

A vertical photograph of a dense forest. The scene is filled with mist or low-hanging clouds, creating a soft, ethereal atmosphere. The trees are a mix of dark evergreens and deciduous trees with yellow and orange autumn foliage. The lighting is diffused, with no harsh shadows.

FRANÇOIS RAFFOUL

THINKING
THE EVENT

THINKING THE EVENT

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THINKING THE EVENT

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THINKING THE EVENT

Introduction

I.

Engaging in the project of “thinking the event” consists in undertaking a philosophical inquiry into what constitutes an event as an event, its very eventfulness: not *what* happens, not *why* it happens, but *that* it happens, and what does “happening” mean. Not the *eventum*, what has happened, but the *evenire*, the sheer happening of what happens. However, at the outset of such a work, one is immediately confronted with the following obstacle: the event has traditionally been understood and neutralized within a philosophy of substance or essence, a metaphysics of causality, subjectivity, and reason—in a word, subjected to the demands of rational thought. An event is interpreted either as the accident of a substrate or substance, as the effect or deed of a subject or an agent, or else it is ordered and organized according to causality, if it is not included within fate or a rational order. In all instances, it answers to the demands of the principle of sufficient reason, which states that no event happens without a cause or a reason. In the words of Leibniz, the “great” principle of natural philosophy and key metaphysical principle of truth is “the *principle of sufficient reason*, namely, that nothing happens without a reason why it should be so rather than otherwise.”¹ Leibniz posits that events must conform to the principle of sufficient reason and that no event can occur without a reason or a ground: in fact, every event must be as it were prepared in advance to be the event that it is, conditioned by a determinant reason: “For the nature of things requires that every event should have beforehand its proper conditions, requirements and dispositions, the existence of which makes the sufficient reason of such an event.”² Such reason can be a cause, as the principle of sufficient reason merges with a “principle of causality,” which states that every event is caused to be the event that it is. Indeed, Leibniz includes in the principle of reason a principle of causality: “Nothing is without reason, or no effect is without a cause.”³ Although not every reason is a cause, every cause *is* a reason.

Ultimately, as Heidegger demonstrates in his 1955–1956 lecture course, *The Principle of Reason*, the principle of reason self-deconstructs because it cannot apply to itself its own requirements without undermining itself: if the principle of reason states that everything that happens must have a reason, then what is the reason for the principle of reason? Does the principle of reason have a reason?

“Indeed the principle of reason is, as a principle, not nothing. The principle is itself something. Therefore, according to what the principle itself tells us, it is the sort of thing that must have a reason. What is the reason for the principle of reason?” (GA 10, 17/PR, 11). Does the principle of reason have a reason? Nothing could be less certain. “*Nihil est sine ratione*. Nothing is without reason, says the principle of reason. Nothing—which means not even this principle of reason, certainly it least of all. It may then be that the principle of reason, that whereof it speaks, and this speaking itself do not belong within the jurisdiction of the principle of reason. To think this remains a grave burden. In short it means that *the principle of reason is without reason. Said still more clearly: ‘Nothing without reason’—this, which is something, is without reason*” (GA 10, 27/PR, 17, emphasis mine). One divines here how the principle of reason is caught in a circle (What is the reason of the principle of reason? What is the foundation of a foundation?) that will throw it into a self-deconstruction, that is, into the abyss of its own impossible foundation.

Indeed, in order to be a ground, the ground must itself be without foundation and therefore groundless. This led Gilles Deleuze to speak of the paradoxical nature of the logic of grounding, of the “comical ungrounding” of the principle of reason: “But who still speaks of a foundation, when the logic of grounding or the principle of reason leads precisely to its own ‘ungrounding,’ comical and disappointing.”⁴ The principle of reason does collapse (“run aground”) at the very place of its impossible foundation, “there where,” as Derrida puts it in *Rogues*, “the *Grund* opens up onto the *Abgrund*, where giving reasons [*rendre-raison*] and giving an account [*rendre-compte*]*—logon didonai* or *principium reddendae rationis—*are threatened by or drawn into the abyss.”⁵ Heidegger revealed this self-deconstructive aspect of the principle of reason by following the logic of the question “why?”: “Whenever we pursue the ground/reason of a being, we ask: why? Cognition stalks this interrogative word from one reason to another. The ‘why’ allows no rest, offers no stop, *gives no support*” (GA 10, 185/PR, 126, my emphasis). The question “why?” seeking a foundation, in fact reveals an abyss, betraying that reason itself may lack a rational basis. Kant spoke of reason as a drive, a *Trieb*, of an “interest” of reason (*Interesse der Vernunft*), thereby pointing to a certain nonrational basis of reason, which led Derrida to ask: “The honor of reason—is that reason? Is honor reasonable or rational through and through? The very form of this question can be applied analogically to everything that evaluates, affirms, or prescribes reason: to prefer reason, is that rational or, and this is something else, reasonable? The value of reason, the desire for reason, the dignity of reason—are these rational? Do these have to do wholly with reason?” (R, 120). Is reason rational? Is the principle of reason rational? Does reason have a reason? These questions reveal the aporia harbored in the principle of reason.

In fact, each time unpredictable and incalculable, an event always exceeds or “suspends”⁶ the demands of the principle of sufficient reason. As Jacques Derrida states, an event can only challenge the principle of sufficient reason “insofar as reason is limited to ‘giving an account’ (*reddere rationem, logon didonai*).” It is not a matter of complying with the demands of such reason rendering, but instead of not “denying or ignoring this unforeseeable and incalculable coming of the other.”⁷ No longer placed under the authority of the principle of sufficient reason, the event must be rethought as the incalculable and unpredictable arrival of what will always remain other—and thus inappropriate—for the one to whom it happens. In that sense, the event also comes as an excess in relation to the subject and can only “naturally take by surprise not only the addressee but also the subject to whom and by whom it is supposed to happen.”⁸ It would then be a matter, in order to give thought to the event in its eventfulness, of freeing the event from the demands of the principle of sufficient reason.

A clarification is necessary at the outset: by the project of “thinking the event,” I do not mean the appropriation by thought of the event, under the authority of the principle of reason. Thinking here is not appropriative, not “in-scription,” but rather, as Jean-Luc Nancy calls it, “*ex-scription*.”⁹ The event remains *outside* of thought, “exscribed” in it. “Thinking the event” means to give thought to its very *eventfulness*, its sheer happening, which necessarily exceeds both reason and subjectivity. Indeed, one could say that the event, in its disruptive and unpredictable happening, *exceeds* both the concept and the anticipation of a subject. This is why a further obstacle in the attempt to think the event is the predominance of transcendental modes of thought, which claim to provide prior conditions of possibility for experience and for the occurrence of events. Indeed, it may well be the case that events are precisely eventful when not preorganized or prepared by some transcendental conditions, or anticipated by a transcendental subject, when they break or “pierce” the horizon provided by transcendental conditions. Not being made possible by a prior condition, the event, as Jean-Luc Nancy points out, “must not be the object of a programmatic and certain calculation. . . . It must be the possibility of the impossible (according to a logic used often by Derrida), it must know itself as such, that is to say, know that it happens also in the incalculable and the unassignable.”¹⁰ An event cannot be reduced to what *can* happen: it does not happen because it can happen, but rather happens without being made possible in advance and to that extent can be called “impossible,” Jean-Luc Marion going so far as to state that the event can only be impossible, the impossible itself: “Moreover, [the event] always appears to us at bottom as impossible, or even as *the* impossible, since it does not belong to the domain of the possible, of that of which we are able.”¹¹ The impossible, in this context, does not mean what cannot be or happen. Rather, the impossible, or the im-possible, as Derrida writes it, means: that which happens outside the

conditions of possibility offered in advance by a subject of representation, outside the transcendental conditions of possibility. Thinking the event will require to break with a certain transcendental mode of thinking, as the event deconstructs the transcendental as such.

In the philosophical tradition, the notion of event has been neutralized under the authority of reason and causality. With Kant, the event is conceived in terms of and on the basis of causality, its independence reduced to a causal order. As one knows, Kant assumes the universal determinism of nature, a universal causal determinism for everything that happens and according to which “everything in the world happens solely in accordance with laws of nature.”¹² Such universal natural causality is taken by Kant as a given and not in dispute. This is not surprising, if it is the case, as Heidegger argues in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, that “Causality, in the traditional sense of the being of beings, in common understanding as in traditional metaphysics, is the *fundamental category of being as being-present-at-hand* [Vorhandensein].”¹³ The causality of nature is traditionally the paradigm to think the being of beings, the very meaning of being. One cannot stress enough the importance of the motif of causality in traditional metaphysics. As Jean-Luc Marion puts it, “Metaphysics knows nothing but the cause.” It “knows nothing except through the cause, either as cause or as effect” (NC, 181). This is why causality is not one category among others but “the universal category for all beings” (BG, 161).

Kant posits this paradigm in the “Analogies of Experience” (second analogy) in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, which state that all events happen *according to causality*. “All alterations [Veränderungen] occur in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect” (CPR, A 189/B 232, 304). Every event occurs following a causal rule since “everything *that happens* presupposes a previous state, upon which it follows without exception according to a rule” (CPR, A 444/B 472, 484). The succession of events *follows* the order of causality, and an event becomes the *effect* of a prior cause. The event is not something new, an original phenomenon disrupting and breaking the course of time, indeed *generating* time, but the product or result of a prior process. For Jean-Luc Marion, this proves that the kind of events mobilized by Kant in the second analogy are not properly events but rather what he terms *impoverished* events, that is, events *reduced to what reason demands of them*: predictability, repeatability, and foundation in causality: “the analogies of experience concern only a fringe of phenomenality—phenomena of the type of objects constituted by the sciences, poor in intuition, foreseeable, exhaustively knowable, reproducible—while other levels (and first of all historical phenomena) would make an exception” (BG, 207). The events of the analogies of experience are not properly events but intraworldly facts that are subject to causality. “Eventful” events, as will be noted, are not subject to causal determinations; rather, in their original happening, they indeed

do not follow but constitute new causal networks and thereby reconfigure if not create a new world. An event “worthy of the name,” as Derrida would say, represents the surge of the new through which precisely it does not “follow” from a previous cause. By introducing the new in the world, indeed by bringing forth a new world, does an event not disqualify prior causal contexts and networks? To that extent, an event could not be “explained” by prior causes because its occurrence has transformed the context on the basis of which it could be explained. To that extent, an event *has no cause*. Jean-Luc Marion writes: “Inasmuch as it is a given phenomenon, the event does not have an adequate cause and cannot have one. Only in this way can it advance on the wings of a dove: unforeseen, unusual, unexpected, unheard of, and unseen” (BG, 167). Kant, however, thinks in the perspective of the demands of the principle of sufficient reason. This is why he reduces events to the law of causality and then attempts to establish a perfect symmetry, or reversibility, between event and causality: “If, therefore, we experience that something happens, then we always presuppose that something else precedes it, which it follows in accordance with a rule” (CPR, A 195/B 240, 308). Conversely, as soon as I perceive in a sequence “a relation to the preceding state, from which the representation follows in accordance with a rule, I represent something as an occurrence, or as something that happens” (CPR, A 198/B 243, 309–310). This structuring accomplishes what Leibniz had posited, namely that events must conform to the principle of sufficient reason.

In addition to this rational enframing, one also notes an egological reduction of the event in the philosophical tradition, as one finds for instance in a hyperbolic or paroxistic form in the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. On the basis of the view that we are responsible for what happens to us, Sartre claims that whatever happens happens to us, and what happens *to* us happens *through* us. Ultimately for him, I choose the meaning of events. Sartre attempts to reduce the alterity and surprise of the event, as it is immediately appropriated by the self in its responsible engagement. Any event becomes a call to my responsibility: I am engaged by the event. Even a war declared by others becomes mine. For Sartre “everything takes place as if I bore the entire responsibility for this war.”¹⁴ Everything that happens is mine, and nothing human is foreign to me, which means there is no radical alterity in the world, and thus no events I have not *chosen*. I can decide on the nonhuman, but “this decision is human, and I shall carry the entire responsibility for it” (BN, 708). Sartre posits here a subjectivity as appropriation of all that happens, as appropriation of the event. Any event is immediately taken over by my freedom, and there are no events without my appropriating them and making them my own. “Thus there are no accidents in life,” and “any way you look at it, it is a matter of a choice” (BN, 708). This hyperbolic inflation of appropriating subjectivity implies the reduction, appropriation, and overcoming of the alterity of events.

