176.

speak of the 'aesthetic' of artistic creation, of the art of poetizing saying."[654] Poetizing saying, the Heidegerian recuperation of aesthetics, does not causal determine that we have properly enter into a harmonizing interpreting relation to the speech of an other, which is to say an ethical conversation. But where it does arise, perhaps we can take it as a sign of having learned to dwell beautifully and ethically.

Conclusion: Spoken Speech

In this chapter, I have aimed to elucidate how Heidegger's engagement with the poet Hölderlin may have shifted significantly after the war. I have done this through a reading of his untranslated "Western Conversation." In unpacking this reading, I have explored how Heidegger weaves his personal life together with his philosophical thinking of poetizing in a way which perhaps circumvents the political sphere he engaged in the preceding "Evening Conversation." In tracing the ways in which Heidegger develops and performs his thinking of relationality and language in this Conversation, I have also attempted to offer a reading of how love emerges as a mode of a released relationality which gives rise to the possibility of a poetizing saying as both a listening to and interpreting of poetizing. This interpreting relation Heidegger here diagnoses as one in which a conversation between the poet and the interpreter gives rise to harmonization which, to avoid amounting to a mere cacophony of noises, is also, unavoidably, beautiful.

Near the beginning of the "Letter on Humanism," Heidegger, addressing Jean Beaufret, makes what might seem to be an offhand comment: "Surely the questions raised in

[654] GA 75: 177.

your letter would have been better answered in direct conversation. In written form thinking easily loses its flexibility. But in writing it is difficult above all to retain the multidimensionality of the realm peculiar to thinking."[655] In conversation, we can respond to the gestures, facial expressions, and affects of our interlocutors. Here, Heidegger is seeming to attribute these facets of what it means to directly converse with someone to the realm of thinking itself. It is later in this text that Heidegger famously depicts *ethos* as charting out the terrain of human dwelling. That Heidegger's concern with conversation precedes and charts out his approach to this key insight ought not be overlooked. Heidegger's next and final Conversation, to which I now turn, is the only of his conversations to take place inside, in a human dwelling, instead of over the course of a walking out into and through nature. I will now turn to this sustained meditation on and performance of human dwelling, to further explore the scope and limits of this ethics of conversation.

[655] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 241.

Endangered Conversation: Touching without Injuring in Heidegger's "From a Conversation of Language"

Short distance is not already nearness. Great
distance is not yet remoteness.
-Heidegger

the most dangerous of goods, language
-Hölderlin

The question of what supports and renders a conversation fruitful abounds across Heidegger's five Conversations. Whether this question arises in the context of heated debate, learning to welcome newness, recover from devastation as a community, or invokes a shared inheritance in learning to listen and think poetically, Heidegger is invested in grappling with the presuppositions and implications of conversation. The fifth and final Conversation is no exception. In the text, entitled in translation, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," Heidegger stages what appears to be a cross-cultural exchange between a German Inquirer and a Japanese professor of German Studies. Both are teachers and their meeting has been occasioned by having engaged in a pedagogical relationship with an absent, third interlocutor. Their conversation ranges over a slew of topics pertaining to their distinct cultures as the two ultimately try to decipher whether Western and Eastern languages, and indeed their distinctive worlds, can converse with one another successfully. They do this by examining the Japanese conception of language as it pertains to the essence of the Western notion of language.

A successful philosophical conversation between two interlocutors from entirely distinct cultures, histories, and languages would seem to ratify Heidegger's conversational

foray into this genre of writing and thinking. On one reading, this text purports to being a cross-cultural exchange in which initial difficulties concerning the translation of terms, concepts, etc. resolve by way of assuming a properly Heideggerian conversational comportment. Many of the same themes arise which are treated in the other four Conversations, including language, most prominently, but also the ontology of sameness (opposed to identically), strangeness, how to engage with historical philosophical and poetic thinkers, metaphysical thinking, and poetizing to name a few.

But, as I hypothesize in this chapter, perhaps a converse reading is also at play. Perhaps this final Conversation is the one in which the limitations of Heidegger's conversational ethics are ultimately revealed. While Heidegger attempts to involve Japanese cultural artifacts such as film, theatre, and religious concepts, he fails blatantly and repeatedly in representing these instantiations of Eastasian culture accurately and thoroughly. In this Conversation, we also are confronted with a resounding set of warnings pertaining to the "danger" of embarking upon so brazen a task. Perhaps such a conversation is impossible from the start if there are multiple "houses of being" for distinct languages, resulting in distinct locales for human dwelling which nevertheless remain inaccessible to one another. I will wonder whether, in his own (mis)use of Japanese resources, the warnings voiced by his characters are heeded by Heidegger himself. At the same time, however, his errors are so pronounced that we might also wonder if they are intentional. As I develop my reading of this Conversation, I will argue that, regardless of the measure of awareness or intentionality of these mistakes, these misemployments nevertheless perform the warnings of the danger of such a venture unavoidably and particularly urgently.

In this way, Heidegger's final Conversation seems to be the inverse of the "Triadic Conversation." In his first Conversation, Heidegger explored how successful conversing, i.e. agreement, might arise out of the context of strident disagreement and dissent. In this Conversation, however, the problem is cast in the reverse; how ought interlocutors—who begin conversing in the context of apparent agreement and repeatedly figure coincidences of meaning across such radical cultural, historical, and linguistic difference—nevertheless remain attentive to the danger of (mis)translation inhering in such a venture. Though the Inquirer and the Japanese seem to be in philosophical agreement throughout their conversation, Heidegger nevertheless emphasizes the danger of seeing identicality rather than sameness.

Perhaps the ways in which Heidegger repeatedly (mis)uses Japanese culture demonstrates how perhaps drawing near—but never claiming having established sure, true exchange in conversation—is perhaps the most difficult of all. Recognition of the other transmutes into a self-recognition of our own limits; Heidegger writes in this text, the human being is "he who walks the boundary of the boundless."[656] The human being must, in venturing out into the boundlessness of the encounter with the other never forget that in the encounter he is enacting and tracing a boundary.

A Note on East-West Conversation

[656] Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," *On the Way to Language*, Translated Peter D. Hertz (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1971), page 41. Published in German as Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, Volume 12; Unterwegs zur Sprache (1910-1976.)*

I will be reading this final Heideggerian Conversation in much the same way as I have approached the preceding four—presenting the major themes of the texts before I then turn to an analysis of how this Conversation uniquely contributes to articulating Heidegger's thinking of relationality, language, and ethics. Before I do, however, I must briefly comment on the appearance of East Asian characters, figures, cultural artifacts and practices, and how I will be figuring this text's references to eastern thinking.

Lin Ma, in *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event*,[657] offers two seemingly competing concluding notes on the Heideggerian possibility of a genuine East-West encounter. First, Ma draws attention to Heidegger's oft affirmed central concern that Being has been forgotten in the Western, European philosophical tradition. She writes that in the face of the *Ge-stell* threatening to dominate the entire globe, we must,

> prepare for the inception of the other beginning, which is possible because of the occurrence of the first beginning with early Greek thinkers. For him, what is embedded in the *Aufgang* of Western philosophical tradition is not ontic triviality, but is endowed with unique ontological significance. Therefore, the more urgent and primary undertaking than that of engaging into a dialogue with the East is for the West to achieve self-transformation by way of a dialogue with early Greek thinkers and their language.[658]

Given this context for Heidegger's concern with thinking, Ma figures that "one can better understand why Heidegger resolutely refuses to conceive of East-West dialogue as one in which both parties are engaged in genuine interactive communication."[659] Instead, she argues, the encounter Heidegger stages—especially in this final Conversation—can only ever amount to a prop in his true philosophical project which consists in the recovery of the proper origins of the decidedly Western philosophical project. She shows how, at multiple

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[657] Lin Ma, *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
[658] Ma, 212.
[659] Ma, 212.

points in his career, Heidegger claimed "[t]hat philosophy is Western is a tautology (*WIP* 31/30) [and] There is no such thing as Chinese or Indian philosophy (*WCT* 224/228)."[660]

That he appears to converse with such traditions, Ma argues, perhaps merely serves as a foil to delve more deeply into the European philosophical inheritance. However, at other points in his corpus Heidegger does seem to affirm the possibility that someday such an intercultural, cross-traditional conversation may one day take place. Ma writes, "Heidegger has, now and again, entertained the 'preliminary' thought that ancient Asian traditions, insofar as they have not been affected by the *Ge-stell*, might be of help for the enactment of the other beginning."[661]

Concerning this final Heideggerian Conversation, Ma writes, "[i]n the latter half of this text, it *looks* as if East and West have entered into a 'deep-level' dialogue in the same mode as what he delineates as authentic *Gespräch*."[662] Against the conclusions of various commentators such as Mehta, Vetsch, Prins, and May,[663] Ma argues that Heidegger fails to stage a genuine interchange between these two philosophical and cultural contexts. She grounds her analysis on an extensive and sophisticated analysis of the notion of the "Same" at work in this Conversation. She shows that the Same "cannot be regarded as a general concept by means of which European and East Asian languages can be united…[because] the Same in its essential nature belongs essentially to the axis of European-occidental-grecian history."[664]

In my analysis, I will agree with Ma that, given the gross misinterpretation of many aspects of the Japanese culture and language in this text, if Heidegger was trying to

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[660] Ma, 210.
[661] Ma, 212.
[662] Ma, 210-1.
[663] C.f. Ma 20-1.
[664] Ma, 203.

accomplish an authentic conversational exchange between the German and Japanese contexts, he has failed miserably. However, reading this Conversation as the final in a series of Heideggerian writings in this genre, offers a different perspective which would situate the reader differently from Ma or the many other commentators on this text. For instance, although the notion of the "self-same" appears in the *Contributions to Philosophy*, and is further developed in "The Principle of Identity" and *What is Called Thinking?* as Ma indicates,[665] it also emerges in the first Country Path Conversation.[666] Ma does not take into account that the notion of the self-same is also developed in a conversational mode in Heidegger's earlier work, attention to which would significantly strengthen her interest in the relation between the sameness and otherness in Heidegger's thinking.

In my account below, I will wonder whether Heidegger's blatant failure to generate a conversational climate in which collaborative poetizing in a cross-cultural context ought, instead, to be read as the final installment of his performative conversational ethics. What if his obvious failure can be read as a successful performance of failure? What if his very failures are either intended to disclose, or perform the disclosure of, the limits of the poetic recognition and attentiveness toward othererness. What if these failures function as a warning of a danger—which is extensively discussed in the Conversation—that it is possible to inappropriately extend this ethical posture beyond its proper bounds. In other words, what if the ontological analysis of the "Same" which Ma develops were instead commuted and refigured under an ethical rubric. The problems detected as the danger of language and referring everything back to a Western context could instead be interpreted as a statement of

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[665] Ma, 196-7.
[666] CPC: 25-30, GA 77: 38-46.

epistemic humility in the face of the most radically different otherness Heidegger managed to figure.

I will not be reading Heidegger's text from a cross-cultural or comparative philosophical standpoint, except insofar as these concerns are philosophically relevant in pursuing the ethical interest in this text I am developing in referring my reading to the way I have also approached the preceding four Heideggerian Conversations. That I have chosen to read this Conversation in this way is not to say that readings of this dense and complicated text from such perspectives are not relevant and necessary. On the contrary, these studies are even more urgent, especially given Heidegger's troubled political involvements and the unacknowledged cultural privilege and prejudice demonstrated by those involvements. However, I must limit the scope of my own reading here to the domain of an interest in this text's rich contributions which add to and comment upon the conversational ethics I argue Heidegger's Conversations perform as they unfold.

Setting the (Dangerously, Eastern) Stage

Although the title of this text has been translated as "A Dialogue on Language—between a Japanese and an Inquirer," the German title is "*Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache—zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden*." The German term *Dialog* does not appear in the title, despite Peter Hertz's English translation. Lin Ma offers a rationale for the translation,[667]

[667] She bases this rationale on remarks Heidegger makes in the lecture course *What is Called Thinking?* in 1951-52, just before the composition of "A Dialogue on Language" in 1953-54, where Heidegger distinguishes

arguing the English differentiation between conversation and dialogue[668] is most appropriate to the distinction Heidegger is here drawing. In making this argument, she opposes Parkes' contention that the title ought to be translated as "A Conversation from Language" where the "from" functions to help capture the fuller force of *von*.

