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MARTIN HEIDEGGER

Basic Writings

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On the Way to Language

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The Question Concerning Technology
and Other Essays

What Is Called Thinking?

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

BASIC WRITINGS

from *Being and Time* (1927)
to *The Task of Thinking* (1964)

REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION
EDITED, WITH GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND
INTRODUCTIONS TO EACH SELECTION,

BY

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In a later passage we find the following:

Without changing the language phonetically, much less changing its forms and laws, *time* often introduces into it an enhanced power of thought and a more penetrating sensibility than it possessed hitherto, and it does so through the burgeoning development of ideas. It is as though a variant sense occupies the old husk, something different is given in the unaltered coinage, and a differently scaled sequence of ideas is intimated according to unchanged syntactical laws. Here we have one of the bounteous fruits of a people's *literature*, and, preeminent in this domain, their *poetry* and *philosophy*.

(Section 11, p. 100)

XI

THE END OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE TASK OF THINKING

¶ We may venture the step back
out of philosophy into the
thinking of Being as soon as
we have grown familiar with
the provenance of thinking.

science" that appeals to an incorrigible source of ultimate evidence, but something less grand and less influential is the matter for whose sake Heidegger thinks and writes.

Goethe's *Urphänomen* or primal phenomenon—that beings become present—provides a clue in this respect. Heidegger invites thought on the free or open space where things appear, linger, endure, and disappear. He calls this *die Lichtung des Seins*, the clearing of Being. In colloquial German, *eine Lichtung* has the sense of a forest "clearing" where the pines have been thinned out and the woods made "lighter," more "open." With the word *Lichtung* Heidegger wants to designate that unencumbered place for the presencing (*Anwesen*, Being) of things. Metaphysics, which stresses the "natural light" of the thinking subject who casts his beam on "objects," has not attended to the clearing or lighting of Being, the opening that precedes all natural and divine light. Such attendance Heidegger names "the task of thinking." It requires a creative return to early Greek thinking—creative because even the Greeks did not secure the clearing for thought and save it from oblivion.

Heidegger questions the early words of Parmenides regarding "well-rounded *alētheia*," unconcealment thought as the *Lichtung* of presence. He now declines to translate *alētheia* as "truth." Citing a passage from *Being and Time* (section 44) that had already sketched the salient features of *alētheia*, Heidegger criticizes his later use of such expressions as "the truth of Being." (He often used this phrase in the 1940s: see for example the "Letter on Humanism," above.) Note that this criticism has nothing to do with Heidegger's "turn" as it is normally interpreted. Indeed Heidegger is here turning away from certain aspects of his post-*Being and Time* writings toward the initial project and insights of *Being and Time* itself. Hence the task of thinking at the end of philosophy, at least so far as Heidegger's own career is concerned, is to deepen meditation "On the Essence of Truth" in such a way that this title too would have to change.

That for the sake of which thought gets under way is the *Lichtung* or clearing in which beings come to presence. Thought must pursue the mystery of this clearing: the need of unconcealment for self-concealing; the need of self-showing or upsurge for reticence or hiding; the need of gathering for sheltering. Most mysterious is the reciprocal play of *Lēthē* and *Alētheia* in the clearing. Whatever the origins of that insatiable need for self-concealment, it is essential that at the end of philosophy—no matter how that "end" may be under-

The title is provocative. It wants to provoke an "immanent criticism" of *Being and Time*, composed some forty years earlier, which is to say, to inquire into the "basic experience" underlying that book and the aptness of its "formulations" without abandoning the perspective of the question of Being. Heidegger has exercised such criticism before, for example in his "Letter on Humanism" (Reading V), and in fact has done so continually since 1927. As a result of this latest reappraisal the key words of Heidegger's project change. Instead of "Being and Time" (*Sein und Zeit*) he now speaks of "Clearing and Presence" (*Lichtung und Anwesenheit*). (Readers should recall that the word *Lichtung*, although cognate with "lighting," has been translated throughout as "clearing.") But Heidegger's alteration is not so much a change in terminology as a transformation of thinking. To what extent this transformation is already envisaged in earlier texts, for example in section 44 of *Being and Time* or in "On the Essence of Truth" (Reading III), is an arresting question.