The event has thus traditionally been grounded in reason, made to follow the order of causality, and reduced to what thought can grasp or to what a subject-agent can will. In all these instances, the event finds itself *neutralized* as it has been situated within a metaphysics of essence, causality, subjectivity, and reason. However, I will question whether there might not be other ways to conceive of an event—doing justice to its eventfulness—once the categories just mentioned are put into question in post-Nietzschean thought. What would an event mean if not enframed in a philosophy of essence, as it were enveloped in an essence? If no longer conceived as the deed of a doer, the act of a willful subject? If it was no longer interpreted in relation to a subject or a substrate? If it resisted the attempt to integrate it within a rational order? If it was, finally, freed from the laws of causality? With respect to the reliance on causality, one can indeed wonder: does the category of cause pertain or even apply to the eventfulness of the event? Is an event, as event, “caused”? Or instead, as suggested prior, does the very eventfulness of the event precisely not point to a certain excess with respect to causality? Marion speaks of “the character and the dignity of an event—that is, an event or a phenomenon that is unforeseeable (on the basis of the past), not exhaustively comprehensible (on the basis of the present), not reproducible (on the basis of the future), in short, absolute, unique, happening. We will therefore call it a *pure event*.”¹⁵ It is that “pure event,” freed from causality and the demands of rational thought, that remains to be thought and is the focus of this work.

The category of the event has become a major concern in contemporary continental thought. It is the ambition of this work to reflect on the place and importance of this phenomenon and to show how the very senses of the event have been transformed. My underlying hypothesis is that in the wake of the end of traditional metaphysics (the twilight of the metaphysical idols of substance, reason, causality, identity, agency, and subjectivity of which Nietzsche spoke), and the withdrawal of transcendental modes of thought, the event becomes the main motif from which to rethink traditional philosophical problems. Ultimately, I seek to show how, in the wake of the exhaustion of traditional metaphysics, the notion of the event has come to the fore in an unprecedented way, with key implications for philosophy, ontology, ethics, and theories of selfhood.

Nietzsche’s critique of metaphysics has opened the way for phenomenological and ontological interpretations of the event, which I propose to investigate in this work. A philosophy that no longer relies on a metaphysics of substance can begin to pay attention to how phenomena happen and can describe these events phenomenologically. Being itself no longer appears as the substantial or atemporal presence of the tradition but as the *event* of presence. Heidegger recognized that in the tradition being was indeed understood as presence, *Anwesenheit*. However, its proper eventfulness was neutralized in the reference to *constant* presence (*beständige Anwesenheit*), substantiality, Heidegger speaking of how

in such tradition of substantiality the temporal meaning of *Anwesenheit* was “repressed” (*abgedrängt*).¹⁶ In fact, the very term *Anwesenheit*, presence, harbors the motion of an event: the *an-* in *An-wesen* or *An-wesenheit* suggests a movement from concealment to unconcealment, a coming into presence, in a word, an *event* of presence. This implies, in turn, a break with the model of constant presence, that is, with a kind of “stability” that suppresses the temporal happening in the phenomenon of presence. It is a matter of hearing again the temporal meaning of presence and breaking with the notion of a constant presence, that is, with the metaphysics of *Vorhandenheit* that has governed the Western philosophical tradition.

Beginning with Nietzsche’s claim that the event exceeds causality and is not based on some substrate, I will attempt to develop a phenomenology of the event, giving thought to its very eventfulness. Nietzsche spoke of the radical unaccountability (groundlessness) of all things, of the radical innocence of life and becoming. No intention, no design, no author, no cause, and no agent direct the event of a life that happens in a tragic and innocent play. This innocence and unaccountability of all things captures the sense of the event as groundless play of existence. Further senses of the event emerge once the metaphysical constructs of reason, causality, and subjectivity are deconstructed: event as innocence of becoming, as excess (to reason and subjectivity), as impersonal happening, as groundless existence, as the very advent of the world, as the interruption of otherness, as the “impossible” itself, ultimately as the inappropriable coming into presence of being. To think the event will amount to consider these senses. In the end, as Nancy puts it, thinking the event, the surprise of the event or the event as surprise, will amount to thinking being surprised, or “over-taken” (*sur-prise*) by the event, for the event always exceeds thinking. The event is both the origin and the end of thought: it ends it in its claims to mastery while opening it to the infinite work of interpretation.

The task of thinking the event leads to the following questions: what constitutes an event as an event? What does “to happen” mean? How can one describe the phenomenon of the event? Is the event even a phenomenon, if it is the case that a phenomenon is what appears while an event seems to evade the presence of a present being and to be properly invisible? Is there a concept of an event, or, on the contrary, is an event not always extraconceptual? In her 1946 essay “What Is Existential Philosophy?”¹⁷ returning to the roots of existential philosophy, Hannah Arendt makes the radical claim that existence happens *outside of thought*. With that insight, a genuine thinking of the event in its eventfulness is made possible. Hannah Arendt argues that in the tradition the event in its sheer happening was suppressed and neutralized, reduced to causality, thought, reason, essence, or the meaning posited by the human mind. In her words, the “that” was subjugated to the “what,” and existence reduced to a concept or an essence, thereby negating

its eventfulness. However, Arendt insists forcefully, “the What will never be able to explain the That” (WEP, 167). The “what” and the “that” are not homogeneous; the event of existence is extraconceptual. This opens the way for encountering the event of being as such, no longer mediated by a reason or a concept. The event is irreducible to the powers of “com-prehension” of the concept. It is in this sense that Hannah Arendt refers to Jaspers’s “border situations”: whether death, guilt, fate, or chance, these events provoke thought and “drive us to philosophize,” not because they can be thought, but precisely *because they cannot*. Arendt indeed speaks of the essential *failure* of thought, the failure to capture in a concept the event of existence: “Philosophic thought can never get around the fact that reality cannot be resolved into what can be thought.” The event happens outside of thought and is irreducible to it. It is as if thought became the thought of its own impossibility, a thought of the aporia: what it has to think cannot be resolved into thought. The very purpose of philosophic thought is not to reduce the event but instead to “heighten . . . the intellectually irresolvable” (WEP, 185).

The event happens outside of thought, yet while happening to it. This is the true aporia (and secret resource) of thought: what it has to think lies outside of it, forever inappropriable. The origin of thought cannot be appropriated by thought: “If thinking necessarily fails to grasp its beginning, perhaps it is because the beginning does not depend upon thought.” Otherwise put, “Philosophy fails in its search for a first concept, because beginning does not depend on it” (POE, 56). The event is “outside the concept” (*hors-concept*), a concept now placed in relation to an outside that will always remain inappropriable for it. As Deleuze stresses, it is a matter of “affirming the relation of exteriority that links thought to what it thinks” (POE, 51). Thought does not begin from itself, but is the traumatized response to an event. Events are always traumatic. As Derrida writes, an event is traumatic or it is not an event: “What is a traumatic event? First of all, any event worthy of this name, even if it is a ‘happy’ event, has within it something that is traumatizing. An event always inflicts a wound in the everyday course of history, in the ordinary repetition and anticipation of all experience.”¹⁸ At the origin of thought there is a singular accident, a trauma, an encounter, a violent shock. As Deleuze puts it, “Truth depends on an encounter with something that forces us to think and to seek the truth. . . . It is the accident of the encounter that guarantees the necessity of what is thought” (cited in POE, 56). The relation between thought and the event is radically contingent. Indeed, an encounter is not accountable by reason, not subject to the principle of sufficient reason: “An encounter is always inexplicable” (POE, 57). To think the event is to think such absolute contingency.¹⁹ No reasons will ever measure up to the happening of the event. “The analysis of conditions of possibility, even existential ones, will never suffice in giving an account of the act or the event. An analysis of that kind will never measure up to what takes place, the effectivity—actuality—of what comes

to pass—for example, a friendship which will never be reduced to the desire or the potentiality of friendship.”²⁰ Born from an accident, a contingent event, from chance, thinking is always “circumstantial,” event-based, an absolutely unnecessary phenomenon or occurrence. “Thought is born of chance” (POE, 57). When thought assumes its eventful origin, when it engages in “an authentic relation to the outside,” it gains its authentic vocation and “affirms the unforeseeable or the unexpected.” Now, the notion that philosophy is born out of an event that it does not control is “a shock to reason” in its quest for ultimate foundations. For “how is it supposed to find a foundation [*assise*] in that which defeats it, in the inexplicable or the aleatory?” The logic of foundation of the principle of reason leads to its very ungrounding, its “collapse” in an abyss. Thought “stands on a movable ground that it does not control, and thereby wins its necessity.” In the end, what transpires is that “we cannot give the reason for an event” (POE, 57) because the event occurs outside of thought.

One finds in Nietzsche’s work an attempt to think this outsideness of the event with respect to thought with his claim that the event happens both *outside* and *before* the cause. Nietzsche frees the event from both causality and the belief in a subject or substrate. According to him, one of the constitutive errors of the metaphysical tradition has been its reliance on causality, the imposition of causes on every existence, on every event, as their *substratum*. “We have *created* a world of causes, a world of wills, and a world of spirits. All happening is considered a doing, all doing is supposed to be the effect of a will; the world is understood as a multiplicity of doers; a doer or subject ‘was imputed to everything that happened.’”²¹ Metaphysics creates a doer distinct from the deed and inverses the relation between cause and effect through the imaginary position of a cause beneath the event and the retroactive imputing of such cause to the event. In fact, far from preceding events as their substrate, causality *follows* the happening of the event, an “after the fact” reconstruction. There is a kind of “inversion of temporality,” an *Umkehrung der Zeit*, by which the event is said to follow the cause, when in fact, the cause is retroactively injected. “I’ll begin with dreams: a particular sensation, for instance, a sensation due to a distant cannon shot, has a cause imputed to it (*untergeschoben*) afterwards (*nachträglich*)” (TI, 32–33). Once the cause has been introduced, *after the event*, then, it is then alleged to exist prior to the event, an event that has now been transformed into necessity and meaning, a meaning that has been introduced: “In the meantime, the sensation persists in a kind of resonance: it waits, as it were, until the drive to find causes allows it to come into the foreground—not as an accident anymore, but as ‘meaning’” (TI, 32–33). What was first a sheer event, perceived outside of any causal network, is later integrated in the dream and reconstructed in terms of causation in the narration. The event is now said to be happening *according to causality*. In fact, one must invert this inversion and posit that the event happens *before* the cause. Only after something

has happened can one begin to account for it causally. That something happens is the original fact. In a sense, as Claude Romano argues in *Event and World*, there is *nothing* before the event. “Pure beginning from nothing, an event, in its an-archic bursting forth, is absolved from all antecedent causality.”²² An event, as he continues, “has no cause, because *it is its own origin*” (EW, 42).

The error is to distinguish in the event a doer from a deed, to “add” a doer to the deed, and to introduce a fictitious substrate under the event. “We separate ourselves, the doers, from the deed, and we make use of this pattern everywhere—we seek a doer from every event.”²³ Nietzsche insists that one cannot attach a doer to deeds, that “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming,” and that the doer “is merely a fiction added to the deed.”²⁴ A subject-doer as cause of its effects, of its deed, these are grammatical-metaphysical fictions, prejudices, that Nietzsche characterizes in *The Genealogy of Morals* as a “seduction of language” along with the “fundamental errors of reason that are petrified in it” (GM, 45). Just as the “popular mind” distinguishes the lightning from its flash, just as it reifies the “it” in the “it rains,” just as it conceives of the event as an action requiring a subject, just as it “doubles the deed” (“it posits the same event first as cause and then a second time as its effect,” GM, 45), the metaphysician distinguishes a subject from its effects. In fact, “there is no such substratum; there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; the doer is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything” (GM, 45). “The deed is everything”: this expression calls for another conception of the event, no longer anchored in a cause-substrate, no longer based on some subject or author, but happening *from itself*. Events do not emanate from nonhappening substrates: they happen from themselves, that is, without ground.

The event rests on no substrate, has no author; this is why it is always impersonal: *it* happens. What of this “it”? Reflecting on the impersonality of the expression *es gibt* (“it gives,” “there is”) in *On Time and Being*, Heidegger notes that the risk when discussing this “it” is to posit some “indeterminate power” that somehow would cause the event.²⁵ The problem might reside in the very structure of language, in a certain grammar that divides subject and predicate, that determines the “it” as a separate entity with an efficiency of its own, leading to the belief in a metaphysical substrate. As such, this grammatical structure neutralizes the eventfulness of the event. It is a matter of no longer isolating the “it” from the happening of the event. The “it” does not refer to a subject existing under the event of being, but is coextensive with such event. If I say “it rains,” the “it” designates the *raining* itself, that is, the *event* of raining. The “it” designates the impersonal eventfulness of the event.