However, in arguing for the retention of "Dialogue" in the title's translation, Ma does not consider the preceding Heideggerian Conversations. Neither does she reference the letter Heidegger wrote to his wife noting his fear that his Conversations would be read as "outwardly imitating the Platonic Dialogues"[669] nor the distinction he draws in his first Country Path Conversation, the "Triadic Conversation," between *Dialog* and *Gespräch*. In 1944, Heidegger explicitly rejects "dialogue" as descriptive of his undertaking. In the "Triadic Conversation," the Scientist admits the Guide's description of authentic conversation eludes him. He attempts to clarify, asking the Guide, "could authentic conversation [*Gespräch*] and what you understand by that be any different from what one customarily conceives of as 'dialogue' [*Dialog*]? After all, it belongs to a conversation that it is a conversation about something and between speakers."[670] The Guide replies decidedly in the negative; "Yet a conversation [*Gespräch*] first waits upon reaching that of which it speaks. And the speakers of a conversation can speak in its sense only if they are prepared for something to befall them in the conversation which transforms their own essence."[671]

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between *Konversation* as that which "consists in slithering along the edges of the subject matter, precisely without getting involved in the unspoken" (WCT 178/182; em. or.) and *Gespräch* as that involves the speakers in "*that* realm and abode about which they are speaking." (Ibid.) *Konversation* would take the form of something like idle talk whereas *Gespräch* is a more proper speaking together.

668 Ma, 191.

669 Heidegger, *Martin Heidegger: Letters to his Wife, 1915-1970,* selected, edited, and annotated by Gertrud Heidegger; translated by R.D.V. Glasgow (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010), 187.

670 CPC: 37, GA 77: 57.

671 CPC: 37, GA 77: 57.

The Guide understands "dialogue" to be prematurely oriented by a concept or a problem in being "about something." This is accompanied by an assumption that the concept or problem is already accessible or available to us, implying that this concept or problem merely requires our technological solution. What the Guide understands as "dialogue" risks canceling the most essential component of conversation which Heidegger is developing: namely an experience in which one is ontologically implicated in the discussion.[672]

Unfortunately, English does not readily provide a third term, beyond "dialogue" and "conversation," which could elegantly render Heidegger's *Gespräch*. In attempting to preserve the distinction Heidegger himself draws between the Platonic Dialogues and his Conversations, however, I prefer to continue translating *Gespräch* as "conversation" as I have in the preceding four chapters. I follow Parkes' lead and further modify his suggestion in translating the title of this final Conversation as "From a Conversation of Language."[673] In translating the title in this way, I have tried to capture what I take to be most important for Heidegger, namely that language is conversing with itself as much as the interlocutors are speaking with and in language. In what follows, I modify Hertz's translation, instead rendering *Gespräch* as conversation whenever possible.

"From a Conversation of Language" takes place, as the subtitle describes, "*Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden*" –between a Japanese man and a questioning man. These are

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[672] This is the same concern Ma references Heidegger expressing in 1951/52 in *What is Called Thinking?*. In 1944 he distinguishes between *Dialog* and *Gespräch*. Nearly a decade later, the distinction is articulated by distinguishing *Konversation* and *Gespräch*. In either case, he eschews terms such as *Dialog* and *Konversation* in favor of *Gespräch*. Of course, the Ge- prefix of *Gespräch* indicates the gathering force which Heidegger underscores across his philosophical corpus, not least of all in pointing out the etymology of *logos*.

[673] This translation decision seems to me to also be supported by Heidegger's remarks in "The Way to Language" referencing Novalis in which he claims "language speaks solely with itself alone"[673] in a characterization which could be construed as monological. Our role, as speakers of language, is first to listen in on language's conversation with itself and only after to take up our own conversations with and within language. Understood in this way, the conversation is always, as we learned in the "Western Conversation," essentially a practice of listening. Furthermore, perhaps it is always also triadic in structure, even before we would attempt to converse with an other.

translated as a "Japanese" and an "Inquirer." This is the only of Heidegger's Conversations in which his characters are denoted with indefinite rather than definite articles. This is also the only Conversation in which the interlocutors are based on real people in a historically fictionalized way, in this case Professor Tezuka Tomio and Heidegger himself. Although the occasion of the Conversation was likely inspired by a visit between Tezuka and Heidegger, the content of the conversation bears scant relation to the historical visit; Tezuka published an afterword[674] to his Japanese translation of "From a Conversation of Language" attesting to this. The Japanese interlocutor and Tezuka are both Japanese professors of German literature. In the Conversation, the Inquirer comments that the Japanese had "translated into Japanese a few of Kleist's plays, and some of my lectures on Hölderlin."[675] Tezuka also was a translator of many of Heidegger's works and his other translation projects included work by Nietzsche, Goethe, Hesse, George, and Rilke. The Inquirer at several points, beyond claiming to have written lectures on Hölderlin, claims authorship of *Being and Time*,[676] *What is Metaphysics?*,[677] and "Letter on Humanism"[678] to name a few. The Inquirer also reminisces about the trajectory of Heidegger's academic career. The Inquirer, then, is a fictionalized, self-stylized character of Heidegger himself.

Even though the conversation commences with the Inquirer asking after features of Japanese thinking and artistic pursuits, the majority of the conversation unfolds with the Japanese questioning the Inquirer about the nature of European metaphysical thought, metaphysically-informed aesthetics, and technical aspects of Heidegger's work. They do

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[674] Ma, 21.
[675] DL, 8.
[676] DL, 9.
[677] DL, 19.
[678] DL, 21.

explicitly determine to switch roles[679] at a crucial point in their conversation, when the Inquirer offers to answer questions about "hermeneutics" so that the Japanese's "reflection may swing freely,"[680] but this is the exception not the rule of their pattern of interaction. This Heideggerian Conversation has the veneer of balance insofar as each interlocutor seems to carry nearly equal philosophical weight in the Conversation. Many commentators have considered this text to be an exemplary model of intercultural exchange.[681] Yet by the midpoint of the Conversation, interest in Japanese culture seem to be abandoned so that the Inquirer can elaborate his own attempts to articulate his conception of language on hermeneutic grounds. Perhaps it would have been more accurate for Heidegger to name these characters alternately "a German" and "an Inquirer," especially given that the language[682] and geographical location[683] of their conversation are both German and that the trajectory of the Western metaphysical tradition is the Conversation's most central concern.

The setting of this Conversation is also unique among Heidegger's other Conversations in that we never learn, beyond the fact that they are in Germany, where exactly they are. The other Conversations take place outside: along a path through a forest which veers away from and then back to a city, on a walk between a country path and a tower, in a prisoner of war camp in Russia, or along the banks of the Ister. We do know that they have spoken before[684] and seem to have a sustained relationship since the Japanese is so familiar with the Inquirer's work. Although nothing is specified directly—they could be

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679 DL, 28.
680 DL, 28.
681 Ma provides brief summaries of the readings of Mehta, Vetsch, Prins, and May which all interpret Heidegger's position in a favorable light as it pertains to cross-cultural exchange (Ma, 20-1).
682 DL, 8.
683 DL, 39.
684 The Inquirer mentions that they have limited time to speak because "tomorrow you will leave again, to go to Florence" (DL, 39) indicating that the Japanese has been there before and is leaving yet again.

inside or outside, moving or stationary—houses and homes[685] are discussed at length in this Conversation, taking the place of the emphasis on walking and sojourning we find in the other Conversations. The Inquirer also shows the Japanese Franz Brentano's dissertation "On the manifold meaning of being according to Aristotle" which was a gift from Dr. Conrad Gröber[686] at one point, indicating that they are near bookcases which would likely either be in an office or, perhaps more likely given the sentimental dimension of the text, in the Inquirer's home.

Perhaps a reason why they are more physically settled is that this Conversation considers concretely personal histories in a retrospective mode. These two have met before. The source of their meeting and subsequent discussions is a third, shadow interlocutor who is introduced in the very first line of the Conversation—Count Shuzo Kuki—to whom they are both pedagogically and academically related. In a sense (which I elaborate below), Kuki functions as the inverse of the Guest in Heidegger's second "Tower Conversation." In this earlier Conversation, the Guest gave the Tower Warden a picture as a gift. The Teacher then encountered this picture in the Tower Warden's room, prompting their subsequent discussion. This gift also foreshadows the encounter with its source, the Guest, by the end of the "Tower Conversation." In "From a Conversation of Language," however, Kuki's physical proximity to these two men long predates their conversation. Kuki is the origin of both the possibility of their conversation and initiates their conversation as, himself, the

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685 At one point, the Inquirer notes that better, richer conversations were possible in his home rather than at the university (DL, 4). At another point, the Japanese notes that the Inquirer is very "at home" in discussing theology and the Inquirer responds that his theological background was crucial for his future path of thinking. The Japanese replies that "the two [the background and the eventual path of thinking] call to each other, and reflection makes its home within that calling" (DL, 10). The famous Heideggerian phrase "language is the house of being" comes up multiple times across the conversation (DL, 5, 21, 22, and 26). Finally, near the ending, their conversation itself is depicted as a home-making activity—Japanese: "[the Japanese word for language hints and beckons] in whose beckoning hint I have come to be at home only now through our [conversation]" (DL, 47). In this respect, this final Conversation sustains the theme of dwelling as a building activity initiated in the "Western Conversation."

686 DL, 7.

subject matter of the first pages of the text. Kuki's 'gift,' if we understand his presence to figure analogously to the Guest, would then consist in the passing along and shaping of the reception of the Inquirer's ideas across geographic, historical, linguistic, and cultural divides. Even after his physical death, on which both interlocutors dwell at length, Kuki's philosophical relevance endures.

This Conversation, then, is clearly temporally located. The first "Triadic Conversation" is given a postscript with a place and date. As I have argued in chapter one, following Hyland, this location and historical moment is highly significant for the conversation. But the significance lies, as Hyland argues, more in the absence of any reference to the bombs and destruction which ought to have been raining down on the interlocutors at that historical time and geographical place, if we take Heidegger's setting to have historically literal import.[687] The second "Tower Conversation" is not dated. The third "Evening Conversation" is dated,[688] indicating what was later to become known as Victory in Europe Day. The fourth "Western Conversation" is again undated. This final Conversation is temporally situated, but not in a context with political or historical import. Rather, the temporal grounding is accomplished on the concrete temporality of specific individuals' lives. We are in the midst of Heidegger's late career. Count Kuki has died. The film *Rashōmon* has been made and released to the public.[689] Perhaps the turn toward memory has invited Heidegger to turn toward a renewed sense of concreteness, here specifically figured under the guise of the personal.

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[687] Hyland, 350.
[688] CPC 157, GA 77: 240.
[689] At least after the August 26, 1950 debut in Japan, and likely after the August 4, 1952 release date in West Germany.

The opening of their conversation is anchored in memory, specifically the memory of Count Shuzo Kuki who died "too early."[690] Just who is this Count Kuki? He is perhaps representative of the historical Japanese philosopher (1888-1941) who was in fact Baron Kuki,[691] not Count Kuki. Baron Kuki spent almost eight years in Europe studying with Husserl, Heidegger, and Bergson.[692] He also encountered Sartre during his academic tour and was perhaps the first to introduce Sartre to Heidegger's philosophy.[693] Baron Kuki was the first to publish a book length study of Heidegger's philosophy in Japan in 1933. He also introduced many other Japanese philosophers to Heidegger through his commentary on *Sein und Zeit*, including Tsjimura Kōichi,[694] a prominent philosopher of the Kyoto school.

In relation to the interlocutors in "From a Conversation of Language," the character of Kuki was a student of the Inquirer and teacher to the Japanese. They both recall him for the influential and deeply philosophical conversations they had shared. The Japanese speaks of a transcript of a lecture course the Inquirer gave in 1921 entitled "Expression and Appearance"[695] which lead to many discussions between the Japanese and his teacher concerning "the terms 'hermeneutics' and 'hermeneutic'…[which] Kuki did not succeed in explaining…[but] stressed constantly that the term was to indicate a new direction of phenomenology."[696] The Inquirer spends much of their subsequent conversation attempting to philosophically flesh out these terms. But in doing so he acknowledges how their

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690 DL, 1
691 MA, 12.
692 C.f. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht for a thorough and entertaining account of the historical Baron Kuki (Gumbrecht, "Martin Heidegger and His Japanese Interlocutors: About a Limit of Western Metaphysics" *Diacritics,* Vol. 30, No. 4 (Winter, 2000), pp. 83-101).
693 MA, 12 and Light (1987) who discusses Kuki's relation with French Philosophy.
694 Ma, 14.
695 DL, 6. C.f. GA 59.
696 DL, 9.

conversation "has grown out of our memory of Count Kuki"[697] and the conversations he had with him which "were not formal, scholarly discussions…The [conversations] of which I am thinking came about at my home, like a spontaneous game…[and] tried to *say* the essential nature of *East-asian* art and poetry."[698]

Both the Inquirer's and the Japanese's pedagogically inflected relationships with Kuki were invigorating and frustrating. As a teacher, Kuki did not have complete, satisfactory explanations for his student. As a student, he could only attempt to bring his own culture to bear on informal conversations with his teacher. In both respects, the figure of Kuki seems to gesture toward the pedagogical relationship Heidegger is developing around this same time in his *What is Called Thinking?* lecture course in which he writes "Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn…The teacher is ahead of his apprentices in this alone, that he has still far more to learn than they—he has to learn to let them learn."[699]

In addition to having pedagogical relations to Kuki, both interlocutors have special connections to his burial site. The Japanese mentions he visits the grave often; "Yes, I know the temple garden in Kyoto…[it] was established toward the end of the twelfth century by the priest Honen, on the eastern hill of what was then the Imperial city of Kyoto, as a place for reflection and deep meditation."[700] His relationship to his teacher's grave extends beyond a mere personal connection. The Japanese knows the history of the garden and the religious significance of the place. He also mentions that he knows the epitaph a famous Japanese