In the French edition of this essay, the "end" of philosophy is translated as *achèvement*. In the *Vollendung* of philosophy Heidegger accentuates the "full" rather than the "ending" by analyzing the full consequences of the dissolution of philosophy into the specialized sciences. The completion of philosophy, the most extreme possibility or "place" for metaphysics, is a world civilization based on the Western technological model. This model is the Platonic *idea* ostensibly drained of all ontological content and become a mere cipher, a monadic carrier of information, a unit of cybernetic science. In the present essay, which appears here in its entirety, Heidegger asks whether a kind of thinking different from the calculative sort, a reflection that is neither scientific nor metaphysical, is possible. Against the background of the Hegelian and Husserlian phenomenologies Heidegger recounts clearly and decisively what his own thinking wants to accomplish. Neither a "system of science" grounded in the absolute identity-within-difference of substance and subject, nor a "rigorous

stood, whether as the achievement of absolute knowing or science (Hegel), the consummation of nihilism (Nietzsche), the closure of the metaphysics of presence and/or the foundering of every apocalyptic invocation of "ends" (Derrida)—our thinking remember the task Heraclitus and Parmenides assigned it: *to protect* the interplay of unconcealment and concealment in the *Lichtung des Seins*. Such protection Socrates called "wonder," whose daughter is iridescent speech (*Theaetetus* 155 d, *Cratylus* 408 b).

THE END OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE TASK OF THINKING

The title designates the attempt at a reflection that persists in questioning. Questions are paths toward an answer. If the answer could be given it would consist in a transformation of thinking, not in a propositional statement about a matter at stake.

The following text belongs to a larger context. It is the attempt undertaken again and again ever since 1930 to shape the question of *Being and Time* in a more primordial fashion. This means to subject the point of departure of the question in *Being and Time* to an immanent criticism. Thus it must become clear to what extent the *critical* question as to what the matter of thinking is necessarily and continually belongs to thinking. Accordingly, the name of the task of *Being and Time* will change.

We are asking:

1. To what extent has philosophy in the present age entered into its end?
2. What task is reserved for thinking at the end of philosophy?

Martin Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," appears in Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, translated by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 55–73. The essay first appeared in a French translation by Jean Beaufret and François Fédier in *Kierkegaard vivant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). The German text appears in Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969), pp. 61–80. I have altered the translation slightly here.

I

To what extent has philosophy in the present age entered into its end?

Philosophy is metaphysics. Metaphysics thinks beings as a whole—the world, man, God—with respect to Being, with respect to the belonging together of beings in Being. Metaphysics thinks beings as beings in the manner of a representational thinking that gives grounds. For since the beginning of philosophy, and with that beginning, the Being of beings has shown itself as the ground (*archê*, *aiton*, principle). The ground is that from which beings as such are what they are in their becoming, perishing, and persisting as something that can be known, handled, and worked upon. As the ground, Being brings beings in each case to presencing. The ground shows itself as presence. The present of presence consists in the fact that it brings what is present each in its own way to presence. In accordance with the given type of presence, the ground has the character of grounding as the ontic causation of the actual, the transcendental making possible of the objectivity of objects, the dialectical mediation of the movement of absolute spirit and of the historical process of production, and the will to power positing values.

What characterizes metaphysical thinking, which seeks out the ground for beings, is the fact that metaphysical thinking, starting from what is present, represents it in its presence and thus exhibits it as grounded by its ground.

What is meant by the talk about the end of philosophy? We understand the end of something all too easily in the negative sense as mere cessation, as the lack of continuation, perhaps even as decline and impotence. In contrast, what we say about the end of philosophy means the completion of metaphysics. However, completion does not mean perfection, as a consequence of which philosophy would have to have attained the highest perfection at its end. Not only do we lack any criterion that would permit us to

evaluate the perfection of an epoch of metaphysics as compared with any other epoch; the right to this kind of evaluation does not exist. Plato's thinking is no more perfect than Parmenides'. Hegel's philosophy is no more perfect than Kant's. Each epoch of philosophy has its own necessity. We simply have to acknowledge the fact that a philosophy is the way it is. It is not for us to prefer one to the other, as can be the case with regard to various *Weltanschauungen*.

The old meaning of the word "end" means the same as place: "from one end to the other" means from one place to the other. The end of philosophy is the place, that place in which the whole of philosophy's history is gathered in its uttermost possibility. End as completion means this gathering.

Throughout the entire history of philosophy, Plato's thinking remains decisive in its sundry forms. Metaphysics is Platonism. Nietzsche characterizes his philosophy as reversed Platonism. With the reversal of metaphysics that was already accomplished by Karl Marx, the uttermost possibility of philosophy is attained. It has entered into its end. To the extent that philosophical thinking is still attempted, it manages only to attain an epigonal renaissance and variations of that renaissance. Is not then the end of philosophy after all a cessation of its way of thinking? To conclude this would be premature.

