Figures of Destiny in Martin Heidegger & Friedrich Hölderlin

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Finally, one must quote a “poem” from Heidegger’s last years. Finally, in other words at the beginning, because destiny preoccupies Heidegger from the beginning, “the place of ancient belonging” already resonating as at the end; and therefore:

When will words again be word?
When does the wind of the wise winding linger?
When the words, distant gift, say—
Not meaning by designating—
When, showing, they carry
To the place of ancient belonging

... Where the ancient, thought in accordance with destiny,
clearly and pliantly readies itself for the encounter.¹

He thought of “the ancient, in accordance with destiny,” to the letter. And he also recommended it to his Japanese interlocutors, eager to learn the latest Western philosophical fashions.² To them he recommended a return to their own ancient traditional sources—the attention to traces that send thought back to its source—according to the same warning he made to himself,³ in other words, that every recent thought which attempts to establish a dialogue with ancient thought cannot do otherwise but understand it from the very place in which it resides each time; and thus lead to an uttering of the silence of ancient thought.

One cannot therefore avoid ancient thought being integrated into a recent wording, transferred to its field of listening and visual horizon, and, so to speak, deprived of the freedom of its own language. But such an integration, however, does not in the least imply an interpretation that is satisfied with converting that which has been thought by Western thought “at its origins” into recent modes of representation.

Whoever undertakes an effort along these lines cannot limit himself to a “historical” search, but, on the contrary, has to establish a dialogue in which the ancient fields of listening and the visual horizons of
those times are considered according to their "original essence," so that one may be able to address that invitation (Geheiss) or that (re)call to them, in which ancient thought, that which has followed it and that which is to come, are held, each in its own way.

Whoever readies himself for this (re)call and this research, Heidegger insists, will direct his gaze above all at the obscure passages of an ancient text, and not only at those which hide behind an appearance of intelligibility, because in that way the dialogue would be over before ever having started.

If these warnings were heeded, a translation (Uebersetzung) could result which, by thinking the ancient Greek utterance, would transport it into that which is culled by someone who has been "awakened" with regards to his "origins". Is this a situation where words, by showing, take us to their ancient place of belonging, wherein what is ancient, thought in accordance with destiny, docile and clear, readies itself for the encounter?

It is in this spirit that Heidegger begins to comment on the subordinate proposition, the obscure passage by Parmenides on destiny:

\[
\text{epei to ge moir' epédisen}
\]
\[
\text{oulon akiniton t' emmenai} \ldots \tag{4}
\]

Subordinate proposition, but one which instead reveals itself as the "thesis of all his theses".

Heidegger is so certain of this as to leave one uncertain, while he argues, in a problematic fashion, that whoever is somewhat of an expert about great thinkers, has often been surprised at finding the "thesis of all theses" in a subordinate proposition, added without much fuss, practically furtively. In fact, the play of light "that calls, unfolds and helps to grow" is not visible on its own: it is as scarcely apparent as the "morning light" on the tranquil sumptuousness of the cornflowers in the field and of the roses in the garden.

That which Heidegger does not make explicit about Heidegger, that which rests in the shadow and is simultaneously intensely implicated, part of his own Moira: is this put in question through Parmenides' Moira? That which escapes Heidegger, in other words, is not the morning light, but that the ancient, thought according to destiny, does not properly concern the Greeks.

But, who are the Greeks?

To whomever asks him, Heidegger answers tautologically and evasively that the task before contemporary thought is that of thinking Greek thought yet more Greekly. To whomever still asks what this means, and why specifically the Greeks, Heidegger responds in a language which manifests a lack of authoritative motivation.

That this seems most proper, unconscious and for this reason unspoken, appears in the very fashion of the mise-en-scène of the writ-
ing which hovers around it with its translation and/or transference (Übersetzung):

G. What can that mean: to think Greek thought more Greekly?

H. It is not difficult to elucidate, if one keeps one's gaze on the essence of appearance. If present being itself is thought of as appearance, then an emerging into openness in the sense of not being hidden dominates in present being. This not being hidden is realized in a discovering understood as a clearing. However, this very clearing remains, as an event, unthought in every aspect. To undertake to think such unthought means pursuing Greek thought in a more original fashion, to discover it in the origin of its authentic being. This gaze, allowing such a discovery, is in its own way Greek. Yet, considered in relation to what it allows one to discover, it is no longer—nor will it ever be—able to be Greek.

G. What is it then?

H. I do not think one can answer this question. Nor would being able to answer it help much, since all that matters is to grasp appearance, as the essence of present being in the origin of its authentic being.

G. When one is thus able to grasp appearance, then the thought of appearance is both Greek and no longer Greek. . . well, then one has already exited from the circle of the subject-object relation.

H. This is difficult, but you touch an essential point. In the origin of appearance, that in which the Difference of Presence and present reality is hidden goes forth to meet man.

G. The Difference, however veiled as such, has always already offered itself to man.

H. Human beings, insofar as they are human beings, listen to this message.

G. This occurs without humans properly noticing that they always already listen to this message.

One doesn't notice, in fact, and therefore, what? One writes?

It is this aspect of writing, always exposed to the danger of an exorbitant explanation, were it not that it remained caught in what Heidegger himself calls the "hermeneutical circle." This also captures and inaugurates a psychoanalytic interpretation.

Writing in no way wants to make the textual unconscious transparent.

Rather, writing would recall the text to that referent that is also its unconscious subject or subject of the unconscious. Writing remembers at the same time that the unconscious is not a cause of meaning, nor of interpretation.

Meaning is only its own cause, but this is through a passage, by way of the unconscious or around the unconscious, which inaugurates and ties the text to its own secret or "mystery".

Heidegger knows this type of mystery, above all when he writes that a mystery is a mystery only when its presence is unsuspected.
And that it is fatal to both the superficial hurried ones, as well to the thoughtful prudent ones, that to them there seems to be no mystery.

His own mystery therefore escapes Heidegger. As his readers, our own mystery eludes us as well. What remains enigmatic is the "pleasure" that compels one to show as writing the very ways of the mise-en-scène of his own enigma, and of the fatal attraction that ties him to Hölderlin.