The event is a radically impersonal phenomenon, enacted by no one, no subject, no self: the event occurs *outside the subject*. As Derrida states, an event is “something that happens in some sense without or before any subject, without or

before anyone's decision" (*For Strasbourg*, 10). The event exceeds the capacity of a subject, the power of a self. This is why Derrida will ultimately reject the notion of the performative to think the event, as it still relies too heavily on the action of a subject. One often associates the performative with the enacting of an event. "We traditionally say that the performative produces events—I do what I say, I open the session if I am presiding over it, I produce the event of which I speak. In general, we thus relate the possibility of the event that is produced to a performative initiative and thus to a performative responsibility" (*For Strasbourg*, 67). However, in such a performative, the event is neutralized by the position of a powerful subject. "A performative produces an event only by securing for itself, in the first-person singular or plural, in the present, and with the guarantee offered by conventions or legitimated fictions, the power that an ipseity gives itself to produce the event of which it speaks" (R, 152). Just as so-called "constative" language, the performative also misses the eventful in the event. "Now, just like the constative, it seems to me, the performative cannot avoid neutralizing, indeed annulling, the eventfulness of the event it is supposed to produce" (R, 152). Certainly, Derrida concedes, something does happen with the performative, but what is eventful exceeds it: "I am not saying that nothing then happens, but what happens is programmable, foreseeable, controlled, conditioned by conventions." Therefore, "it can thus be said, I would dare say, that an event worthy of its name is an event that derails all performativity" (*For Strasbourg*, 67). It is a matter of thinking the event outside of a problematics of power, "beyond all performative mastery, beyond all power,"²⁶ as the event undoes both will and power. The experience of the event "defeats my will."²⁷ With the event, it will be a matter of a *letting*, not a doing. When it comes to the event, it is a matter of abandoning the will and *letting* the event happen, as opposed to *making* it happen, a "making happen" that always mobilizes the power and will of a subject. "Must there not be an absence of the will to abandon, whence the question of letting-happen rather than making-happen?" (*For Strasbourg*, 92).

The event undoes the power of the subject, as the event happens *of itself*, placing us, as it were, no longer in the position of actors, but, as Jean-Luc Marion suggests, of *witnesses*. As he clarifies, the term *witness* signifies the undoing of the transcendental subject constituting the event as object: "With the name witness, we must understand a subjectivity stripped of the characteristics that gave it transcendental rank" (BG, 217). To the constituting subject, "there succeeds the witness—the constituted witness" (BG, 216). The event happens of itself, not constituted by a transcendental subject: "The phenomenon of the passing reached me and, so to speak, constituted me as not constituting it—to the point that all I have is recognize myself as the mere witness (the one who certainly saw what he has seen, but does not understand what he has seen), and I renounce my claim to be its transcendental subject" (NC, 186). The event happens of itself without anyone

conducting it. Hence, in Waterloo, the battle “passes and passes away on its own, without anybody making it or deciding it. It passes, and each watches it pass, fade into the distance, and then disappear, disappear like it had come that is to say, of itself” (BG, 228). Let me stress here the capital importance of this motif of *passing* in the thinking of the event. The event “is” not but essentially *passes*. The event belongs to the fundamental category of *passing*; not “being” in the sense of a substantial presence, but *passing*. As Marion explains, “First, it is not self-evident that in order to be, a being must subsist in permanence: indeed, what is proper to the event, by definition, is not to be insofar as it subsists in permanence, but insofar as it *passes*” (NC, 89, my emphasis). The event passes (*passe*) and passes of itself (*se passe*) while exceeding us from all sides.

The event happens of itself, i.e., is impersonal, and yet it always happens to someone, bringing forth an eventful self, that is to say, a self that is constituted (but also undone) by the event. Heidegger shows how being is an event (*Ereignis*) in which we have a part as human beings. The human being is not the *ego cogito* of the Cartesian tradition in a position of subject, but the one who is concerned by the event of being and happening from it. This new perspective requires that the self, far from designating some substantial ego, itself must be understood as arising from an event. In that sense, the self as such *is* an event, coming to be as a response to the eventfulness of being. It will be necessary, in our understanding of the event, to think together the impersonality of the event with the arising and responding of a self, as if the *es gibt* was the site of an I to be, a self that is corresponding with an otherwise impersonal phenomenon. In this respect, one ought not to be too quick to set apart the impersonality of the event with the selfhood that is engaged by it. The event is impersonal, happens of itself, but it engages a self that consists precisely in the reception of such event, in which the I suffers the “shock” of the event. What is at stake here in the task of thinking the event is to reveal how the self itself is an event, happening, as it were, in and from the happening of being. The self cannot be presupposed as a pregiven or preconstituted subject but rather originates *in and as an event*.

This selfhood, however, is not appropriative, not synonymous with the possessive appropriation of otherness in an absolute “at-home,” since to be a self is to be exposed to an event that remains inappropriable for it. Derrida insists that the experience of the event is always that of an inappropriable: “The undergoing [*l'épreuve*] of the event, that which in the undergoing or in the ordeal *at once opens itself up to and resists experience*, is, it seems to me, a certain inappropriability of what comes or happens [*ce qui arrive*]” (PTT, 90, trans. slightly modified). For Arendt the event always remains outside of thought, happening from without, a pure “that” that no “what” can ever explain. This is why we will have to approach the event in terms of such inappropriability, an expropriation or “secret” to which we are exposed. Heidegger indicated the irreducible expropriation (*Enteignis*) at

the heart of the event (*Ereignis*), going so far as to state: “Expropriation points towards what is most proper to the event.”²⁸

II.

In chapter 1, I attempt to reconstitute the twisting free of the event from the demands of rational thought. I have indicated how the event has traditionally been understood within a philosophy of causality, subjectivity, and reason and how its eventfulness was neutralized by the postulate that events happen *according to causality*. In contrast with this tradition, which ultimately places the event under the requirements of the principle of sufficient reason, I follow the emergence of a thinking of the event after Kant (but in a sense already with Kant), drawing from Hannah Arendt’s 1946 essay “What Is Existential Philosophy?” Hannah Arendt argues that in the tradition the event of existence was neutralized by and reduced to the power of the concept, a project that culminates in Hegel’s work. Even in Husserlian phenomenology, the notion of an intentional consciousness establishes the reduction of the happening phenomenon to what a consciousness can transcendently constitute: the event is not allowed to escape the constitutive powers of subjectivity. To think the event in its eventfulness will require a break with that reduction of being to thought, that is, with the postulated identity of being with thought in which the event is made to conform to the power of the concept and of consciousness.

Arendt evokes the “philosophical shock,” the very shock or wonder (*thau-mazein*) that is at the origin of thinking and philosophy. The event happens *outside* of thought and remains inappropriate for it. This is, for instance, the shock of the resistance of *singularity* to conceptual generality. An event is each time singular, a singularity that interrupts the mastery of thought and the form of conceptuality. Derrida speaks of the event as “what comes to pass only once, only one time, a single time, a first and last time, in an always singular, unique, exceptional, irreplaceable, unforeseeable, and incalculable fashion” (R, 135). It is the shock of an event that does not occur within a pregiven structural whole, such as “the world,” but “pierces” its horizon. It is the shock of facticity in the face of thought, the “that” before the “what.” It is the shock of sheer existence before meaning. In each case, the event exceeds the form of the concept. I follow this freeing of the event from the power of the concept in Arendt’s reading of Kant, in particular in: (a) his account of synthetic judgments; (b) his refutation of the ontological proof of God’s existence; and (c) his notion of transcendental freedom.

I pursue in chapter 2 this emergence of the event outside of the dominance of causality and subjectivity by showing how for both Nietzsche and Heidegger, the event escapes the schemes of causality, subject or substrate, and reason. Two fundamental errors stand in the way of letting the event come forth in its

eventfulness: the reliance on causality and the belief in the subject. With respect to causality, instead of the event following the cause, I suggest that the event is the original phenomenon. Events do not simply follow predetermined sequences. An event “worthy of the name” represents the surge of the new through which precisely it does not “follow” from a previous cause. A new understanding of temporality is here required: not a ruled sequence coming from the past to the present, but an eventful temporality, coming from the future, disrupting the causal networks, and transforming the entire complex of temporality, indeed transforming the past itself. Another conception of the event is called for, no longer anchored in a cause-substrate, but happening *without ground*.

This groundlessness of the event is revealed by Heidegger in his course, *The Principle of Reason*, in which he reflects on a principle that is precisely supposed to ground events: the principle of reason (*der Satz vom Grund*). As noted, it is paradoxically the very claim of the principle of reason, that is, that all events must be founded in reason, that turns out to be itself without reason and thus groundless. An abyss is here formed, which is the abyss (*Ab-grund*) of the ground that, in order to be the ground, must itself be without a ground. To the question of “why,” which asks for reasons and foundations, Heidegger opposes the “answer” of the because through his citing of the sixteenth-century poet and mystic Angelus Silesius:

The rose is without why: it blooms because it blooms,
It pays no attention to itself, asks not whether it is seen

The rose is without why, but blooms *because* it blooms. For Heidegger, that tautology, far from saying nothing, says everything, that is, the entire *eventful facticity* of the being: it happens as it happens. The event becomes the highest reason. The reason given is harbored entirely within the fact of the being, that is, within the being itself, “the fact of its being a rose or its rose-being [*ihr Rose-sein*]” (GA 10, 84/PR, 57, trans. slightly modified). We are asked to leave the why (the cause) for the because (the event). Heidegger cites Goethe, who wrote in his *Collected Sayings* from 1815: “How? When? and Where?—The gods remain mute! You stick to the *because* and ask not why?” (GA 10, 185/PR, 126). The because (*weil*) is, as ground, groundless. In contrast with the why, always in quest of foundations, the because remains groundless. “What does ‘because’ mean? It guards against investigating the ‘why,’ therefore, against investigating foundations. It balks at founding and getting to the bottom of something. For the ‘because’ is without ‘why,’ it has no ground, it is ground itself” (GA 10, 186/PR, 127). The event of being is groundless, without reason, without a why.

In chapter 3, I investigate the phenomenological senses of the event revealed by this dismantling—deconstruction—of the metaphysical categories of causality,

subjectivity, and reason/ground. Once the event is no longer referred to the demands of the principle of reason, no longer anchored in a subject-cause, it becomes possible to let it give itself in its eventfulness, in the way it happens each time. “Thinking the event” would here mean not subjecting it to reason, but letting it be (especially if thinking itself is approached as a kind of letting, letting-be or *Gelassenheit*²⁹), and indeed grasping phenomenality itself as an event. Following Heidegger in paragraph 7 of *Being and Time*, phenomenology is a bringing to light of the phenomenality of phenomena, that is, the *event* of their givenness. Phenomenology is concerned, not with the ontical given, but with phenomenality itself, with the *event* of givenness. The phenomenon is here taken in its verbal sense, as a self-showing. This suggests that phenomena themselves must be taken as *events*. This is why I argue that phenomenology, in its most authentic sense, ought to be reconsidered in terms of the event and recast as a phenomenology of the event.

Certain commentators have claimed that there is an antinomy, an incompatibility of sorts, between phenomenology and event on the account that phenomenology would always be directed at the present phenomenon while the event exceeds the present, and even the horizon of presence. To the extent that the event is not a present being or object, that is, is “not ‘presentable,’” it would “exceed” the resources of any phenomenology.³⁰ I argue, however, that phenomenology is *about that very excess*. Drawing from Jean-Luc Marion’s description of the “saturated” phenomenon, I approach the event as *excess*. Unconditional eventful phenomenality exceeds any encompassing horizon and reverses the subject into the recipient (indeed, as we saw, the “witness”) of the impersonal passing of the event. As such, the event becomes unpredictable (for Derrida, “it’s an event insofar as what’s happening was not predicted,” CIP, 456), outside the domain or sphere of the subject and happening to it from without. An event is that which happens in excess of our subjective anticipations. Phenomenology is transformed by such eventful phenomenality, and thinking the event means here how thinking is affected and traumatized by the event.

