

Heidegger's onto-poetology: the poetic projection of Being

A onto-poetologia de Heidegger: a projeção poética do Ser

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In this article I try to demonstrate how Heidegger's engagement with poetry forms a step in the development of his philosophy of Being, by interpreting Heidegger's dialogue with poetry as an essential step for the task of thinking on the path of overcoming metaphysics. Heidegger's essay *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking* is one of the few writings after *Being and Time* that does not contain an explicit reference to poetry. Heidegger advocates, here, that futural thinking should think 'truth' from its relation to *aletheia*, i.e. the unconcealment as the openness of presence. Despite the lack of a reference to poetry in this text I would like to argue that if we interpret Heidegger in broader sense as onto-poetology, thinking the openness must remain intimately related to poetry.

KEYWORDS

poetry . opening . *aletheia* . ontology .
metaphysics . onto-poetology

Neste artigo tento demonstrar o diálogo de Heidegger com a poesia como um momento importante para o desenvolvimento de sua filosofia do Ser. Por isso, interpretarei a atenção que Heidegger dá à poesia como um passo essencial no caminho da superação da metafísica, inserido na tarefa de pensar. O ensaio de Heidegger *O Fim da Filosofia e a Tarefa do Pensamento* é um dos poucos escritos posteriores a *Ser e Tempo* que não contém nem uma única referência à poesia. Heidegger defende nele que o pensamento futuro deveria pensar a 'verdade' a partir da sua relação com a *aletheia*, isto é, como o desvelamento como clareira da presença. A despeito da falta de referência à poesia neste texto, o pensar deve manter-se, se interpretarmos Heidegger num sentido mais amplo como onto-poetologia, intimamente relacionado à poesia.

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poesia . abertura . *aletheia* . ontologia .
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Introduction

In contrast with many of his later writings, Heidegger's magnum opus *Being and Time* (1927) is not principally concerned with poetry. The essay *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking* (1966) is one of the few writings after *Being and Time* that does not contain an explicit reference to poetry. Heidegger advocates, here, that futural thinking should think 'truth' from its relation to *aletheia*, i.e. the unconcealment as the openness of presence, on the path of overcoming metaphysics. Since it is a late work, we have reason to presume that the text is based on the trajectory of Heidegger's thinking in a more complete sense, giving his exhortation a seminal character. Should one conclude on the basis of this text that the task of overcoming metaphysics is not related to poetry? In this article I try to demonstrate Heidegger's dialogue with poetry as an essential step on the path of overcoming metaphysics. Hence, I will interpret Heidegger's engagement with poetry as an important moment in the development of his philosophy - or rather 'thinking' - of Being.

Heidegger reads poetry undeniably from an ontological stance. On the poetry of Hölderlin Heidegger writes:

The poetic approach to his poetry is only possible as a thinking confrontation with the revelation of being won in this poetry. (HEIDEGGER, 1999, p.6)

To what extent Heidegger's ontology is related to poetry cannot simply and unequivocally be taken from his writings, and is therefore open to interpretation. Although many scholars have commented on Heidegger's writings on poetry, a start with reading and interpreting Heidegger's writings on poetry primarily from the perspective of his ontological concerns has hardly been made.¹ Such a reading would nevertheless be justified if it is true that Heidegger's writings on poetry are an integral part of his thinking, and therefore of his ontology. To pass over the relation between ontology and poetry in Heidegger's work would be like reading van Gogh's letters without taking his paintings into account. In this article I would like to prepare an ontological reading of poetry from the perspective of Heidegger's thinking and in particular by relating poetry to the

¹ Compare, for example, Allemann, B. *Hölderlin und Heidegger* (1954) and Buddeberg, E. *Heidegger und die Dichtung: Hölderlin, Rilke* (1953).

ontological notions of metaphysics and the openness of presence.² Further concepts that fall beyond the scope of this article, but which are nevertheless eligible to be investigated in relation to poetry are concepts like attunement (*Stimmung*), uncanniness, the godhead, the sacred and the feast. Given these constraints, the investigation has a rather general approach, but as I hope a basic one too.

1. The ontological argument

I will start with a reconstruction of Heidegger's ontological argument to inquire at what point poetry enters the stage. Heidegger addresses the case of the Being in three different senses. Firstly, as beings or entities (*seiendes*), which he understands as that which 'is' in the sense of that which is present, or has presence. Secondly, as the being of entities, which is the mode of being of entities (*Seinsweise*). This distinction is the basic assumption of Heidegger's main work *Being and Time* and known as the 'ontological difference'. In the following period Heidegger adds a third sense, namely Being as '*Seyn*'. *Seyn* indicates Being itself, that is Being at large, which 'essences' (*west*) and 'presences' (*west an*) entities by letting them arrive in their specific mode of being, having itself, however, an absent and rather concealed character. From here on in, I will refer with the term 'ontological' also to the sense of Being as *Seyn*, which I will spell with a capital letter.