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[697] DL, 15
[698] DL, 4 (I have here substituted "conversation" for Hertz' translation "dialogue" as will be subsequently indicated with brackets).
[699] Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 15.
[700] DL, 1.

philosopher, who was also Kuki's teacher, worked on for over a year[701] to perfect for Kuki's grave. The Inquirer also has a connection to this place, but not one grounded in history and culture. Rather, the Inquirer mentions he is "happy to have photographs of Kuki's grave and of the grove in which it lies."[702] From this, we know the Inquirer has not been to the garden, nor does he have any access to it beyond an image and second-hand account which has been provided to him of the place. The German term translated as "photograph"—*Aufnehmen*[703]—carries additional connotations of a record or even a video tape. The lens of a camera intruding upon Japanese culture is explicitly discussed later in their conversation. But even at this early point in the conversation, it is notable that this detached, technological mode of registering this burial site is the Inquirer's mode of access to Japanese culture, at least at the conversation's outset. There is also, embedded within the force of the memory which impels their present conversation, a sense that a human life can and does impact the world well beyond death, challenging the temporality of such an event perhaps especially because of the earliness of Kuki's passing.[704]

The Japanese explains that Kuki's philosophical efforts were "devoted to what the Japanese call *Iki*."[705] The Inquirer rejoins, "In my [conversations] with Kuki, I never had more than a distant inkling of what that word says"[706] again demonstrating the distance between he and Japanese culture. *Iki* plays a central role in this conversation, originating from their shared history with Kuki, and is discussed as carrying potential aesthetic

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[701] DL, 1.
[702] DL, 1.
[703] GA 12, 81.
[704] Perhaps there are resonances with this invocation of the unliving Kuki all the way back to *Being and Time* in which Heidegger offers an analysis of corpses as objects which nevertheless are never reducible to their mere objecthood. Rather, they seem to preserve their history even after death. C.f. especially section 47 of *Being and Time.*
[705] DL, 1.
[706] DL, 2.

significance. As Ma notes, the term *Iki* in fact "refers to the aesthetic sensibility of a merchant class that was developed in the pleasure quarters in the Edo period of Japan."[707] She also references Hisumatsu who describes *Iki* as "an aesthetic complex—connotatively, as combining outward coquetry with inner boredom; denotatively, as embracing such contrasting qualities as refinement and coarseness, or showiness and restraint."[708] Ma goes on to show how the historical Kuki's theorizing of this term bears little to no resemblance to the way Heidegger depicts it in "From a Conversation of Language" although she does reference some of Heidegger's other work on the "relation between a language and a people"[709] which is not discussed explicitly.

Not only does Heidegger misrepresent Kuki's interest in *Iki*, he also offers a highly creative interpretation of the term in this Conversation. Of course, Heidegger develops very creative readings of philosophy and poetry over the course of his career. That Heidegger's proclivity to do so extends to philosophically salient notions and terms which reside not in the Western philosophical tradition or the domain of German cultural history (both of which Heidegger's educational training equips him to understand the scope of just *how* creative his interpretations are and enables his decisions to read historical texts as he does), can be construed as remarkably brazen, if not wildly irresponsible.

I will return to discussing the conversational and ethical stakes of Heidegger's potential philosophical (over)reaching, but for the moment I will suspend these concerns to approach *Iki* as Heidegger's interlocutors do. Kuki's obsession with *Iki* is reportedly the source of his travels to Europe, so that he could learn about European aesthetics and

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[707] Ma, 169.
[708] Shinichi Hisamatsu *The Vocabulary of Japanese Literary Aesthetics* (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1963), 64.
[709] Ma, 169.

whether it, as the Japanese puts it, "furnishes us with the concepts to grasp what is of concern to us as art and poetry."[710] The first definition which emerges is purportedly Kuki's; *Iki* is a "sensuous radiance through whose lively delight there breaks the radiance of something suprasensuous."[711] Later, after they have discussed aesthetics and hermeneutics and have come to recognize the inapplicability of European metaphysical thinking to East-Asian art and poetry, they reformulate *Iki* as "the gracious."[712] The connection to grace[713] is further articulated as "the breath of the stillness of luminous delight."[714]

These second and third elaborations of *Iki* take place much later in the Conversation, after the rejection of the standard configuration of aesthetics on a metaphysical basis which presupposes the sensuous/supersensuous distinction. As Mitchell shows, this notion of "grace" emerges repeatedly across Heidegger's corpus, but culminates especially in 1949-54.[715] In "From a Conversation of Language," after *Iki* is unfolded otherwise than in its traditional aesthetic sense, the interlocutors reference Heidegger's earlier essay *"…Poetically Man Dwells…"* and turn to the articulation of χάρις therein. Mitchell argues that *charis* names a "bringing forth…[which] does not produce anything, assert itself into anything, but instead receives something."[716] The Inquirer further explains that in that lecture, "*charis* is there called *tiktousa*—that which brings forward and forth. Our German word *dichten*, *tihton* says

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[710] DL, 2.
[711] DL, 14.
[712] DL, 43.
[713] Inaugurated, as I showed in my previous chapter, in the "Western Conversation."
[714] DL, 44.
[715] Andrew Mitchell, "The Exposure of Grace: Dimensionality in Late Heidegger," *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (2010), p. 311.
[716] Mitchell, "The Exposure of Grace: Dimensionality in Late Heidegger," 319.

the same."[717] *Iki* is ultimately brought forward and forth into relation with poetizing which also functions per the logic of "the arrival of some kind of withdrawal."[718]

Another central theme of "From a Conversation of Language" arrives in short order—danger. As soon as the Japanese explains to the Inquirer that Kuki had come to Europe to learn the conceptual system of aesthetics to "grasp what is of concern to us as art and poetry,"[719] the Inquirer hesitates.[720] He resists the notion that it is proper "for Eastasians to chase after the European conceptual systems"[721] because of a danger which threatens from such an encounter. At first the Inquirer worries that such an encounter is not and cannot take place due to the radical difference between the traditions of the East and West. But then he suggests that "a far greater danger threatens"[722] than a mere failure of exchange. The Inquirer relays that this greater danger "was hidden in language itself, not in *what* we discussed, nor in the *way in which* we tried to do so."[723] The Japanese begins to realize that the Inquirer and Kuki's attempt at conversation itself[724] was dangerous insofar as "[t]he language of the [conversation] constantly destroyed the possibility of saying what the [conversation] was about."[725] This was because though the Inquirer and Kuki were attempting to discuss East-Asian art and poetry, they were speaking of this topic in German and—at least for the Inquirer—very much against the backdrop of European metaphysical philosophy.

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[717] DL, 46.
[718] Mitchell, "The Exposure of Grace: Dimensionality in Late Heidegger," 319.
[719] DL, 2.
[720] It does not seem to farfetched, given Heidegger's interest in hesitation as the proper comportment of the human being to her essence in the "Western Conversation" to read this moment as a performance and reference to this previously developed analysis and therefore as no mere (or no simple) moment of dramatic flair.
[721] DL, 3.
[722] DL, 3.
[723] DL, 4.
[724] DL, 4.
[725] DL, 5.

This danger may lead to a reductive situating of European and Japanese notions in parallel, or perhaps even identical[726] terms. For example, the bringing into relation of *Iki* with *dichten* discussed above. Or the temptation to equate the metaphysical distinction between the sensuous and the supersensuous with what Heidegger's Japanese interlocutor (mistakenly, as I will discuss below) presents as a distinction between *Iro* (color) and *Ku* (the open emptiness.)[727] The concern is that, while the European conceptual system seems to provide convenient parallel explanations of what it presents as foreign concepts, the interlocutors "will let [them]selves be led astray by the wealth of concepts which the spirit of the European languages has in store, and will look down upon what claims our existence, as on something that is vague and amorphous."[728] Or, even worse, they will look upon what claims their existence as finally clear and precisely articulated according to the metaphysical rubric. The reliance upon such a measure would cause them to thereby lose the wealth for thinking of tarrying with that very vagueness.

Throughout the Conversation, the Japanese and the Inquirer are aware of this danger. The Inquirer mentions that embedded within the expectation that their conversation "could turn out well" in the encounter between the Eastern and Western traditions there threatens "*still* more clearly the danger that the language of our [conversation] might constantly destroy the possibility of saying that of which we are speaking."[729] If both interlocutors were to part ways believing that they had made philosophical progress understanding how their different heritages are really just articulating identical thoughts and

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[726] Resisting identicality or reduction of difference to making-identical is one of the themes which is sustained across the five conversations, perhaps most prominently in the third Country Path Conversation and its discussion of the ontology of evil which I argued was dependent upon a desire or drive toward identicality in its totality.
[727] DL, 14.
[728] DL, 3.
[729] DL, 15.

accompanying paths of thinking, this would be the ultimate confirmation of this danger. In emphasizing the purported success of an intercultural exchange, the carnage which may be left in its wake is decidedly ignored. On this basis of awareness, the interlocutors determine the danger can never be entirely avoided while they nevertheless suggest the danger "can be banished for a few moments"[730] as they turn to discuss further dimensions of Japanese culture. Even though the Inquirer is never sure that his thinking of East-Asian art and poetry is properly calibrated, he still pursues his questioning. Even in banishing the danger, danger remains as a sustained point of reference; its banishment is decidedly *not* its erasure. I argue that remaining sensitive to the danger, which remains even in apparently 'successful' conversations, is the ethical task Heidegger unfolds in his final Conversation. Inverting the "Triadic Conversation," then, agreement, and perhaps even collaborative poetizing, itself emerges as dangerous.

After entertaining various cultural, historical, and language-oriented East-Asian topics, the interlocutors bookend this section of conversation by reprising the theme of danger. At this point, the danger which "lies in the concealed nature of language"[731] is further elaborated in a somewhat surprising way. As we already knew, the Japanese is himself a professor and scholar of German literature. He also undertakes German to Japanese translations of some of the texts he studies.[732] As he is discussing translating both the Inquirer's lecture on Hölderlin's elegy "Homecoming" and Kleist's *Penthesilea* and the *Amphitryon*, the Japanese tells the Inquirer, "while I was translating, I often felt as though I were wandering back and forth between two different language realities."[733] Ma interprets this passage to support her reading that Heidegger's interest in a intercultural exchange is

[730] DL, 17.
[731] DL, 21.
[732] This is another instance in which the Japanese and Tezuka share distinctive characteristics.
[733] DL, 24.

here asymmetrical[734] insofar as German, with its inextricable grounding in metaphysical, representational, technological philosophy will inevitably distort that with which it comes into contact. Ma argues that the converse—that Japanese would likewise distort German concepts—does not bear upon Heidegger's interest; "What he is talking about is not the danger of any language when used to explain a notion embedded in another language, but specifically *the* danger inherent in European languages. Furthermore, the existence of this danger is independent of the actual use of European language(s), either in intercultural context or not."[735] The two different language realities the Japanese references, therefore are not equally real, or do not carry equal ontological weight among Heidegger's philosophical concerns.

Reading Heidegger's concern with the danger as embedded in language itself would seem to be consistent with much of his work oriented by a desire to overcome or otherwise abandon the Western metaphysical tradition. Even his conception of the human being as that being which is both homely and foreign for itself simultaneously—first articulated in his lecture courses on Hölderlin[736]—is firmly grounded in the issue of the German relation to Greece and other foreign lands. While it would be tempting to draw from these claims a philosophical grounding toward grounding a case that Heidegger is here engaging in a cross-cultural, intercultural thinking of conversation, I agree with Ma that Heidegger's ultimate concern is and remains involved in a wrestling with the Western philosophical, metaphysical inheritance.

That his standpoint is grounded in such a way is, I will argue, in keeping with a proper awareness of and comportment to the notion of danger I read Heidegger as here

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[734] C.f. Ma 172-177.
[735] Ma, 172.
[736] See especially section nine of Heidegger's Lectures on *Hölderlin's Hymn 'The Ister'*.

developing. The Inquirer goes on to provide a potential antidote which might offer a measure of protection; "That is a danger we stave off as long as we ourselves make an effort to think in [conversation.]"[737] This is a somewhat perplexing claim. To stave off danger, we must think using the very medium—language—in which the danger inheres and threatens. Language, as Heidegger is here understanding it, must be capable of both bearing this danger and of offering protection from it. Mitchell argues that this measure of protection is traced, in both this text and others from this period in Heidegger's thinking, back to grace, *charis*, and poetizing,[738] to which I will turn shortly.

Sustaining this conversation—between danger and grace—that is happening within language itself and enabled by our entering into thinking conversation with language emerges as the path forward. This is buttressed by the notion of "kinship"—*Verwandtschaft* a term which means at once blood relation and relatedness as such—which recurs across their conversation. My reading of the "Western Conversation" argued that Heidegger was there enacting a weaving together of genealogy and thinking. Here too kinship and relationality as such are drawn into proximity to one another.