In light of this phenomenology of the event, I investigate in chapter 4 the extent to which “things” themselves should be taken as events. Once things are referred back to the event of their givenness, they in turn become affected by such presence and find themselves participating in the proper mobility and happening of being so that they are precisely not simply “mere” things but events themselves. For Heidegger being is never without beings and does not subsist in some separate sphere: there is no being without beings. This is why beings participate in the event of being, an event that cannot happen without things “sheltering” it. With respect to thing and world, one can state that things become events by participating in a world that *is never given* but exists only as happening. “The world worlds,” Heidegger writes in “The Origin of the Work of Art.”³¹ This verblatity of the world reveals that the world is not given but is an event that

happens, each time, *by way of things*. This is shown in *Being and Time*, where Heidegger describes things, not as discrete, separate, individual entities, but as constitutive and formative of a world. Things that appear within the world are not first simply “present-at-hand” (*vorhanden*), as Heidegger calls them, but must be taken instead as “ready-to-hand” (*zuhanden*), that is, as participating in the event of the world. Further, Heidegger presents in *Being and Time* what could be called a “thingly self,” that is, a self that comes to itself *from things*, revealing that the event of selfhood is inscribed in things.

Things are thus events. I analyze Heidegger’s rethinking of the thing in later texts, where it is precisely taken in its eventful and verbal sense. Heidegger seems to recognize that a thing is indeed properly an event, and to that extent, he offers a verbal form for the term, *dingen*, *Das Dingen*, at the risk of stretching the limits of language: the “thing things,” *Das Ding dingt*, the thing is a thing insofar as it “things.” As he puts it in the essay “The Thing”: “The jug presences [*west*] as a thing. The jug is the jug as a thing. But how does the thing presence? The thing *things* [*Das Ding dingt*].”³² The thing as noun becomes the thing as a verb: to thing, the “thinging” of the thing. The thing is neither the Roman *res*, nor the medieval *ens*, nor an object, and nor a present-at-hand entity. Rather, the thing is a thing *insofar as it happens*, that is, insofar as “it things”: “The presence of something present such as the jug comes into its own, appropriatively manifests and determines itself, only from the thinging of the thing” (GA 7, 179/PLT, 175). The being of the thing lies in its eventfulness, not in objective presence. This presencing of things is the way in which the thing harbors, shelters, the event of presence. There are no things prior to such thinging; rather, there is a thing insofar as there is “thinging.” Things are properly events, and this reveals in turn that events are “thingly.”

In chapters 5 and 6, I explore the thematic of an “event of being” and how the event comes forth as the main feature of being. In the wake of the deconstruction of the categories of reason and causality that have in the tradition enframed and neutralized the event in its eventfulness, I noted how it became possible to do justice to the phenomenon of the event, indeed to grasp phenomenology itself as a phenomenology of the event. Now, according to Heidegger, the original phenomenon of phenomenology is *being* itself. Unlike his former mentor, Husserl, Heidegger does not define phenomenology in relation to consciousness but to the event of being. “With regard to its subject-matter, phenomenology is the science of the being of entities—ontology.”³³ Phenomenology is approached as the very method of ontology, and the phenomena are to be referred not to a constituting consciousness, but to the *event* of being as such. Now, if on the one hand phenomenology is to be recognized as a phenomenology of the event, and if on the other hand the distinctive original phenomenon of phenomenology is being as such, then it becomes possible to finally grasp being itself as event, as opposed

to some substantial ground. Indeed, Heidegger develops a powerful thought of the event, seizing being itself as eventfulness and temporal happening, as presence and presencing. By approaching being in distinction from beings, and in particular in distinction from any reference to a supreme being, substrate, or substance (which in the ontotheological tradition had determined the meaning of being), Heidegger makes it possible to approach being as an event, away from the tradition of substantiality and the metaphysical categories of atemporal permanent presence. Levinas rightly underlined this fundamental contribution of Heidegger's thought: namely, to have grasped being no longer as a noun, but as a verb. In one of his last classes taught at the Sorbonne, on November 17, 1975, he explained: "The most extraordinary thing that Heidegger brings us is a new *sonority* of the verb 'to be': precisely its *verbal* sonority. To be: not what is, but the verb, the 'act' of being."³⁴ Heidegger understands being as event: being, as such, *happens*. In this way, it becomes clear that it is not necessary to go beyond being, beyond ontology, to think the event (as some allege), for being itself happens as an event.

In chapter 5, I follow Heidegger's critique of substantiality so as to reveal the eventfulness of being, which he approached in his early works as the proper motion or "unrest" (*Unruhe*) of "factual life." Understanding being itself as event was made possible, first, by deconstructing the inadequate mode of substantiality, and further, by revealing the motion and eventfulness of historical life. I trace the retrieval of the eventfulness of life in Heidegger's early work on history and in his thematization of "hermeneutical life," which displays a motion or motility (*Bewegtheit*) that always involves a radical expropriation, which Heidegger names "ruinane." I identify several features: (a) Being (which Heidegger approaches in these early texts terminologically as "life" and "factual life") is not some substantial presence, but an event and a happening. (b) This event is irreducible and the ultimate phenomenon: it is not anchored in any other reality that itself would not be happening. (c) This event is marked by an expropriation or negativity, an expropriation or "ruinane" already identified in the thematic of the event occurring "outside" of thought. (d) To such event is assigned thought as the counter-event or response to its coming.

In chapter 6, I pursue this thinking of the event of being by first developing its temporal dimension. In Heidegger's early work, "factual life" (later renamed "Dasein") is described in terms of a temporal singularity as each time its own (*Jeweiligkeit*). Dasein is *each time* the being it has to be. I elaborate this logic of the each, revealing key features of the event: singularity, discontinuity, and difference. In *Being Singular Plural*, Nancy insists on the singularity of being, understood in terms of the temporal givenness of an "each time," suggesting that being itself happens "*au coup par coup*," blow by blow, going so far as to claim that the essence of being is the stroke or the shock of the instant (*le coup*). Each time,

“being” is always a stroke or blow (*un coup*) of being. This could also be said in this way: the essence of being is the event. Being happens each time as a “stroke of being”: “a lash, blow, beating, shock, knock, an encounter, an access” (BSP, 33). The event of existence is and can only be singular: there is no “general” or continuous existence. Indeed, “each time” does not mean “always” and in fact indicates the interruption of any continuity. Any “constancy” is derived from the interruption of the event, from the succession of an “each time” that is not unlike what Merleau-Ponty wrote of time, which he compared it to a fountain whose renewed thrust can give the appearance of permanence: “We say that there is time as we say that there is a fountain: the water changes and the fountain remains, because the form is preserved; the form is preserved because *each* successive burst takes up the functions of the previous one.”³⁵

I further explore how the event can be articulated in terms of *possibility*. Derrida stresses that any event must be structured around the possibility of a perhaps. “There is no event, to be sure, that is not preceded and followed by its own perhaps,” he writes.³⁶ The *perhaps* or the *maybe* of the event is the primary and irreducible form of experience, the primary tense of being. This perhaps represents the most authentic sense of the event: “the thought of the ‘perhaps’ perhaps engages the only possible thought of the event” (PF, 29). This is indeed what Heidegger showed when he explained that Dasein’s being is its own possibility. “As a being, Dasein always defines itself in terms of a possibility which it *is*” (SZ, 43). Dasein is a being that never “is” what it is (as a present-at-hand being), but is instead approached in terms of an event that is in the process of happening. The event is tied to the possible, to the event of an existence that is each time “to be.” Nonetheless, I will in chapter 8 radicalize this thinking of the possible by showing how possibility needs to be located in an exposure to the “im-possible,” as if the possible was “possibilized” by the impossible. Indeed, a possibility that would be merely possible can only be a neutralization of the irruptive nature of the event. “For a possible that would only be possible (non-impossible), a possible surely and certainly possible, accessible in advance, would be a poor possible, a future-less possible, a possible already set aside, so to speak, life-assured” (PF, 29). Such a possible would not be eventful, but the predetermined realization of a prior plan or program. If the event must be approached first on the side of the possible, it must be recognized that the impossible proves to be the secret resource of the possible. “If all that arises is what is already possible, and so capable of being anticipated and expected, that is not an event. The event is possible only coming from the impossible” (PM, 74).

I pursue this thinking of the event of being in terms of a reflection on presence. As noted, Heidegger approaches being as an event, as the event of presence. Instead of supposing an underlying permanent substance and foundation, it is a matter of understanding being as the event of givenness (and withdrawal), as well

as a *letting*. Indeed, “letting” is for Heidegger the “deepest meaning of being.” For an event happens *of itself* so that an event is never prepared, produced, or made, but precisely let be. To the letting of being corresponds the fundamental disposition of thinking as *Gelassenheit*, as letting-be. “Thinking the event” would mean here: letting . . . the letting, letting the letting be. Through a close reading of the 1962 lecture “On Time and Being” and other texts of that late period, such as *Four Seminars*, I engage Heidegger’s approach to being as event of presence (*Anwesenheit*) or presencing (*Anwesen*). What then appears is how the proper of time and the proper of being involve the event (*Ereignis*) of the givenness of the *es gibt*, that is to say, the *event* of being and time and the human being as recipient of such event. This is why in a last section, I show how the self happens in and though the event of being, a self that is no longer the substantial subject of the tradition, but the one who is the recipient of the event of being, happening through the happening of being. The thinking of being approached from the giving of *Ereignis* leads to a pure thinking of the event, that is, to the *eventfulness of the event*, an eventfulness that nonetheless always entails an irreducible expropriation.

In chapter 7, I explore such expropriation in the happening of the event in terms of what Jean-Luc Nancy calls a withdrawal of essence. This withdrawal is apparent in the fact that nothing preexists the event of being, no principle, arche, or prior substance. “Being absolutely does not *preexist*; nothing preexists; only what exists exists” (BSP, 29). To that extent, being is nothing but the event of itself and does not refer to any other instance than its own happening. The event is no longer anchored in a principle that itself would not be happening. Preceded by nothing and grounded in no essence, the event can only come as a surprise. Indeed, for Nancy, the surprise is not the mere accompanying aspect of an event, but its defining characteristic (“What makes the event an event is not only that it happens, but that it surprises,” BSP, 159), going so far as to write that “the event surprises or else it is not an event” (BSP, 167). The event cannot unfold predictably, following an essence, a direction, or some principle, but can only happen “by way of surprise” (BSP, 159). Thinking the event here would mean thinking the surprise, which immediately reverses into: thinking is surprised by the event; surprised, or, to follow literally the French, *sur-pri*se: “over-taken.” Nancy writes that “philosophy is *surprised thought*” (BSP, 165).

I unfold this essencelessness of the event in terms of what Nancy calls the “creation of the world.” In spite of its theological provenance, the motif of “creation,” certainly used provocatively by Nancy,³⁷ is to be taken in a radically nontheological way as a creation “without a creator.”³⁸ In fact, creation is even characterized as the nodal point in a deconstruction of Christianity to the extent that it is a creation *ex nihilo*, a nothing in which God as author disappears. Nancy suggests that the God of ontotheology, in a peculiar *kenosis* or self-emptying, was “progressively stripped of the divine attributes of an independent existence and

only retained those of the existence of the world considered in its immanence” (CW, 44). Creation, understood in a nontheological sense, is the mark of the event of the world: the world is not given, not resting on some prior principle of arche, but exists rigorously as the event of itself, as *creation* of itself. This is why Nancy clarifies that “the world is not given” and that, in fact, “the world is its own creation” (CW, 109).

In a third section, I explore this thinking of the event in terms of *abandonment*, which designates the unsubstantial character of an event as deprived of principles, ground and arche, a condition or rather “incondition” in which we find ourselves in the wake of the exhaustion of metaphysical principles and from which we are called to think. Nancy characterizes existence as abandonment and sheer exposure, a “leaving” or “abandonment” of any prior essence. It is “from an abandonment that being comes forth: we can say no more. There is no going back prior; being conveys nothing older than its abandonment.”³⁹ The only ontology that remains, according to Nancy, is precisely no longer an ontotheology, but an ontology characterized by the feature of abandonment, that is, abandonment *as the sole predicate of being*. Abandonment must not only be understood as an abandonment by but also an abandonment *to a law*, Nancy clarifies. One finds here the motif of law and obligation intertwined with that of “abandoned being.” The event of being amounts to a being-obligated: to be is having to be, obligated and called to be. One can speak of a categorical imperative of the event of being: one must be! A certain dignity, or ethicality, is hence conferred to the event of being, which is always a call that one must answer.