The former renders understandably into three lines of analysis that can be traced in Heidegger's work. Firstly, the ontic, secondly the ontological: a fundamental ontology based on the temporal analytics of the human existence, called '*Dasein*' in *Being and Time*, on the one hand, and a historical ontology (*seinsgeschichtlich*), on the other hand, in the period afterwards. And, lastly, an analysis concerning the 'Event' (*Ereignis*), which is itself no longer historical. The human existence characterized as a 'being-in-the-world' is in its daily care ontically concerned with entities that are present to him. Metaphysics, or traditional ontology asks about the being of entities as the question about the 'beingness' (*Seiendheit*) of entities. Socrates asks for example: What is knowl-

² In *Off The Beaten Track* (Holzwege) (1935-1946) Heidegger writes on poetry in relation to Rilke's concept of the Open. Rilke's 'Open' is the widest orbit that rounds all entities into one. Because it is determined as 'venture', the concept belongs to the metaphysics of the will, according to Heidegger. Rilke's Open does therefore not coincide with Heidegger's notion of the unconcealing-lightening unifying, i.e. the clearing as the openness of presence. To avoid confusion, I will leave this text therefore out of consideration.

edge? What is goodness? Etc. The goodness is in this case the being of all good beings. In *Contributions to philosophy* (1936-1938) Heidegger criticizes the ontological approach of *Being and Time* that privileges a single entity – namely, *Dasein* as the human eccentric ecstatic existence – in order to disclose the meaning of Being. Heidegger acknowledges that this way of questioning still follows the line of questioning of metaphysics, since being comes only into view here within the horizon of time, which is understood as the being of the entity *Dasein*, i.e. its temporality. Thinking the Event, in contrast, means thinking the Being as time. This way of thinking takes Being itself as starting point, instead of the ontic, the human being or the nature of entities.

2. Being and metaphysics

Heidegger's aim of overcoming metaphysics does not stand alone, but stems from the quest for the Being, from where it solely should be interpreted. Heidegger identifies philosophy with metaphysics. His relation to the history of philosophy is ambiguous because the history of metaphysics has itself a two-fold character, due to the revealing (*Entbergung*, *Enthüllung*) and concealing (*Verbergung*) dynamics of Being.

Metaphysics attests the way in which being (*sein*) as the being of entities unfolds itself historically. While attempting to uncover the foundations of being, metaphysics describes the way being makes itself positively manifest in each different epoch of being. Already in the account of phenomenology from *Being and Time* Heidegger argues, that despite the fact that entities show themselves from themselves as phenomena, we do not behold them naively in an immediate and unreflective way. It is the extant metaphysical language and explanation of being that orientates our reflections and thus mediates the way entities are approached, experienced and come into view.

Metaphysics itself considered as a phenomenon or happening takes part in the concealment of Being, whence the 'forgetfulness of Being' stems. Being hides itself through metaphysics by showing itself not in its absent but in its present character. Consequently, Being is forgotten in its proper absent character, since metaphysics has taken Being itself as a present entity or at least approaches being and entities from the primacy of the present entity. Showing

the covering up of metaphysics by uncovering the traditional layers of ontology implies a *via negativa* through the history of philosophy as the destruction or deconstruction of metaphysics in order to prepare an answer for the question of the meaning of being in *Being and Time*, and in the following period a preparation of a thinking that thinks the truth of Being (*aletheia*) as the origin (*Anfang*) of Being (*Seyn*) in terms of the Event (*Ereignis*). To ask only about the meaning of Being would imply reducing Being to 'world', but Being harbors also that which appears as closed and non-meaningful, as expressed in Heidegger's later concept of 'earth'. The quest for the Being does not only concern a semantic issue or a particular feature of Indo-European languages.³ Meaning 'is', emerges and happens, rather than that Being yields from meaning.

Metaphysics thinks the being of entities mainly as substance. Because it holds the substance to be a cause it is therefore the *causa sui* of the entity. Being as the Event, in contrast, is thought by Heidegger as the concealed origin, whence present, futural and even past entities receive their specific being. To ask, in turn, about the cause or the ground of Being itself does no longer make sense in Heidegger's ontology, or at least not in the traditional metaphysical way, if Being is itself not a present entity. Being 'is' therefore not, but 'essences' (*west*).

The former does not imply that there is no thinking implied in the works of the metaphysicians whatsoever. Since metaphysics is included in the way in which being makes itself manifest and comes into view, it cannot be disregarded in relation to the question of Being. However, the questioning of metaphysics, which asks about the ground of entities does not reach far enough into Being as *Seyn* from the perspective of the futural task of thinking that is orientated towards Being as absence. Heidegger's initial talk of the 'overcoming' (*Überwindung*) of metaphysics is later replaced by the term 'disappearing' (*Verschwindung*). The term 'overcoming' is still metaphysical, and gives the impression that the transition from metaphysics to the thinking of the Event could yield from thinking as a human activity. Instead of bringing out an internal movement or movement of being on its own merits, thinking can only keepsake what Being alludes to and has therefore a character of 'waiting' (*warten*). Nihilism and calculative technical thinking are the ultimate results of metaphysics, when the forgetfulness of Being has almost reached completion by the furthest retrieving of Being into concealment.

³ Compare a contrary position in *Heidegger's ontological difference and language*, LOHMANN, J in *On Heidegger and language* KOCKELMANS, J. Evanston, 1972, Northwestern University Press.

3. Being and unconcealment

Being as *Seyn* is the abyss of the ground as the absent and concealed origin. Thinking ought to clear the truth of Being not only in its revealing but also in its concealing character. Concerning the metaphysical philosophers it should pay attention to that which is still 'unthought-of', i.e. still concealed for thinking, by being reserved and still in store. This means, in Heidegger's view, that through a deconstruction of metaphysics, thinking should turn towards the origin of the manifestation of being, which Heidegger calls the 'first origin' (*archè*), namely the Greek dawn of metaphysics and especially the pre-Socratic 'thinkers' that still thought truth as *aletheia*, that is 'unconcealment'. However, this first beginning as the clearing and unconcealment of being points towards the concealment of Being, and thinking should transitively move on towards a region of thinking which Heidegger calls 'the other origin'. A thinking that thinks the other beginning 'thinks of' or remembers (*andenken*) Being as the absent and concealed origin, which he calls the Event (*Ereignis*).