The first instance of "kinship" is found in the Japanese claiming, "[f]rom a great distance I sense a kinship"[739] between the Inquirer's notion of language and the Japanese word for language which the Japanese is pondering, but has not yet explicitly named in the conversation. The Inquirer does not address this depiction by the Japanese here, but harnesses this distant yet nearing intuition to propel their conversation onward. The next instance in which the notion of kinship appears, however, is quite different. Near the end of the conversation, the Japanese again mentions, "I sense a deeply concealed kinship with our

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[737] DL, 31.
[738] Mitchell, "The Exposure of Grace: Dimensionality in Late Heidegger," 311-2.
[739] DL, 24.

thinking."[740] This time, the Inquirer responds "Your admission agitates me in a way which I can control only because we remain in [conversation.] But there is one question I cannot leave out…[t]he question of the site in which the kinship that you sense comes into play."[741] Just what could it be which would support a genealogical relation between them? As Ma argues, it is the Heideggerian notion of the "same"[742] which is shot through with difference, an argument I will treat in detail below when I discuss how relationality is articulated in this text. Perhaps it is also sustained by the conversation unfolding within language itself between the danger, on the one hand, that all language will inevitably be technologically invaded[743] and reduced to merely regurgitating Western metaphysics. On the other hand, we have the grace to poetically explode such limits and to grasp, as Mitchell puts it, that the "unknown is the measure."[744] Language can accomplish both tasks. Language is ambivalently related to itself; it is its own kin.[745]

By the end of their conversation, the Inquirer considers the Japanese as having a special capacity to understand what is finally discussed as the "mystery" which functions according to a peculiar kind of logic;[746] "A mystery is a mystery only when it does not even come out *that* mystery is at work."[747] This self-concealment of the mystery as mystery recalls the same dynamic at work in danger as well. In the Bremen Lectures, for example, Heidegger

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[740] DL, 40-41.
[741] DL, 41.
[742] Ma 196-209.
[743] C.f. Heidegger's lecture *Traditional and Technological Language* for an illustration of how Heidegger thinks language can itself be technological.
[744] Mitchell, "The Exposure of Grace: Dimensionality in Late Heidegger," 316.
[745] Perhaps this same thought would be articulated in the "Western Conversation" with the sentiment that language is capable of loving itself.
[746] The "mystery" also, according to Luc Brisson, shares its logic with Plato's understanding of myth: "the community have questions for which they have no reply. Myth offers replies to these questions, but they are replies which can only be set forth, for they tolerate neither questions nor explanations. Thus, a myth is never a 'myth' for the person who adheres to it." (Luc Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 9).
[747] DL, 50.

writes that "what is most dangerous in the danger consists in the danger concealing itself as the danger that it is."[748] Its self-concealing is both its most essential trait and that which makes it the most dangerous toward itself. The danger of their conversation between their cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts, then, is finally articulated not as anything blatant, such that the European conceptual system might threaten the complete elaboration of Japanese notions, although this is of concern. Even more essentially, the danger consists in the threat that one might sense in otherness only what is familiar. Even in an attempt to reach out beyond oneself, one might only ever be able to see as problematic what one is already equipped to recognize and solve. The deeper danger is that one might not register anything as dangerous at all. This understanding of the danger both further buttresses Ma's argument that Heidegger's concern with Japanese language and culture is inherently asymmetrical and thus not ultimately about cross-cultural exchange. It also, I will argue, works to open up additional avenues toward an ethics of conversation I will explore below.

Another substantive theme running through "From a Conversation of Language" is the force of memory inaugurated with the figure of Kuki. In addition to remembering those who have come before, Heidegger also unfolds a living retrospective on his own career throughout this final Conversation. Early in the Conversation, it becomes clear that the Inquirer and Heidegger share one aspect of their identity. After bringing up the Inquirer's relationship to Kuki and the conversations the two of them shared years back, the Japanese relays that those conversations shaped the ones he himself subsequently had with Kuki at Kyoto University:

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[748] Heidegger, "Insight Into That Which Is," 52.

> …[w]e pressed him in our effort to understand more clearly the reason that had prompted him at that time to go to Germany to study with you. Your book *Being and Time* had then not yet been published. But after the First World War several Japanese professors, among them our revered Professor Tanabe, went to Husserl, in Freiburg, to study phenomenology with him. That is how my compatriots came to know you in person.[749]

The Inquirer goes on to reminisce about a lecture course he gave in 1921 entitled "Expression and Appearance"[750] and his dissertation "Duns Scotus' Doctrine of Categories and Theory of Meaning."[751] The Inquirer agrees with the Japanese's assessment that both his dissertation and his '21 lecture course "circled around the problem of language and of Being"[752] which he has never abandoned. The Inquirer turns to Hölderlin's line from *Der Rhine* "…For as you began, so you will remain"[753] to help him poetically articulate what he interprets to be the constancy of the mainstays of his philosophical concern across his career.

Of these two fundamental concerns—language and Being[754]—the Inquirer explains, "the fundamental flaw of the book *Being and Time* is perhaps that I ventured forth too far too early."[755] He then clarifies that he waited twenty years after his doctoral dissertation to again broach the topic of language in his teaching and another ten years after that before he could properly articulate his concern with language. He claims "the fitting word is still lacking even today."[756] The Inquirer goes on to express the additional concern he has now as to "whether what I am trying to think of as the nature of language is *also* adequate for the nature of the

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[749] DL, 5.
[750] DL, 6.
[751] DL, 6.
[752] DL, 6.
[753] DL, 7.
[754] An assertion this dissertation, likewise, takes seriously insofar as I have chosen to focus on language and relationality (as what I take to be distinct about Heidegger's thinking of Being) in order to then construct a reading as to the ethical implications of his thought.
[755] DL, 7.
[756] DL, 8.

Eastasian language."[757] This claim could frame the Conversation under the rubric of Heidegger testing the possibility for an East-West confrontation. It could also, however, just as easily be understood to be marking out radical difference and the possibility that his thinking—although it aims for the nature of language as such—is culturally, historically, and linguistically contextualized and limited.

The Inquirer continues his memoir, reflecting on the importance of hermeneutics to his thinking, specifically how his initial goal was to produce a "hermeneutic phenomenology"[758] in *Being and Time*. He claims he was familiar with hermeneutics first through his "theological studies"[759] which he values as crucial for his later philosophical pursuits, and then again in Dilthey and Schleiermacher.[760] Although in these domains hermeneutics is determined to "mean the theory and methodology for every kind of interpretation,"[761] the Inquirer claims that this is not the sense which he intended in *Being and Time*. His project therein was rather "to define the nature of interpretation on hermeneutic grounds"[762]—a task which lead him to abandon the term hermeneutics altogether in his later work,[763] although he claims the same questions drive him even though "the former standpoint was merely a way-station along a way."[764]

Many other references to Heidegger's historical life abound in "From a Conversation of Language" which more than suggest the Inquirer as a personification of Heidegger. Quite a few aspects of Heidegger's personal history are also omitted. Many questions central to his philosophy are nowhere to be found. Clearly, we cannot simply call the Inquirer Heidegger

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[757] DL, 8.
[758] DL, 9.
[759] DL, 9.
[760] DL, 10.
[761] DL, 11.
[762] DL, 11.
[763] C.f. Andrew Mitchell's account of this shift in chapter four of *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger*.
[764] DL, 12.

and leave the matter at that.[765] But it is also apparent that Heidegger is using his character to defend,[766] explain, and perhaps even work out a retrospective, autobiographical clarity to his own thinking path for himself that only hindsight can bring. While larger concerns pertaining to language, culture, and history are all essential for the thinking which unfolds in this Conversation, the personal, concrete dimension of these domains are unavoidably also at play for Heidegger himself in this Conversation.[767] A practice of memory, and enacting a thinking and interpretive relation to the past, is very much alive for Heidegger.

Before I turn toward unfolding my argument as to the ethical implications of how Heidegger both articulates and performs a dangerous sort of conversation in "From a Conversation of Language," I must make a final set of remarks to set the scene of "From a Conversation of Language" concerning the abundance of Japanese cultural topics and artifacts which appear. First, while quite a few of these topics surface over the course of the Conversation, a great deal more topics loosely but undeniably arising from German culture, the Western philosophical tradition, and Heidegger's personal history and culture permeate this text, right down to the very language of its composition. The Japanese references which do emerge range from being slightly misrepresented to blatantly incorrect. I will reserve my own argument for the philosophical significance of Heidegger's (mis)use of these references for the moment, first turning toward a brief introduction of the main Japanese cultural topics.

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[765] I resist Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's hasty claim that the Inquirer "of course stands for Heidegger himself" (Gumbrecht, 85) for a series of ethical concerns I unfold as being at play in this conversation as well, concerns Gumbrecht entirely overlooks.

[766] Later in the Conversation, Heidegger uses the Japanese and the Inquirer to offer a justification for why it seems the Inquirer "pay[s] no heed to the current ideas of your fellows" because "It seems that way, of course; but in truth, every thinking step only serves the effort to help man in is thinking to find the path of his essential being" (DL, 34).

[767] Whether this Conversation, or the "Evening Conversation" in which Heidegger seems to be coping with the disappearance of his sons is more personal is, of course, biographical speculation. Insofar as the domain of the personal is philosophized in his Conversations, however, that these details bear upon Heidegger's own work is significant to understanding to terms and terrain of his thinking.

The term *Iki,* which I discussed in detail above, is of central importance throughout the text. Although the definitions offered of the term morph as the interlocutors develop their understanding of a non-metaphysical account of language, they never discuss the historical significance of the term.[768] Neither do they recall the historical Baron Kuki's interest in the term which was grounded much more in how language manifests the people which is constituted in relation to a culture and history.[769] Ma elaborates that its "complete meaning is beyond that of such words as raffiné, elegant and coquettish. *Iki* is not an abstract concept, but a distinctive ethnic consciousness the penetrates the minutest areas of the life of the Japanese people."[770]

Soon after *Iki* is introduced, the Japanese interlocutor references *Iro* and *Ku* as similar to, but also distinctive from, the distinction between the sensuous and the suprasensuous found in European metaphysics. The Japanese introduces the terms, saying "[o]ur thinking…does know something similar to the metaphysical distinction; but even so, the distinction itself and what it distinguishes cannot be comprehended with Western metaphysical concepts. We say *Iro*, that is, color, and say *Ku*, that is, emptiness, the open, the sky. We say without *Iro*, no *Ku*."[771] The interlocutors go on to worry "how great the temptation"[772] would be to equate this with the European metaphysical distinction. The Inquirer worries that this exact temptation incites "my fear that in this way the real nature of Eastasian art is obscured and shunted into a realm that is inappropriate to it"[773] indicating

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768 Again, that it was a descriptor of the proper or ideal comportment of prostitutes toward their clients in the Edo period of Japan (1603-1867) (MA, 169)
769 "[L]anguage is nothing but the self-manifestation of the past and present mode of being of a people, and the self-unfolding of a specific culture endowed with history…The relations between the two indicate organic compositional relations where the whole prescribes the part." (Kuki 1997, 20) Cited by Ma on her 169.
770 Ma, 169.
771 DL, 14.
772 DL, 14.
773 DL, 14.

again the danger[774] such a solution harbors. The Japanese then clarifies, "while *Iro* does indeed name color, it yet means essentially more than whatever is perceptible by the senses. *Ku* does indeed name emptiness and the open, and yet it means essentially more than that which is merely suprasensuous."[775]

This color and emptiness are somehow "more than" the Western metaphysical distinction. This launches a discussion of several further Japanese cultural artifacts which illustrate how deep the "complete Europeanization of the earth and of man"[776] runs. Discussing this difficulty is one thing, seeing it in action is another. And, perhaps unfortunately, Heidegger himself has already done this for us with this very depiction. Ma explains,

> Heidegger invokes the famous Buddhist formula '*shiki* is *kū, kū* is *shiki*' ('form is emptiness; emptiness is form')…In his text, the twin words *skiki* and *kū* appear as *iro* and *kū* (IDL 14/120). In the context of the Buddhist ideas of *shiki* and *kū*, which cannot be clearly differentiated, the first character should read *shiki*, not *iro*. Heidegger might have misread *shiki* as *iro* from his notes, or he was later given another reading. Further, Heidegger made an obvious mistake in explaining *iro* (form) as meaning 'colour' (DL 14/120); in fact, 'colour' can only be said to be one aspect of the meaning of 'form.'[777]

These errors work toward confirming the Inquirer's and the Japanese's worry, namely that in discussing Japanese culture through a European lens which has the veneer of appropriateness, significant and unnoticed distortions result. Even further, the interlocutors are performing this very dangerous undertaking and failing in exactly this way within the context of their conversation. There is no point within the Conversation in which their error is indicated or corrected.

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[774] DL, 15.
[775] DL, 15.
[776] DL, 15.
[777] Ma, 182.