As a completion, an end is the gathering into the uttermost possibilities. We think in too limited a fashion as long as we expect only a development of new philosophies in the previous style. We forget that already in the age of Greek philosophy a decisive characteristic of philosophy appears: the development of the sciences within the field that philosophy opened up. The development of the sciences is at the same time their separation from philosophy and the establishment of their independence. This process belongs to the completion of philosophy. Its development is in full swing today in all regions of beings. This development looks like the mere dissolution of philosophy, yet in truth is precisely its completion.

It suffices to refer to the independence of psychology, sociology, anthropology as cultural anthropology, or to the role of logic as symbolic logic and semantics. Philosophy turns into the empirical science of man, of all that can become for man the experiential object of his technology, the technology by which he establishes himself in the world by working on it in the manifold modes of making and shaping. All of this happens everywhere on the basis of and according to the criterion of the scientific discovery of the individual areas of beings.

No prophecy is necessary to recognize that the sciences now establishing themselves will soon be determined and regulated by the new fundamental science that is called cybernetics.

This science corresponds to the determination of man as an acting social being. For it is the theory of the regulation of the possible planning and arrangement of human labor. Cybernetics transforms language into an exchange of news. The arts become regulated-regulating instruments of information.

The development of philosophy into the independent sciences that, however, interdependently communicate among themselves ever more markedly, is the legitimate completion of philosophy. Philosophy is ending in the present age. It has found its place in the scientific attitude of socially active humanity. But the fundamental characteristic of this scientific attitude is its cybernetic, that is, technological character. The need to ask about modern technology is presumably dying out to the same extent that technology more decisively characterizes and directs the appearance of the totality of the world and the position of man in it.

The sciences will interpret everything in their structure that is still reminiscent of their provenance from philosophy in accordance with the rules of science, that is, technologically. Every science understands the categories upon which it remains dependent for the articulation and delineation of its area of investigation as working hypotheses. Not only is their truth measured in terms of the

effect that their application brings about within the progress of research, scientific truth is also equated with the efficiency of these effects.

The sciences are now taking over as their own task what philosophy in the course of its history tried to present in certain places, and even there only inadequately, that is, the ontologies of the various regions of beings (nature, history, law, art). The interest of the sciences is directed toward the theory of the necessary structural concepts of the coordinated areas of investigation. "Theory" means now supposition of the categories, which are allowed only a cybernetic function, but denied any ontological meaning. The operational and model-based character of representational-calculative thinking becomes dominant.

However, the sciences still speak about the Being of beings in the unavoidable supposition of their regional categories. They only do not say so. They can deny their provenance from philosophy, but never dispense with it. For in the scientific attitude of the sciences the certification of their birth from philosophy still speaks.

The end of philosophy proves to be the triumph of the manipulable arrangement of a scientific-technological world and of the social order proper to this world. The end of philosophy means the beginning of the world civilization that is based upon Western European thinking.

But is the end of philosophy in the sense of its evolving into the sciences also already the complete actualization of all the possibilities in which the thinking of philosophy was posited? Or is there a first possibility for thinking apart from the last possibility that we characterized (the dissolution of philosophy in the technologized sciences), a possibility from which the thinking of philosophy would have to start, but which as philosophy it could nevertheless not expressly experience and adopt?

If this were the case, then a task would still have to be reserved for thinking in a concealed way in the history of philosophy from

its beginning to its end, a task accessible neither to philosophy as metaphysics nor, even less, to the sciences stemming from philosophy. Therefore we ask:

II

What task is reserved for thinking at the end of philosophy?

The mere thought of such a task of thinking must sound strange to us. A thinking that can be neither metaphysics nor science?

A task that has concealed itself from philosophy since its very beginning, even in virtue of that beginning, and thus has withdrawn itself continually and increasingly in the times that followed?

A task of thinking that—so it seems—includes the assertion that philosophy has not been up to the matter of thinking and has thus become a history of mere decline?

Is there not an arrogance in these assertions which desires to put itself above the greatness of the thinkers of philosophy?

This suspicion obtrudes. But it can easily be quelled. For every attempt to gain insight into the supposed task of thinking finds itself moved to review the whole history of philosophy. Not only that. It is even forced to think the historicity of that which grants a possible history to philosophy.

Because of this, the thinking in question here necessarily falls short of the greatness of the philosophers. It is less than philosophy. Less also because the direct or indirect effect of this thinking on the public in the industrial age, formed by technology and science, is decisively less possible for this thinking than it was for philosophy.