4. Openness

Concerning the truth of Being as *aletheia* - the concealing clearing (*bergende Lichtung*) - Heidegger holds the notion of 'openness' (*Offenheit*) to be essential. Openness has a revealing as well as a concealing character.⁴ However, philosophy knows nothing of the opening, as the philosopher states in *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*. Every appearance occurs in some light. That which shines radiates through brightness to show itself. This means that we see entities always in a certain light, in some respect, perspective, or in other words, within a horizon. In *The basic problems of phenomenology* Heidegger writes:

Being does not become accessible like a being. We do not simply find it in front of us. As is to be shown, it must always be brought to view in a free projection. (HEIDEGGER, 1988, p.22)

⁴Notice that the German *offen* has also the connotation of 'free'.

Metaphysics demonstrates how entities always appear within a projection of being and determines that grounding element. However, metaphysics does not ask how it is possible that one projection of being, one historical epoch of being, transitions to another one. In what sense is the projection of being a free and open projection? Thinking can ask: What is the space, the open play whence that which is epoch-making, suits and destines entities? In what free region is it possible for light to change and, in the first place, to pass through? Heidegger calls that free region the 'opening'. It is the openness that grants a possible letting appear and show. The opening of unconcealment is the phenomenal character of every phenomenon itself, and therefore the primal phenomenon. To unconcealment belongs self-concealment, the opening grants entities in their being, but without granting that which grants. The opening 'presences', but is itself not a present entity. By bringing entities to our attention Being distracts the attention from itself. Being is the concealed theatre of entities as a self-concealing happening. The clearing of Being can show, on the one hand, the absence and concealment of the being of entities, while Being, on the other hand, as unconcealment conceals itself. Because the understanding of Being (*Seinsverständnis*) includes equally seeing as hearing, the clearing is not only free for brightness and darkness, but also open for resonance and echo, for sound and the diminishing of sound. The free region of the clearing is in auditory terms the space of resonance, the absence that is present as silence.

5. The double concealment in unconcealment

Concealment takes place in every form of unconcealment, phenomenon, occurrence of truth, or happening, according to Heidegger. Heidegger's concept of phenomenon as that which shows itself from itself escapes a dualistic and rigid essence-appearance distinction. The phenomenon is the way the essence of an entity 'essences' in the totality of its moments, without hiding itself - as it were in another metaphysical realm of Being - behind the appearance. Hence, presence and absence, the ontic and the ontological, never occur in an isolated sense. This does, however, not mean that the essence reveals itself exhaustively always and everywhere in the present, in all its possibilities and as itself. For example, on a quantum level there is in the discovery of the atom still much for us concealed. Hegel has characterized thinking as a dynamic process, which is worked out by Heidegger as the overall problem of time. The understanding of

the being of entities as a gradual process of disclosure and discovery has, in the first place, a temporal character. Unconcealment as disclosure and discovery is historically determined, which means that it has been made possible by temporality and time.

Heidegger speaks of a 'double concealment' as 'refusal' and 'dissembling'. One can discover a specific mode of being of an entity or the mere presence of an entity. Likewise, one can discover an absence of a specific mode of being of an entity or the absence of an entity. We can, for example, detect a loss of quality with respect to used things, or detect a state of being-not-yet-finished of things that are still in production, or we can notice, for example, that a species has gone extinct. As such, absence can be present and belongs therefore to the openness of the clearing too. Heidegger calls this kind of concealment 'refusal'. Furthermore, an entity has the possibility of showing itself as something else, as that which it is not. Heidegger calls this kind of concealment 'dissembling', which is the possibility of error, illusions and hallucinations. Thus, we can distinguish in Heidegger's double concealment of unconcealment three forms of concealment corresponding with the three ways in which he addresses the case of Being, firstly, concealment as dissembling, secondly, concealment as a refusal concerning the appearance of an entity and, thirdly, concealment as a refusal concerning the unconcealment, as such.

The ontic does not equal the ontological. In cases of phenomena like illusion, hallucination and error, the essence is not its illusive manifestation. A present entity could be mistaken for another present entity, or that which is absent could be taken for something present, and *vice versa*. The illusive phenomenon has clearly a concealing nature concerning its being, not strictly in an ontic sense, but rather in an ontic-ontological sense, since whatever we essentially assert concerning the ontic would by definition also have an ontological character. The concealment of illusion is, however, only possible because of the concealing clearing character of the phenomenon in which the ontological difference renders itself in absence and presence. Therefore, we could, secondly, from an ontological perspective, conclude that the essence is concealed in as far as the essence as 'essencing' does not equal its present manifestation. Appearance means 'appearing' which extended over time might transcend the present. Heidegger calls being the 'transcendence' pure and simple. Hence, the being of any entity can be concealed in as far as the entity is not yet manifested in its essence and in as far as the entity is only the way being is present (*gegenwärtig*), while the totality of the being of the entity withdraws itself and refuses to give itself to actual experience. This is, thirdly, related to the concealment of Being (*Seyn*)

as the origin whence entities receive their specific mode of being, assumed that they do not come forth from themselves as a *causa sui*. Phenomenologically, our access to entities might be through phenomena that show themselves from themselves, but ontologically entities owe their being to Being. As such, Being is also characterized by Heidegger as the 'there is' (*Es gibt*) - literally 'it gives', which indicates presence as that which grants entities their being. It remains a question to what extent phenomenology, which seeks access to Being through phenomena, yields an ontic focus, or at least a focus on the being of entities, remaining therefore determined by the perspective of present human experience, which is subjectivity. The phenomenology from *Being and Time* still takes explicitly the ontic as the possibly of the ontological. It is noticeable that Heidegger's ontology of the Event does not have a phenomenological character anymore.