It is May 1934: Heidegger has resigned from his position as Chancellor of the University of Freiburg and all the deans nominated by him have also resigned.

Gerhard Ritter writes to Karl Jaspers:

I would also like to add that he, as I know from detailed and reliable knowledge of the events (we always belonged to a common philosophical circle), was from June 30, 1934, a bitter enemy of nazism and that he had completely lost that faith in Hitler which had led him in 1933 to a disastrous mistake.

A sampling of the titles of the university courses at the time includes: Current Economic Life from the Historical and Political Point of View: Liberalism, Fascism, Socialism; Racial Hygiene and its Meaning for Population Politics; From the Labor Camp to the Duty of Labor; Border Germanism: the Border Land of the German People in the West; The Doctrine of the Fatherland in National Germanism. In this context, Heidegger addresses himself to Hölderlin: Hölderlin's Hymns "Germanien" and "Der Rhein".

Why the poets once more, but above all Hölderlin, after the fatal error during the period of the "misery"? Heidegger sees Hölderlin eminently as "the poet's poet".

Without, once again, being able to provide a well-founded demonstration, Hölderlin is thought of as making "essential" statements about language, calling it "the most dangerous of goods."

Only the poet Hölderlin, in the "conversation" which he establishes naming the gods and all things "as that which they are", would seem to be able to contain its dangers: arbitrariness, noise, decadence, confusion.

This naming by the poet—as that of the moira—would not seem to consist in the fact that something already known beforehand is provided with a name. Rather, it would seem to receive the nomination of being "what it is" and would thus be evoked and known insofar as it is an "entity". Poetry would seem to be the instituting of Being in the word.

Why the poet's and not everyone's word, when this happens? Heidegger insists: this instituting of the Being of things which it names comes to "the poet of poets" from his listening to the call of the gods, remaining exposed to their lightning-bolts.
In this being exposed to the lightning-bolts of the god, and for this reason, Hölderlin would seem to be the first in his time, to institute a new time: that which Heidegger calls “of the gods that fled and of the god to come.” It is coming, but has not arrived yet. In the condensed and falsely connected rhythm of his speech, Heidegger seems to demonstrate here that an intense projective identification is at work and that the figure of Hölderlin discloses its constellation: is it the epoch of the double lack, of the gods that fled and of the god who has not yet come? A time of deprivation and misery: solitude?

In that which he calls the “nothing of this night” the poet and/or philosopher has to hold “the supreme isolation” firm in himself.

However, this turn toward Hölderlin had already occurred almost ten years earlier: the lecture Wozu Dichter? is from 1926, presented to a small circle of people and in which lived experiences, rather than the themes of solitude and an epochal lack of foundation (the foundation is the ground on which to take root and stay . . . the epoch which lacks it is suspended over the abyss) are already intensely elaborated and do not have roots in the evidence of events such as those of 1934.

These are the Marburg years: the biographer rapidly indicates “From what one can tell Heidegger felt the transfer to central Germany as a sort of exile. The periods of vacation between semesters are regularly spent in that minuscule mountain hut of Todtnauberg, which would later become famous.”

Why would Heidegger have to have felt the appointment at Marburg that Husserl and Natorp endorsed to be a sort of exile?

There is no questioning this fact, nor that Heidegger, apart from occasional trips, will not even accept the Berlin campus, so as to “take root and stay” in Freiburg i.B.: What are the earth and sky of Freiburg and Messkirch, whose intense emotional bond and elevated symbolic valence he will so often evoke? Did Heidegger not like peregrinations, except of the symbolic kind? As when he writes “Insofar as it is solitary, the soul wanders. The ardor of its courage is asked to make that which weighs as destiny to enter such a wandering.”

What weighs as destiny, and as a destiny which makes him Hölderlin’s brother already in unsuspected times and to the end, where by now—as the biographer writes in the chapter entitled “The Partial Return to the University and the Maturing of “Late Thought”:

For Heidegger only Messkirch and the Black Forest are concrete, even though a return to them is rigorously denied, and, if one doubts being able to represent oneself Heidegger’s man of the future, what he understands as “squaring” in any case becomes evident, if one addresses oneself to the past and to the disappearing present. “Let us think for a while about a peasant house in the Black Forest which, two centuries ago, was
built by rustic living. Here, that which has edified the house has been the persistent capacity to make sky and earth, gods and mortals in their simplicity, enter things. It has put the courtyard on the slope that is repaired from the wind, oriented towards midday, among the fields and near a spring. It has given it its shingle roof which juts out quite far, angled conveniently to support the weight of the snow, and which, descending very low, protects the rooms against the storms of the long winter nights. It has not forgotten the inglenook (Herrgottswinkel) behind the shared table, has made space in the rooms for the sacred places of the birth-bed and the tree of the dead, as the coffin is called in those parts, thus prefiguring, under one roof, the trace of their journey through time to the various ages of life.\(^{17}\)

Here the subject, author of everything, is persistent capacity. But whose? Thus foreshadowed, and when words carry one to the place of ancient belonging, where the ancient, thought in accordance with a docile and clear destiny, readies itself for the encounter: who comes into discrete evidence?

Heidegger never encounters him by nominating him, but always, in a constant, intense, opaque—and therefore revealing—manner, as when he writes, in the cipher of one of his central arguments: “We have left every claim of unconditionality behind us”.\(^{18}\) This is, at the same time, the need for a return from a purely representative, “in other words explanatory—foundational (erklärende)—to a remembrant thinking.”\(^{19}\)

If the opacity of the subject, veiled by the name of “persistent capacity,” therefore advances its patent form, its names remain latent for Heidegger himself, even when they flicker in some sort of light, reflected on the level of fate.

At this point of rupture, the discourse, surprising in its servitude to the absoluteness of the imaginary, simply claims to become an “authentic conversation.”\(^{20}\) “We have sought to dominate language instead of putting ourselves in a listening attitude in its regards . . . a talking in the listening to language is possible only as conversation.”

But not a conversation that would circle in that which other times he had called the “hermeneutic circle:” insofar as a discourse on the circle always remains a discourse on the surface.