Finally, I explore the extent to which this event of being is always—each time—the event of a coexistence, as for Nancy being rigorously means: being-with. Nancy approaches such being-with as an event in his rethinking of democracy, of what one may call the *event* of democracy. Nancy’s claim is that it is a matter of understanding democracy “metaphysically,” and not in its traditional exhausted sense as a political regime. “Democracy is first of all a metaphysics and only afterwards a politics.”⁴⁰ What Nancy gestures toward here is to approach democracy not as a political form or regime, but as an *event*. Indeed, democracy is characterized as a power of imagining, of invention, without subject or mastery and in excess of identity of any given form. Democracy is not only in excess of the political, it is also in excess *of itself*, that is, of its own idea, form, or concept, precisely to the extent that it is first of all an event, which, as seen with Arendt, always exceeds its own concept. Therein lies what Nancy calls the “inadequacy” of democracy, an inadequacy with respect to itself that Nancy refers to Derrida’s “democracy to come” in a perspective that combines the eventful character of democracy with its incompleteness and perfectibility. I argue that such incompleteness or inadequation—indeed *différance*—must be also thought from the eventful character of democracy.

In chapter 8, I focus on the inappropriability of the event, a motif that has been a constant thread in the course of this work. As I have hoped to show, the event permeates every instance of being and existence to such an extent that to be means: to happen. And yet, it remains inappropriable, frustrating any attempt to reduce it to a present being or an identity. It only *happens*, in the flash of a disjointed, discontinuous, and anachronic temporality preventing any gathering in a present. The event has, as it were, the structure of the trace as Derrida describes it: “The trace is not a substance, a present existing thing, but a process that is changing all the time. It can only reinterpret itself and always, finally, it is carried away” (PM, 159). The event remains inappropriable, resistant to anticipation and even to comprehension, irreducible to reason. It “belongs to an atemporal temporality, to a duration that cannot be grasped: something one can neither stabilize, establish, *grasp* [*prendre*], *apprehend*, or *comprehend*. Understanding, common sense, and reason cannot seize [*begreifen*], conceive, understand, or mediate it.”⁴¹ As such, the event constitutes a challenge to reason and understanding: “The event is what comes and, in coming, comes to surprise me, to surprise and to suspend comprehension: the event is first of all *that which* I do not first of all comprehend. Better, the event is first of all *that* I do not comprehend. The fact that I do not comprehend: my incomprehension.”⁴² For Derrida, an event is always inappropriable. I discuss the presence of this inappropriable in terms of what Derrida calls the “secret” (note that the French *secret* translates in Derrida’s text Heidegger’s *Geheimnis*). Through the leitmotif repetition of the expression “*il y a là un secret*” or “*il y a là du secret*,” “there is something secret” (literally, there is there something secret), Derrida seeks to emphasize that it is first a matter of recalling, not *what* the secret would be, but rather *that* there is a secret at all; as if, through this shift from the “what” to the “that” of the secret, it was a matter of remembering, or removing from its necessary oblivion, the presence of a secret in the experience of the event.

I then engage Derrida’s thinking of the “im-possible” as it pertains to the event. Indeed, for Derrida, “only the impossible happens” (PM, 87). In what was to be his last appearance on television, in June 2004 with France 3, answering the question of the journalist who had asked him what deconstruction is, Derrida replied: “deconstruction is what happens [*la déconstruction, c’est ce qui arrive*],” and then he added: “that is to say, the impossible.” The impossible, he concluded, is “the only thing that happens [*la seule chose qui arrive*]”!⁴³ This is no hyperbole, but a rigorous understanding of the intertwining between the possible and the impossible as it pertains to the event. “‘The impossible is what takes place.’ Madness. I am tempted to say of this utterance, itself impossible, that it touches on the very condition of thinking the event. There where the possible is all that happens, nothing happens, nothing that is not the impoverished unfurling or the predictable predicate of what finds itself already there, potentially, and thus

produces nothing new, not even accidents worthy of the name ‘event’” (OT, 57). As I alluded to prior, the impossible becomes the secret resource of the possible and the condition of any event “worthy of the name.”

Finally, in a concluding chapter, I sketch the contours of an “ethics of the event” and how the happening of the event opens onto a welcome to what comes in the event, a saying yes to being overtaken and taken away by its secret. Here appear the thematics of a hospitality to the event. Throughout this work, it has been an issue of freeing the pure eventfulness of the event from the traditional attempts to neutralize it, whether through the demands of a principle of reason or through the position of a willful ego, of letting the event give itself. The happening of the event is the coming of the *arrivant*, an arrival that is welcomed by an original hospitality. Indeed, the ethics of the event, as I approach it here, is to be taken as an ethics of hospitality, a welcome of the event in its irruptive coming. I am, before the event, caught by surprise, and without resources, an absolute weakness before its happening. In fact, an event exposes the utter vulnerability of the one who is exposed to it, the powerlessness and radical passivity of the one to whom it happens. Derrida writes that the event “is there, before us, without us—*there* is someone, something, that happens, that happens to us, and that has no need of us to happen (to us). And this relation to the event or alterity, as well as to chance or the occasion, leaves us completely disarmed; and one has to be disarmed. The ‘has to’ says yes to the event: it is stronger than I am.”⁴⁴ The ethics of the event would designate this vulnerability, this unconditional openness to the other. From such exposure to the otherness of the event, always happening from without, one understands better in what sense the event weighs on thought from the outside (how it exscribes it) and how thought is nothing but the thinking of this shock, in wonder before it, even if it means never being able to comprehend or appropriate it.

1 The Event outside of Thought

The Neutralization of the Event

In her 1946 essay “What Is Existential Philosophy?,”¹ returning to the roots of existential philosophy, Hannah Arendt makes the radical claim that the event of existence is a phenomenon that takes place *outside of thought*. With that insight, which posits the exteriority of existence with respect to thought, a genuine thinking of the event in its eventfulness is made possible. This possibility is born out of a break with reason’s claims to encapsulate or enframe the real, which has been the dream of the entire philosophical tradition culminating with Hegel. Precisely commenting on Hegel’s system as an attempt to encompass the whole of reality in thought, Arendt writes: “With a comprehensiveness never achieved before him, Hegel provided a philosophical explanation for all the phenomena of nature and history and brought them together in a strangely unified whole.” In so doing, she continues, thought became a “prison for reality” (WEP, 164). The eventfulness of the event is thereby reduced to the demands of reason. Such attempt to reduce events to what thought can grasp is best represented, according to Arendt, in Hegel’s work, “the last word of all Western philosophy,” in the sense that it accomplishes the ancient identification of being and thought. In Hegel’s well-known expression in his preface to *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, “what is rational is real, and what is real is rational (*Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*).”² Now, according to Arendt, the origin of existential philosophy is to be situated in the rupture with this postulate of an identity between being and thought. What those existential philosophers “were rebelling against, and despairing of,” she writes, “was philosophy itself, the postulated identity of thought and being” (WEP, 164). Whether in the form of materialisms or idealisms, whether by affirming the primacy of matter or on the contrary the primacy of the mind, all traditional systems of thought agree on this identity, and they all attempt “to re-establish the unity of thought and Being” (WEP, 164). Existential philosophy breaks with that supposed identity, through which the event is neutralized and made to conform to the form of thought.

Never has this neutralization of the event to thought appeared so clearly as in the reduction of events to causality in Kant’s theoretical philosophy. With Kant, one sees how events are conceived in terms of and on the basis of causality, how their independence is reduced or neutralized by a causal order. Kant posits that

events happen *according to causality*. Kant assumes the universal determinism of nature and asserts his commitment to a universal causal determinism for everything that happens, according to which “everything in the world happens solely in accordance with laws of nature.”³ Such universal natural causality is taken by Kant as a given and not in dispute. This is not surprising, if it is the case, as Heidegger states in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, that “*causality*, in the traditional sense of the being of beings, in common understanding as in traditional metaphysics, is the *fundamental category of being as being-present-at-hand* [Vorhandensein].”⁴ One cannot stress enough the importance of the motif of causality in traditional metaphysics, with Jean-Luc Marion going so far as to claim, “Metaphysics knows nothing but the cause.” Metaphysics knows nothing but the cause, and “knows nothing except through the cause, either as cause or as effect.”⁵ Causality is the fundamental category. “In metaphysics, cause does not exist merely as one categorical function among others; it is set up as the universal category for all beings. Thus for Suarez: ‘There is no being that is not an effect or a cause’; for Pascal: ‘All things caused and causing’; or for Kant: ‘Everything of which experience teaches that it happens [*geschieht*] must have a cause.’”⁶ Causality of nature is traditionally the paradigm to think the being of beings, the meaning of being.

Kant posits this paradigm in the second analogy of experience in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which states (in the A edition) that “everything that happens presupposes something which it follows in accordance with a rule” and (in the B edition) that “all alterations [*Veränderungen*] occur in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect” (CPR, A 189/B 232, 304). Let me clarify from the outset that for Kant, as he demonstrated in the first analogy, all appearances are alterations, that is, alterations of an enduring substance, as opposed to “an origination out of nothing” (CPR, A 206/B 251, 314). He writes in the second analogy that “all appearances of the temporal sequence are collectively only **alterations**, i.e., a successive being and not-being of the determination of the substance that persists there,” and: “This could also have been expressed thus: **All change (succession) of appearances is only alteration**” (CPR, A 189/B 232, 304, emphasis in the original). An alteration “is a way of existing that succeeds another way of existing *of the very same object*” (CPR, A 187/B 230, 303, emphasis mine). This understanding of appearances as alterations reveals that Kant is assigning to events an underlying substrate, a substance, which by definition does not change and remains the same. The “concept of alteration presupposes one and the same subject as existing with two opposed determinations, and thus as persisting” (CPR, A 189/B 233, 304). In this way, the notion of event discussed in the analogies of experience only presents a neutralized eventfulness, reduced to a substantial principle that itself does not happen.

For Kant, “analogies” refer to the principles that organize and regulate the *existence* of appearances in time, the various processes of nature. These

appearances obey certain rules that are not drawn empirically from a given experience, but rather determine a priori the possibility of experience (the analogies, as rules of the three modes of time that are persistence, succession, and simultaneity, “precede experience and first make it possible,” CPR, A 177/B 220, 296). In fact, for Kant, “it is only because we subject the sequence of the appearances and thus all alteration to the law of causality that experience itself, i.e., empirical cognition of them, is possible” (CPR, A 188/B 234, 305). For Kant, the general principle of all three analogies is that all appearances are subject a priori to rules that affect and determine their relation in time. Such rule is, of course, that of the cause. For what is a cause? The concept of cause is that of “the real upon which, whenever it is posited, something else always follows” (CPR, A 144/B 183, 275). This necessary rule determines a priori the temporal succession of events, the succession of occurrences. As Kant explains in the introduction to the first Critique (CPR, B 5, 138): “The very concept of a cause so obviously contains the concept of a necessity of connection with an effect and a strict universality of rule that it would be entirely lost if one sought, as Hume did, to derive it from a frequent association of that which happens with that which precedes and a habit (thus a merely subjective necessity) of connecting representations arising from that association.” The second analogy is indeed titled “Principle of temporal sequence according to the law of causality” (CPR, A 189/B 232, 304). The rule necessarily determines the relation between two states so that “in order for this to be cognized as determined, the relation between the two states must be thought in such a way that it is thereby necessarily determined which of them must be placed before and which after rather than vice-versa” (CPR, A 189/B 234, 305). In other words, the succession of events must follow a rule, so that, as Kant explains, “I cannot reverse the series and place that which happens prior to that which it follows” (CPR, A 198/B 243, 310). That rule—causality—ensures that when the preceding state is posited, the current event in question “inevitably and necessarily follows.” For instance, to take up the example of the ship going down the river provided by Kant, “it is impossible that in the apprehension of this appearance the ship should first be perceived downstream and afterwards upstream” (CPR, A 192/B 237, 307). The order in the succession of the appearances is here necessary, and “the apprehension is bound to it.” This stands in contrast with the succession of perception of a house, for, although the perceptions are also successive, the order of this succession is subjective and arbitrary. “Thus, e.g., the apprehension of the manifold in the appearance of a house that stands before me is successive;” however, in this particular case, “my perceptions could have begun at its rooftop and ended at the ground, but could also have begun below and ended above; likewise I could have apprehended the manifold of empirical intuition from the right or from the left. In the series of these perceptions there was therefore no determinate order that made it necessary when I had to begin in the apprehension in order to combine

the manifold empirically” (CPR, A 193/B 238, 307). Now the difference between the ship going down the river and the house is the following: the house is not an event but an object that “stands before me,” while the ship on the river is an actual occurrence or event. When it comes to occurrences or events, the order of succession is necessary and always happens according to a rule. Hence Kant clarifies: “But this rule is always to be found in the perception of *that which happens*, and it makes the order of perceptions that follow one another (in the apprehension of this appearance) **necessary**” (CPR, A 193/B 238, 307, italics emphasis mine, bold emphasis in the original). The issue for Kant is to establish that events occur successively insofar as each event follows necessarily from the previous one. Otherwise, “if I were to posit that which precedes and the occurrence did not follow it necessarily, then I would have to hold it to be only a subjective play of my imaginings, and if I still represented something objective by it I would have to call it a mere dream” (CPR, A 201/B 247, 311–312). What thus guarantees the possibility—and objectivity—of experience is the principle of causality itself: “Hence the principle of the causal relation in the sequence of appearances is valid for all objects of experience (under the conditions of succession), since it is itself the ground of the possibility of such an experience” (CPR, A 202/B 247, 312). Causality structures the occurrence of events thoroughly: “Now every alteration has a cause, which manifests its causality in the entire time during which the alteration proceeds” (CPR, A 208/B 253, 315).

