

I



Philosophy and the Poetic Eros of Thought

If we trust Heidegger's own assessment at the end of his life,¹ as Gadamer has transmitted this to us, Nietzsche would be Heidegger's undoing. Nevertheless, Heidegger undertook to read Nietzsche in a way that remains a rarity to this day.² Completing Nietzsche's project at the "end of philosophy," Heidegger thinks the "other beginning."³ But Heidegger's beginnings are known only in the flashing of the moment: as the first edge of the sun at the break of dawn or the wake of an eclipse.⁴

In his lecture courses, Heidegger took care to bracket then-contemporary presuppositions about Nietzsche, the very presuppositions that continue today. Not as a philosopher of life (and we note that past as well as more recent readings of Nietzsche and biology and even Nietzsche and the body continue to install him in the conceptual register of life or blood and thereby race) and not as a poet-philosopher, Nietzsche, for Heidegger, can tell us what philosophy can be.⁵

Philosophy, Love, and Wisdom:
Heidegger, Nietzsche, and the Erotic

If philosophy, as the "love of wisdom" involves thinking and if thought has knowledge as its object, then all human beings, to the extent that it is true that it is in the nature of the human to "love" or to search for knowledge, may be supposed to be philosophers at ground or *in nuce*. Thus Aristotle begins his *Metaphysics* with the assertion that "All men by nature desire to know" (Meta. 980a), an assertion that seemingly emphasizes the philosophical temperament as specifically humanizing, just as

Aristotle distinguishes human beings from plants and from animals in terms of the capacity for reflective thought. This humane confidence has often been used to obscure what Nietzsche regarded as the consummately undemocratic tenor of antiquity, a tenor corresponding to the paradoxically sublime forbearance of the noble vis-à-vis the common, the core of Nietzsche's notion of the "*pathos* of distance" (GM I:2).

For Nietzsche, the Greek ideal of nobility (or virtue) is as impossibly distant for us as is the ancient Greek understanding of slavery and its attendant contempt for necessary or life-essential labor, that is, in support of the life of the species.⁶ In other words, ancient Greek conceptions of slavery are intrinsically foreign to our modern sensibility, to a lifestyle or "art of living" that willingly trades the hours of its day for material compensation, payable by the hour or still worse, as a career, in exchange for a secure salary (see GS §330). "The Greek philosopher," Nietzsche wrote, "went through life feeling secretly that there were far more slaves than one might think—namely that everyone who was not a philosopher was a slave" (GS §18). To comprehend this attitude of self-mastery, pursuing wisdom not for social rewards or for the sake of "earning a living," as the English idiom so tellingly has it, the philosopher has to be fundamentally genuine, in Heidegger's sense, foundationally real, and only in this ultimate sense, a true lover of wisdom.

This is the high foundational significance of "real" or "actual"—the meaning Heidegger gives to being a "real" poet: "provided, for example, there are poets only, but then: really poets, to the extent that there are thinkers only, but then: really thinkers. . . ."⁷ Heidegger's emphasis here, "*die Dichter nur*" contrasts with Nietzsche's plainly poetic expression, only a fool, only a poet, "*nur Narr, nur Dichter*." Thus as Nietzsche teases, the philosopher (even the genuine or real philosopher) turns out to be merely a lover of wisdom (a perpetual suitor, as the poet John Keats comforts—or curses—the swain frozen on an antique urn, "She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss, Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!"): an eternal seducer of wisdom, but an inconsummate, impotent failure just the same.

In a lecture presented in Normandy on the theme *What Is Philosophy?*, speaking ten years after the end of World War II, Heidegger shows himself to be a master of rhetoric, and, therefore, of diplomacy. In contrast to the usual characterizations of Heidegger's chauvinism, reserving the German language for philosophy and expressly excluding other languages, Heidegger here addresses his French audience beyond their own Gallic and Latinate heritage, reminding his listeners that when one invokes philosophy, whatever language one speaks, every scholar is in the province of ancient Greece. In this way, Heidegger tells us, all philoso-

phers may be ranged within the legacy of that Greek thinker, presumably Heraclitus, who first coined “the word *philosophos* [φιλόσοφος].”⁸