Surface and homogeneity which break up into depth and heterogeneity (Differenz), as soon as the disposition to the listening of language and the observation of the “quid adloquatur” in a silence that can be kept as such can be realized. “From then on there is no place where the hidden game of the relation between message and path of the message-bearer does not operate.”\(^{21}\)

How could destiny have been better evoked, if not as the operative game of the hidden relation between message and path of whoever has to bear the message, beyond any hermeneutic circle? Above all
when the past is seen as "something else than what has been:" in other words, as the gathering of that which endures"?

    G. But the past goes away, has gone away, how can it come back?
    H. The past is something else from the has-been.
    G. In what way should we think of this latter?
    H. As the gathering of that which endures.
    G. Of that which as You recently said, remains as that which assures.
    H. and remains identical as the message . . .
    G. which subjects us and liberates us as its bearers.22

The last figure in the series that began with the parents——Freud wrote23——

is the dark power of Destiny which only the fewest of us are able to look upon as impersonal. There is little to be said against the Dutch writer Multatuli when he replaces the moira [Destiny] of the Greeks by the divine pair, logos and ananke [Reason and Necessity], there is not much to object to; but all who transfer the guidance of the world to Providence, to God, or to God and Nature, arouse a suspicion that they still look upon these ultimate and remotest powers as a parental couple, in the mythological sense and feel tied to them by libidinous bonds. In The Ego and Id, I also made the attempt to derive mankind’s realistic fear of death from the same parental view of fate. It seems very hard to free oneself from it.

Is that which subjugates to destiny as to this “great parental authority” the type of libidinous bond which ties those—and only those—that are readying themselves to become its carriers? An intense bond, always concrete but unconscious, towards which one posits an ironic or auto-ironic distance. Is this a positing of a right distance, in other words, in the cipher of an omnipotence or an impotence alternately or simultaneously imposed or suffered, that seems never to have been able to occur? Is the problem of the right intrapsychic and relational distance, posed in these terms, that which “makes” Heidegger’s Höllderlinian style and all the connexed ontology of the search of the beginning and the presence?

Heidegger addresses himself to the poet of poets above all during misfortune: is this then another trace that destiny is lived as a substitute of the parental instance?

If one is unlucky, this signifies that one is no longer loved by that supreme power and, threatened by this loss of love, one continues to bow to the deputation, in the Above, of one’s parents, which had been neglected in more fortunate times.24

Naehe—Ferne: proximity—distance . . . .
Does Hölderlin also collude with Heidegger, if not in the form, then in the excessive and unconscious intensity of the bond that ties him to destiny, and therefore the challenge to the fearful gods of destiny to sing to him, to sing “then continuously in my ears/your hymn of misfortune . . . /you will have me finally, I know, and yet before then/I will belong to myself and will take my share of life/ and glory.”

Who are these birds of ill-omen? TheseWarnenden in whose song Hölderlin weaves the waft of the time of the gods that fled, of abandonment, of isolation?

Is this a time in which Heidegger is his very close contemporary, as if knowing, without knowing it, all its significant resonance?

Is it not Heidegger who captures in the poetizing of the poet of poets, its connection with risk, the greatest, to which it would expose him in his innocence?

What innocence is it a question of? What risk?

“The greatest risk-takers are those who, in the absence of salvation are aware of our being without protection. They bring mortals the trace of the gods that fled, fled into the darkness of the night of the world. The greatest risk-takers, insofar as singers of salvation, are poets in a time of need.”

What time are we dealing with?

“This epoch is neither decadence nor twilight. Inasmuch as it is destiny (Geschick) it rests in being and claims man for itself. Hölderlin is the precursor of poets in the time of need. That is why none of the poets of this epoch can surpass him.”

The -chick of Geschick would be to rest in Being—in other words, not on the surface of the hermeneutic circle and/or its arbitrariness—and to claim man for itself.

The inexplicable cogency, of which it well knows the claim, forces Heidegger’s style into an intense and peremptory allusiveness, up to the unparalleled concluding warning that “to think that the time of Hölderlin the precursor will have arrived the day in which the whole world will know his poetry” is without meaning.

The poetry of such a precursor remains in fact as having been.

The essence of its coming is fore-gathered in destiny (Geschick); that which subsists in this way is never at the mercy of what passes and preemptively goes beyond any possible transitoriness. That which is transitory, already before its passing, is devoid of destiny. The having-been is, instead, that which is as destiny.

Is this not the key to the strange relation with destiny that has to be evoked by the belief of whoever has to “carry” it and contemporaneously, “to escape” it, so as to be suddenly taken by it, as if by a power?
Psychoanalysis believes that such a destiny is for the most part prepared by whomever seems to submit to and suffer from it, by putting him/herself in the same situation without recognizing it, but provoking it, evoking it, seducing it to return, even if loaded with suffering.

Pleasure in displeasure.
The advantage of believing and/or evoking destiny seems to be that of being able to relate oneself to a necessity which one cannot attribute to oneself, and about which one knows nothing.

That which is perceived is only the effect of a force or a pressure, Ananke, which, as the etymon conveys, takes one by the throat, and seems to be reinforced by every gesture one makes to get rid of it.

Another effect tied to this mechanism is that of self-deception with respect to the "place" which the Ananke inhabits and which forces one to perceive it as if projected onto a weft of the world outside:

"Because the superstitious person knows nothing of the motivation of his own chance actions, and because the fact of this motivation presses for a place in his field of recognition, he is forced to allocate it, by displacement, to the external world."^31

The belief in destiny remains, therefore, in the interweaving of unconscious determinism and chance, and that is where whoever evokes it also exists.

Can one then suppose that destiny is only the belief in a truth consigned by/in the unconscious?

And that therefore becomes, literally, the Real?^32

To evoke a presumed destiny is to give it the power of being both inaugurated and oriented by it: does it not almost collude with the fatality of Fate in so doing?

What then is the poet's task in the destiny of the night of the world? In the sense that "only in the advent of his word are things to come realized," all the more so the more "purely" this event takes place?

With what innocence are we dealing? With what risk?