The succession of events thus *follows* the order of causality, and an event becomes the *effect* of a prior cause. The event is not something new, an original phenomenon disrupting and breaking the course of time, but the product or the result of a prior process. An event takes place within the order of time as the effect of a prior cause. As Kant put it in the third antinomy (in the proof of the thesis), “everything *that happens* presupposes a previous state, upon which it follows without exception according to a rule” (CPR, A 444/B 472, 484). The same necessity applies to that previous state as well, which has also arisen from a previous state that caused it (“But now the previous state itself must be something that has happened,” CPR, A 444/B 472, 484). In other words, the prior cause for the event must also, in view of this principle of causality, be caused by a prior or antecedent cause. The notion of a universal causality of nature presupposes this temporal antecedence as “the causality of the cause through which something happens is always something *that has happened*, which according to the law of nature [*nach dem Gesetz der Natur*] presupposes once again a previous state and its causality, and this in the same way a still earlier state, and so on” (CPR, A 444/B 472, 484). One notes here the past tense: the event is here approached as that which *has happened*, and this prior event is approached in terms of a prior cause, in accordance with a conception of temporality that conceives of it as happening from the past. This, it could be argued, is a “leveled down” temporality, reduced to the order of

causes, unfolding from the past to the present. Instead of an event that is determined from prior occurrences and causes, I will show how an authentic eventful temporality should be conceived as happening *from the future*, thus breaking the order of causes as unfolding from the past. Kant remains within this understanding of events as determined from the past, as revealed in this passage from the “Clarification of the cosmological idea of a freedom in combination with the universal natural necessity”:

The law of nature that everything that happens has a cause, that since the causality of this cause, i.e., the **action**, precedes in time and in respect of an effect that has **arisen** cannot have been always but must have **happened**, and so must also have had its cause among appearances, through which it is determined, and consequently that all occurrences are empirically determined in a natural order – this law, through which alone appearances can first constitute one **nature** and furnish objects of one experience, is a law of the understanding, from which under no pretext can any departure be allowed or any appearance be exempted; because otherwise one would put this appearance outside of all possible experience, thereby distinguishing it from objects of possible experience and making it into a mere thought-entity and a figment of the brain. (CPR, A 542/B 570, 538, emphasis in the original)

The concept of the relation of cause and effect determines events, with “the former of which determines the latter in time, as its consequence” (CRP, A 189/B 234, 305). By becoming enframed in the causal order, events are neutralized within a rational apparatus, as well as within a representation of time as succession, happening from the past (cause) to the present (effect).

Now, as Jean-Luc Marion suggests, the kind of events mobilized by Kant in the second analogy are not properly events, but what he terms *impoverished* events, that is, events *reduced to what reason demands of them*: predictability, repeatability, and foundation in causality. Marion writes that “the analogies of experience concern only a fringe of phenomenality—phenomena of the type of objects constituted by the sciences, poor in intuition, foreseeable, exhaustively knowable, reproducible—while other levels (and first of all historical phenomena) would make an exception” (BG, 207). The events of the analogies of experience are not properly events but intraworldly facts that are subject to causality. “Eventful” events, as will be covered in the following, are not subject to causal determinations; rather, in their original happening, they indeed do not follow but constitute new causal networks and thereby reconfigure if not create a new world. Kant, however, thinks in the perspective of the demands of the principle of reason. This is why he reduces events to the law of causality and then attempts to establish a perfect symmetry, or reversibility, between event and causality: “If, therefore, we experience that something happens, then we always presuppose that something else precedes it, which it follows in accordance with a rule”

(CPR, A 195/B 240, 308). Conversely, as soon as I perceive in a sequence “a relation to the preceding state, from which the representation follows in accordance with a rule, I represent something as an occurrence, or as something that happens” (CPR, A 198/B 243, 309–310).

Kant explains in the second analogy that it is a formal condition of our sensibility that all phenomena must happen successively (“The apprehension of the manifold of appearance is always successive,” CPR, A 189/B 234, 305) and that “every apprehension of an occurrence is therefore a perception that follows another one” (CPR, A 192/B 237, 306). The possibility of experience also requires that this succession be ordered causally, that it happens “according to a rule”: “Now if it is a necessary law of our sensibility, thus a **formal condition** of all perceptions, that the preceding time necessarily determines the following time (in that I cannot arrive at the following time except by passing through the preceding one), then it is also an indispensable **law of the empirical representation** of the temporal series that the appearances of the past time determine every existence in the following time, and that these, as occurrences, do not take place except insofar as the former determines their existence in time, i.e., establish it in accordance with a rule” (CPR, A 199/B 244, 310, emphasis in the original). Such a rule is, of course, the causal rule, itself expressive of the principle of sufficient reason: “This rule for determining something with respect to its temporal sequence, however, is that in what precedes, the condition is to be encountered under which the occurrence always (i.e., necessarily) follows. Thus the principle of sufficient reason is the ground of possible experience” (CPR, A 201/B 246, 311). The law of causality, or law of nature, which states that all events and occurrences are determined, itself falls under the authority of the principle of sufficient reason, which states that everything must have a reason that accounts for it thoroughly and completely—that is, “sufficiently.” This is why the law of causality, or law of nature, “consists just in this, that nothing happens without a cause sufficiently determined *a priori*” (CPR, A 446/B 474, 484).

There lies the aporia of natural causality as presented in the third antinomy: if one assumes there is only the causality of nature, then the consequence is that “everything *that happens* presupposes a previous state, upon which it follows without exception according to a rule” (CPR, A 444/B 472, 484). Now the same necessity applies to that previous state as well, which has also arisen from a previous state that caused it (“But now the previous state itself must be something that has happened”). In other words, the prior cause for the event must also be caused by a prior or antecedent cause. There is no way to interrupt or escape the ineluctability of this infinite regress, which makes it impossible to reach the beginning of the series, the “first” beginning and cause that would secure the exhaustive accounting of nature according to the requirement of the principle of sufficient reason. Kant continues by stating, “If, therefore, everything happens according

to mere laws of nature, then at every time there is only a subordinate but never a first beginning" (CPR, A 444/B 472, 484). For the impossibility of finding a first cause would signify that no completeness of causes can be reached, which would contradict the principle of *sufficient* reason, which precisely demands such a completeness. "But now the law of nature consists just in this, that nothing happens without a cause sufficiently determined *a priori*" (CPR, A 446/B 474, 484), and therefore a first absolute beginning provided by a first cause. The notion of a "cause sufficiently determined *a priori*" is the equivalent of the Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason. This principle of sufficient reason states that no event can take place without a cause, a reason, or a ground. Such is "the *principle of sufficient reason*, namely, that nothing happens without a reason why it should be so rather than otherwise."⁷ The principle of sufficient reason, which is the foundation for "contingent truths," Leibniz explains further, "is the principle for the need for a sufficient reason for anything to exist, for any event to happen, for any truth to take place."⁸ Every event occurs following a causal rule, and "everything that happens (begins to be) presupposes something which it follows in accordance with a rule" (CPR, A 189/B 232, 304).

This structuring effectively accomplishes what Leibniz had posited, namely that events must conform to the principle of sufficient reason and that no event can occur without a reason or a ground: in fact, every event must be as it were prepared beforehand to be the event that it is, conditioned by a determinant reason: "For the nature of things requires that every event should have beforehand its proper conditions, requirements and dispositions, the existence of which makes the sufficient reason of such an event."⁹ This principle of sufficient reason merges with a principle of causality, which states that every event is caused to be the event that it is, giving the event its grounding. As Heidegger puts it, the principle of reason, which affirms that every being has a reason, also posits the cause. Indeed, Leibniz had conflated the principle of reason with a principle of causality: "Nothing is without reason, or no effect is without a cause."¹⁰ The statement that "no effect is without a cause" can be called the principle of causality. Thus, "Leibniz obviously posits the principle of reason and the Principle of causality as being equivalent." Although not every reason is a cause, nonetheless, "the Principle of causality belongs within the orbit of the principle of reason" (GA 10, 33/PR, 21). We see here how the principle of reason is caught in a quest for foundation, which ultimately, as Heidegger would show in *The Principle of Reason*, proves self-destructive or self-deconstructive. The principle, which states that "nothing happens without a cause sufficiently determined *a priori*," proves impossible to fulfill, and it self-destructs. For, on the one hand, the principle of natural causality contradicts itself since no first cause is attained: the more it seeks to fulfill itself, the more it engages in the infinite regress that will prove its deconstruction; on the other hand, if one posits the first foundation that is *causa*

sui, then one also reveals an abyss beneath it. The ground, in order to be the first ground, cannot itself have a ground and is therefore groundless. The principle of sufficient reason self-deconstructs, which I will return to in chapter 2.

The Event Outside of Thought

In addition to this enframing of events within causality, a further reduction of events to thought occurs by referring them to a constituting subjectivity. Arendt claims that Husserl attempted to reestablish the ancient identity between being and thought through his notion of an intentional consciousness: insofar as the intentionality of consciousness ensures that the transcendental ego always has its object before it, the happening phenomenon has been reduced to what can be apprehended of it. Intentionality ensures the reduction of the event to consciousness, thereby maintaining the identity of being and thought. Arendt writes: “As a conscious being I can conceive of all beings, and as consciousness I am, in my human mode, the Being of the world. (The seen tree, the tree as object of my consciousness, does not have to be the ‘real’ tree; it is in any case the real object of my consciousness.)” (WEP, 164–165). In addition to the rational enframing of the event, there is thus also a reduction of the event to a transcendental consciousness or subject, which keeps mastery of events through its constitutive power. Insofar as the transcendental subject objectifies phenomena under its gaze, events will be reduced to objects for my subjectivity. Thus, for Sartre, everything that happens, happens to me, and what happens to me happens *through* me. Sartre reduces the alterity and surprise of the event as it is immediately appropriated by the self in its responsible engagement. The event is immediately taken on by the subject. What happens to me happens through me because everything concerns me and because I am the one by whom the world takes on a meaning. When something happens in the world, I am called to respond and to answer for it: I am responsible for it. Any event becomes a call to my responsibility: I am engaged by the event. Even if a war is declared by another, “everything takes place as if I bore the entire responsibility for this war.”¹¹ Everything that happens is mine, says Sartre, and nothing human is foreign to me: “By this we must understand first of all that I am always equal to what happens to me qua man, for what happens to a man through other men and through himself can only be human” (BN, 708). There is no nonhuman state of things, Sartre insists, which means there is no radical alterity in the world and no events I have not *chosen*. I can decide on the nonhuman, but “this decision is human, and I shall carry the entire responsibility for it” (BN, 708). Sartre posits here a subjectivity as appropriation of all foreignness. Any event is immediately mine and taken over by my freedom, and there are no accidents without my appropriating them and making them my own. “Thus there are no accidents in life,” and “any way you look at it, it is a matter of a

choice" (BN, 708). This hyperbolic inflation of appropriating subjectivity implies the reduction, appropriation, and overcoming of everything that seems to haunt and threaten it at every step, the accidents and events that happen to me from without, events of which I am not the cause. At this point, nothing is allowed to escape either the principle of reason or the constitutive powers of subjectivity.