6. Time as the veil of Maya

Although we have cursorily touched upon the matter, the former ontological structure remains rather abstract and pointless if we do not take time, Heidegger's veil of Maya, into consideration. It is in and by time itself where Being is revealed and above all concealed.

Time, according to Heidegger, constitutes entities in an abysmal way. Since its inception, philosophy has expressed the essence of things with an implicit reference to the notion of time. When the Greeks thought being as 'idea' or 'substance', they thought the essence as the unity in the manifold that 'remains' the same in every change. Fundamental ontological notions like 'idea' and 'substance' turned later on in the history of metaphysics into ideas in God's mind, subject, reason, spirit or will to power, as expressions of the essence, however, the same basic ontological model remained intact. Heidegger translates Aristotle's concept of being as substance '*ousia*' for constant presence (*ständiges Anwesen*) and argues that metaphysics has been thinking being that way ever since its beginning. Socrates and Plato already thought the essence of something in the sense of what endures and remains permanently (*das Fortwährende*). The 'idea' as eternal truth (*aei on*) was discovered in the aspect (*Aussehen*) as that which tenaciously persists throughout all that happens.

The term 'presence' can be analyzed in two senses, viz.: in a temporal and in a spatial sense. The present indicates the time of something to distinguish it

from the past, the future or the mere possible. There exists, for example, the present tense in grammar. On the other hand, something can be present in a spatial sense as 'appearing somewhere together' or 'being somewhere with the others' as, for example, in: "All the recruits were present at the roll call". Heidegger deals in *Being and Time* with the latter sense of presence by means of an analysis of being-with-others (*Mitsein*), the spatiality of innerworldly things at hand, being-in-the-world, and in his later writings by means of concepts like place (*topos*), building and dwelling. However, it is the analysis of time that initially prevails upon the analysis of space in Heidegger's work as a way of rethinking metaphysics, since in the history of metaphysics the reverse has been the case.

'Constancy' and 'presence' refer to the present as a mode of time that gives entities a specific mode of being. Our vulgar understanding of the present is, according to Heidegger, that of the 'now' as part of our vulgar understanding of time, stemming from a spatial representation of time. This way of understanding time represents time by a line that runs from the past to the future, which is infinitely divisible into equal parts and connects every now as a distinct point. Thus represented, time is basically a series or sequence of homogeneous nows that become countable and, subsequently, datable. But, phenomenologically speaking, the present has no definite borders dividing it from past and future, and the linear representation of time reduces time conceptually to space. Being should, in contrast, be considered in the broader sense in which time phenomenologically shows itself. This results concretely in a phenomenological analysis of the temporality of the human existence in *Being and Time* and later into an understanding of Being as time, which is thought as the Event, the happening to which the history of *Dasein* belongs.

Being encompasses, in Heidegger's view, not only the present, but also the 'earlier' and 'later' as the not-anymore and the not-yet of past and future. As such, Being implies negativity, nothingness, or temporal and thus verbally expressed: 'nothinging' (*nichten*). What makes present or is 'presencing' is not only the present, rather do past, present and future reach into the wider unity, or gathering of Being, in the sense of temporality as a future that makes present in the process of having-been (*Gewesenheit*). Time as the event is the past that is 'happening' out of the future. The presence of this happening is from the perspective of the wholeness of time a dynamic now, called the 'instant' (*der Augenblick*). Being is the past that springs from the future, its destiny is therefore the departure of and from its origin. Being as time has the character of a journey, which becomes the main figure of interpretation in Heidegger's elucidations of Hölderlin's poetry. From the perspective of the whole journey,

presence is distinct from the present as a single mode of time and that which is merely present in an ontic sense. Time, as that which makes present, or that which is itself presencing, is not a present entity. As such, the totality of Being withdraws itself from the experience of the finite human being, who cannot freely and infinitely oversee past, present and future, i.e. the totality of time. Terms like 'eternity' – not understood as timelessness but as an infinite mode of time – and (thus) 'infinity' must remain empty notions from the perspective of man's own finite experience.

Since Being comes only into view within a 'clearing' (*Lichtung*), which is man as the 'finite thrown projection', the totality of Being, i.e. Being in exhaustive sense as the forth-bringing origin, withdraws itself from man's finite experience. Being as time refuses to coincide with man's finite time and remains therefore ultimately an abyss. However, Being as time does not mean 'linear' time. Hence, it is not the case that Being as time simply endures, or lasts longer than the finite temporality of man, as if man had missed the boat of Being, so to speak. Man's finite temporality rather means his impossibility to bring about an event or happening out of himself as the Event, in contrast, is capable. Likewise, his understanding depends on the revelation of the Event along the history of being. Man's ways of projecting and his bringing forth in the sense of *poiesis* remain designated to the unconcealment of Being. Man is not an origin, although *Being and Time* still seems to suggest this.