Instead, they continue discussing Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashōmon* which debuted in Tokyo in 1950. Within the conversation, the Inquirer and the Japanese discuss the importance of "gesture" as something which challenges and transcends the European obsession with realism. The Japanese specifically dwells on an example of a "hand resting on another person, in which there is concentrated a contact that remains infinitely remote from any touch, something that may not even be called gesture any longer in the sense in which I understand your usage."[778] The Japanese goes on to explain how this film is an example of the growing Europeanization of the world—"the mere fact that our world is set forth in the frame of a film forces that world into the sphere of what you call objectness. The photographic objectification is already a consequence of the ever wider outreach of Europeanization."[779] In a critique ala Benjamin of the hyper limitation imposed upon a world by means of the technical constraints of the camera's lens, the Japanese rejects the interpretation that Kurosawa was successful in providing "the enchantment of the Japanese world"[780] which the Inquirer reported as his experience of viewing the film.

Ma also provides significant background for this depiction of Kurosawa's film. She explains that the plot of the film is the rape of a wife and the murder of a husband as told from the point of view of the four people involved, yielding four very different narratives. Ma further elaborates upon the hand and gesture on which Heidegger focuses:

> Watching the film *Rashōmon* by oneself, one cannot find a scene in which a hand is given a focus of such kind, except the two hands of the murdered man sticking out of the shrubs when the woodcutter found the corpse…[which are a] pair of stiff hands of a dead man. As a matter of fact, the film *Rashōmon* is set in a milieu in which the world is thrown out of joint: the decrepit *Rashōmon* gate, the suspense of a Hitchcockian style before the corpse is discovered, the violence, the betrayal, the

[778] DL, 16.
[779] DL, 17.
[780] DL, 16.

> robbery, and the inscrutability of everything…From this perspective, instead of treating it as an embodiment of the 'enchantment' of traditional Japanese taste, it would be more apposite to describe this film as an allegory of the rootlessness of Japanese reality after the Second World War.[781]

The traditional Japanese *Nō* play is the next topic of discussion, offering a continuation of their discussion of gesture and an alternative to the European camera's sin of objectifying the Japanese world. The Inquirer confesses that he has only ever read Benl's Academy treatise[782] about the *Nō* -play. The Japanese tells him that to understand the *Nō*-play, he would have to attend a performance, but that "even that remains hard as long as you are unable to live within Japanese existence."[783] Despite this difficulty, the Japanese attempts to "assist"[784] the Inquirer, both telling and showing the Inquirer that the emptiness of the Japanese stage is populated by the gestures of the actors: "For instance, if a mountain landscape, is to appear, the actor slowly raises his open hand and holds it quietly above his eyes at eyebrow level."[785] Ma writes that, in this Conversation, "it is claimed that the background world of Japan, or 'that world itself,' that is concealed behind the objective frame of a film, is experienced in the Japanese *Nō* play…[and that] Heidegger begins to explicitly characterize Japanese notions in accordance with his locutions"[786] from this point on, describing gestures according to his vernacular of the "gathering of a bearing"[787] which ultimately culminates in using the *Nō* play to clarify his own thinking of "nothingness" in *What is Metaphysics?*[788]

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781 Ma, 186-7.
782 DL, 17.
783 DL. 18.
784 DL, 18.
785 DL, 18.
786 Ma, 188.
787 DL, 18.
788 DL, 19.

While it is true that Heidegger here again is deploying a Japanese theme for his own philosophical purposes, this explanation overlooks a subtler dynamic constructed by the distinction between the European film and the Japanese *Nō* play. The distinction between film and theatre is not fixed. Recall that the entire basis of their conversation resides in their continued connection to Count Kuki despite his biological death. The Japanese not only visits the grave site himself, but often makes the trip with friends and ostensibly also devotes his time in the place to "reflection and deep meditation"[789] in addition to commemorating his teacher. The Inquirer, however, only had one mode of connection to Kuki's tomb, namely through a series of "photographs"[790] which translate the German *Aufnehmen* which can just as easily mean films. Yet this additional level of removal for the cultural world which produced the original, of which the films are somehow a copy, is not articulated as problematic at the Conversation's outset. Is it possible that even embedded within the danger of the European objectification of the foreign Japanese culture, a measure of grace which grants some mode of relation yet resides?

The final Japanese theme of central importance to the Conversation is the Japanese word for language. In much the same way as the fragment from Heraclitus is indicated at the beginning, but is not revealed until near the end in the "Triadic Conversation," the Japanese word for language likewise organizes the unfolding of "From a Conversation of Language" both in its first being withheld and then in its ultimate disclosure. Before the Inquirer first asks the Japanese for his language's word for language itself, the following exchange takes place:

J: Thus we have indeed stayed on the path of the [conversation].

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[789] DL, 1.
[790] DL, 1.

> I: Probably only because we, without quite knowing it, were obedient to what alone, according to your words, allows a [conversation] to succeed.
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> J: It is that undefined defining something…
>
> I: …which we leave in unimpaired possession of the voice of its promptings.[791]

That which is left undefined, in order that it might allow their conversation to proceed despite the danger in which they are mired, is revealed to be the nature of language itself. The Japanese articulates their task as to touch "upon the nature of language without doing it injury"[792] i.e. perhaps to understand without relying on a grasping-distorting.

In this moment, the Inquirer, in acknowledging that he is "walking toward the danger," asks the Japanese for his culture's understanding of the nature of language "since the nature of language remains something altogether different from the Eastasian and the European peoples."[793] After the surprised interlocutor responds that he has never been asked that question before, Heidegger inserts the following editorial note: "*The Japanese closes his eyes, lowers his head, and sinks into a long reflection. The Inquirer waits until his guest resumes the conversation.*"[794] That Heidegger here refers to the Japanese as a "guest" is unique within this Conversation, but not among the corpus of Heidegger's Conversations. In the second "Tower Conversation," the character of the Teacher is anxious and distressed about how to welcome the figure of the Guest into he and the Tower Warden's conversation. The closer they walk toward the Guest, the tenser the Teacher becomes. This is exacerbated because the Guest is also the source of a mysterious picture which was a gift to the Tower Warden and which caused a great deal of confusion for the Teacher. In "From a Conversation of

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[791] DL, 22, italics original.
[792] DL, 22.
[793] DL, 23.
[794] DL, 23.

Language," however, the Japanese Guest and the photographs he seemed to have brought with him for the Inquirer do not cause this sort of anxiety. He has already been welcomed into the Inquirer's home. Further, the still unresolved question which lingers at the end of the "Tower Conversation" as to how to incorporate the Guest into their very nuanced philosophical conversation which is already underway seems to be answered in this final Heideggerian Conversation—by waiting for all those involved in the conversation to involve themselves as and how they are able, a waiting-as-dwelling upon which I elaborate below.

This moment of waiting for the Japanese does not result in an answer, at least not immediately. Although the Japanese does resume the conversation having reflected upon a Japanese word which "says the essential being of language,"[795] he does not thereby disclose the word, due to a fear of the danger they elaborate as inhering in the translation into European language with its culture and history of reducing all in its path to technological resources. It is not until just before the closure of their conversation that the Japanese word for language the Japanese interlocutor has selected is uttered: *Koto ba.*[796] The word *ba* means leaves, "especially the leaves of a blossom-petals."[797] *Koto* is more difficult to translate and the interlocutors rely heavily on the definition of *Iki* they landed upon just moments before—"*Koto*, then, would be the appropriating occurrence of the lightening message of grace."[798]

This interpretation of *Koto ba* is heavily influenced by Heidegger's thinking which subsists separate from his encounter with Eastasian thought. Ma explains "*kotoba* is derived from the native Yamato vocabulary. Literally it means the foliage of speech…in ancient

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[795] DL, 23.
[796] DL, 45.
[797] DL, 45.
[798] DL, 45.

Japanese society, *koto* meant both reality or events and its expression in words…there is a general consensus that *koto* in the ancient period means both what is or is happening and its expression in words."[799] The etymology of this term does indeed hold together closely the notion of the thing with the word which would describe it and there are undoubtable resonances with Heidegger's thinking of language here. Ma acknowledges that there is a "tenuous similarity"[800] between Heidegger's interpretation and that of Japanese scholars. But she also indicates the research of May and Marra which argue for significant distortion and even the passing over of much better terminological candidates for the Japanese notion of language.[801]

As these brief excurses show, Heidegger's encounter with and depiction of Japanese cultural themes within "From a Conversation of Language" are far from accurate, culturally aware or sensitive representations, or at least are not free from significant problems. Whether these (mis)uses are intentional or not, they do perform the danger of cross-cultural exchange, which the interlocutors think about with one another concretely. This performative dimension of the text I will argue suggests an additional dimension to Heidegger's ethics of conversation. But first, I will turn to a detailed account of the contributions to Heidegger's thinking of both relationality and language which are developed in this final Conversation.

Two-fold Relationality

[799] DL, 45.
[800] Ma, 178
[801] Ma, 178.

In "From a Conversation of Language," relationality is confronted the most directly and blatantly of all five Heideggerian Conversations. The thinking of relationality is also most overtly performed within the interlocutors' exchange. In this section, I will support both these claims through an analysis of two instance of relation discussed in detail in the Conversation. First, the interlocutors consider the "two-fold" relation between Being and beings. Second, the Inquirer claims that they must learn to grant full weight to previously unthought or underthought key philosophical terms, the most overlooked of is the term "relation" itself. In analyzing these two points, I will begin to indicate how language figures into this thinking of relationality as well as work to prefigure how the performance of the new Heideggerian force of "relation" is enacted within the concrete relationship between the interlocutors and their distinct cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts.

The Inquirer introduces the two-fold by contextualizing it in the work he began in his treatise *Being and Time*. He tells the Japanese, "What mattered then, and still does, is to bring out the Being of beings—though no longer in the manner of metaphysics, but such that Being itself will shine out, Being itself—that is to say: the presence of present beings, the two-fold of the two in virtue of their simple oneness."[802] The relation between Being and beings is both a relation and not a relation. It is a singular, unified relation which is nevertheless predicated on the difference of that which it holds in and as a relation. Presence both is *and* is attested to in present beings. These are both different from and the same as one another—a dynamic Ziarek, for example, would articulate as "nearness."[803] The "fold" between the two delivers this "simple oneness," that Being is at work both in Being and beings, though its mode of appearance varies. As Mitchell describes it, the two-fold must

[802] DL, 30.
[803] Ziarek, 11.

encompass "both, a one that moves beyond itself—the particular being that is nonetheless in being without itself being being—and a two that is likewise one—the particular being is so tied to what lies beyond it, so tied to being, that it is impossible without it. Neither two nor one, being is relation, what stretches between them."[804] In unpacking the two-fold, the hope in this Conversation, as the Inquirer later formulates it, becomes to approach the Greek sense of appearance housed in the verb *phainesthai* which the Inquirer articulates as meaning "that a being assumes its radiance, and in that radiance it appears. Thus appearance is still the basic trait of the presence of all present beings, as they rise into unconcealment."[805]

What this two-fold dynamic requires to so constitute itself and appear in this way is a clearing in which to sway, and in fact the two-fold is described as itself being this swaying movement, thus fleshing out further the rustling and oscillating themes which emerged in both the "Evening Conversation" and "Western Conversation." The Japanese and the Inquirer continue their conversation:

> J: [the two-fold] cannot be explained in terms of presence, nor in terms of present beings, nor in terms of the relation of the two.
>
> I: Because it is only the two-fold itself which unfolds the clarity, that is, the clearing in which present beings as such, and presence, can be discerned by man…
>
> J:…by man who by nature stands in relation to, that is, is being used by, the two-fold.
>
> I: This is also why we may no longer say: relation to the two-fold, for the two-fold is not an object of mental representation, but is the sway of usage.[806]

That the two-fold cannot be an object of mental representation, but rather is caught in the logic of a "sway" recalls the oscillating and vibrating themes. It also recalls the emphasis

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[804] Mitchell, "The Exposure of Grace: Dimensionality in Late Heidegger," 320.
[805] DL, 38.
[806] DL, 33.

throughout Heidegger's conversations on walking and moving across and through space as the thinking endeavor is undertaken. In the "Triadic Conversation," for instance, it is the moments when the interlocutors physically stop walking that their conversation also is most theoretically blocked. Even in this final Conversation, which is sedentary, and arguably takes place in the Inquirer's home so that memory, the past, and history can constitute their temporal terrain, there are still multiple references to thinking as the walking of a path.[807]

The sway of usage across geographical and perhaps even intellectual terrain is yet another instance of Heidegger's recovery of a phenomenological approach which works to redeem a notion of a static standpoint for plural and temporalized "way-station[s]"[808] of thinking. What stretches between these way-stations, Mitchell argues, is that "being is relation"[809] and presumably a relation which has spatial and temporal dimensions. Yet, as the Japanese depicts it, the two-fold cannot be explained "in terms of the relation of the two."[810] What are we to make of this state of affairs? "Relation," in some sense, is inapplicable to the two-fold, because it is also at once a simple oneness. But another "relation" is inherently embedded within the two-fold, namely the human being "who by nature stands in relation [*Beziehung*] to…the two-fold [*Zwiefalt*]."[811]