But above all, the thinking in question remains unassuming, because its task is only of a preparatory, not of a founding character. It is content with awakening a readiness in man for a possibility whose contour remains obscure, whose coming remains uncertain.

Thinking must first learn what remains reserved and in store for it, what it is to get involved in. It prepares its own transformation in this learning.

We are thinking of the possibility that the world civilization that is just now beginning might one day overcome its technological-scientific-industrial character as the sole criterion of man's world sojourn. This may happen, not of and through itself, but in virtue of the readiness of man for a determination which, whether heeded or not, always speaks in the destiny of man, which has not yet been decided. It is just as uncertain whether world civilization will soon be abruptly destroyed or whether it will be stabilized for a long time. Such stabilization, however, will not rest in something enduring, but establish itself in a sequence of changes, each presenting the latest novelty.

The preparatory thinking in question does not wish and is not able to predict the future. It only attempts to say something to the present that was already said a long time ago, precisely at the beginning of philosophy and for that beginning, but has not been explicitly thought. For the time being, it must be sufficient to refer to this with the brevity required. We shall take a directive that philosophy offers as an aid in our undertaking.

When we ask about the task of thinking, this means in the scope of philosophy to determine that which concerns thinking, is still controversial for thinking, and is the controversy. This is what the word *Sache* [matter] means in the German language. It designates that with which thinking has to do in the case at hand, in Plato's language, to *pragma auto* (See "The Seventh Letter," 341c 7).

In recent times, philosophy has of its own accord expressly called thinking "to the things themselves." Let us mention two cases that receive particular attention today. We hear this call "to the things themselves" in the Preface that Hegel placed at the front of the work he published in 1807, *System of Science*,* *First Part: The Phenomenology of Spirit*. This preface is not the preface to the *Phenomenology*, but to the *System of Science*, to the whole of philosophy. The call "to

**Wissenschaft, scientia*, body of knowledge, not "science" in the present use of that word. For German Idealism, science is the name for philosophy.—Tr.

the things themselves" refers ultimately—and that means according to the matter, primarily—to the *Science of Logic*.

In the call "to the things themselves" the emphasis lies on the "themselves." Heard superficially, the call has the sense of a rejection. The inadequate relations to the matter of philosophy are rejected. Mere talk about the purpose of philosophy belongs to these relations, but so does mere reporting about the results of philosophical thinking. Neither is ever the actual whole of philosophy. The whole shows itself only in its becoming. This occurs in the developmental presentation of the matter. In the presentation, theme and method coincide. For Hegel, this identity is called the idea. With the idea, the matter of philosophy "itself" comes to appear. However, this matter is historically determined as subjectivity. With Descartes's *ego cogito*, says Hegel, philosophy steps on firm ground for the first time, where it can be at home. If the *fundamentum absolutum* is attained with the *ego cogito* as the distinctive *subiectum*, this means the subject is the *hypokeimenon* transferred to consciousness, is what truly presences; and this, vaguely enough, is called "substance" in traditional terminology.

When Hegel explains in the Preface (ed. Hoffmeister, p. 19), "The true (in philosophy) is to be understood and expressed, not as substance, but, just as much, as subject," then this means: the Being of beings, the presence of what is present, is manifest and thus complete presence only when it becomes present as such for itself in the absolute idea. But since Descartes, *idea* means *perceptio*. Being's coming to itself occurs in speculative dialectic. Only the movement of the idea, the method, is the matter itself. The call "to the thing itself" requires a philosophical method appropriate to its matter.

However, what the matter of philosophy should be is presumed to be decided from the outset. The matter of philosophy as metaphysics is the Being of beings, their presence in the form of substantiality and subjectivity.

A hundred years later, the call "to the thing itself" again is heard in Husserl's treatise *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*. It was published

in the first volume of the journal *Logos* in 1910–11 (pp. 289ff.). Again, the call has at first the sense of a rejection. But here it aims in another direction than Hegel's. It concerns naturalistic psychology, which claims to be the genuine scientific method of investigating consciousness. For this method blocks access to the phenomena of intentional consciousness from the very beginning. But the call "to the thing itself" is at the same time directed against historicism, which gets lost in treatises about the standpoints of philosophy and in the ordering of types of philosophical *Weltanschauungen*. About this Husserl says in italics (ibid., p. 340): "*The stimulus for investigation must start, not with philosophies, but with issues [Sachen] and problems.*"

And what is the matter at stake in philosophical investigation? In accordance with the same tradition, it is for Husserl as for Hegel the subjectivity of consciousness. For Husserl, the *Cartesian Meditations* were not only the topic of the Paris lectures in February of 1929. Rather, from the time following the *Logical Investigations*, their spirit accompanied the impassioned course of his philosophical investigations to the end. In its negative and also in its positive sense, the call "to the matter itself" determines the securing and elaborating of method. It also determines the procedure of philosophy, by means of which the matter itself can be demonstrated as a datum. For Husserl, "the principle of all principles" is first of all not a principle of content but one of method. In his work published in 1913, *Ideas toward a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, Husserl devoted a special section (24) to the determination of "the principle of all principles." "No conceivable theory can upset this principle," says Husserl.