Man's finitude does not primarily consist in the fact that his life will come to an end one day, but in the fact that he is finitely 'disclosed'. Man as the clearing projection remains finitely thrown by time as revelation. Man as the self-mediation of Being is, therefore, a finite mediation. Being as time rather means history as 'revelation'. From the perspective of the access of Being, existence as temporality means disclosure, whereas from the perspective of Being (*Seyn*), Being as time means revelation. Precisely, because Being as time means the disclosure in revelation, it is clear that at the end of *Being and Time* the unity of Being or its positive meaning 'is' and must remain concealed if man as the disclosure in the revelation of Being turns out to be a finite being. Being is the coming to pass and the coming to light of entities in their specific way of being in the free region of the openness of presence. As such, it is up to Being to what extent, or even whether or not, Being makes itself present in its open spot called the clearing, i.e. man.

We see at this point the difference with Hegel, who thought that Being as absolute spirit had finally arrived at the stage of complete self-revelation. This

determination of Being is only possible under the assumption that Being is *Logos*. *Logos* is *legein*, speech or discourse (*reden, sprechen, Sprache, Vernunft*). Discourse is equi-primordial saying and hearing and, as such, dialectic. If Being is discourse, its objective articulation can be interpreted by knowing, i.e. Being as the hearing subject. The dynamic categorical interpretation of its own dynamic articulation forms then the self-revelation in objective sense, and the self-interpretation in subjective sense of Being on its way of becoming absolute spirit as pure self-consciousness. In other words, Being has in the complete self-unconcealment of the final negation of its subject-object-distinction become itself, and for itself, a complete present entity.

But, although Being is articulated, and 'speaks', Being remains also silence and silent (*die Verschweigung*), according to Heidegger. *Logos*, or Being as the word is nothing 'logical' or dialectical, which means that Being is never completely articulated, heard and understood. As will be discussed in chapter 11, *Logos* as 'language that speaks' is rather 'poetic projection', 'poietic', i.e. *poiesis*, the bringing forth of entities from Being in their specific being. In *poiesis* Being remains 'inexplicable' and 'enigmatic'. There must remain therefore a gulf between the poetic speaking of Being, on the one hand, and thinking as hearing, waiting and thanking, on the other hand. As such, Heidegger is a mystic, but a silent mystic who leaves room for the poetic language of concealed Being.

7.The language of Being

In *Basic questions of philosophy* (1937-1938) Heidegger writes about man and his relation to the essence of things:

What is close and closest is not what the so-called 'man of facts' thinks he grasps; instead, the closest is the essence, which admittedly remains for the many the farthest of all—even when it is explicitly shown to them, insofar as it allows itself to be shown in the usual way at all. (HEIDEGGER, 1994, p. 73)

The above consideration gives rise to the question concerning the language of Being. In other words, to what extent can the essence, i.e. Being, be indicated?

If Being is not a present-at-hand entity, how is it then possible to show Being? How could nothingness be indicated? And if Heidegger after *Being and Time* finally loses entities as the starting point for the question of Being, where should thinking find its hints (*winken*) and directions? It is obvious that language itself becomes the main focus now.

Heidegger approaches language basically in two ways. In the period of *Being and Time* and the writings preceding this work, he discusses language in terms of what he calls 'apophantic speech' as letting something be seen in and from its being. After *Being and Time* his writings start putting emphasis on language as a 'poetic founding' (*Stiftung*).

I would argue that the shift from the former to the latter is the direct consequence of a radicalization of the question of the Being. When Heidegger starts to ask about Being (*Seyn*) itself, the ontological is no longer encountered in dealing with the ontic as the inner-worldly-entities of *Dasein*'s daily care, but rather when thinking gets 'homely' in 'the house of Being', which is language. Being does not become firstly apparent in the 'working world', but rather in language. Heidegger shows already in *Being and Time* that *Dasein* is always already part of a metaphysical tradition, which it more or less explicitly grasps. *Being and Time* suggests that phenomenology should go hand in hand with a destruction of metaphysics. Phenomenological thinking also implies the destruction of the concealing effects of metaphysics in order to gain ontological transparency. Heidegger discusses everyday phenomena in an anything but everyday language. A meta-language to express and discuss phenomena is metaphysical in as far as it is conceived to be final, that is, as the ultimate expression of an absolute truth. Concerning ontology we might compare two ways in which 'language speaks'. Hegel regards the terms that indicate the categories of being in *The science of Logic* as the final expression of being, as absolute spirit, and presents the categories as such. But in what sense are these terms more adequate for Being than, for example, Hölderlin's poetizing of Being in terms of rivers? A mere representation of phenomena will not be sufficient for phenomenology, since it lacks interpretative and explanatory power. The language of the phenomenological articulation will inevitably be metaphysically coloured. Hence, phenomenological investigation and metaphysical destruction have to pay also attention to the word as the logos in which phenomena make themselves manifest.

8. From language as phenomenon towards the phenomenon as language

Two years before *Being and Time* Heidegger writes:

It is not so much that we see the objects and things but rather that we first talk about them. To put it more precisely: we do not say what we see, but rather the reverse, we see what one says about the matter. (HEIDEGGER, 1985, p.56.)

However, in the same writing Heidegger still stresses the need of a phenomenological method, exhorting:

Before words, before expressions, always the phenomena first, and then the concepts! (HEIDEGGER, 1985, p.248).

Although the late Heidegger seems to loosen up regarding the importance of a method for thinking, that of phenomenology in particular and does not understand philosophy as a science anymore, the word and discourse were already for the early Heidegger part of the phenomenon, i.e. that which shows itself from itself. Due to what Heidegger calls the 'meaningfulness' (*Bedeutsamkeit*) of the world -the way entities are meaningful by the way they refer to each other as tools in a referential cohesion of serviceability and usability- the phenomenon possesses an intrinsic connection with verbal meaning and discourse.