The lover of wisdom is like the lover of anything, as Heidegger goes on in the same good scholastic fashion, retracing the hierarchical cadence of love well known to us after both Plato and Aristotle—“like *philarguros*, loving silver, like *philotomos*, loving honor.”⁹ Thus an “*aner philosophos* is *hos philei to sophon*, he who loves the *sophon*.”¹⁰ For Heidegger, such love, conceived as harmony, and accordingly understood in the cosmological fashion that Heraclitus speaks of the physical meaning of love, like Empedocles, is an accord with the *sophon*. This is the meaning of “*hen panta* (one is all).” Heidegger continues: “The *sophon* says—all being is in Being . . . being is Being.”¹¹ This is the “that” of the wonder expressed in the Greek *thuamazein*—the sheer *that* that things are, which—as every student learns—is the beginning of philosophy in astonishment or wonder. But for Heidegger, the love of the *sophon* (“the being in Being”) is from its inception, and almost immediately, lost. This radically sudden loss or eclipsed beginning is the lightning flash that, in the oldest conversion of metaphors, may be regarded as the ground tone resonating throughout the later Heidegger. In what Nietzsche calls the jealous and compensatory “vicariousness of the senses,”¹² this music barely begins to sound, that is to say: this lightning just flashes and is as quickly lost to senses of apprehension and to thought. Thus Heidegger calls for another beginning in thinking, a step back interior to philosophy itself. Philosophy is consequently already metaphysical at its inception, a striving (*orexis*): it becomes a sundered longing for the *sophon*. “Because the loving is no longer an original harmony with the *sophon* but is a particular striving towards the *sophon*, the loving of the *sophon* becomes ‘*philosophia*.’ The striving is determined by Eros.”¹³ But ancient Greek *eros* and *philia* are two different (if always affine) things.

Heidegger therefore maintains that philosophy exemplifies a particular love, indeed a clearly erotic relation to thought.¹⁴ And in his lecture course *What Is Called Thinking?*, he turns to Hölderlin to articulate the relation between love and thinking to trace the relation between thinking or philosophy and love. Reflecting on thought and poetry, Heidegger claims that poetry, as its own “standing in itself,” must be seen “its own truth” in the “beauty” of its very word (WT, 19). This self-standing in the truth “does not exclude but on the contrary includes what we *think* in the poetic word” (Ibid.). Heidegger’s reading of the poet’s word turns it out of the center of one of Hölderlin’s seductively intriguing poems, “Socrates and Alcibiades”: “Who the deepest has *thought*, *loves* what is most alive” [*Wer das Tiefste gedacht, liebt das Lebendigste*].¹⁵ The poet draws us to thinking and love, posing them side

by side, as Heidegger observes: “*thought*’ and ‘*loves*’ form the center of the line. Inclination [*Mögen*] reposes in thinking.”¹⁶ The alignment of love (the past of thinking and the present allure of love) betrays the sobriety (and self-sufficiency) ordinarily supposed for the life of thought.

“*Mögen*,” for the Suabian Hölderlin as much as for Heidegger—love, for Heraclitus (and for Empedocles)—is a vulnerable and impermanent disposition, a harmony, which needs to be held, sustained, or tuned in being, or it vanishes. This vulnerability is key beyond the excitement associated with an attunement of any kind: “Once, however, in the beginning of Western thinking, the essence of language flashed in the light of Being—when once Heraclitus thought the Λόγος as his guiding word, thus to think in this word the Being of beings. But the lightning vanished abruptly. No one preserved its streak of light or the nearness of what it illuminates.”¹⁷ As the mark of loss, this reversed eclipse is an erotic figure. We begin, with Heidegger, by talking about philosophy, the love of wisdom. Just as quickly, we find ourselves talking about longing; betrayed in the same movement, we are talking about eros and this is never quite, if it is also never far from, the discourse of love.

This is the eros of philosophy that has Nietzsche commending Socrates as a sublime eroticist (TI, “The Problem of Socrates,” §8, vgl. BT §13), and speaking, in advance of Wittgenstein, and this may be no accident, of the permeation of eros to the depths or else to the heights of the human soul (BGE §75), the same eros that was given poison to drink: crippled but not killed by the church (BGE §168).

Numerous commentators, including Luce Irigaray, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Giorgio Agamben have undertaken to write on (and often enough, on the impossibility of) Heidegger and the subject of love. Recently, George Steiner has even installed Heidegger in the place of Peter Abelard in the lover’s square opposed to Hannah Arendt’s Heloise (a disquieting constellation, one might say, and in more than one sense).¹⁸ Yet this last construction reminds us of the old claim that philosophy begins in gossip (another way to translate the famous first line of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*). And talking about gossip—or about love affairs in Heidegger’s case—the theme of Heidegger and eros is eminently seductive. Confirming this dimension, Heidegger himself instigates the arch erotic move of evasion, the master’s move that like Socrates’ own gambit, assures his lasting allure. Declaring, as I am told that Heidegger declares, and I am happy to take it on the purest faith,¹⁹ that “the essence of eros is nothing erotic,” Heidegger would outdo even Nietzsche for sheer provocation.