The word "relation" is of pivotal concern in this Conversation. At one point, the Inquirer renders their conversational task in the following way, claiming that they must together "examine whether each word in each case is given its full—most often hidden—weight."[812] One of the words they hit upon as remaining most unexamined, and therefore

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[807] C.F. DL 6, 7, 10, 21, 22, 29, and 48.
[808] DL, 12.
[809] Mitchell, "The Exposure of Grace: Dimensionality in Late Heidegger," 320.
[810] DL, 33.
[811] DL, 33.
[812] DL, 31.

have most failed in granting it its proper weight, is "the word 'relation'"[813] itself. The Inquirer goes on to offer several correct yet incomplete definitions. He first says, "[w]e think of it in the sense of a relationship. What we know in that way we can identify in an empty, formal sense, and employ like a mathematical notation. Think of the procedure of logistics."[814] In addition to the mathematical, logistical meaning of relation, there is also an economic sense of the term the Inquirer works to distinguish—"[w]e say 'correlation' also when talking about the supply and demand of commodities."[815]

After setting aside these variously scientific denotations of the word "relation," the Inquirer offers his interpretation—"the word 'relation' does want to say that man, in his very being, is in demand, is needed, that he, as the being he is, belongs within a needfulness which claims him."[816] While the interlocutors reject the conception that the two-fold is related to itself (or at least that it cannot be explained merely in these terms, being both a simple oneness and a two-fold at once), the needfulness of the two-fold for belonging together with the human being is essential. For the two-fold to appear, for it to radiate as it rises into unconcealment, it must appear to a particular being capable of receiving and bearing witness to such an event. In a way, the relation between the two-fold of Being and beings and the human being can also be figured as a relation in which the two-fold and the human being are "kin" to one another, rather than scientific determinants. This relationality between the two-fold and the human being is thus both ontological and genealogical. One way in which this needfulness is unconcealed is, as we now turn to explore, the human hermeneutic involvement with language.

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[813] DL, 32.
[814] DL, 32.
[815] DL, 32.
[816] DL, 32.

The Hermeneutic Needfulness of Language

Just how is this needfulness of the two-fold for the human being expressed? One way we might think of the receptive capacity of the human being would be our ability to receive a message—a capacity the interlocutors in this Conversation explore as hermeneutic in nature. Hermeneutics, as an academic discipline and as a more fundamental human comportment, surfaces as a topic repeatedly in the Conversation. Early in the Conversation, the Japanese asserts (and his conversational partner agrees) that across his career, the Inquirer's questions "circled around the problem of language and of Being."[817] Through the Inquirer's presentation of his intellectual autobiography, it emerges that Count Kuki's interest in Heidegger's '21 lecture course *Expression and Appearance*, was its attempt to elaborate hermeneutics as one more of exploring the problem of language and of Being. The Japanese complains here that Kuki's explanation of the import of that lecture course often "invoked the terms 'hermeneutics' and 'hermeneutic'"[818] which the Japanese could never fully understand.

The Inquirer here introduces the term "hermeneutics" by grounding it in his own personal history. He tells the Japanese, "[t]he term 'hermeneutics' was familiar to me from

[817] DL, 6.
[818] DL, 9.

my theological studies."[819] At the point in his life when he was studying theology, he was most concerned with the "relation between the world of Holy Scripture and theological-speculative thinking."[820] He goes on to cite Schleiermacher's text *Hermeneutics and Criticism* which specifically focuses on the New Testament of the Bible:

> Hermeneutics and criticism, both philological disciplines, both methodologies, belong together, because the practice of each presupposes the other. The first is in general the art of understanding rightly another man's language, particularly his written language; the second, the art of judging rightly the genuineness of written works and passages, and to establish it on the strength of adequate evidence and data.[821]

This account helps the Japanese see hermeneutics as a modality "for every kind of interpretation, including, for example, that of the works of the visual arts."[822] The Inquirer further clarifies the radical scope of his focus on hermeneutics in *Being and Time* in which he claims, "hermeneutics means neither the theory of the art of interpretation nor interpretation itself, but rather the attempt first of all to define the nature of interpretation on hermeneutic grounds."[823] That interpretation itself is a hermeneutic venture is not yet made clear for either interlocutor at this point. The Inquirer does note that he seemingly abandoned the term hermeneutics in his "later writings."[824] However, he also claims that he never abandoned the interest in thinking of hermeneutics in a hermeneutic way. He self-interprets as instead having left behind this particular standpoint in order to draw near to it from a

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[819] DL, 9.
[820] DL, 9-10.
[821] DL, 10-11.
[822] DL, 11. This passing reference to the visual arts both further contextualizes the different forms and media of art which emerge in this Conversation. It also, however, gives retrospective strength to my contention in chapter two of this dissertation that the picture in the "Tower Conversation" can and should be understood most properly as an instance of language, and poetic language as such, insofar as the drive toward interpretation was so thoroughly engendered by its presence.
[823] DL, 11.
[824] DL, 12.

new, "strange"[825] angle.[826] In so doing, he left the term "hermeneutics" undefined so that it could rest in its strange vagueness, a decision the Japanese responds to favorably, indicating that "[w]e Japanese do not think it strange if a [conversation] leaves undefined what is really intended, or even restores it back to the keeping of the undefinable."[827] Essentially, the Japanese, as an interlocutor, does and does not find strangeness strange, and is thereby exemplifying a proper two-fold relationality with and two the strange.

With these remarks, the interlocutors leave behind the topic of hermeneutics for a while, allowing it to remain undefined and perhaps even undefinable. They do, however, return to hermeneutics from an entirely new vantage point later in their conversation. This reemergence of the topic of hermeneutics renders it nearly entirely strange and new, perhaps performing a microcosm of the Inquirer's own journey in which any particular interest is "merely a way-station along a way [which is] the lasting element in thinking."[828] The Inquirer initiates the revisiting of hermeneutics when he suddenly suggests that the two "exchange roles."[829] For the most part, the Japanese had been the one answering the Inquirer's questions about Japanese words and cultural artifacts thus far. The Inquirer offers to "be the one who gives the answers, specifically the answer to your question about hermeneutics"[830] perhaps in the spirit of reciprocity or perhaps simply as a sign of gratitude for the knowledge and perspective the Japanese has just shared with him. The Inquirer does admit that his previous explanation devolved quickly into mere "stories…showing how I came to employ

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[825] DL, 12.
[826] The importance and value of strangeness was, of course, explored extensively in chapter two and is here obliquely invoked by Heidegger to explain and justify his own academic terminological choices.
[827] DL, 13.
[828] DL, 12.
[829] DL, 28.
[830] DL, 28.

the word"[831] and the Japanese in turn offers thanks to the Inquirer "for coming back once more to hermeneutics."[832]

The Inquirer's second attempt to clarify hermeneutics for the Japanese takes an entirely different approach. He offers an etymology of the term:

> The expression 'hermeneutic' derives from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*. That verb is related to the noun *hermeneus*, which is referable to the name of the god Hermes by a playful thinking that is more compelling than the rigor of science. Hermes is the divine messenger. He brings the message of destiny; *hermeneuein* is that exposition which brings tidings because it can listen to a message. Such exposition becomes an interpretation of what has been said earlier by the poets who, according to Socrates in Plato's *Ion* (534e), *hermenes eisin ton theon*—"are interpreters of the gods."[833]

There are many important threads touched upon here as the Inquirer describes hermeneutics in this non-autobiographical way. Plato, the Greeks, destiny, the gods, the poets, listening, interpreting, sending, and the limitations of science are all reprised and reevoked from the four preceding Conversations in more subtle and complex ways than I have time to unpack here. The kernel of what the Inquirer claims he intends, through this exposition, to make clear is "that hermeneutics means not just the interpretation but, even before it, the bearing of message and tidings."[834]

It is no accident that interpretation is here grounded in a "message" which is in turn essentially related to language. The Inquirer claims that it was this "original sense" of *hermeneuein* which prompted him to begin his engagement with hermeneutics which in turn laid the groundwork for the phenomenological thinking from which *Being and Time* emerged. This is because the message which is brought to the human being here originates in the two-

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[831] DL, 28.
[832] DL, 28.
[833] DL, 29.
[834] DL, 29.

fold sense of Being and beings, to which the human being is essentially related. The Japanese explains that the human being "realizes his nature as [a human being] by corresponding to the call of the two-fold."[835] This call, if it is not precisely linguistic, nonetheless issues forth from language. The Inquirer responds, "what prevails in and bears up the relation of human nature to the two-fold is language. Language defines the hermeneutic relation."[836]

Hermeneutics, then, pertains less to interpretation as a scientific enterprise, and more to a practice of listening to the message of language itself, sent from the gods and relayed by the poets.[837] It is not that the depiction Heidegger offered in his first attempt at articulating hermeneutics by way of Schleiermacher's account was exactly incorrect, but it was not complete. The emphasis on the stance of receiving the tidings of a message in the second articulation prefigures and makes possible the subsequent task of understanding as rightly as we can before we then pass judgement on that message. These are projects which are found out ahead of the human being, however. The Inquirer claims that essentially "[the human being], to the extent he is [a human being], listens to this message."[838] In coming to understand the essential definition of the human being, only the existence and quality of listening to and out of a relation that language constitutes with the two-fold of Being and beings ultimately and finally renders the human as human. It is in this way that she is able to dwell in language as the house of Being.

Between these two separate thinking approaches to hermeneutics which are developed in the Conversation, the interlocutors embark upon a brief interlude concerning

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[835] DL, 30.
[836] DL, 30.
[837] This account, then, rests squarely on the same philosophical grounds as the "Western Conversation."
[838] DL, 40. I have replaced the translation "man" with "human being" as indicated by brackets.

hints. The interlocutors determine that a "hint would be the word's basic character."[839] As the essential formulation of the word, the hint both gestures at a meaning of a word without purporting to scientifically, categorically force it into a settled definition. Hints are, the Inquirer explains, "enigmatic. They beckon to us. They beckon *away*. They beckon us *toward* that from which they unexpectedly bear themselves toward us."[840] As essentially enigmatic, hints do not establish definitions. Hints, rather, incite movement, movement which requires space and time—perhaps a clearing—in which to move. Just as in the "Western Conversation," words are here on the move. The Inquirer summarizes this; "Hints need the widest sphere in which to swing…"[841] It is language itself as the relation enacted between the human being and the two-fold of Being and beings which is needful of the human. The dynamic is unsettled and unsettling, the inverse of the drive toward developing scientifically grounded definitions.

This dynamic is not only theorized within the interlocutor's conversation, it is also most unmistakably performed in the third reprisal of the theme of hermeneutics. Here, hermeneutics itself is no longer either a component of the Inquirer's personal intellectual history nor restricted to an instance of 'playful' etymological thinking. Instead the Inquirer launches his attempt toward articulating the task of hermeneutics he had attempted to unpack from the start; his approach to hermeneutics is "the attempt first of all to define the nature of interpretation on hermeneutic grounds."[842] In developing the surmise that words are hints which require space in which to swing, the interlocutors thereby developed the theoretical framework wherein the first two attempts to describe hermeneutics can be brought into a swinging relation with one another. Each merely demarcates one of two limits

[839] DL, 24.
[840] DL, 26.
[841] DL, 27.
[842] DL, 11.

of this swinging relation. On the one hand, they explore the undergirding supportive structure of hermeneutics as listening to and receiving language from elsewhere. On the other, they also gesture toward the futural tasks hermeneutics call for us to sustain in further attempting to understand and judge rightly these words issuing from an other. The swinging relation between these two is further disallowed from being thought two-dimensionally, but is rather articulated as a three-dimensional circular swinging which the Inquirer explains he once called "the hermeneutic circle."[843] The dynamic is ultimately responsive to the speaking of the gods and the poets interpret them as a "speaking *from* language [which] could only be a [conversation]."[844] That language is finally in conversation with itself always and ever before it would then enter into conversation with us as a medium in which we subsist in the human hermeneutical comportment toward it means language as such exceeds any words which arise within its domain. Language also functions as its own guard in this way, ontologically resisting the technological impulse to reduce it to a mere resource. Put in another way, language's words are hints because they must gesture both back to the ontological conversation language is having with itself and toward the conversation it may yet enter into with other words. In reprising the theme of how one is to abandon metaphysical, technological thinking, the full import of the recognition of the transformative potential of conversation is indicated:

> I: The transformation occurs as a passage…
>
> J:…in which one site is left behind in favor of another…
>
> I:…and that requires that the sites be placed in discussion.
>
> J: One site is metaphysics.

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[843] DL, 51.
[844] DL, 51.