Concerning language Heidegger admits in *On the way to language* (1950-1959) that in *Being and Time* he ventured too far too early, which might even be the fundamental flaw of the book. The work contains many neologisms and Heidegger admits later that he had later learned from Hölderlin that it is not necessary for thinking to create new terms. *Being and Time* presents language merely from a phenomenological point of view. It is, therefore, still very concerned with the ontic structure of language. Heidegger explains, for instance, the proposition as a mode of relating, signs as 'gear' and approaches discourse in the form of idle talk, rather than that he reflects on the poetic essence of language. A

phenomenological approach of language pays attention to how language shows itself and *Being and Time* demonstrates how language, *inter alia*, shows itself in our daily existence. However, language can only show itself through language, since there is no way of showing or indicating that is not meaningful and, therefore, already language. The meaningfulness of the world is, in broad sense of the term, already language, without it being actual discourse, and they must be intrinsically connected. One cannot say what language is without using language and therefore one presupposes in some sense always already language. Hence, one can only let language have a 'stage' in poetry and thinking and pay attention to the original emergence of meaning and the historical course of language as in etymology. The latter seems the path of Heidegger after *Being and Time*.

Heidegger's essay *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking* is one of the few writings after *Being and Time* that does not contain an explicit reference to poetry. Heidegger advocates, here, that futural thinking should think 'truth' from its relation to *aletheia*, i.e. the unconcealment as the openness of presence. Despite a lack of an explicit reference to poetry in this text, thinking the openness must remain intimately related to poetry if we interpret Heidegger in a broader sense.

Heidegger has learned from the poetry of Stephan George that "where word breaks of no thing may be." Since all ways of thinking lead more or less perceptibly through language, ontology, or a thinking that thinks the truth of Being as the openness of presence, cannot exist without a meditation on language. A reflection on language and Being has, in Heidegger's own words, determined his path of thinking from early on, but their discussion has stayed as far as possible in the background. But when Heidegger's thinking turns itself towards the question of the access of Being and at the same time dismisses entities as starting point, a reflection on language becomes ultimately inevitable. Heidegger writes:

So the concealment (*Verschweigung*) must surely come from the Being. Then the Being itself is the concealment of itself, and this is probably the only constitution of the possibility of the silence and the origin of silence. Primarily, in this region each time the word becomes. (HEIDEGGER, 1981, p.77)

9. Poetry and disclosure

An experience with language, whether everyday, metaphysical or poetic, demonstrates that language has itself a revealing and concealing character. Concerning the revealing character of language Heidegger pontificates In *Being and Time*, that poetry has the possibility of disclosing the existence of *Dasein*.

The communication of the existential possibilities of attunement, that is, the disclosing of existence, can become the true aim of 'poetic' speech. (HEIDEGGER, 1996a p.152)

On a notion of poetry kindred to the one above Heidegger writes in a lecture course of 1927:

Poetry, creative literature, is nothing but the elementary emergence into words, the becoming-uncovered, of existence as being-in-the-world. (HEIDEGGER, 1982b, p.172)

At another moment Heidegger formulates poetry as:

Poetizing (*Dichten*) is a saying in the way of indicating making manifest (*weisendes Offenbarmachen*). (HEIDEGGER, 1999, p.30)

Heidegger understands in his Nietzsche interpretations the categorical intuition of essences (*Wesenschau*) of reason in terms of poetry too, literally as a 'closing' (*dichten/ausdichten*). Poetry, as a closing, unifying and founding process of essential naming, points in a negative way at that which is unclosed and free, i.e. the opening as the free region from which the undetermined receives its essential determination. Categorical intuition as categorical representation is traditionally thought to find its origin in the faculty of imagination. But this way of projecting originates, in Heidegger's view, not in a faculty of the subject,

but in poetry as the happening and becoming of the truth of Being, as will be discussed in paragraph 11.

10. Poetry as the mediation of Being.

Poetry has a mediating character. Being is, accordingly to the late Heidegger, not primarily mediated to *Dasein* by his 'being-in' of the working world, but rather by the being-in of the meaningfulness of the world as language. Moreover, Being is mediated to *Dasein* by the poets. Heidegger brings to mind the following words of Hölderlin:

The immediate, strictly speaking, is as impossible for the mortals as for the immortals; the god must distinguish different worlds, in accordance with his nature, because heavenly goodness, for its own sake, must be holy, pure. Man, as the knowing one, must also distinguish different worlds, because knowledge is only possible through opposition. For this reason, the immediate, strictly speaking, is as impossible for the mortals as for the immortals. Strict mediatedness, however, is the law. (HEIDEGGER, 2000a, p.84)

Heidegger interprets the existence of the poets as an abiding in the openness of presence, which is the truth of Being. Immediate knowledge of Being (*Seyn*) is impossible. The poets transmit the messages of the gods to the people by their poems. They stand "bare-headed beneath God's thunderstorms", according to Hölderlin's poem *As when on a holiday*. Heidegger interprets Hölderlin's gods as an expression for Being, and calls to mind that for Hölderlin God means primarily time. (HÖLDERLIN, 1922, Band 2, p. 316)

11. Poetry and the open – the poetic projection of Being

Heidegger asserts in *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1950) that the nature of art is poetry and the nature of poetry, in turn, is the founding of truth. A work of art has the ability to set up a world. World is a self-opening openness of the

broad paths of simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people, according to Heidegger. Art creates meaning by allowing letting truth arise, by means of which Being becomes comprehensible. The meaning of a work of art cannot be considered separately from the conversation that the work initiates and which the artist anticipates. Building and plastic creation happen, always and only, in the open of saying and naming. Both the artist and a work of art, participate in art. Art, in turn, cannot be isolated from the discourse in which it participates, that is historical language, which Heidegger calls the 'poetic projection'. Heidegger takes here, as we can see again, exclusively, an ontological interest in art and writes:

What poetry, as illuminating projection, unfolds of unconcealedness and projects ahead into the design of the figure, is the open which poetry lets happen, and indeed in such a way that only now, in the midst of beings, the open brings beings to shine and ring out. (HEIDEGGER, 2001, p. 70.)