Agamben too has a lover’s “complaint” about Heidegger and love. Limiting his concern to Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, Agamben draws attention to Heidegger’s seeming failure to mention love (just as

Heidegger fails, quite fatally for Sartre one might remember, to talk about beer, or just as cataclysmically for Irigaray, to mention air). Agamben has to qualify the claim with reference to Heidegger's invocation of the terminology of Pascal and Augustine (as most other such claims might also be qualified—this is the same Heidegger who begins by talking about nothing only to discover Being or, beginning with Being, to advance to thinking about nothing, quite differently than Alain Badiou's important valorization of the same).

Given, so Agamben claims, Heidegger's familiarity with Max Scheler's views on the preeminence of love (and hate) and considering (this is Agamben's trump card) the circumstantial romantic involvement of Heidegger and Arendt, attested in a backwards look from a letter Heidegger wrote to Arendt later in life, Agamben nevertheless has his satisfaction on just these terms. For Agamben, the very "writing of *Being and Time*" took "place under the sign of love."²⁰ If Luce Irigaray's reading in *Heidegger and the Forgetting of Air* retains the elevated tone of a Derrida by comparison—and despite or better said owing to the distractions of her Lacanian formation—by gentle or literary contrast with Irigaray's philosophic inquiry, George Steiner's reading raises the question of a traditionally redemptive romantic entanglement.²¹ The stakes of this redemption correspond to what Steiner happily—or unhappily—calls the *Lessons of the Masters* (he took the English title reluctantly, so he assures us in his introduction).

Steiner's "lessons" are offered beyond the reality of sexual harassment—he has no patience with the language and imputations of unwanted attentions (how could there be anything but mutuality here, albeit upon on a clearly unequal level, Steiner seems to ask), nor does he have any time to consider the possibility of less than gentle consequences of such mismatched seduction (again, on both sides). The masters never want to be masters at this level: this is the chance to return to the Shropshire of their remembered or unfulfilled youth. And to be sure, for such literal-minded thinkers of the old school, what the media calls "sexual harassment" is a lame word for the dynamic of intellectual betrayal, frustrated hope, and wronged innocence that teachers of a past generation can never imagine. Never, never ever.

Teaching—to paraphrase Nietzsche—is so erotic. But it is essential, if only for the lovers' ideal of fantasized reciprocity (as Lacan would mock us), to ask: for whom? Whose eros is this if it is not the master's erotic ideal: for we are not talking about a student playground, youth on youth.

Nietzsche stood square in the company of the masters—professors, teachers. He did not, so he assured Lou in a disarmingly innocent protestation of his "intentions," merely want someone to act as his secretary

and practical assistant in household affairs, he wanted a—she could be his—pupil. And Arendt was Heidegger's student. It is worth pausing a moment to ask ourselves why we persistently call Lou Salomé by her first name, just where we do not refer to Nietzsche as Friedrich (forget Fritz or Freddy), or why Arendt is almost always emphatically *Hannah* Arendt and Heidegger only *Martin* in the context of a love story? The paradigmatic love story for academic masters, as Steiner recalls this account, is that of Heloise (had she a surname?) and one Peter Abelard, an unusually gifted troubadour and on this account quite successful with all the women who heard him, as Heloise would later accuse in one of her letters. Maybe we are all of us vicarious masters, in Steiner's phrase, and thus we, male or female, assume the right of speaking on a first name basis whenever we speak of women. Indeed, we extend this intimacy to women we are not supposed to like, thus we call Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth, as we name Heidegger's wife Elfriede, or Wagner's wife Cosima or his daughter Winifried.

But Nietzsche challenges philosophers as such, just because what characterizes Nietzsche's understanding of philosophy is precisely the notion of command. Thus he routinely tells philosophers what they should do, as he famously distinguishes between the tractable, scientific laborer and the philosophical legislator or ruler, just as he saw himself as philosopher rather than philologist alone. If Nietzsche was correct to upbraid philosophers in this case, criticizing them for what he diagnosed as their "lack of love,"²² a point addressing less the philosophers' innocence or their deficiencies in matters erotic (as sex-manual mad or just gender scholars have assumed) than the philosophers' lack of critical concern with the very "question" of love. The philosopher simply assumes that he (it is always a he)²³ simply knows what love is. But Nietzsche sought to raise questions where one usually does not think to do so (he regarded this as the determinative characteristic of critique and thereby, and this was the same for Nietzsche, of science).