It is at this juncture, where events seem to have been absorbed by reason and an appropriating subjectivity, that Arendt seeks to reawaken what she calls the "philosophical shock" (WEP, 165), the shock by which precisely thought realizes it is not in possession of its objects, but is rather exposed to an event that is irreducible to it: thought is exposed to an alterity that happens to it, which both interrupts it and sets it in motion. In fact, one also recalls here, paradoxically, Sartre's rebellious cry against the dissolution of reality in consciousness in his short essay, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology." Rejecting the reduction of "a table, a rock, a house" to the contents of consciousness, rejecting what he calls a "digestive philosophy" that constantly attempts to trap things in its web, Sartre insisted that one cannot "dissolve" things in consciousness: "You see this tree, to be sure. But you see it just where it is: at the side of the road, in the midst of the dust, alone and writhing in the heat, eight miles from the Mediterranean coast. It could not enter into your consciousness, because it is not of the same nature as consciousness."¹² What appears here is the radical *exteriority* of the event to thought, which places thought in a state of shock. It is the very shock of which Deleuze speaks to account for the origin of thought. "Something must *force* thought, shocking it and drawing it into a search."¹³ Thinking always begins from an event that comes from without: at the origin of thought there is not some rational principle, but an event, an accident, an encounter, a violent shock that calls on thought by its very outsideness. "Something must *force* thought": not a "natural disposition" but rather "a fortuitous and contingent incitation derived from an *encounter*" (POE, 56). This encounter has no necessity, no *reason*: it is external, an event through which thought enters in relation with what does not depend from it. The relation between thought and its outside is contingent and cannot be derived from the connections it makes. As François Zourabichvili reminds us, for Deleuze it is a matter "of affirming the relation of exteriority that links thought to what it thinks" (POE, 51). The true beginning is an event that is "outside concept" (*hors-concept*), a concept now placed in relation with an outside that will always remain inappropriable for it. As Nancy explains, thought is not appropriative, not appropriation, not even inscription, but *ex-scription*,¹⁴ expropriated by the event.

This, indeed, is the challenge to reason: thinking is born from a contingent event, from chance, and is always "circumstantial," dependent on events, that is, on an absolutely unnecessary phenomenon. "Thought is born of chance," "relative to an event that happens unexpectedly to thought," and therefore, "Whether

it is a question of thinking or of living, it is always a matter of the encounter, the event, and therefore of the relation as exterior to its terms" (POE, 57). Thought is always in a state of crisis, Deleuze stating "that the act of thinking necessarily puts subjectivity into crisis, and that necessity, far from fulfilling the wishes of an already constituted thinking subject, can only be conquered in the state of a thought outside of itself, a thought that is absolutely powerful only at the extreme point of its powerlessness" (POE, 52). One encounters an event outside reason. The event of an encounter is not subject to the principle of sufficient reason: "An encounter is always inexplicable" (POE, 57). To think the event is to think such absolute inexplicability and contingency.¹⁵

The well-known paradigm of such encounter outside of reason is the case of friendship, as described by Michel de Montaigne between him and Étienne de La Boétie. "If you press me to tell why I loved him, I feel that this cannot be expressed except by answering: because it was he; because it was I" (*Si on me presse de dire pourquoi je l'aimais, je sens que cela ne se peut exprimer qu'en répondant: parce que c'était lui; parce que c'était moi*).¹⁶ As Marion comments, the event of this friendship occurs "all at once, without warning or anticipation, according to an *arrival* without expectation,"¹⁷ and without reason. The event of friendship is a fact (it "imposes itself"), a fact and a chance irreducible to reason. Therefore, no reasons will ever measure up to the fact of the encounter, to the chance happening of friendship. As Derrida puts it in *The Politics of Friendship*, "The analysis of conditions of possibility, even existential ones, will never suffice in giving an account of the act or the event. An analysis of that kind will never measure up to what takes place, the effectivity—actuality—of what comes to pass—for example, a friendship which will never be reduced to the desire or the potentiality of friendship."¹⁸ Now, the notion that philosophy is born out of an event that it does not control is "a shock to reason" in its quest for ultimate foundations. For "how is it supposed to find a foundation [*assise*] in that which defeats it, in the inexplicable or the aleatory?" The logic of foundation of the principle of reason leads to its very ungrounding, its "collapse" in the abyss. Thought then "stands on a movable ground that it does not control, and thereby wins its necessity." In the end, what transpires is that "we cannot give the reason for an event" (POE, 57).

When thought assumes its eventful origin, when it engages in "an authentic relation to the outside," it then gains its authentic vocation and "affirms the unforeseeable or the unexpected" (POE, 57). There lies the fundamental aporia (and secret resource) of thought: it must think and account for what happens outside of it. Because the origin of thought is an event that lies outside of it, thinking will always *fail* in appropriating such beginning: "If thinking necessarily fails to grasp its beginning, perhaps it is because the beginning does not depend upon thought."¹⁹ It is in this sense that in her 1946 essay, Hannah Arendt speaks of the *failure* of thought, as if such failure was its *most authentic vocation*. Arendt

refers to Jaspers's "border situations": whether death, guilt, fate, or chance, these events provoke thought and "drive us to philosophize," not because they can be thought, but precisely *because they cannot*. Arendt adds that "in all these experiences we find we cannot escape reality or *solve its mysteries by thought*" (WEP, 167, emphasis mine). Philosophy, she concludes, can "never get around the fact that reality cannot be resolved into what can be thought. Therefore, the very purpose of philosophic thought is to 'heighten . . . the intellectually irresolvable'" (WEP, 185). As Derrida would put it, it is a matter of thinking "according to the aporia."²⁰ This is what makes us think: the fact that we cannot appropriate what we think. In the famed words of Martin Heidegger, the "most thought-provoking thing in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking."²¹ The event is then both the end and the origin of thought: it ends it in its claims to mastery while opening it to the infinite work of interpretation.

Arendt first describes the shock of the event of existence in terms of the resistance of *singularity* to conceptual generality. In its singularity, the event does not belong to a constituted whole, such as the world. It happens, and as it happens it interrupts any context that could include it. It remains outside, exterior, inappropriate, even while it happens "in" the world: "The functional context of the world in which I too am included can always explain and justify why, for example, there are tables and chairs at all. But it will never be able to make me understand why *this* table is. And it is the existence of *this* table, quite apart from tables in general, that evokes the philosophical shock" (WEP, 165). This passage reveals that singularity belongs to a definition of the event, that an event is each time *singular*, and that this singularity is irreducible to any conceptual reappropriation. To illustrate the irreducibility of singularity to conceptual generality, Arendt refers to Hoffmansthal's letter to Stefan George, in which he sides with "the little things" against the "big words" because "it is in those little things that the mystery of reality lies hidden" (WEP, 165). This is how Arendt interprets the motto of phenomenology, "Back to the things themselves!": it is a matter of returning to those singular things and their happening. When confronted with such singular beings, one is confronted with the fact that reality remains alien to humans and that therefore the human being is not and cannot be "the creator of the world" (WEP, 167). The world in which one would feel at home is interrupted by a certain alien presence of singular things, which, although they take place or occur "in" the world, manifest outside of that world. They occur in the world and yet remain somehow outside, external to it. This occurring inside and outside is the mark of the event. No event would happen if it only belonged to an immanent whole. At the same time, no event would happen if it did not in a certain way manifest itself in the world. It happens in the world from without.

In addition to singularity, the event displays a radical *facticity*. This is what Schelling saw, according to Arendt, when he opposed to the "philosophy of pure

thought" a thinking of existence. "His positive philosophy took as its point of departure 'existence' . . . [that] initially it possesses only in the form of the pure That" (WEP, 167). The "That" designates the pure eventfulness of an event before it can be included within a rational or causal order. It is the first happening of *that* which can then become an object of thought (the "what") or an intentioned object for a thematizing and objectifying consciousness. However, Arendt insists forcefully and decisively, "the What will never be able to explain the That" (WEP, 167). Why? Because the "that" and the "what" are simply not homogeneous, not on the same plane, irreducibly other to one another. There collapses the ancient Parmenidian dream of a identity of thought and being: being will always remain other to thought. The event of existence cannot be included in what can be thought. What then appears is the sheer fact of an event: modern philosophy "begins with the overpowering and shocking perception of an inherently empty reality. The more empty of all qualities reality appears, the more immediately and nakedly appears the only thing about it that remains of interest: *that it is*" (WEP, 167). At that point, instead of presenting the features of meaningfulness and order, being begins to appear as an event that is marked by "chance" and that can be described as "uncertain, incomprehensible, and unpredictable" (WEP, 167), indeed alien to human beings.

As Arendt shows, one finds several instances of this breakdown of the dreamed unity of being with thought in Kant's work, in particular in his account of synthetic judgments and his refutation of the ontological proof of God's existence. In turn, this twofold break will open onto a further rupture, with natural causality, allowing for the surge of a "transcendental freedom" that will constitute the possibility of eventfulness. With respect to the first point, Arendt argues that the traditional unity of thought and being, which supposed the coincidence between *essentia* and *existentia*, and the reciprocity between the rational and the real (the belief that "Everything thinkable also existed" and that "everything extant, because it was knowable, also has to be rational," WEP, 168), breaks down in Kant's notion of synthetic judgments. Why? Because "by his analysis of synthetic propositions, he proved that in any proposition that makes a statement about reality, *we reach beyond the concept* (the *essentia*) of any given thing" (WEP, 168, emphasis mine). Indeed, as is well-known, in the introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant explains that for all judgments, the relation of the subject to the predicate is possible in two different ways: "Either the predicate *B* belongs to the subject *A* as something that is (covertly) contained in this concept *A*; or *B* lies entirely outside the concept *A*, though to be sure it stands in connection with it" (CPR, A 6/B 10, 130). He calls the latter a synthetic judgment (because it adds to the subject) and the former an analytic judgment (because it merely analyses the a priori content of the concept). The criterion for an analytic judgment is the principle of identity or noncontradiction: the predicate cannot contradict the

concept of the subject. “Analytic judgments (affirmative ones) are thus those in which the connection of the predicate is thought through identity” (CPR, A 7/B 11, 130). In contrast, in a synthetic judgment, the predicate is not already contained in the concept but lies *outside of it*. Kant establishes that in the case of synthetic judgments the concept cannot encompass reality but in fact depends (in sensibility) on the givenness of a phenomenon that lies outside the concept. The basis for synthetic judgments is thus extraconceptual. What distinguishes a synthetic judgment from an analytic judgment is whether the predicate lies outside or inside the concept and whether there is some reality that lies outside the concept. This is indeed how Kant presents the difference: a synthetic judgment, in contrast with an analytic judgment, adds

To the concept of the subject a predicate that was not thought in it at all, and could not have been extracted from it through any analysis; e.g., if I say: “bodies are extended,” then this is an analytic judgment. For I do not need to go outside the concept that I combine with the word “body” in order to find that extension is connected with it, but rather I need only to analyze that concept, i.e., become conscious of the manifold that I always think in it, in order to encounter this predicate therein; it is therefore an analytic judgment. On the contrary, if I say: “All bodies are heavy,” then the predicate is something entirely different from that which I think in the mere concept of a body in general. The addition of such a predicate thus yields a synthetic judgment. (CPR, A 7/B 11, 130)

In this way, Kant destroys the ancient postulate of a strict identity between thought and being: here, being lies outside of thought and does not belong to it.

A further rupture with the alleged identity between being and thought takes place in Kant’s refutation of the ontological proof of the existence of God (a proof, I should stress, that is based strictly on the *concept* of God and that abstracts “from all experience and infer[s] the existence of a highest cause *entirely a priori from mere concepts*,” CPR, A 590/B 618, 563, emphasis mine). In this refutation, Kant establishes that no existence can be deduced from a concept; in fact, this critique “destroyed any rational belief in God based on the proposition that anything accessible to reason had to exist” (WEP, 169). This is the case, first, because Kant refuses to engage in metaphysical speculations and considers them illegitimate. As he writes, “I will establish that reason . . . spreads its wings in vain when seeking to rise above the world of sense through the mere might of speculation” (CPR, A 591/B 619, 563). But further, Kant refutes this ontological proof by engaging in a rethinking of existence or being, which, he argues, is not a “real predicate,” that is, not a conceptual content or a predicate that could be included as part of a concept: existence cannot be established from a concept. Rather, existence must be presupposed by any judgment, rather than derived from it.