In a letter of Hölderlin's of January 1799 to his mother, there is a detailed defense of his poetic passion which leads to these questions:

This perhaps unfortunate inclination for poetry, against which I have honestly striven to fight since I was young, busying myself with so-called more serious occupations, persists in me and ... I will keep it as long as I live ....

For how is it possible that I can be as good and quiet as a child, when I dispose of sweet leisure to devote myself undisturbed to this
If my poetry is still far from having reached the necessary mastery, maybe it is because, since childhood, I have never dared to devote myself entirely to it, as I have to that other work that I was too obedient not to try to realize in the most conscientious manner possible, taking both my situation and other people’s opinions into account . . . .

Why not make use of my filial rights and tell You, for my own peace of mind, that which is closest to my heart? And above all do not think that I have ulterior motives . . . .

Others, stronger than me, have tried to be important businessmen or learned men, while simultaneously remaining poets.

But, in the end, they have always had to sacrifice one profession for the other, and this never ended well . . . . because, by sacrificing their profession, they acted disloyally towards others and, sacrificing their art, they committed a crime against the natural gift that God had given them, and this is as great a sin, nay even greater, than sinning against one’s own body.”

33

Is poetry the only avenue of/to one’s desire?

Is it a question of travelling it against his mother, who has always obstructed it for him and could not do otherwise?

By contrast, is the poetic passion or activity that endangers his mother’s omnipotence said to be the most innocent of all?

That Hölderlin, should not know anything of all this is shown by the assurance “and above all do not think that I am hiding some ulterior motive”; but that he knows about or suffers from it, is this not perhaps enclosed in the expression that compares the sacrifice of poetic passion to a sin greater than sinning against one’s own body?

In the sacrifice of this avenue, life is at stake.

Will “the fearful gods of destiny” that sing incessantly in his ears then have won?

As Heidegger had read and perceived, this innocence of poetic activity has to be put into relation to the supreme risk it contains: but only in the common constellation of the excessive unconscious intensity of a libidinal bond which ties one to destiny lived as a substitute of a parental instance still authorized to invade or abandon, and which is felt—even if according to peculiar replies and representations—as an actual presence (Naehe) or absence (Ferne)?

Such is Man; when the wealth is there, and no less than a god in Person tends him with gifts, blind he remains, unaware.

First he must suffer; but now he names his most treasured possession,

Now he must find for it words like flowers leaping alive.

[So ist der Mensch: wenn da ist das Gut, und es sorget mit Gaaben Selber ein Gott für ihn, kennet und sieht er es nicht. Tragen muss er,
zuvor: nun aber nennt er sein Liebestes, Nun, nun mussen dafür Worte, wie Blumen, entstehn.[34]

These words do not speak—they cannot—of that which generates closeness or distance, happiness or catastrophic menace, fullness or the abyss: they flower around us, hinting.
Is every possibility, not of escaping the awe-ful gods of destiny, but of remaining exposed to their unbearable presence, enclosed in this being able to show—show oneself?
And therefore words like petals that flower from that which surveys everything that germinates:

...since, directing our gaze to the essence of original Speech, thought starts on that road which subtracts us from the purely presentative thinking of metaphysics, to make us aware of the hints of that message, of which we would like to become messengers.

G. The road is long.
H. “Not so much because it goes far, but rather because it leads through that which is close by.”[35]

Proximity to Being: die Naehe zum Sein . . .
Shouldn’t one ask oneself if Being is not something else?

Hölderlin’s notion and experience of a (simultaneously or alternatively) helpful and menacing closeness of the other loved one, on Hölderlin’s part, is, as evidenced above all in Jean Laplanche’s study,[36] central to researches into psychic suffering.
Laplanche reminds us that it was probably Paul Matussek[37] who first attempted to render the themes of closeness (Naehe) and distance (Ferne) operative in a clinical sense, themes which we will reinterpret as follows: the deeper the ambivalence between the need for closeness and its avoidance, the deeper the psychic suffering.
In other words, one avoids, in a more or less intense manner, precisely that which one desires. In other words, there seems to be a manifest incapacity to find an appropriate distance in regard both to the object and to the desire which plays according to unconscious fantastical lived experiences of the type squeeze/be squeezed, bite/be bitten, withhold/be withheld, swallow/be swallowed, within which every difference between two is dissolved in a dual union.
Laplanche remarks that this hypothesis would coincide in a punctual fashion, so to speak, with that which Hölderlin formulated for himself, living, writing.[38]
If one wants to follow this trace, one will then remark that the most revealing and icastic moment is perhaps the relation with Schiller, when he is implicated in constellating for Hölderlin what Laplanche calls “the place of the father figure”.


But is this the case?

I was well aware that I would not be able to get away from your proximity (Naehe) without jeopardizing my most intimate being quite considerably. I now experience this more each day.

It is strange that someone can feel very happy under the influence of a soul, even if it does not influence one by verbal communication, but only by its proximity (Naehe), and that every mile that removes you from it makes you feel its loss more keenly.

On the one hand all the reasons that I had for leaving would have brought me to such a decision only with difficulty if only this closeness had not, on the other hand, so often troubled me.

I was constantly tempted to see You and I saw You only to realize that could be nothing for You (dass Ich Ihnen nichts Seyn Konnte) . . . because I wanted to be so much for You, I had to say that I was nothing.39

The dynamic character of this relation with Schiller, which rapidly becomes the object of an unbearable fascination, seems to be "explicable" starting from an extremely intense feeling, characterized, on Hölderlin's part, by an absolute misery and inferiority: because he wanted to be everything for him, he has to say he is nothing.

No concrete experience has led Hölderlin to this conclusion: but one knows that this is the cipher that runs through all the correspondence and the friendship with Schiller, from beginning to end:

Why do I have to be so miserable and be interested to such an extent in the wealth of one soul? I will never be happy."40

Laplanche observes that in reality Eros, son of Poros and Penia, seems to be at stake; a myth, moreover, Hölderlin had revisited in The Youth of Hyperion.

As if every amorous investment immediately, in combination with it, evoked in him a lived experience of absolute misery in which he finds himself literally annihilated.

In this sense those who see in this phenomenon a sort of preexistent archetype of all Hölderlin's amorous experiences are not totally mistaken, whether their object be masculine or feminine.