Pastor's son that he was, Nietzsche called attention to the philosophical and widespread conviction concerning the nature of love. Worse than Augustine's question concerning the nature of time, everyone knows—asked or unasked—what love is, and everyone knows that love is desirable (this is Plato's ironic edge, conveyed in the words of two hired lovers, both male and female: equally contracted and duly paid for the pleasure of their beautiful speeches, because the art of speaking well was thought by the ancients to be the most alluring of all, as Nietzsche reminds us [cf. GS §80]). Thus Plato gives us Diotima's remembered teaching in the *Symposium* and details the triangular constellation of Lysias's written seducer's speech in the *Phaedrus*). Much more, as

Nietzsche goes on to deepen his challenge to this presumption, everyone knows that a god of love—and here Nietzsche turns ugly—must correspond to a *higher* divinity than any other god before him. Exactly how this divine evolution might advance (GS §140), and even pondering what a god of love, exigently requiring love (GS §141), would have to learn about love (BGE §142), Nietzsche argues that our convictions, already knowing as we do, just might be unfounded (GS §307). As Descartes critiques the common conviction concerning “good sense,” whereby “everyone thinks himself so abundantly provided with it”²⁴ that one also assumes oneself entitled to forego the acquisition of “rules” for the direction of thought, so too, we tend to forget that we need to learn how to love things in general (GS §334), be they musical, artistic, or corporeal, whether our love is the love of words (philology) or wisdom (philosophy).

Despite Agamben’s assertions, and as Irigaray has noticed (and Steiner follows her, if to be sure, without adverting to her lead), Heidegger himself inquires about love in his discussion of philosophy, even in *Being and Time*, if only indirectly. Later, and inspired by Nietzsche, Heidegger will observe that in the philosopher’s love of the *sophon*—that is, for Heidegger: being in Being—the disposition of love turns to desire from the start. Love in the process, this is the legacy of formal indication, obscures the character of this solicitude. Failing the exigent reticence of love, the philosopher becomes a scholar, aspiring to wisdom. Worse (in what Heidegger called “cybernetics” and what would today be called “cognitive science”), the philosopher can become a man of science, dedicated to the calculation of practical knowledge, a calculation of security that is for Heidegger (as it would also have been for Nietzsche) no different from the calculation of the man of faith.²⁵

The Philosopher as Poet

The Nietzsche who wrote a handbook of poetry also wrote poems, just as the Nietzsche who celebrated music above all, also composed, and, perhaps most importantly, also *played* music.²⁶ If it is true that Nietzsche’s well-attested gift for musical improvisation has rarely been considered (and such a consideration would be challenging indeed), his compositions have been judged harshly, from Nietzsche’s contemporary, the composer Hans von Bülow to Cosima Wagner to Georges Liébert.²⁷ And his poetry would seem to present a similar case. If, as we shall see in the chapter to follow, Nietzsche borrowed the title for the poems that introduce *The Gay Science*, his “Prelude in German Rhymes” from no one less than Goethe (“Scherz, List, und Rache”), his efforts here repeat the handbook of the troubadours’ guild, the aristocratic singers’ repertory of

poetic form as a kind of poetic or literary exercise. I will argue that *The Gay Science* as a whole can be seen from this perspective. If this case can be made, it nonetheless remains difficult to draw Nietzsche's thinking out of his poetry. Well in advance of his auto-bibliography, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, Nietzsche proposes his own self-summary under the same inscription in the set of rhymes introducing *The Gay Science*:

Ecce Homo.

Yes! I know now whence I came!
 Unsatiated like a flame
 my glowing ember squanders me
 Light to all on which I seize
 ashen everything I leave:
 Flame am I most certainly. (GS "Prelude," 62)

Thus the same Nietzsche who was to be charmed by a published comparison between himself and "dynamite"²⁸—only consider the late-nineteenth-century force of this imagery!—had already compared himself to light, to burning flame (deploying an image used in the English Shelley's concluding stanza to his "Ode to the West Wind"—"Scatter as from an unextinguish'd hearth, / Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!"). And the same Nietzsche also wrote "My Roses" (*wollt ihr meine Rosen pflücken*), a poem of inspired—and erotic—ambiguity, as well as the magical "Sils-Maria" in the 1887 appended *Songs of Prince Vogelfrei* (a series likewise dedicated to Goethe), as well as the self-ironic "Poet's Calling" (and with this last song, one surely has Nietzsche's blessing for calling him a tick-tock poet).

Martin Heidegger's poetry is a different affair to the extent that it has been read as part of his philosophy. This difference does not make Heidegger better—or worse—than Nietzsche as a poet. But it does mean that to read Heidegger, one does well to attend to his poems.