Among the arts, the poem has, as a linguistic work, a privileged position.⁵ Poetry plays a fundamental and eminent role because of the founding revealing character of the poetic word. Although the poetic does not simply coincide with a lingual structure, Heidegger seems to suggest that the poetic is nevertheless most present in a linguistic work. Poetry, or the poetic, has in an ontological sense a far broader meaning than poetry as a discipline of literature, in other words, poesy. For example, a work of fine art, or a philosophical thought, can have, in Heidegger's view, a poetic character too. This is related to the poetic character of language. Language is, according to Heidegger, not just a means of communication of information between human subjects and which originates in the human subject. Heidegger ascribes, in contrast, an autonomous character to language, saying: 'language speaks'. First there is language in which the being of *Dasein* can be determined and only in the second place is *Dasein*, as subject, able to use language, which is only possible because he is the clearing as a being-in-the-world. This being-in-the-world is founded in language, as

⁵Heidegger puts the statement later into perspective: "Poetry is here thought in such a broad sense, and at the same time in such an intimate and essential unity with language and the word, that it must remain open whether art, in all its modes from architecture to poesy, exhausts the nature of poetry." (HEIDEGGER, 2001, p.71)

Heidegger interprets a line from Hölderlin's unfinished poem the *Conciliator*: "Since we have been a conversation / and able to hear from one another." We should recall that language as the ontological conversation is explicitly neither an object (*Gegenstand*), nor information (*Bestand*) nor any ontic, logical or grammatical structure, but rather the way in which Being historically appears to man and the way man historically responds to Being. In other words, language is the mediation of Being and man is the conversation of Being. Hence, the revealing and concealing character of language must be designated to the openness of presence of the truth of Being.

Language alone brings entities for the first time into the open, according to Heidegger. Openness does not exist without language, as in the case, for example, of stones, plants and animals. Heidegger writes:

Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates beings to their being from out of their being. Such saying is a projecting of the clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come into the Open *as*. (HEIDEGGER, 2001, p 12)

This projecting saying is poetry as the saying of the unconcealedness of that which is. Heidegger makes it already clear in *Being and Time* that entities only come into view within a projection, in other words, a horizon, which is there interpreted as the temporality of *Dasein* itself. Heidegger emphasizes in *The Origin of the Work of Art* not primarily the temporal, but rather the lingual character of the projection of Being.⁶ If future and past are present as absence, what then is this 'as' indicating? Heidegger determines language as the historical poetic illuminating projection of Being, which has a free and open character.

12. Historical Dasein – the poem of Being

Heidegger calls man at a certain point the 'poem of Being', which indicates that man as the clearing has itself a poetic character. Heidegger writes on *Dasein* in relation to Being:

⁶ Compare the note in *Being and Time* in relation to the Dasein as thrown projection: "Thrownness is essential to language". (HEIDEGGER, 1996a p.151)

Dasein, as the essential occurrence of the clearing of self-concealing, belongs to this self-concealing itself, which essentially occurs as the appropriating event. (HEIDEGGER, 2012, p. 235)

And in relation the authenticity of *Dasein* as conversation he writes:

And this to the extent that it is precisely in the naming of the gods and in the world becoming word that authentic conversation, which we ourselves are, consists. (HEIDEGGER, 2000a, p. 58)

Heidegger determines *Dasein*'s basic constitution as being-in-the-world. He etymologically relates the 'in' of 'being-in' to the Old German verb *Innan* that means dwelling. The latter does not primarily consist in great historical human achievements, but has essentially a poetic character, which becomes apparent in a quote that Heidegger often cites from Hölderlin: "Full of merit, yet poetically humans dwell upon the earth." The founding nature of poetry determines how *Dasein* historically dwells as a people on the earth and the way space becomes a determined place for him. Heidegger writes:

But poetry that thinks is in truth the topology of Being. This topology tells Being the whereabouts of its actual presence. (HEIDEGGER, 2001, p.12)

Poetry becomes the central term for Heidegger to indicate the essence of language. Heidegger writes:

Hence poetry never takes language as a material at its disposal; rather, poetry itself first makes language possible. Poetry is the primal language of a historical people. (HEIDEGGER, 2000a, p.60)

Poetry as the process of essential naming is the condition for language. Consequently, philosophy -thinking- as the quest for the essence, the possible, the ground, principles or the origin must turn itself towards poetry on the futural path of thinking.