How does Schiller arrive at this role of unattainably rich and omnipotent object, and why does this situation become so intolerable for Hölderlin, that he has to escape to Jena. Does this also determine his salutary fall into the crisis of 1802?

I had grown like a vine without a support and the wild tendrils spread on the ground without any direction. You know how more than one vital energy can be ruined in us because it is not utilized.

I was wandering like a will-o'-the-wisp, I clung to everything and all things in their turn clung to me . . . and my awkward energies would tire themselves uselessly.

Everywhere I felt that I was missing something and yet, I could not
reach my goal.

That is how he found me.\textsuperscript{41}

At Jena, in fact, Hölderlin had himself "situé dans une position telle que l’accès à tout ce qui compte pour lui au monde passe nécessairement par Schiller: Schiller est alors celui qui détient pour Hölderlin la clé et le sceau de ses forces (Kräfte),"\textsuperscript{42} according to a model already experimented by Hölderlin and always identical: the impossibility of corresponding, of disposing of his own forces (Kräfte) "half developed, and half dead," which are always in somebody else's hands:

"May no groundless worry, dearest Mother, come to disturb the hopes that you have undoubtedly put in me . . . Allow me the undisturbed use of my forces that are now perhaps for the first time my lot!"\textsuperscript{43}

If Hölderlin addresses his mother as she who holds his forces—at the time he has for the first time enacted the project of living in Jena independently—is it because she can really dispose of them in both a real and figurative sense?

Certainly the substantial estate which she administers for him with disconcerting parsimony, is in her hands.

And in his \textit{Imago}? Hölderlin’s desire seems to be buried in his \textit{Imago} and—differing from all interpretations about him—he does not in the least seem inclined to free it by addressing himself to father figures.

The unanswerable question is always repeatedly addressed to the Mother, and if this request inaugurates and substantiates all his work, it is because Hölderlin \textit{knows nothing} of this, just as his mother, who does not see herself as the grieving mother she is (not because she has been widowed twice, but because she has never, on her part, had access to her own desire) also seems to know nothing about it: of the other and the Other, of every other, in other words, Johanna Christiane Heyn cannot be the mediatrix, since she cannot be it for herself.\textsuperscript{44}

From the foreclosure\textsuperscript{45} that dwells in mother and son, from the effects of a lack that generates a shadow dense with abandonment and solitude, the search and the forever resurgent question are born, around something about which, in the letter, is not a question of words.

How then could the other be encountered as such? All the less as a "father substitute": for Hölderlin at the other end of any relationship there is always, has always been, a mother empty of the other and of every \textit{jouissance}: an immediate mother, whose proximity is confusive and imposing, like a destiny.

Every important encounter with the other, inscribed in this model, can be neither salutary nor liberating: Schiller himself cannot but be a "mother," the more conversation with him becomes
inevitable.

Schiller, therefore, does not come “in place” of the father, but in the place of the foreclosure that occupies it: Hölderlin cannot but miss him, as he does every other, similarly fatal, being, without knowing the reason, when he suddenly and impulsively leaves Jena:

I loved my heroes, as the fly loves the flame; I sought their dangerous proximity, I ran away from it, I sought it again. Schiller cannot but miss him, as he does every other, similarly fatal, being, without knowing the reason, when he suddenly and impulsively leaves Jena:

“To be close or near her, for whom I felt a love without name. . . it was the same! One thing or the other, it had become Hell for me.”

In Nürtingen, in his mother’s house, he will feel even worse than in Jena: to a friend who goes and visits him, he appears to be a living corpse who fantasizes to himself about a trip to Rome, and who, from that “distance” writes Schiller that he belongs to him, however “if not otherwise as a res nullius; and, therefore, also with the sour fruit that I bear” . . . . “I often feel the bewilderment of the exile, when I remember the hours during which You communicated with me without becoming irritated at this clouded or badly polished mirror, in which you could often no longer recognize Your manifestation (Außerung). I think it is the privilege of rare men to be able to give without receiving or to be able to ‘warm themselves with ice’.”

For my own part, I feel only too often that I am not a rare man. I freeze and solidify in the winter that surrounds me. To the extent that my sky is of iron, to that extent, I am of stone.”

Winter of lack and of his mother: lack of the mother herself and that which comes from her? In an implicitly passionate question: of recognition. And therefore:

“O Mother of mine! There is between You and me something which separates our souls; I do not know its name; maybe it is that one of us esteems the other too little, or otherwise what?”

Will a day come in which she will be able to revise her judgment of him and absolve him: legitimate him, instead of continuously reflecting the image and feeling of her own lack and unhappiness back to him?

It will not come, it cannot come, if not in the form of an increasingly radical disavowal, from which Hölderlin does not pull back, but in which, in the long run, he cannot but feel that it contains a truth: not which, but how, catastrophic (Abbruch) and, paradoxically, liberating, from the expedient of poetry as well as passion:

... But when
The blueness is extinguished, the simpleness—
Then shines the pale hue that resembles marble, like ore,
A sign of riches.
Afterwards it will be a game for which it is no longer necessary to ask for authorizations and where the grandiose rhythms pass away, in a sort of piety of thought and gaze, into sounds of the greatest simplicity allowed:

So all that's heavenly fleets on, but not for nothing.  
At all times knowing the measure, with a sparing hand 
A god will touch the dwellings 
Of men, for a moment only 
And they do not know it, yet long they 
Remember it and ask who it was. 
Yet when a certain time has gone by, they know it.

Afterwards, therefore, one arrives at a position from which one better understands one's existence. One confronts things and the world in a completely different manner. One asks oneself how this could have happened. Because, Then, "when time has passed": one knows.

And then "I cannot tell you how much, at times, I desire to see you again. I scarcely know how I can have resolved to separate myself from you."  

In the undatable fragment of a letter to Diotima, does Suzette finally appear as other?  

But afterwards, when he by now knows that "Time is exact to the letter and infinitely merciful," as if in the distant echo of a verse of Oedipus Rex which he has translated in the past and which reemerges in memory at a precise moment: Time "which sees everything."