"The principle of all principles" reads:

... Every originally giving intuition [is] a source of legitimation for knowledge; everything that presents itself to us in the 'intuition' originally (in its bodily actuality, so to speak) [is] simply to be accepted as it gives itself, but also only within the limits in which it gives itself there. . . .

"The principle of all principles" contains the thesis of the preexistence of method. This principle decides what matter alone can

suffice for the method. "The principle of principles" requires absolute subjectivity as the matter of philosophy. The transcendental reduction to absolute subjectivity gives and secures the possibility of grounding the objectivity of all objects (the Being of these beings) in their valid structure and consistency, that is, in their constitution, in and through subjectivity. Thus transcendental subjectivity proves to be "the sole absolute being" (*Formal and Transcendental Logic*, 1929, p. 240). At the same time, transcendental reduction as the method of "universal science" of the constitution of the Being of beings has the same mode of Being as this absolute being, that is, the manner of the matter most native to philosophy. The method is not only directed toward the matter of philosophy. It does not merely belong to the matter as a key does to a lock. Rather, it belongs to the matter because it is "the matter itself." If one wished to ask: Where does "the principle of all principles" get its unshakable right? the answer would have to be: from transcendental subjectivity, which is already presupposed as the matter of philosophy.

We have chosen a discussion of the call "to the matter itself" as our directive. It was to bring us to the path that leads us to a determination of the task of thinking at the end of philosophy. Where are we now? We have arrived at the insight that for the call "to the matter itself" what concerns philosophy as its matter is established from the outset. From the perspective of Hegel and Husserl—and not only from their perspective—the matter of philosophy is subjectivity. It is not the matter as such that is controversial for the call, but rather the presentation by which the matter itself becomes present. Hegel's speculative dialectic is the movement in which the matter as such comes to itself, comes to its own presence [*Präsenz*]. Husserl's method is supposed to bring the matter of philosophy to its ultimate originary givenness, and that means to its own presence [*Präsenz*].

The two methods are as different as they could possibly be. But the matter that they are to present as such is the same, although it is experienced in different ways.

But of what help are these discoveries to us in our attempt to bring the task of thinking to view? They do not help us at all as long as we do not go beyond a mere discussion of the call. Rather, we must ask what remains unthought in the call "to the matter itself." Questioning in this way, we can become aware that something that it is no longer the matter of philosophy to think conceals itself precisely where philosophy has brought its matter to absolute knowledge and to ultimate evidence.

But what remains unthought in the matter of philosophy as well as in its method? Speculative dialectic is a mode in which the matter of philosophy comes to appear of itself and for itself, and thus becomes present [*Gegenwart*]. Such appearance necessarily occurs in luminosity. Only by virtue of some sort of brightness can what shines show itself, that is, radiate. But brightness in its turn rests upon something open, something free, which it might illuminate here and there, now and then. Brightness plays in the open and strives there with darkness. Wherever a present being encounters another present being or even only lingers near it—but also where, as with Hegel, one being mirrors itself in another speculatively—there openness already rules, the free region is in play. Only this openness grants to the movement of speculative thinking the passage through what it thinks.

We call this openness that grants a possible letting appear and show "clearing." In the history of language the German word *Lichtung* is a translation derived from the French *clairière*. It is formed in accordance with the older words *Waldung* [foresting] and *Feldung* [fielding].

The forest clearing [*Lichtung*] is experienced in contrast to dense forest, called *Dickung* in our older language. The substantive *Lichtung* goes back to the verb *lichten*. The adjective *licht* is the same word as "light." To lighten something means to make it light, free and open, e.g., to make the forest free of trees at one place. The free space thus originating is the clearing. What is light in the sense of being free and open has nothing in common with the adjective

"light" which means "bright," neither linguistically nor materially. This is to be observed for the difference between clearing and light.* Still, it is possible that a material relation between the two exists. Light can stream into the clearing, into its openness, and let brightness play with darkness in it. But light never first creates the clearing. Rather, light presupposes it. However, the clearing, the open region, is not only free for brightness and darkness but also for resonance and echo, for sound and the diminishing of sound. The clearing is the open region for everything that becomes present and absent.