In the domain of philosophy and thinking Heidegger most explicitly promotes the poetry of Hölderlin. Hölderlin's past poetry is futural, it has presence in as far as it occurs from the future. Hölderlin is, therefore, the future of the German being in as far as the German people will be able to understand themselves as belonging to the destiny of Being. Hölderlin is the herald of Being and his poetry is itself a happening of the Event. Heidegger calls him the poet of the poets because he must know and think, just as the intimately kindred thinker, in his highest creating, what thinking is and who the thinker is. Hölderlin poetizes about poetry and thinks about thinking. Hölderlin's poetry mourns the flight from the earth of the gods. In contrast to metaphysics in the sense of what Heidegger calls 'onto-theology', the interpretation of Being as the highest present entity itself, Hölderlin's sacred mourning is a poetic attuned remembrance of absence. However, his poetry as the poetic thinking of Being (*Seyn*) cannot establish a way to Being by itself. What is required is an elucidation of his poetry by thinking that is orientated towards Being. And, as such, Hölderlin's poetry enters Heidegger's ontology. Heidegger writes:

Nevertheless, the historical moment of the transition must be carried out in the knowledge that all metaphysics (founded on the leading question: what are beings?) remained incapable of transposing the human being into the basic relations to beings. And how should it be capable of that? Even the will to do so finds no hearing as long as the *truth* of Being and the uniqueness of Being have not become *needful*. Yet how is thinking supposed to succeed in what was previously denied the poet (Hölderlin)? (HEIDEGGER, 1994, p. 9)

Hölderlin's poetry has a preliminary and anticipating character for Heidegger's thinking of Being (*Seyn*) and is, as such, historical and futural. However, Heidegger already cites in an early work *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1919-1920) a complete poem of Rilke in order to elucidate the character of Dasein and in a late work on (from) language, entitled *On the way*

to language, which deals extensively with poetry, Hölderlin's poetry plays only a minor role. Heidegger seemed to have tempered his tone concerning the exclusive futural character of Hölderlin's poetry when there were on the actual world stage no signs to be found indicating that the human being was responding to Hölderlin's poetry in the way that Heidegger had believed and expected. Hölderlin did not become to German thinking what Homer had been to Greek thought, but was instead abused as suitable material for Nazi propaganda. Furthermore, we should take into account that Hölderlin's poetry has primarily a founding character, in Heidegger's view, for the German being. From a destinal belongingness to other peoples the Germans might become world-historical along with other peoples. Those other peoples might have their own founding poets and, as such, Hölderlin turns out to be not the only founding poet of Being.

13. Onto-poetology – the in-between of distant peaks

Thinking that listens to the absence of Being as silence whence the word stems does not have a methodological character like phenomenology anymore, but rather dwells near a poetic region. Heidegger writes:

In thinking, there is neither method nor theme, but rather the region, so called because it gives its realm and free reign to what thinking is given to think. Thinking abides in that country walking the ways of that country. (.....) This country is everywhere open to the neighbourhood of poetry. (HEIDEGGER, 1982a, p. 74&75)

In *Letter on Humanism* (1946) Heidegger compares poetry and thinking with two mountaintops that are separated by an abyss. The poet and the thinker live nearby on distant peaks. Many words could be said about the relation between poetry and philosophy but, essentially, we know nothing of the dialogue (*Gespräch*) that takes place between the poet and the thinker, according to Heidegger. In *What is called Thinking* (1952) Heidegger writes:

What is stated poetically and what is stated in thought,

are never identical; but there are times when they are the same, those times when the gulf separating poesy and thinking is a clean and decisive cleft. (HEIDEGGER, 1968, p. 20)

Heidegger reserves the term 'the same' (*das Selbe*) for the ontological overlap between poetry and thinking and the 'identical' or 'the equal' (*das Gleiche*) to express any ontic similarities. Two beings can be essentially the same, but do not have to be necessarily identical. Poetry and thinking are the same in as far as the essential naming of poetry is a condition for thinking and questioning the Being. Poetry (poesy) and thinking merely equal each other in as far as they are forms of care for the word. However, they are unequal too. Poetry is elevated, thinking is deep, poetry names the Sacred and thinking says the Being, thinking is associated with grounding poetry with founding. One would miss out on the sameness in their inequality if one would simply reduce one to the other effacing the differences. From Hölderlin's poem *Remembrance (Andenken)* Heidegger has learned that, that which is truly proper – as the basis for a relation of sameness between unequal entities – can only be found in a confrontation with its proper other, i.e. in the figure of the stranger. The same holds true for the relation between poetry and thinking.

Heidegger writes in *Letter on Humanism*:

Presumably thinking and poetizing each in their own way spring from originary thinking, which they need, yet without themselves being able to be a thinking. (HEIDEGGER, 1998, p. 237)

In this passage Heidegger interprets thinking, the disclosing understanding of Being as the thankful response to the gift or allusion of Being. As such, thinking is thinking and sprouts together with poetry from what Heidegger calls 'the originary thinking' (*das anfänglichen Denken*), which thinks the Being as the concealed origin. Thinking holds to the coming of what has been, and is as such remembrance. The overlap between thinking and poetry is for Heidegger situated in remembrance (*Andenken*), as Ulrike Kuhlmann has strikingly pointed out in *Das Dichten denken*. Poetic remembrance can in relation to ontology be determined as onto-poetology.

Guided by a phrase that Heidegger often cites from Hölderlin's poem *Remembrance*: "What remains is founded by the poets", Heidegger tries to overcome and rethink the understanding of Being as substance. Heidegger thinks Being instead from the perspective of its proper relation to language and time, as the poetic historical projection of Being. Poetry takes, according to Heidegger, part in the openness, revealing and concealing of truth as *aletheia*. Moreover, poetry is the essence of language as the poetic projection of Being. Here, the language of metaphysics as the language of objectivity, the positive and the mere present no longer serves a thinking that thinks Being as absence and silence. Finally, the language of metaphysics might become obsolete and disappear in thinking that is in dialogue with poetry.

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