But beforehand, in the threat of an Abbruch, he is forced to the remedy of the transition to the act of writing and poetic mania and, against the Misery inflicted to the Mother and by the Mother, to recourse to Beauty.

...I am however only too precisely aware of what I wanted ... to be able to tell myself with certainty that for many good hours I felt the value of
this soul which I respect quite purely...and that my attempt to be a lot for him, was nothing more, at bottom, than the justified desire to get closer to the Beautiful, the Good and the True, whether accessible or not, through my own individuality.56

This, which is true for Schiller, is true also, as is well known, for "Diotima" and everyone else:

"Seeing her in front of me, standing, so different from my interior disorder, so serene, radiant as in the complete fullness of the heavens—inhabitants, I was afraid."57

Of what?

Sublime, she had torn my soul from death.
But that which I was, I was through her...
Too rapidly I understood that I would have become more miserable than a shadow, if she had not lived in me around me, for me....
May this saintly soul forgive me! I have often cursed the hour in which I met her. . . .58

Beauty (like Goodness and Truth) becomes, in the encounter, only that which exposes one to the evidence of lacking it completely and to the necessity of escaping.

In the encounter with Alabanda59 the modalities are analogous. It is the umpteenth encounter—feigned or relived, it does not matter much—in which, each time the same bolt of re-velation is produced, in which each person finds himself, as long as he can bear it, as if completely exposed to the other: "Each time it was a sublime moment, that in which the gaze of this man, for whom the free ether would have appeared too constricting, cast aside all severity to search for the object of his aspirations, until it met my gaze; we looked at each other blushing."

He would never again want to leave this man "for all the empires in the world, but I am too often gripped by anxiety at the thought that you could become indispensable to me to the point that I would thus become chained to you."

Each encounter, like each escape, however, is apparent: Hölderlin does not stop revolving in the orbit of his Mother’s omnipotence, alternately or simultaneously, compulsively, inhabiting its areas of light or shadow.

And where could he “live,” if that which could have subtracted him from this everlasting fusion (defusion—profusion, so as to push him towards his own place) if his own Desire, is lacking?

Is it precisely that which cannot be mediated, then, that is projected in a grandiose cosmic game? The gods, the titans, the heroes, all the less accessible, the less they are interiorized: “absent,” “fleeing,” “escaped,” in which and for which the name and the Law of the Father, as every jurisdiction, remain a dead letter.
That which is essential is enacted in the exclusive relationship with the Mother, on which the most narcissistic presumption is founded:

I see a serene life flourishing around me in the figures of the creation . . . But the laughter of men seems to afflict me since I have a heart.

Would I like to be a comet? I think so. In fact comets have the speed of birds, go into a fiery flowering and are as pure as children.60

But is it not "permitted to a human being, when life is only grief, to look up and say: I also want to be like this?"61

In the meantime, he often asks himself if it would not be better to sleep than to stay like this, without companions

Always waiting, and what to do or to say in the meantime—
I don't know, and who wants poets at all in desolate times?"

On need, as a horizon of his style, only Hölderlin's words to Hölderlin: as when he thinks that his poetry is lacking something which he calls Das Lebendige63 and which he describes as follows: "I am lacking less in strength than in lightness, less in ideas than in shadings, less in a fundamental tone, than in a variety of tones, less in light than in shadow."

The strength and light that prevail on lightness and shadow, on the multiplicity of tones and shadings, do they come, almost unnoticeably, from the fragility (Zerstrbarkeit, destructibility, he calls it) and umbrageousness of his feeling? "I was not structured in a sufficiently solid and indestructible fashion."64

That which he is in need of in his relation with others, in which he attempts not to fall boundlessly and without discretion, does he see it in his "poetic style," opaque mirror and yet a crutch of feigned difference, thanks to which he does not completely dissolve in the "other in-itself"?

Simulation of difference: why does writing not take the place of the relationship which remains occupied by a sort of insurmountable fatal predisposition, since Hölderlin, even though suffering from it, does not see its alternative?

And once I finally could reach the point that I manage to see in that which is lacking less the undefined grief, that it often provokes in me, but rather feel the particular, instantaneous, and specific lack: . . . then I would be calmer and my activity would progress in a more regular fashion.

Because, if one perceives a lack infinitely, one is naturally moved
to want to infinitely remedy it, and so, when these occasions present themselves, our forces are often caught up in an indeterminate, sterile and exhausting, struggle, not knowing where the lack is and how to correct, to complete, this, precisely this, lack. 65

There is a lack, but it cannot be determined: a step from being perceived, it instead persists, in an opaqueness that makes it ungraspable.

Poverty or wealth "of men," the emergence of a destiny as that clot of opaqueness which, remaining such, makes sense and proper time?

An enigma are things of pure origin.
Even song may hardly unveil it.
As you began, so you will remain,
And much as need can effect,
And breeding, still greater power
Adheres to your birth.

Ein Rätsel ist Reinentsprungenes. Auch
Der Gesang kaum darf es enthüllen. Denn
Wie du anfiengst, wirst du bleiben.
So viel auch wirket die Noth.
Und die Zucht, das meiste nämlich
Vermag die Geburt. 66

Enigma: Hölderlin’s; but Heidegger’s as well, when he, like Johanna, maintains that he was not able to come to grips with his own life.

But, of which life?

Heidegger reveals in this utterance his measure of blindness, if he is simultaneously aware that Hölderlin “persisting in the very pronounced isolation of his destinal vocation (Bestimmung) attains truth” or, we would rather say, the inaccessibility of truth.

How then can he, the “constrained” par excellence to the innocent availability of remaining under the storms and lightning bolts of the god with a bare head, with bare hands, not have been able to come to grips with his own life?

In Heidegger too, does “someone” sing in the ears and indicate in the past, inflexibly, a model of life such as those with which one can come to grips?

Is this what creates the contradiction, what shocks and surprises us? Is this what leads the thinker of the time of need towards every form of abjection and every form of opportunism?

Is it the support of “the magnificence and greatness of the national irruption”? Or the support “to the Führer as the reality and law of today and times to come” and, which, after the fall, leads him to see
himself as if “in the position of the Führer who has failed, being the best and maybe even the only nationalist”\textsuperscript{68}

Who is behind the movement that makes him call a psychic locus “people” and “land of the sunset,” which at most, can refer to himself and which produces the bad rhetorical taste, Black Forest style, that derives from it?