It is necessary for thinking to become explicitly aware of the matter here called clearing. We are not extracting mere notions from mere words, e.g., *Lichtung*, as it might easily appear on the surface. Rather, we must observe the unique matter that is named with the name "clearing" in accordance with the matter. What the word designates in the connection we are now thinking, free openness, is a "primal phenomenon" [*Urpheänomen*], to use a word of Goethe's. We would have to say a "primal matter" [*Ursache*]. Goethe notes (*Maxims and Reflections*, no. 993): "Look for nothing behind phenomena: they themselves are what is to be learned." This means the phenomenon itself, in the present case the clearing, sets us the task of learning from it while questioning it, that is, of letting it say something to us.

Accordingly, we may suggest that the day will come when we will not shun the question whether the clearing, free openness, may not be that within which alone pure space and ecstatic time and

everything present and absent in them have the place that gathers and protects everything.

In the same way as speculative dialectical thinking, ordinary intuition and its evidence remain dependent upon openness that already holds sway, the clearing. What is evident is what can be immediately intuited. *Evidentia* is the word that Cicero uses to translate the Greek *enargeia*, that is, to transform it into the Roman. *Enargeia*, which has the same root as *argentum* (silver), means that which in itself and of itself radiates and brings itself to light. In the Greek language, one is not speaking about the action of seeing, about *vidēre*, but about that which gleams and radiates. But it can radiate only if openness has already been granted. The beam of light does not first create the clearing, openness, it only traverses it. It is only such openness that grants to giving and receiving and to any evidence at all the free space in which they can remain and must move.

All philosophical thinking that explicitly or inexplicitly follows the call "to the matter itself" is in its movement and with its method already admitted to the free space of the clearing. But philosophy knows nothing of the clearing. Philosophy does speak about the light of reason, but does not heed the clearing of Being. The *lumen naturale*, the light of reason, throws light only on the open. It does concern the clearing, but so little does it form it that it needs it in order to be able to illuminate what is present in the clearing. This is true not only of philosophy's method, but also and primarily of its matter, that is, of the presence of what is present. To what extent the *subiectum*, the *hypokeimenon*, that which already lies present, thus what is present in its presence is constantly thought also in subjectivity, cannot be shown here in detail. (Refer to Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 2 [1961], pages 429ff.)*

We are concerned now with something else. Whether or not what is present is experienced, comprehended, or presented, presence as

*"Light" is also two adjectives in English, each having its own origin. "Light" in the sense of having little weight derives from the Sanskrit *laghu* and the Greek *elaphros*, *elachus* (slight, small); in the sense "bright, shining, luminous" it derives from the Indo-Germanic *leuk-* (white) and Sanskrit *ruc* (to shine). Yet already in Old English, though not yet in Old High German, the words take the same form: during the history of both languages they increasingly converge. The verb *lichten*, "to lighten," also has two senses: to illuminate and to alleviate. Heidegger emphasizes the less familiar second sense—to make less dense and heavy, for example, to lighten a ship by dispatching "lighters" to it to relieve it of cargo—see Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," lines 47–48 and 92.—Ed.

*This material appears in English in Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 26ff.—Ed.

lingering in the open always remains dependent upon the prevalent clearing. What is absent, too, cannot be as such unless it presences in the *free space of the clearing*.

All metaphysics, including its opponent, positivism, speaks the language of Plato. The basic word of its thinking, that is, of its presentation of the Being of beings, is *eidos*, *idea*: the outward appearance in which beings as such show themselves. Outward appearance, however, is a manner of presence. No outward appearance without light—Plato already knew this. But there is no light and no brightness without the clearing. Even darkness needs it. How else could we happen into darkness and wander through it? Still, the clearing as such as it prevails through Being, through presence, remains unthought in philosophy, although it is spoken about in philosophy's beginning. Where does this occur and with which names? Answer:

In Parmenides' thoughtful poem which, as far as we know, was the first to reflect explicitly upon the Being of beings, which still today, although unheard, speaks in the sciences into which philosophy dissolves. Parmenides listens to the claim:

... χρὴ δὲ σε πάντα παθεῖσθαι
ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρέμετος ἥτορ
ἥ δὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἐν πίστιν ἀληθείης.

Fragment I, 28ff.

... but you should learn all:
the untrembling heart of unconcealment, well-rounded,
and also the opinions of mortals
who lack the ability to trust what is unconcealed.