William J. Richardson thus begins his masterly overview of Heidegger's work, *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, with Heidegger's poem "Eventide over Reichenau" [*Abendgang auf der Reichenau*]. Echoing Hölderlin's *Bread and Wine*, as Hölderlin calls to Heine's earlier poem to the night, it is significant to observe that this may be counted as Heidegger's own *Abendlied*—or *sirenas*, to use Nietzsche's classifying translation of the forms of troubadour song.²⁹ Richardson's commentary on this poem is keenly insightful and it recurs in an important fashion in Richardson's later reflections on Heidegger.³⁰ If most readers of Heidegger's poetry have been literary scholars, as George Steiner will go

on to confirm, the value of this poetry for his thinking, as Richardson's analysis shows, is plain for philosophy.

Robert Bernasconi similarly reads Heidegger's poetry as articulating the said/unsaid,³¹ adverting to Heidegger's politically impossible silence in much the same way, as does Steiner, and as I too have reflected upon this same silence, under the sign of "a language whose words have already broken."³² I find it essential here to read Bernasconi's focus on this interrupted speech as a *musical* attention. In the "space" of such a music, listening to Heidegger's silence, one must also attend to the articulation of the needful connection between saying and thinking, so that for his own part, as Heidegger reads Parmenides he invokes a paratactically musical reading, in the acoustic dimensionality of the punctuation marks Heidegger adds for our eyes, visually, literally, transposing a voiced break (one which can only be heard in ancient Greek): "saying speaks where there are no words, in the fields between the words which the colons indicate" (WT, 186). This is the silence that speaks between the words, between the lines: echoing as the unsaid in what is said.

Bernasconi takes the inspiration for his reading of Heidegger's poem on language, "Sprache," by means of a recollection of the poem-question overheard in Heidegger's reading of another poet, Stefan George,³³ who wrote himself of the failing of the word as word: "where word breaks off, no thing may be."

Heidegger's question turns in Bernasconi's reading on the question of the word's return: "when will words again be words?"³⁴ Bernasconi's invocation of Heidegger's reply echoes only in the highest tonality: "when they bear us back to the place of ancient owning [*uralter Eignis*] where the ringing of stillness calls."³⁵ Heidegger's poetic words are set into the philosophical substance of his thinking. A musical reading of his thought entails that we seek to hear what is said/unsaid in these words.

The question of language and translation is at issue for us, precisely as English language readers. The translation of *uralter Eignis*, "ancient owning" is a fine and beautiful rendering—and yet it does not invite us to hear what Heidegger says, *not* because these words mis-take Heidegger's language, but because we cannot hear his meaning in this. To read Heidegger, to read Nietzsche, to read Hölderlin, we have to read German.³⁶ And like any language, a foreign language can only be mastered for us, for English-speaking readers, in order to return us once again and only not to the foreign language as such but to what is our own, to what is native to us—as both the poet Hölderlin and the linguist philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt had differently emphasized, echoing for their part the spirit of eighteenth-century hermeneutic reflection.³⁷ Given this poetic and hermeneutic limitation, to read Heidegger's "Sprache," to

read the poetic word *wralter Eignis*, we would have to be able to catch a resonant, metonymic reference to the penumbra of sounding words that echo in the word as word: *eignen* [fit, suit, attempt] as much as *eigen* [own, ownmost] and *Ereignis* [event, happening, occurrence]. Do we have this capacity? Ought one to hear *Eigentlichkeit* [authenticity] as *Eignis* in Heidegger's 1972 poem as it may, perhaps—I do not know if this is true—recall the key word of his 1927 masterpiece?

In a personal letter, Reiner Schürmann noted the difficulty reported by English readers reading Heidegger on language, as on poetry and thought. Schürmann suggested that we might do well to return to reflecting upon the indispensability of a critical familiarity with German. This familiarity resonates with Heidegger's recommendation that one first of all read Greek, which for many of us can mean that we need to begin to learn Greek. Here Schürmann invoked the results of linguistic research as "substantiating" Heidegger's nationalistically irritating (and politically unsettling) claim for a supposed and philosophic affinity proper to the German—as to the Greek.³⁸