I: And the other? We leave it without a name.[845]

Conversation is remarkable in how clearly it involves otherness, but it is also conspicuous in that it is able to support namelessness, or the leaving of a central issue undefined,[846] and to nevertheless proceed. At stake in the capacity of language to converse with itself, and for us human beings who respond to the call of language which brings tidings of the needfulness of the two-fold, is the very possibility for transformation as such. Conversation is not merely one linguistic mode among many, but rather is originary language. As Heidegger interpreted Hölderlin decades earlier,

> We—human beings—are a conversation. Man's being is grounded in language; but this actually occurs only in *conversation*. Conversation, however, is not only a way in which language takes place, but rather language is essential only as conversation. What we usually mean by 'language,' namely, a stock of words and rules for combining them, is only an exterior aspect of language. But now what is meant by 'conversation'? Obviously, the act of speaking with one another about something. Speaking, then, mediates our coming to one another.[847]

Language is conversational in essence. It is the ground for the being of the human being. It mediates our mutual encountering of one another, a register we might consider to be ethical.

However, a further complication arises in this Conversation. Another reprised theme throughout "From a Conversation of Language" is the phrase "Language is the house of being" Heidegger first developed in the "Letter on Humanism."[848] This phrase first appears early in the Conversation. As the Inquirer embarks upon recounting Heidegger's quasi-autobiography, the Inquirer says, "[s]ome time ago I called language, clumsily enough, the

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[845] DL, 42.
[846] DL, 13.
[847] Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," 56.
[848] Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 239.

house of Being"[849] purportedly referencing the "Letter on Humanism." He goes on to wonder, "[i]f man by virtue of his language dwells within the claim and call of Being, then we Europeans presumably dwell in an entirely different house than Eastasian man."[850] The Japanese responds, "[a]ssuming that the languages of the two are not merely different but are other in nature, and radically so."[851] The Inquirer replies, "so, a [conversation] from house to house remains nearly impossible."[852] That there may be (at least) two radically "other" houses of Being is not here contested in any meaningful way, but the status of the "nearly" is not pursued further. The "Triadic Conversation" and the "Tower Conversation," in particular, develop a notion of nearness which is grounded in farness. The Bremen Lectures, as well, open with a reflection on the seeming interrelation of nearness and farness:

> All distances in time and space are shrinking. Places that a person previously reached after weeks and months on the road are now reached by airplane overnight...Yet the hasty setting aside of all distances brings no nearness; for nearness does not consist in a small amount of distance…What is vastly far away in terms of length, can be near to us. Short distance is not already nearness. Great distance is not yet remoteness.[853]

Nearness is of ontological concern to Heidegger and, as such, ought not be discounted in this first appearance of the concern that there may be multiple houses of language in which Being, and the human beings it is needful of, might dwell.

The second appearance of the phrase presents the dilemma much differently. The prospect of multiple dwellings of Being is concerning, but Heidegger's famous phrase is newly explored through the question of what concerns the "nature" of language as such,

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[849] DL, 5.
[850] DL, 5.
[851] DL, 5.
[852] DL, 5.
[853] Heidegger, "Point of Reference," *Insight Into that Which Is,* 3.

rather than through particular instantiations of languages which may be foreign or native in relation to a speaker. The interlocutors agree that the nature of language is the fundamental question driving their conversation. The Inquirer stresses that his phrase "'house of Being' does not provide a concept of the nature of language."[854] The Japanese responds favorably to explanation which nevertheless this withholds an answer, responding, "I, too, find much food for thought in your phrase 'house of Being'—but on different grounds. I feel that it touches upon the nature of language without doing it injury."[855]

This "manner in which the attempt"[856] to think the nature of language is ultimately the most important in their exploration of the singly sourced, yet proliferating instantiation of language across the East-West divide. There is an ambivalence, which cuts to the core of this text, as to whether the Heideggerian concept of the nature of language is, as the Inquirer worries, "*also* adequate for the nature of the Eastasian language; whether…a nature of language can reach the thinking experience, a nature which would offer the assurance that European-Western saying and Eastasian saying will enter into [conversation] such that in it there sings something that wells up from a single source."[857] This singing[858]—this vibrating, swaying movement which makes possible vocalization as such—even if it issues forth from a single source, is itself indicative of an inherent relationality. Conversation, of course, takes place as essentially engaged with otherness in which we send thoughts out which are received and responded to in a potentially thrilling, fearless abandon to and with our conversational partner. But here again, we are reminded that language is also in conversation with itself and that its dwelling, as a self-sheltering, also guards against the absolute

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[854] DL, 22.
[855] DL, 22.
[856] DL, 22.
[857] DL, 8.
[858] The provenance of the poet and poetizing, as we learn in the "Western Conversation."

disclosure its source. The nature of language is excessive, *par excellence*. Its hints need space to swing out beyond us while nevertheless returning to us in their abiding swaying. In opening this expanse, the possibility of holding the core issue of their conversation out as undefined—which amounts to its appearance on the scene nevertheless sustaining its concealment even in its being revealed—is exalted.

Heidegger's Performative (Conversational) Ethics

Not only does language, on Heidegger's account, exhibit a tripartite structure, as Ziarek argued. In its conversational essence, in the relationality which inheres in this essence, language is triadic in it's dynamic oscillations. I argue that from this understanding of the dynamic of relational language, two ethical implications follow from this reading of Heidegger's final Conversation. On the one hand, Heidegger here describes a guiding of principle of conversation as a practice of touching without injuring. This practice might also be thought as a drawing near to something without thereby radically or absolutely reducing its otherness to identicality. But this is precisely what is dangerous—the very definition of danger—which Heidegger's interlocutors unpack, namely the danger that we might not notice there is anything to notice at all. What is most menacing in danger is the threat that one might only sense what is familiar when confronted with otherness, that one might only ever be able to recognize as problematic that which one is already equipped to resolve. It is this most dangerous essence of danger which I read Heidegger as most capable of illustrating in harnessing the performative capacity of the conversational form of writing philosophy. The second ethical implication I argue Heidegger is here disclosing is that, on the other

hand, we must also understand and judge the other's language "rightly" as part and parcel of the interpretive, hermeneutic task. A significant component of generating this properly faithful interpretation of the language of another, follows from the first ethical claim of this Conversation, namely that hermeneutic engagement with the other aims to touch without injuring. So I will first turn to elaborate upon this ethical claim I argue stems from this Converastion.

To understand what it means to "touch" in Heideggerian terms, we must first turn to two key moments in the Conversation. First, in struggling to speak of and in language at once, the Inquirer tells the Japanese "Speaking *about* language turns language almost inevitably into an object" to which the Japanese replies, "And then its reality vanishes."[859] Moments before this exchange, the Inquirer articulated this dilemma as the "untouchable"[860] dimension of language. In short, the moment the interlocutors would attempt to directly confront language, language in its full reality withdraws. Figured as an object, language is untouchable. The interlocutors go on to determine that if they cannot speak "about" language, they must instead speak "from" language in a circular, hermeneutical, triadic relationality the Inquirer describes as follows "…[our speaking from language] would be called *from out of* language's reality, and be led *to* its reality…A speaking *from* language could only be a [conversation.]"[861] Conversation, the intervention of otherness within the medium of language itself, opens a path forward. Surrendering to language's terms, refigures the terrain of language and in turn the possibilities to detect the relationality already at play therein.

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[859] DL, 50.
[860] DL, 50.
[861] DL, 51.

The second key moment came much earlier in the Conversation. The Inquirer, in referencing the Japanese's even earlier expression of comfort with leaving the essence of any given matter undefined, tells the Japanese that they have remained on their thinking path because "we, without quite knowing it, were obedient to what alone, according to your words, allows a [conversation] to succeed."[862] The Japanese responds, "[i]t is that undefined defining something…the nature of language."[863] The Inquirer replies, "[t]hat is what is defining our [conversation]. But even so we must not touch it."[864] The Japanese concludes saying, "[s]urely not, if by touching you mean grasping it in the sense of your European conceptualizations."[865] Touching as grasping as conceptualizing in the mode of objectification is simply inutile. If language could be touched in this way, it would doubtless sustain fatal injury. But language, in its conversational essence, guards itself against this sort of grasping.

However, in letting language's essence remain undefined, the defining touching which is thereby made possible is unfolded as an alternative way of relating to otherness as such, not merely to language, and does so in a modality unmistakably attenuated in the middle voice of releasement, of the *Gelassenheit* Heidegger introduced in the "Triadic Conversation." The only way to touch without injuring is to practice a releasing relationality toward the otherness of that with which we would converse. Thus we can only "judge rightly" the language of another, indeed we can only hear that very language in the first place, if we simultaneously practice touching without injuring in the listening which constitutes authentic conversation. This practice is ostentatiously ethical.

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[862] DL, 22.
[863] DL, 22.
[864] DL, 22.
[865] DL, 22.

Yet the strongest objection to the practicability of this practice resides just as brazenly in this very text. On the one hand, in staging this text as a conversation between representatives of the East and West—between a German and a Japanese—Heidegger has dramatized and radicalized the challenge of learning to welcome the other who is perhaps the most other Heidegger could bring himself to figure. This, of course, gives rise to the reading that Heidegger is attempting to demonstrate his thinking as capable of yielding cross-cultural resonances and fostering a thoroughly egalitarian community of thinkers which does not discriminate against anyone, regardless of historical, cultural, or linguistic difference. However, this reading is immediately cast into doubt by Heidegger's presentation of the otherness of Japanese culture in this text. In referring to the various artifacts of Japanese culture I detailed above, Heidegger ranges from offering what could be construed as highly creative interpretations of Japanese terms, to misremembering scenes from a Japanese film, to even incorrectly transcribing sets of Buddhist ideas which would seem to evince a lack of concern for the integrity of the otherness he references.

Perhaps the situation is salvageable yet. Heidegger's proclamation that it was a necessity of thought which drove him to write conversations may finally allow its full weight to be felt in his final Conversation. Either Heidegger is carelessly misrepresenting Eastasian culture or he is very creatively appropriating it for his own philosophical purposes. I am not here properly equipped to a make a determination either way, nor do I believe it is necessary to do so. Instead, I would remark upon the fact that, intentional or not, Heidegger's Conversation is enabling this concern to emerge. There are, I argue, two possible interpretations of the consequences of this feature of Heidegger's Conversation. First, perhaps this misrepresentation is, in some measure, intentional and Heidegger is well aware that he is falling prey to the very danger he repeatedly warns against in the course of his

Conversation. In this case, Heidegger is, in illustrating his characters falling into the trap they repeatedly warn against in the Conversation, performing and redoubling his argument. But, perhaps even more powerfully, Heidegger was entirely unaware that he was committing errors (and in this case they would be veritable errors) in the course of what he understood to be a project of enacting a genuine cross-cultural exchange. If this were the case, I would argue that the very existence of these "errors" demonstrate and perform, even more palpably, the pervasiveness and seriousness of the danger Heidegger warns against in his Conversation. The fact that Heidegger perhaps attempted to grasp and present danger without fatally injuring any hope for the success of such a procedure attests, all the more, to the integrity of his thinking elaboration.

Both these possible interpretations, I argue, demonstrate that otherness is simultaneously endangered and irrevocably appended to Heidegger's Conversational endeavor. Nevertheless, the otherness of the other presents an absolute limit to thinking and ethics as such, one which we ontologically unable to violate no matter how hard we might try. That Heidegger's thinking here has an ethical annex is inescapable, if we understand ethics to negotiate the persistent residence of the other in and near my own dwelling. That Heidegger could either seem to or in fact misstep so radically in this Conversation recalls the seeds planted in the "Tower Conversation" and the "Evening Conversation." That Heidegger, through his characters was capable of committing (and possibly even performatively admitting) errors in thinking with one another, as the Tower Warden and Teacher demonstrated, further shows that the making and negotiating the consequences of mistakes is a thoroughly ethical practice for Heidegger. And without the possibility of making mistakes, of wandering out into (what we at least perceive to be) otherness and

losing our bearings, we would have no assurance that we have not already fallen in to the clutches of totalizing, self-identical, ontological evil.

Finally, it seems that the fact that (if it is indeed a fact at all) these ethically-inflected sorts of claims would somehow be born out of as thoroughly ontologically-oriented a thinking as Heidegger's is only (or only without the greatest difficulty) made possible because of the form of this text itself. Perhaps Heidegger's Conversations are conversational beyond simply employing language as conversational in essence. Perhaps, further, the conversation these Conversations can strike up in their performativity, that the character's performance can reconfirm, aggravate, or even generate the strongest accusations against the philosophical content of the Conversation itself, provided the form of writing which made possible the only sort of elaboration of an ethics of which Heidegger's thought is capable of bearing. Heidegger's ethics do not merely pertain to conversations, instead his ethics are essentially conversational.

Afterword

Three Theses

In what has preceded, I have attempted to elaborate three interdependent theses concerning Heidegger's Conversations. First, I have argued that Heidegger's thinking has achieved an explicit performative dimension. Heidegger expressed that he felt impelled by a philosophical necessity to write conversations, but left the content of that necessity vacant for those of us interested in this authorial decision. The implication of staging the elaboration of a set of thoughts between two (or more) interlocutors is profound. This staging means that philosophy is no longer simply stated. Instead it additionally ineludibly thrusts philosophizing into explicitly enacting that which it theorizes. In tracing how Heidegger's characters perform their thinking—for instance in enacting a releasing mode of encountering via care for the affective registers of human experience, how the ontology presupposed and detected by our capacity to make mistakes uncovers how thinking is ever a practice which is never reducible to a mere product, or how our misappropriation and harming of that which properly belongs to others perhaps lurks within our language itself—I have demonstrated that these performances embedded within Heidegger's writings bear upon his thinking in philosophically significant ways.