Alētheia, unconcealment, is named here. It is called well-rounded because it is turned in the pure sphere of the circle in which beginning and end are everywhere the same. In this turning there is no possibility of twisting, distortion, and closure. The meditative man is to experience the untrembling heart of unconcealment. What does the phrase about the untrembling heart of unconcealment

mean? It means unconcealment itself in what is most its own, means the place of stillness that gathers in itself what first grants unconcealment. That is the clearing of what is open. We ask: openness for what? We have already reflected upon the fact that the path of thinking, speculative and intuitive, needs the traversable clearing. But in that clearing rests possible radiance, that is, the possible presencing of presence itself.

What prior to everything else first grants unconcealment is the path on which thinking pursues one thing and perceives it: *hopōs estin* ... *einai*: that presencing presences. The clearing grants first of all the possibility of the path to presence, and grants the possible presencing of that presence itself. We must think *alētheia*, unconcealment, as the clearing that first grants Being and thinking and their presencing to and for each other. The quiet heart of the clearing is the place of stillness from which alone the possibility of the belonging together of Being and thinking, that is, presence and apprehending, can arise at all.

The possible claim to a binding character or commitment of thinking is grounded in this bond. Without the preceding experience of *alētheia* as the clearing, all talk about committed and non-committed thinking remains without foundation. Whence does Plato's determination of presence as *idea* have its binding character? With regard to what is Aristotle's interpretation of presencing as *energeia* binding?

Strangely enough, we cannot even ask these questions, always neglected in philosophy, as long as we have not experienced what Parmenides had to experience: *alētheia*, unconcealment. The path to it is distinguished from the lane along which the opinion of mortals wanders. *Alētheia* is nothing mortal, just as little as death itself.

It is not for the sake of etymology that I stubbornly translate the name *alētheia* as unconcealment, but for the sake of the matter that must be considered when we think adequately that which is called Being and thinking. Unconcealment is, so to speak, the element in which Being and thinking and their belonging together

exist. *Alētheia* is named at the beginning of philosophy, but afterward it is not explicitly thought as such by philosophy. For since Aristotle it has become the task of philosophy as metaphysics to think beings as such ontotheologically.

If this is so, we have no right to sit in judgment over philosophy, as though it left something unheeded, neglected it and was thus marred by some essential deficiency. The reference to what is unthought in philosophy is not a criticism of philosophy. If a criticism is necessary now, then it rather concerns the attempt, which is becoming more and more urgent ever since *Being and Time*, to ask about a possible task of thinking at the end of philosophy. For the question now arises, late enough: Why is *alētheia* not translated with the usual name, with the word "truth"? The answer must be:

Insofar as truth is understood in the traditional "natural" sense as the correspondence of knowledge with beings, demonstrated in beings; but also insofar as truth is interpreted as the certainty of the knowledge of Being: *alētheia*, unconcealment in the sense of the clearing, may not be equated with truth. Rather, *alētheia*, unconcealment thought as clearing, first grants the possibility of truth. For truth itself, like Being and thinking, can be what it is only in the element of the clearing. Evidence, certainty in every degree, every kind of verification of *veritas*, already moves with that *veritas* in the realm of the clearing that holds sway.

Alētheia, unconcealment thought as the clearing of presence, is not yet truth. Is *alētheia* then less than truth? Or is it more, because it first grants truth as *adaequatio* and *certitudo*, because there can be no presence and presenting outside the realm of the clearing?

This question we leave to thinking as a task. Thinking must consider whether it can even raise this question at all as long as it thinks philosophically, that is, in the strict sense of metaphysics, which questions what is present only with regard to its presence.

In any case, one thing becomes clear: to raise the question of *alētheia*, of unconcealment as such, is not the same as raising the question of truth. For this reason, it was immaterial and therefore

misleading to call *alētheia*, in the sense of clearing, "truth."¹ The talk about the "truth of Being" has a justified meaning in Hegel's *Science of Logic*, because here truth means the certainty of absolute knowledge. And yet Hegel, as little as Husserl, as little as all metaphysics, does not ask about Being as Being, that is, does not raise the question as to how there can be presence as such. There is presence only when clearing holds sway. Clearing is named with *alētheia*, unconcealment, but not thought as such.

The natural concept of truth does not mean unconcealment, not in the philosophy of the Greeks either. It is often and justifiably pointed out that the word *alēthes* is already used by Homer only in the *verba dicendi*, in statements, thus in the sense of correctness and reliability, not in the sense of unconcealment. But this reference means only that neither the poets nor everyday linguistic usage, nor even philosophy, see themselves confronted with the task of asking how truth, that is, the correctness of statements, is granted only in the element of the clearing of presence.