Nietzsche as Thinker

We have already noted that Heidegger began his lecture course in the 1930s by underscoring Nietzsche's relevance as a philosopher *tout court*—and not a poet or a "life-philosopher" and, most radically, emphatically not as promulgator of racist or "biological" teachings."³⁹ What Nietzsche teaches us about thinking, about "thoughtlessness," Heidegger finds in Nietzsche's "simple, because thoughtful words, 'The wasteland grows'" (WT, 29). *Die Wüste wächst*. And Heidegger emphasizes Nietzsche's next reflection on the consequences of nihilism, "Woe to him who hides wastelands within" (29). Not a matter of negative judgment or pessimism, it is "that which gives us food for thought, which is what wants to be thought about" (30). In addition to somber affairs, such as death as one had since *Being and Time*, all-too-typically (and for Heidegger, all-too-journalistically) associated with his thinking, Heidegger wrote that lightness and love: "and beautiful and mysterious and gracious things give us food for thought" (Ibid.). In all that belongs to be thought about things as such, "what is most thought provoking—especially when it is man's highest concern—may well be also what is most dangerous. Or. . . ." Here Heidegger interrupts himself in a Suabian voice, different from the more rhetorically stylized way that Nietzsche interrupts himself (these are Nietzsche's very deliberate *Gedankenstriche*). By means of this elevated, questioning use of "*Oder*," Heidegger invites us to think back upon what is said, reflecting upon our own assumptions: "Or do we

imagine that a man could even in small ways encounter the essence of truth, the essence of beauty, the essence of grace—*apart from danger?*” (31, emphasis added). If it is to think about what provokes thoughtfulness with respect to the range of what is dangerous to be thought about—from truth to love, beauty, and grace—to think about such thinking invites reflection on danger itself, on “the Danger” as such: it is to engage in thinking about danger. Here, Heidegger’s reflections present Nietzsche as the ultimately dangerous thinker: “I am no man,” we again recall Nietzsche as writing, “I am dynamite” (EH, “Why I Am a Destiny,” 1).

There is an important sense in which, unlike Hölderlin or Pindar or any other poet, but like Kant, and as a philosopher, even as Nietzsche claims to invert Plato, Nietzsche remains in thrall to Plato just as Heidegger says, almost as Nietzsche contends, and thereby to Aristotle. In this manner, Nietzsche turns within the orbit of Western metaphysics as the culmination of Western thought.

What is important to observe about this Heideggerian compulsion is that it is no kind of error as it is also nothing like a mistake that could (or should) be corrected. Western metaphysics at its end is a matter of perspective. That is, thought itself, in the Western tradition, taken with the darkness of nihilism’s unthinking refusal or, otherwise said, the light openness of mystery, as critical rationality and sensible, reflective understanding, *thought itself* is nevertheless, with everything at its disposal, unable to overcome this constriction. Heidegger never abandons this insight into what is called “thinking.” These are the complexities of thought as Heidegger calls for thinking in the critical terms of Nietzsche’s challenge to Western reason or nihilism.

Heidegger cites Nietzsche’s prophecy: “The wasteland grows . . . ,” and for Heidegger, these words express the philosopher’s heart (“Nietzsche put all that he knew” into them) (WT, 51).⁴⁰ With this citation, as he repeats it in *What Is Called Thinking?*, Heidegger commands the seduction of a prophecy drawn from Nietzsche’s sardonic (more than a few scholars have ventured their explanations of the reasons Nietzsche had for adding this) fourth part to the book that the present author, with all due caution, cannot but regard as Nietzsche’s Trojan horse, that is, his most dangerous gift to the reader, indeed, a book that destroys as it gives: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. Heidegger will make this the key to his esoteric reading of Nietzsche, a key he takes from Nietzsche himself. Thus, “Nietzsche, the thinker, hints at the secret fittingness of his thought in this manner” as he inscribes it in the most obvious place—that is the prime esoteric locus—in the very subtitle of his most famous book, “a subtitle which runs: *A Book for Everyone and*

No One" (WT, 50). But it is for just this reason that Heidegger will later remind us that "this too remains for us to be learned, namely, to read a book such as Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the same rigorous fashion as one of Aristotle's treatises" (Ibid., 70).⁴¹

For Heidegger, "In the realm of essential thinking, Nietzsche sees the necessity of a going beyond [*Übergang*] with greater clarity than any before him" (WT, 57). Reading Nietzsche's thinking, it is not only essential that we "refer everything in his thought that is still unthought back to its originary truth" (Ibid., 54), but much more than that, Heidegger argues, we are to see Nietzsche as the one thinker who recognizes that in the history of Western man something is coming to an end. This transition, as we have already cited it, is named as the danger, a word borrowed from Hölderlin.⁴² It appears in "Die Gefahr," a title figuring with *Das Gestell* as one of the lectures to the Club of Bremen, a term included in the unpublished opus of the *Beiträge* and familiar to us from the conclusion to his published essay, *The Question Concerning Technology*.⁴³ This danger today is the totalizing domination of Western, that is, perfectly technological humanity as the measure and definition of all that is, and it is what Heidegger names the "end" of philosophy—in a very different sense than the oddly Hegelian sense intended by Francis Fukuyama when he speaks of the "end" of history. For Heidegger, the end of philosophy "proves to be the triumph of the manipulable arrangement of the scientifico-technological world and of the social order proper to this world."⁴⁴ It is in this humanistic context that Heidegger recalls Nietzsche's anti-philosophical (arch-philosophical) definition of the human as (the non-exclusively) rational and (not specifically) political animal. "The human being," as Nietzsche defines humanity, and as Heidegger quotes him, "is the *always yet undetermined animal*" (WT, 59; BGE §62). Citing the limits of the physical and psychological sciences, as the limits of cosmology and metaphysics, such an undetermined being must find "a passage beyond himself," and "for this reason the bridge must be found to that nature by which the human being heretofore can be the *surpassing* of his former and last nature" (WT, 59). This bridge is the *Übermensch*, read not in terms of race (even Heidegger's original lectures on Nietzsche are unwaveringly clear in their opposition to the error of reading the biological doctrines of National Socialism back into Nietzsche) but sheer, active transcendence.