How does it sustain the philosopher of the “Conversation that we are” and of the uttering, in the acception of the Greek, indicating, gesturing? Of the utterance open and ready for the Unreckonable, so far from mere enunciation which one discusses only in relation to its exactness or inexactness?

The philosopher of assignation (Zuweisung) and of destination (der Schickung) which alone sustains and ties, and which enables one to dispose oneself within Being in its becoming (Ereignis)?

“One thing is clear: not only do we not know who we are”\textsuperscript{69} but it is precisely on and from this not-knowing that a question that we really can pose is born.

Really “in other words, a question which we confront during the entire span of our life”\textsuperscript{70} and which does not resolve, but which indicates the enigma which inaugurates it.

Near
And difficult to grasp is the God.

[Nah ist
Und schwer zu fassen der Gott.]\textsuperscript{71}

Should one not ask if the gods are something else? So close, and by a whisker, incomprehensible:

That the god live or remain dead is not decided by the religiosity of human beings nor, with all the more reason, is it decided by the theological aspirations of philosophy or the sciences of nature. That god be god occurs starting from the constellation of Being (Konstellation des Sein) and within its sphere.\textsuperscript{72}

Where this happens “Schicket es sich”: it destines itself.

Is the emergence of a destinal constellation on its own the symptom that in it “god is god” and he rules designing, from his invisibility, the modalities of the lived experiences that he constellates?

Should one not ask oneself if the gods are not something else?

By a whisker “the singer remains blind”: in and because of the cipher of the fatality that casts its shadow on him?

In it the dialogue between Heidegger and Hölderlin is an interrogating oneself on something that remains nameless: knowledge of the Inexplicable (das Wissen des Unerklärbaren) in the sense of letting it be as
They in fact agree that to understand an enigma does not mean liquidating it in understanding, but to preserve it in all the breadth of the hiding in revelation.

Should one not ask oneself if the enigma is not something else?

If one takes these questions into account, one at least avoids colluding with the movement Heidegger makes, unwittingly, transferring from Hölderlin and from himself to a contradictorily "general" plane the reflection on something like: an essence of thinking and poetizing.

In fact, can there be a thinking/poetizing to the extent that it is "this or that, authentic or inauthentic in itself," apart from the enigma and the Event (Ereignis) which inaugurates it, each time anew, for each being-there?

NOTES


5. Martin Heidegger, Unterwegs zur Sprache, cit., pp. 83 ff.


10. Maria L. Proietti, La cosa poetica e il cammino verso sé in Martin Heidegger, (Roma: Bulzoni, 1984), p. 9: “But why poets and not all “mortals,” also those whose destinies no one sees, because they in no way become spectacle, or even drama? The problem of the relationship between thought and poetry, between mortals and mortal poets, between object and poetic object, is truly that around which Heidegger’s following (or second, or last) period of reflection, after the long interruption we are aware of, is set in motion. And, within this problematic relationship, the necessity of a distinction is problematically inserted which, however, in my view, will ultimately never be either grounded or effective.”


14. E. Nolte, op. cit., p. 63. The events in Heidegger’s life, apart from those tied to his relationship to Nazism, do not seem very important when compared to his work, unlike those in Hölderlin’s life.

As Ernst Nolte writes, separated from his work, Heidegger’s life seems
devoid of any interest, and it could seem that this is placed next to that, in other words the work, only to provide a semblance of some historical legitimacy. As Heidegger said of Aristotle, Heidegger therefore was born, worked and died. In other words: he was born into a poor and provincial environment, was kept studying thanks to subsidies from the Catholic Church; after the Abitur, which he obtained in 1915, he moved, apart from the occasional trips, working exclusively in the context of two provincial universities: Freiburg i.B. and Marburg. Finally he died, without falling sick, cared for by the attentions of a wife “endowed with a practical wisdom”.

From our point of view, however, already the apparently mere coincidence of his life with his work is a trace filled with suggestions. This is all the more true when the limitation of the sources is underscored by the absence of a set of Heidegger’s correspondence which, not only is not published, but whose publication is not even contemplated. And one cannot count on the “weight” that the amorous correspondence with Hannah Arendt would have been given, dating to the Marburg years, and destroyed, apparently, by Heidegger himself. On the importance of his meeting with Arendt there is only her testimony: the philosopher of Destination (der Schickung) and of the open utterance and one that was ready for the Incalculable, remained tied to the many academic and family duties “which he would not have voided even when faced with Hannah’s vulnerable freedom and her demanding intelligence of love . . . In the slow and painful labor of grief, the necessity of moving away from the only—der Einzige—to which he was tied by a rigid dedication, Hannah describes his shadows, the nightmares of loneliness and of a sort of despairing possession” (Hanna Arendt, Rahel Varnhagen, (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1988), pp. XXI ff., of which a trace is in the verses:

And we lose life
When we love, when we live
or:
Why do you give me your hand
Shyly as if it were a secret?
Do you come from such a distant land?
Do you not know our wine?
/ . . . /
Come and love me
Don’t think of your fears
do you not know trust?
Come, take and give.

On the “practical wisdom” of Elfride Petri Heidegger, there is an eloquent observation of Enrico Castelli’s in his Itinerari e panorami, (Padua 1980):

June 9, 1946 . . . we penetrate the Black Forest . . . Todtnauberg: twenty houses. High up a wooden hut, isolated: it is Martin Heidegger’s dwelling. A man of small build, with broken pants, broken shoes . . . . Cold reception. His wife a tough Prussian, an officer’s daughter . . . . It is two o’clock in the afternoon. Afraid of having to offer us some soup, the Heideggers don’t eat. Our provisions line up on the table.
- Bitte . . .
Martin Heidegger would like to accept a meat sandwich, but his wife paralyzes him with her gaze. Martin Heidegger withdraws his hand.