In the scope of this question, we must acknowledge the fact that *alētheia*, unconcealment in the sense of the clearing of presence, was originally experienced only as *orthotēs*, as the correctness of representations and statements. But then the assertion about the essential transformation of truth, that is, from unconcealment to correctness, is also untenable. Instead we must say: *alētheia*, as clearing of presence and presentation in thinking and saying, immediately comes under the perspective of *homoiosis* and *adaequatio*, that is, the perspective of adequation in the sense of the correspondence of representing with what is present.

But this process inevitably provokes another question: How is it that *alētheia*, unconcealment, appears to man's natural experience and

1. How the attempt to think a matter can for a time stray from what a decisive insight has already shown is demonstrated by a passage from *Being and Time*, 1927 (p. 219): "The translation [of the word *alētheia*] by means of the word 'truth,' and even the very theoretical-conceptual determinations of this expression [truth], cover up the meaning of what the Greeks established as basically 'self-evident' in the pre-philosophical understanding of their terminological employment of *alētheia*."

speech *only* as correctness and dependability? Is it because man's ecstatic sojourn in the openness of presencing is turned only toward what is present and the presentation of what is present? But what else does this mean than that presence as such, and together with it the clearing that grants it, remains unheeded? Only what *alētheia* as clearing grants is experienced and thought, not what it is as such.

This remains concealed. Does that happen by chance? Does it happen only as a consequence of the carelessness of human thinking? Or does it happen because self-concealing, concealment, *lēthē*, belongs to *a-lētheia*, not as a mere addition, not as shadow to light, but rather as the heart of *alētheia*? Moreover, does not a sheltering and preserving rule in this self-concealing of the clearing of presence, from which alone unconcealment can be granted, so that what is present can appear in its presence?

If this were so, then the clearing would not be the mere clearing of presence, but the clearing of presence concealing itself, the clearing of a self-concealing sheltering.

If this were so, then only with these questions would we reach the path to the task of thinking at the end of philosophy.

But is not all this unfounded mysticism or even bad mythology, in any case a ruinous irrationalism, the denial of *ratio*?

I ask in return: What does *ratio*, *nous*, *noein*, apprehending, mean? What do ground and principle and especially principle of all principles mean? Can this ever be sufficiently determined unless we experience *alētheia* in a Greek manner as unconcealment and then, above and beyond the Greek, think it as the clearing of self-concealing? As long as *ratio* and the rational still remain questionable in what is their own, talk about irrationalism is unfounded. The technological-scientific rationalization ruling the present age justifies itself every day more surprisingly by its immense results. But this says nothing about what first grants the possibility of the rational and the irrational. The effect proves the correctness of technological-scientific rationalization. But is the manifest character of what is exhausted by what is demonstrable? Does not the insistence on what is demonstrable block the way to what is?

Perhaps there is a thinking that is more sober-minded than the incessant frenzy of rationalization and the intoxicating quality of cybernetics. One might aver that it is precisely this intoxication that is extremely irrational.

Perhaps there is a thinking outside of the distinction of rational and irrational, more sober-minded still than scientific technology, more sober-minded and hence removed, without effect, yet having its own necessity. When we ask about the task of this thinking, then not only this thinking but also the question concerning it is first made questionable. In view of the whole philosophical tradition this means:

We all still need an education in thinking, and first of all, before that, knowledge of what being educated and uneducated in thinking means. In this respect Aristotle gives us a hint in Book IV of his *Metaphysics* (1006a17): ἔστι γὰρ ἀπαδευσία τὸ μὴ γινώσκειν τῶν οὐ δει. ζῆρεν ἀνὸδεξιὺν καὶ τῶν οὐ δει. "For it is uneducated not to have an eye for when it is necessary to look for a proof and when this is not necessary."

This sentence demands careful reflection. For it is not yet decided in what way that which needs no proof in order to become accessible to thinking is to be experienced. Is it dialectical mediation, or originally giving intuition, or neither of the two? Only the peculiar quality of what demands of us above all else to be granted entry can decide about that. But how is this to make the decision possible for us when we have not yet granted it? In what circle are we moving here, indeed, inevitably?

Is it the *eukukleōs Alētheiā*, well-rounded unconcealment itself, thought as the clearing?

Does the title for the task of thinking then read, instead of *Being and Time*: Clearing and Presence?

But where does the clearing come from and how is it given? What speaks in the "There is / It gives"?

The task of thinking would then be the surrender of previous thinking to the determination of the matter for thinking.