Nietzsche's critique of subjectivity and therewith his critique of intentionality—the knowing consciousness of the knower who knows, as this may be addressed to Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, but also, *avant la lettre*, Husserl—addresses language in the poetic sense so important for

Heidegger. Language is thus what speaks us: thoughts come when they—and not the thinking subject—are moved to come: “One hears, one does not seek; one takes one does not ask” (EH, Z §3). As Nietzsche declared of himself and his own compositional craft and powers in his *Ecce Homo*, reflecting upon his inspired way of writing in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “I have never had any choice,” choosing the subjective *I* quite deliberately in opposition to classical, thinking subjectivity. As the supposedly most radical and, popularly, as the most individually free thinker of our time, for Heidegger, Nietzsche “neither made nor chose his way himself, no more than any other thinker ever did. He is sent on his way” (WT, 95; 46). As thinker of thinking, thinking what is called (or calls, sends us to) thinking, Nietzsche’s reflection on subjectivity as he questions the notion of the subject is the patent reason Heidegger engages Nietzsche as he does in *What Is Called Thinking?*

As in the associative couple *Denken/Dichten*, thinking becomes a kind of poetizing. With Nietzsche’s observation—that a thought comes when it wants—thinking becomes a species of the same kind of enthusiasm or inspiration that is poetry and which, for Heidegger, works to transform thought as *Dichtung*. This way of conceiving thought yields a kind of love or crossover, an affinity between thinking and poetry: “a secret kinship.”

The Relation Between the Poetry and Music/Silence of Language

Unlike Nietzsche, Heidegger is not typically regarded as a poet but he is also not typically denied the title of philosopher, if his rank as a philosopher has been the subject of ongoing dispute owing to his style, famously regarded as unclear, if it is also plain that this dispute owes at least as much to his politics.

I argue, together with George Steiner as it turns out, that if we attend to the music (or “style”) of Heidegger’s writing, the claim that Heidegger’s writing is unclear⁴⁵ loses its force. To read Heidegger as a poet is to take Heidegger’s musical style as relevant for what he says. In this sense, what determines whether we can hear what he says or merely find it unclear or “badly” done depends in turn upon whether we have (or can develop) an ear for that same writing style.

As thinker, Heidegger is consigned to use language to understand the essence of poetry and language and thought, as of being itself. But the philosopher as writer is subject to the readings of the critics and their judgment has been harsh if intriguingly subject to a self-overcoming or reflective return. Hence it is important that although in 1988 Steiner was

able to observe of Heidegger's expressive gifts: "Words failed Heidegger and, at a pivotal stage in his life and work, he failed them,"⁴⁶ almost a decade and a half later Steiner has turned, as he has written to the present author, to a study of those very words: Heidegger's poetry. Already in 1991, Steiner had underscored the matter of Heidegger's style as Heidegger's voice, and below I return to the question of this voice in an exactly modern musical mode.

Steiner's emphasis is both strikingly literal and instructively phenomenological (if it is also posed contra Derrida), and in the spirit of Nietzsche's philological style (a style Steiner for his part does not attribute to Nietzsche). Thus Steiner highlights the "central *orality* in Heidegger's teaching and concept of the enterprise of serious thought,"⁴⁷ explaining this diction as that of a specifically poetic or lyrical kind: "I have found that passages in Heidegger which are opaque to the reading eye and stony on the page come to more intelligible life, take on a logic of an almost musical kind *when they are read aloud*."⁴⁸

It is Heidegger as poet who writes in "The Way to Language," "Language speaks by saying, this is, by showing. What it says wells up from the formerly spoken and so far still unspoken saying which pervades the design of language. Language speaks in that it, as showing, reaching into all regions of presences, summons from them whatever is present to appear and to fade."⁴⁹