What this performative dimension of Heidegger's five Conversations opens them toward, I have further argued, is the bearing of an ethical impetus. Given its performativity, the landscape of the Heideggerian Conversation is ethically infused on at least two levels. A relation is enunciated between the theoretical content and the dramatic unfolding of the conversation. If only on a meta-textual level, claims about how philosophical topics ought to

be discussed are embedded (intentionally or not) within the exchanges. Further, conversation takes place between two or more characters, setting forth a terrain of intersubjective relations as well. The hypothesis I have tested here I might now articulate in the following way: Perhaps any sort of writing in which distinct "others" appear is necessarily accompanied by explicit or implicit ethical claims. Simone de Beauvoir suggests this is at play in any text in which questions are employed; "even the way of asking questions, of adopting perspectives, presupposes hierarchies of interests; all characteristics comprise values; every so-called objective description is set against an ethical background."[866] Heidegger resists the derivation of concrete normative claims from his thinking. If I have found some, perhaps I have engaged in a reading of Heidegger which is distinctively un-Heideggerian, stretching Heidegger beyond the bounds which he assigned for his own thinking. But I would not be the only one.

As I have discussed in this dissertation, in the "Letter on 'Humanism'" Heidegger remarks, "[i]f the name 'ethics,' in keeping with the basic meaning of the word ἦθος, should now say that ethics ponders the abode of the human being, then that thinking which thinks the truth of being as the primordial element of the human being…is in itself originary ethics. However, this thinking is not ethics in the first instance because it is ontology."[867] Many commentators have claimed that Heidegger's thinking, largely because it proclaims itself to be singularly interested in fundamental ontology, is a barren resource for ethics. But this is not what Heidegger himself claims in this passage, or at least this depiction brushes over the nuance of his claim. His commitment to thinking "being" as his primary concern does not limit itself to the abstract. Heidegger does not claim to be interested in thought as that which

[866] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 16.
[867] Heidegger, "Letter On 'Humanism'," 271.

produces theoretical, ontological propositions, but rather in "thinking" which even as a noun retains its active, verbal quality, tying it firmly to a concrete human thinker. This has the result that ontological thinking cannot take place outside of an *ethos*. The thinking of the "truth of being" is elaborated as the most essential to the human being, whose defining environment is its *ethos* which is charted according to what Heidegger calls "originary ethics." The locus of concern for this thinking may be directed toward Being as such, but the terrain which supports the possibility of this thinking is, on Heidegger's own claim, constructed by originary ethics or *ethos* which is deeply rooted in the relational possibilities of the human being delimited by language insofar as "only speech enables man to be the living being he is as man."[868]

Understanding Heidegger's elaboration of *ethos* seems to be indispensable for coming to terms with the ontological commitment of his project. Although Heidegger eschews any merely anthropological interpretations of his work, he affirms repeatedly that the human being is absolutely essential to his ontological thinking and that coming to understand the *ethos*—the terrain of the way of life of this being—is necessary. Being needs the human being and it is impossible for the human being to arrive at ontology without this sheltering, supportive abode of *ethos*. However, overly focusing on the *ethos* of the thinker—at the expense of the thinking which weds Being and the human together—poses the danger of becoming a distraction from Being, should the pondering of *ethos* overtake Being as the primary concern. This seems to be the typical error Heidegger believes takes place in most philosophizing about ethics.

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[868] Heidegger, "Language," 187.

In many moments in his writings, Heidegger thinks and writes in ways which seem to aim to avoid just such an error. For instance, Heidegger often defines concepts by means of another concept, which is necessarily related to another concept, and so on, and so forth, nesting definitions in relation. This again illustrates the intimacy between language and relationality in Heidegger's writings, as well as recalling Nehamas' notion of "living metaphor." For example, Heidegger describes thinking in the following way in the first Country Path Conversation; "Indwelling of releasement to the open-region would accordingly be the genuine essence of the spontaneity of thinking."[869] Here, "thinking" is modified by "spontaneity" which is only properly understood via having grasped what a "genuine essence" might be which in turn is only accessible via the "open-region" where we must "indwell" by way of "releasement." None of these terms express their full sense if they are removed from their context of relation to the other terms. The terms do not stand on their own. They are already in conversation with one another even before we might enter into a thinking conversation with them. The mode of writing and reading which this example demands relies upon what I would loosely call as a 'poetic order of operations' which is neither mathematically nor objectively necessary, yet nevertheless indispensable. At stake is not merely defining these terms, but rather the exposing of a dynamic cartography of relationality—a charting of thinking's proximity to Being via language which, in always exceeding a collection of words, retains is essentially conversational essence. To put it differently, language, in preserving its inherent otherness and insistent othering of itself to itself, provides one model we might use as a vantage point for considering the role of otherness—and the human other—in Heidegger's thinking at large.

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[869] CPC: 94, GA 77: 145.

While "originary ethics" or *ethos* is not in and of itself a primarily ontological project, we cannot thereby conclude that thinking ontology is not an inherently originarily ethical task. As Jean-Luc Nancy claims, it is "not only that the thinking of Being involves an ethics but, much more radically, that it involves itself as an ethics. *'Original ethics' is the more appropriate name for 'fundamental ontology.' Ethics properly is what is fundamental in fundamental ontology.*"[870] Krzysztof Ziarek goes so far as to insist that "the ethical and the ontological are the two sides of *Gelassenheit*, with a thin and fragile boundary that readily blurs itself, forcing, as Heidegger would say, an unexpected, perhaps even unprecedented, 'poetic' rigor upon thinking."[871] In what has preceded, I hope to have made a case that, while *Gelassenheit* is one moment in which the ethical implications of Heidegger's thinking rises into unconcealment, the formally entailed performativity of his texts also provides a testament to the import of a specifically conversationally-figured Heideggerian ethics.

The third component of the argument I have attempted to trace through this dissertation follows upon the preceding two concerning performativity and ethics. Namely, that these five Heideggerian Conversations are not simply formally similar to one another, i.e. that they are all written in dialogical or trialogical form, but that the philosophical necessity at the root of their similarity—namely the performativity which makes a Heideggerian thinking in an ethical register possible and inescapable—ought to lead us to read these five texts as a coherent sub-corpus.

I have argued that each Conversation distinctly contributes to Heidegger's conversational ethics. In the first Conversation, Heidegger demonstrates how to generate a collaborative

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[870] Nancy, "Heidegger's 'Originary Ethics'," 78-9.
[871] Ziarek, *Inflected Language: Toward a Hermeneutics of Nearness: Heidegger, Levinas, Stevens, Celan*, 14.

climate of agreement out of stark disagreement. In the second Conversation, this climate of collaboration is tested through the impending intervention of something or someone strange and unknown. In the third Conversation, Heidegger shows how, even in the face of devastation and evil resulting from political error, this climate of collaboration is repairable through the conversational sharing of our (healing) experiences with one another. In the fourth Conversation, Heidegger explores how shared history, culture, and language are integral to maintaining that healing of our relations with one another, as a community, as we learn to dwell poetically. Finally, in the fifth Conversation, Heidegger depicts how inevitably relying on history, culture, and language which is not universally shared constitutes a danger and thus the proper limit within which this ethics of conversation must learn to dwell. In this way, I read each Conversation as following upon the next, presupposing the ethical moment developed in those which precede it, ultimately articulating a much more complex and intricate ethics of conversation than any one of Heidegger's Conversations could accomplish on its own.

Looking Ahead

Over the course of the writing of this dissertation, several important points of my reading have gained more traction than I expected. In considering how I will continue to develop and refine this project, I may decide to feature more prominently one of these currently minor aspects of my readings of Heidegger's Conversations. On the one hand, I believe I can make the case that the figure of "the Teacher" appears in each of Heidegger's Conversations, except the "Evening Conversation," and that this figure may be the most easily identifiable character through whom Heidegger is elaborating his ethical comportment.

That the Teacher is absent from the third Country Path Conversation would not undermine this account. This Conversation lies at the midpoint of the five and develops evil as a mode of the rapid spreading of radical, ontological self-identicality. The possibility of any ethics at all, including Heidegger's ethics of conversation)predicated upon a difference inhering in self-sameness), would be foreclosed in this existential condition. The teacher would not be able to teach and thus his absence is precisely what calls for a healing remedy. Another minor guiding thread running through these texts is how the distinction between the "identical" and the "self-same," inaugurated in the "Triadic Conversation," provides one of the most powerful philosophical explanatory engines for the topics which unfold in each text. Finally, "dwelling" and learning to properly, which is to say poetically, dwell arises as being of preeminent concern for the human being in each conversation. That Heidegger diagnoses *ethos* as a mode of dwelling (insofar as it is the "abode" of the human) provides additional confirmation that dwelling is a fixture of Heidegger's thought at this time and that it (nearly) broaches ethical terrain for him.

In continuing to develop my readings of Heidegger's Conversations, and the stakes of dialogue as a philosophical concern independent of Heidegger, I would like to include Gadamer and Derrida in this project in its next phase. I would like to take into account their separate considerations on this topic, but also their "debate" concerning a presumed shared background for dialogue. Where Gadamer argues for the possibility of shared understating, Derrida instead highlights fissures and interruption. Whether my reading of Heidegger's Conversations as performative would survive an encounter with this debate, I look forward to discovering.

The set of considerations collected here does, however, make a significant set of contributions to the philosophical and academic community, even in its current iteration. In choosing to write on Heidegger, I have set forth the intention to contribute to scholarship on Heidegger. This dissertation is the first full-length, academic, philosophical, treatment (in English, of which I am aware) which collects Heidegger's Conversations for extensive and exclusive inquiry. This project has entailed reading and preliminarily translating selections of Heidegger's second longest (137 pages) "Western Conversation." I hope to continue my engagement with this text in collaborating on its official translation for publication soon. I believe that augmenting the visibility of the "Western Conversation" within the community of Heidegger scholarship will enhance further academic investigations into Heidegger's post-war revision of his readings of Hölderlin, will perhaps open new avenues into considering Heidegger's interpretation of Plato, and enhance considerations pertaining to relationality and language as they develop in Heidegger's corpus.

I also believe I have developed themes which will be of interest not only for Heidegger Studies, but which also resonate with ethical questions which abound in the philosophical study of ethics as well as in our daily lives. I take these questions to include those such as: Who can we speak to and how? Which aspects of the experience of another are we permitted to wonder and ask about? What ought we refrain from requesting from another or disclosing ourselves? How do we practice vulnerability differently when we are speaking with our friends? To what extent is practicing vulnerability ethically advisable? When ought we instead be on our guard in conversations, either to protect ourselves or others? How might we work to expose ourselves to the voices of those we would rarely encounter in our typical daily life? How should we take great care in attempting to include the voices of those who have suffered exploitation so as to not reinscribe that very

exploitation in the act of conversing? To what extent ought we allow considerations concerning the political climate to bear upon our interactions with others? Can we ever have a conversation free from the political context? And when, instead of continuing conversations which may have become toxic or harmful, ought we determine the ethics of ending conversation, of remaining silent? These questions, and more, were raised for me over the course of writing this dissertation and, I believe, Heidegger has some intriguing contributions which could intervene on these salient and urgent ethical issues.

A Final Author's Note

On a final note, it has been particularly thought provoking for me to have undertaken to write a dissertation on the ethics of conversation in today's political climate. At the outset of this project, many of the political conversations about conversation itself were centered around a concern that the American people were divided because they weren't talking or listening to one another. To this sentiment, I felt that my project was bearing upon a very live issue. However, there has been a momentous shift in how conversation is even valued in American politics today which corresponded with the second half of my writing experience. It is no longer assumed that conversation and working toward compromise is a (near) universal political ideal. Rather, the importance of conversation, indeed even the obligation that the yielding to facts and telling the truth seemed to once carry, has been discharged in our political sphere to an unprecedented degree in my lifetime at least. For my part, when a feeling of insurmountable helplessness sets in in the wake of confronting what consequence a post-truth political leadership might entail, I turn back to the *Gorgias* for hope. Socrates there ultimately turns to myth in an attempt to recraft the truth of his

argument in such a way that Callicles' will find it persuasive, but he also tells Callicles first that it is his "love of the people"[872] (which is to say his love of the power he believes he can wield over people for the greater fulfilment of his own desires) which stands in the way of him seeing (or caring) about truth. Socrates responds to this predicament, telling Callicles, "But if we closely examine these same matters often and in a better way, you'll be persuaded."[873] Though we cannot force those in political power to have conversations with us "often and in a better way," we as a political community ought not to be dissuaded from relentlessly, tirelessly conversing with each other, searching for a "better way" forward.

[872] *Gorgias,* 513d.
[873] *Gorgias,* 513d.

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