As regards the ironic and autoironic positing of a distance, cf. also Pier Aldo Rovatti’s observations (“’Il giro della parola da Heidegger a Lacan,” *Cosa Freudiana*, 5:33, 1993): “We shall say, with Heidegger, that language talks to us—but in this our being spoken by words . . . we find ourselves in a respectful listening of a distant, ancient, echo, of a “which” which, as such, is irredeemably lost. Heidegger’s seriousness consists, from my point of view, in this tragic intonation, which does not only derive from the fact that there has been a loss, but, above all, from the attitude he assumes and which he advises one to assume with respect to the “lost”. The most obvious confirmation comes from Heidegger’s own language, from his “saying” in which, not only is the play of language not doubled, but allows listening to it in its distance and “sacrality”. In Heidegger’s silence there is no room for surprise, lapsus or ironic impertinence: his philosophical writing is without holes. It is tense, extended, veritative. In it fiction is always falsification: an error opposed to the erring of truth. Maybe that is why Heidegger has so little sympathy for metaphor.”


Sing, O sing then, continuously in my ears
Your hymn of misfortune, terrible Gods of destiny
You will have me finally, I know, and yet before then
I will belong to myself and will take my share of life
and glory.

But ours is only a hypothesis on Hölderlin and Heidegger “built” above all on the type and degree of suffering described and lamented. On the poet’s presumed “schizophrenia” there are neither sufficient materials nor proofs to be able to discuss them seriously and, above all, “in absentia”.
40. Friedrich Hölderlin, letter to Schiller without a date, 6, No 76, in: Jean Laplanche, *op. cit.*, p. 40. The translation is mine.
41. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, (It. ed. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981), p. 34. This is the way the encounter with Adamas is recounted.
42. In: Jean Laplanche, *op. cit.*, p. 43: “He has put himself in such a position that access to everything that is important to him in the world necessarily passes through Schiller: Schiller is therefore he who detains the key and the seal to Hölderlin’s forces (Kräfte).
43. Friedrich Hölderlin, letter of January 16 1795 to his mother, 6, No. 92, in: Jean Laplanche, *op. cit.*, p. 33. The translation and italics are mine.
45. In the process of the signifying chain, Jacques Lacan has called the Freudian *Verwerfung forclusion*, translated into Italian by Giacomo Contri as “preclusione,” a translation which he justifies as follows: “We have preferred “preclusione” to other terms such as “reiezione,” “rigetto,” “ripudio,” since it is that which corresponds to *foreclosure* in juridical language, and which designates the obstacle-situation which prevents the subject of a right from being able to exercise it . . . The “preclusione” with which we are dealing is that of a key signifier . . . which does not come to occupy, in the unconscious, the position it should.” (in: *Ecrits*, cit., p. 7).
47. In: Jean Laplanche, *op. cit.*, p. 69. The Italian translation is mine.
49. Friedrich Hölderlin, letter to his mother of December 11 1798, 6, No
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170, in: Jean Laplanche, op. cit., p. 89. The Italian translation is mine.

50. In: H. Bertaux, op. cit., pp. 316-7. The 15th of September 1806, the Autenrieth clinic in Tübingen, whose accounts are well kept, registers the arrival of “Magister Hölderlin”. One can believe without hesitation that this admission occurred only because Hölderlin’s mother explicitly requested it. This for a very simple reason: in Swabia a clinic would never have accepted a patient without knowing who was going to pay the bill. Hölderlin’s mother has considered her son crazy for a long time . . . . Mentally ill he is, from the moment of his admission, understood as a civil debarment. There will no longer be any question of his being able to demand to make use of a capital that is his. The mother also exploits the situation to obtain an income from it. Pretending to be without resources, she will obtain from Württemberg’s sovereign . . . . a pension for Friedrich, this “failed pastor,” failed for reasons of health . . . . The failed son has gone through profits and losses. She will never see him again, not even once.” The translation is mine.


52. In: H. Bertaux, op. cit., p. 331 ff. In Zimmer’s house, in which he has taken refuge from Autenrieth’s hell, Hölderlin “draws, writes . . . Mörike, Schwab, Weiblingen, rummage around in the pile of papers. They are obliged to observe that there is not a single verse of Hölderlin’s that shows any sign of mental illness: nothing that does not make any sense. . . . The roughly fifty poems of the Tower period that have been preserved have as their almost exclusive topic the passing of time. Their titles bear witness to this . . . . “The Autumn”, “The Summer”, “The Winter”, “The Spring”. But it is a question of a temporal dimension that differs from that of human agitation, the historical one with its dates: Hölderlin rediscovers the cyclical time of rural civilization”. The translation is mine.


54. In: H. Bertaux, op. cit., pp. 375-6. “The number of notes that Hölderlin addresses to his mother starting from 1812 (in other words after his entering the Zimmer household) is 60, a number that exactly corresponds to the quarterly payments to Zimmer. Therefore Hölderlin only writes because Zimmer prods him to each time that he himself writes to Johanna. . . . There is moreover a disturbing fact that I do not know how to interpret. The first note of the new series carries the stamp of the Tübingen post-office: September 15 1812. Now it is on September 20th, in other words five days later, therefore undoubtedly immediately after having received this letter, in which Hölderlin omits to assure his mother of his “obedience,” that Johanna adds to her testament a codicil against Friedrich, benefitting Karl Gok. There is certainly a connection, but which? Apart from a somewhat contracted style—but wasn’t he writing against his will?—this letter is perfectly lucid. But it seems to be charged with hints that his mother must have understood well. Maybe too well: may she not have asked herself if, after all, (her son) was not really sane, if he might not one day have returned to the living, to claim his rights?” The translation is mine.

55. Which surely is also to be placed in the “iconography” of German idealism in the years of Hölderlin’s and Hegel’s youth: but in a peculiar sense,
then, for Hölderlin.

56. Friedrich Hölderlin, letter to Schiller of July 23 1795, 6, No 102 in: Jean Laplanche, op. cit., p. 51. The translation is mine.

57. Friedrich Hölderlin, Thalia fragment, in: Jean Laplanche, cit., p. 64.


59. Friedrich Hölderlin, Hyperion, cit., pp. 72 ff.


63. In: Jean Laplanche, op. cit., p. 91.

64. Ibidem.


68. In: Ernst Nolte, op. cit., p. 183.