Heidegger is aware that such a "gnomic" formula as his pronouncement that "Language itself is language,"⁵⁰ leaves him open to the charge of Anglo-analytic vagueness. "The understanding that is schooled in logic, thinking of everything in terms of calculation and hence usually overbearing, calls this proposition an empty tautology. Merely to say the identical thing twice—language is language—how is that supposed to get us anywhere?" (L, 190). Heidegger answers this simple question with disarming intensification, that is, still more simplicity. We have seen that he concurs, in an unsettling admission for philosophy used to supporting the progress ideal of rationality and the pragmatic ambitions of scientific technicity, "but we do not want to get anywhere." For Heidegger, the passion for novelty and the latest discoveries are distracting tendencies of the modern era and irrelevant to thought itself, especially philosophy. Thus Heidegger concludes with an equally gnomic declaration that has already compelled us to question its significance: "We would like only, for once, to get to just where we are already" (Ibid.).

An advocate of releasement [*Gelassenheit*] and therefore pleading the liberating *uselessness* of philosophy—" 'You can't do anything with philosophy' "—Heidegger nevertheless could expect philosophy to have

the highest advantage: “granted that *we* cannot do anything with philosophy, might not philosophy, if we concern ourselves with it, do something *with us*?”⁵¹

In this sense, and beyond the reproofs of Theodor Adorno’s “jargon” but also beyond the charge widespread in analytic circles of his endemic obscurantism, Heidegger’s wordplay opposes both the received sense of philosophy and the received use of language as a mere playing. As poet, Heidegger is just and only and no more than a poet through whom what is said is said. To this extent, what Heidegger writes is without gain, profit, or advantage, and that *indigence*—to use Richardson’s language⁵²—is a simplicity in its purest sense: beyond value, yet more crucially beyond valuing. Thus Heidegger suggests that rather than attempting to attain to something *by means of* or *with* philosophy—doing things with words, or “doing” philosophy or theory in the pragmatic or practical sense—we might rather and like Nietzsche, make the effort to risk or to dare to suffer that philosophy *do* “something *with us*.” This, as I read it, is the meaning of Heideggerian *Gelassenheit*.

In Nietzsche’s case, to regard Nietzsche as Heidegger proposed to do, that is, to read him as a thinker in the most rigorous sense, is to read his critical writing on thinking as a critique of logic and scientific rationality. Such a critique examines the rational foundations of logic and rationality itself as a means of knowing the world to be known. Such a radical critique is thereby turned upon reason itself as a means of knowing the knower. In this way, Nietzsche’s thinking offers a critique of reason: simply or purely and as such.

And it is in this rigorously Kantian sense that we are also to understand Nietzsche’s avowed ambition to doubt more radically than Descartes a part of Nietzsche’s critique of the subject.⁵³ But when and if we can understand Nietzsche as going beyond his predecessors in this fashion, as more critical than those very critical thinkers who came before him, we may well find ourselves as frustrated as Heidegger found himself at the end of his life.⁵⁴ In this way, Nietzsche’s project thus destroys not only the historical past of philosophy, not only its representation of itself to itself, but the very project of thought itself.

In the most rigorously self-conscious sense of critique, a sense that was enhanced and not weakened by the lack of scholarly resonance with his critical work, Nietzsche took his scholarly point of departure from the critical proposition that an instrument of criticism (rationality) cannot as such be turned upon itself. This is the critique of critique as Nietzsche dares to pose this question against scientific reflection itself. If what you are doing is fundamentally reflexive, *critical* thinking, the result turns out

to be an unsustainable project on its own reflexive, fully critical terms. Philosophy in this sense reaches an end: it goes aground—an all-too-Nietzschean shipwreck.

If one thus regards Nietzsche's consummation of Western metaphysics less as a metaphysics, as Heidegger's interpreters have been all-too-literally inclined to do, than as a critique of the subject, the same critique of humanism that Heidegger shared with Nietzsche, together with his critique of the physical world and the ideal/illusory world, one finds once again, and on Heidegger's terms, that Nietzsche's thinking includes philosophy on every level, beyond ontology to the thought of thought itself. Beyond Heidegger, if indeed beyond most Nietzsche interpretation to date, this is the Nietzsche that still calls to be read.

What follows is an attempt at such a beginning, a reading still underway inasmuch as a Heideggerian guideline is one that seeks to keep the question of reading in mind precisely as a question. In the case of Nietzsche, this requires attention to the elusive and esoteric project of attending to the acoustic echo of the soul of ancient music in the text of ancient Greek lyric poetry as he himself had linked it to his recommendations for the culture of the future.