In the section entitled “On the impossibility of an ontological proof of God’s existence,” Kant begins to introduce a break, a gap, in the assumed identity of thought and being or existence by pointing out that the concept of God in no way implies its existence, as “one easily sees that the concept of an absolutely necessary being is a pure concept of reason, i.e., a mere idea, the objective reality of which is far from being proved by the fact that reason needs it” (CPR, A 592/B 620, 563). Thus, one is left wondering “whether through a concept of an unconditionally necessary being I am still thinking something or perhaps nothing at all” (CPR, A 593/B 621, 564). The error exposed by Kant consists in treating existence as a necessary predicate of the concept of God, just as having three angles is a necessary determination of a triangle. Now this latter proposition, as Kant clarifies, does not mean that “three angles are absolutely necessary,” but instead that “under the condition that a triangle exists (is given),” then three angles “also exist in it necessarily” (CPR, A 594/B 622, 564–565). Existence must first be presupposed, not derived from the content of the concept. Existence is not intraconceptual, for “if you cancel its existence, then you cancel the thing itself with all its predicates” (CPR, A 594/B 622, 564–565). Existence is not a predicate but instead the subject along with all of its predicates. This refers to Kant’s definition of being: “Being is obviously not a real predicate, i.e., a concept of something that could add to the concept of a thing. It is merely the *positing* of a thing or of certain determinations in themselves” (CPR, A 596/B 624, 567). The expression “real predicate” requires a clarification, for the term “real” does not convey in Kant’s text the sense that is used nowadays as “actually existing.” “Real” in the context designates the conceptual content that determines a *res*, a thing; hence “real predicate” designates the conceptual content of a thing. Reality for Kant does not designate actuality but the substantive content of a thing, *whether that thing exists or not*. This is why in his essay on “Kant’s Thesis about Being,” Heidegger explains that “a real predicate, a determination belonging to a substance, to the substantive content of a thing, is, for example, the predicate ‘heavy’ with respect to the stone, regardless of whether the stone really exists or not.”²² A real predicate is hence the substantive conceptual content of a thing that can then be attributed to it. And that is what being *is not*. Being is not a real predicate, that is, it is not a conceptual element or part of a thing. Why? Because precisely that thing must first exist. Being is in this sense not a predicate of a thing, but the very positing of the thing *with all its predicates*, which explains the second part of Kant’s definition: being “is merely the *positing* of a thing or of certain determinations in themselves.”

One encounters here the distinction highlighted by Hannah Arendt between the “what” and the “that”: what Kant calls “merely” is the pure or sheer positing of being, the pure “that” of an existence apart from any consideration of its “what.” When I say, for instance, that “the stone is,” I am using in a certain sense the predicate “is,” but not as a real predicate, that is, not as a conceptual content.

I am only stating *that* the stone exists, not *what* it is. Kant is then able to redefine existence in its distinction from conceptuality, and to redefine it no longer as part of a concept but as pure *position*, the position of a subject along with its predicates, but not itself one of those predicates. This is why in the proposition “God is omnipotent,” in the logical use as a copula of a judgment, the small word “is” is not a predicate of the concept of God, but that which *posits* the predicate in relation to the subject. “The proposition **God is omnipotent** contains two concepts that have their objects: God and omnipotence; the little word ‘is’ is not a predicate in it, but only that which posits the predicate in relation to the subject” (CPR, A 596/B 624, 567, emphasis in the original). When I say “God exists” or “God is” (using the word “is” no longer in its logical use as a copula between the subject and the predicate, but as pure positing of existence), I have not added a new predicate to the concept of God, but have only posited the subject itself along with all of its predicates. Being is posited in its existing presence, and no longer within a logical or conceptual frame. With the proposition of existence, I go beyond the concept, not toward another possible predicate of that concept, but toward the very thing that exists as absolute position. There again, what this Kantian refutation shows is that existence lies outside the concept. Kant states it explicitly: “Thus whatever and however much our concept of an object may contain, we have to go out beyond it in order to provide it with existence” (CPR, A 601/B 629, 568). Through this twofold break with conceptuality, Kant frees up the possibility of a thinking of the event of existence that would take place outside the order of reason and causality. This appears in Kant’s third antinomy, in which an excess with respect to natural causality opens the possibility of the event of freedom. Kant opens the way for encountering the event of being as such, no longer mediated by a reason or a concept. Far from the diminished, impoverished sense of the event as presented in the analogies, this opens to a more radical sense of the event, which one actually finds developed in Kant’s philosophy of transcendental freedom, this uncanny capacity to begin absolutely, to initiate a new series of events, a spontaneous surge of the new that inaugurates a radical understanding of the event.

The New, or the Event of Freedom

The twisting free of the event from natural causality can be followed in Kant’s third antinomy. Paradoxically, it by pursuing the logic of natural causality that Kant unveils the possibility of an event occurring outside such causality, namely, the event of *freedom*. As noted prior, Kant assumes the universal causality of nature by which all events are rigorously ordered. However, this is not the only causality. There are for Kant two causalities, natural causality and a causality by freedom. Kant explains in the “Resolution of the cosmological idea of the totality

of the derivation of occurrences in the world from their causes" in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that "In regard of what happens, one can think of causality in only two ways: either according to nature or from freedom" (CPR, A 532/B 560, 532). Indeed, there are two different ways for things to happen: either by necessity (they could not have happened any other way), following the universal laws of nature by which each thing is as it were "pushed" or determined by a preceding cause, or else from freedom, a kind of spontaneity or free surge that does not follow the universal laws of nature and is therefore not "pushed" by some preceding cause that would determine it. Kant presents such freedom as a sort of originary capacity to begin, absolutely, "from itself," that is, spontaneously. "By freedom in the cosmological sense, on the contrary [to the causality of nature], I understand the faculty of beginning a state *from itself* (*von selbst*), the causality of which does not in turn stand under another cause determining it in time in accordance with the law of nature" (CPR, A 533/B 561, 533). Such causality is the spontaneity of the agent, that is, a power "which could start to act from itself, without needing to be preceded by any other cause that in turn determines it to action according to the law of connection" (CPR, A 533/B 561, 533). This capacity to begin is described by Hannah Arendt as natality, that capacity to initiate a radical break with any antecedent phase or causality: "It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings."²³

The distinction between those two causalities is developed in Kant's crucial developments on "transcendental freedom" in the third antinomy in the *Transcendental Dialectic* in the *Critique of Pure Reason* ("Third Conflict of the Transcendental Ideas"), also known as the "cosmological" antinomy ("cosmological" because the reflection takes place within the context of a discussion on causality in nature). Freedom, I should note, is indeed discussed within a general discussion of causality,²⁴ that is, approached in its cosmological sense, in relation to the world in its constitution. The emergence of this radical sense of the event of freedom occurs in a discussion of the opposition between a thesis and an antithesis. "(Thesis) Causality in accordance with laws of nature is not the only one from which all the appearances of the world can be derived. It is also necessary to assume another causality through freedom in order to explain them" (CPR, A 444, B 472, 484), to which the antithesis counters: "There is no freedom, but everything in the world happen solely in accordance with laws of nature" (CPR, A 445, B 473, 485). In dispute is whether it is also necessary, or even permissible, to appeal to another conception of causality, transcendental freedom, defined as the power (*Vermögen*) of beginning a state spontaneously (*von selbst*): "By freedom in the cosmological sense, on the contrary, I understand the faculty of beginning a state from itself, the causality of which does not in turn stand under another cause determining it in time in accordance with the law of nature"

(CPR, A 533/B 561, 533). The stakes for a thinking of the event are high because it is a question of determining whether events can escape the universal determinism provided by natural causality. Kant begins by developing the aporias involved in the antithesis, which claims that there is no freedom and that everything in the world happens only in accordance with the laws of nature. As we mentioned prior, if one assumes there is only the causality of nature, then it follows that, as noted, “everything *that happens* presupposes a previous state, upon which it follows without exception according to a rule” (CPR, A 444/B 472, 484). The universal causality of nature supposes a temporal antecedence, as “the causality of the cause through which something happens is always something *that has happened*” (CPR, A 444/B 472, 484), which in turn requires a previous cause, and so forth. An aporia within natural causality begins to appear: if there is no way to interrupt or escape the ineluctability of this infinite regress, then one could never reach the beginning of the series, the “first” beginning and first cause that alone would satisfy the principle of sufficient reason that demands a completeness of the causes. In other words, it appears that natural causality, *through its very principle*, excludes the possibility of a satisfaction of its own requirements! The law of causality would then contradict itself, and be thrown into an aporia, which Kant describes in this way:

Among the causes in appearance there can surely be nothing that could begin a series absolutely and from itself. Every action, as appearance, insofar as it produces an occurrence, is itself an occurrence, or event, which presupposes another state in which its cause is found; and thus everything that happens is only a continuation of the series, and no beginning that would take place from itself is possible in it. Thus in the temporal succession all actions of natural causes are themselves in turn effects, which likewise presuppose their causes in the time-series. An *original* action, through which something happens that previously was not, is not to be expected from the causal connection of appearances. (CPR, A 543/B 571, 538)

In other words, as Kant also concludes: “If, therefore, everything happens according to mere laws of nature, then at every time there is only a subordinate but never a first beginning . . .” (CPR, A 444/B 472, 484).

Now, without such beginning, one could never have arrived at this present state, which is of course an impossibility. The impossibility of finding a first cause would signify that no completeness of causes can be reached, which would contradict the principle of sufficient reason, which precisely demands such a completeness. This is why Kant insists that by following the mere causality of nature one could never attain a “completeness of the series on the side of the causes descending one from another” (CPR, A 446/B 474, 484). This aporia signifies the impossibility of the antithesis (“There is no freedom, but everything in the world happens solely in accordance with laws of nature”), which precisely claimed there

was only one causality, the causality of nature: such causality cannot provide the first beginning that would ensure the completeness of causes and satisfy its own requirement. Kant then concludes that “the proposition that all causality is possible only in accordance with laws of nature [*nach Gesetzen der Natur*], when taken in its unlimited universality, *contradicts itself, and therefore this causality cannot be assumed to be the only one*” (CPR, A 446/B 474, 484, emphasis mine).

As a consequence, another causality must be admitted, and another sense of the event than the one presented in the second analogy, one that would happen “without its cause being further determined by another previous cause” (CPR, A 446/B 474, 484). Such an event would happen outside the law of cause and effect, and as it were “from itself,” a pure happening as opposed to the neutralized or “impoverished” events of the second analogy of experience. Kant describes this new sense of the event in terms of spontaneity, that is, as that which begins from itself, an “*absolute causal spontaneity beginning from itself*” that he also names “*transcendental freedom*,” transcendental insofar as it transcends the course of nature. Such a transcendental freedom must be assumed, although “no insight into it is achieved” (CPR, A 450/B 478, 486), since it is not a part of the phenomenal world, which remains subject to natural deterministic causality. Indeed, it cannot be part of the phenomenal world as it contradicts the fundamental law of causality structuring the unity of the world as nature.

Kant first and provisionally characterizes freedom negatively as foreign to law, as a sort of “lawlessness” (CPR, A 447/B 475, 485) rebel to universal determinism, leaping out of natural causality. Indeed, in one sense (the negative sense), freedom is independence *from* the laws of nature, a “liberation from coercion” or “from the guidance of all rules.” Freedom in this context is identified with lawlessness: Kant for instance speaks of the “lawless faculty of freedom” (CPR A 451/B 479, 489), and he goes so far as to claim that freedom is “contrary” to causal law: “Thus transcendental freedom is contrary to the causal law” (CPR, A 445/B 473, 485). Freedom seems as antinomical to rules and laws as nature is structured according to them, to such an extent that Kant adds pleasantly: “if freedom were determined according to laws, it would not be freedom, but nothing other than nature” (CPR, A 447/B 475, 485)! With transcendental freedom, we are, as it were, leaping out of causality, that is to say, of nature, if not out of the world. Such faculty of freedom is indeed literally “out of this world” because it cannot appear in the field of appearances as a spatiotemporal given and is for that very reason termed “transcendental.” Kant explains that freedom taken in the cosmological sense, that is, as the faculty of beginning a state from itself, “is a pure transcendental idea, which, first, contains nothing borrowed from experience, and second, the object of which cannot be given determinately in any experience” (CPR, A 533/B 561, 533). Such faculty of freedom is noumenal since it cannot appear in a spatiotemporal causal network. In fact, such freedom is “contrary to the laws

of nature,” “to all possible experience” (CPR, A 803/B 831, 676). It can only be assumed as an outside *of* the world, and yet this outside makes the world possible by securing the completeness of causes. The completeness of the world, and its possibility, rests upon this noumenal, outerworldly freedom. Such is the enigma presented by Kant: the completeness of the world lies outside the world, and yet this outside constitutes the world: it is, as it were, the outsideness *of* the world.²⁵

Transcendental freedom, Kant explains, is the capacity of a cause to produce a state spontaneously, or “from itself” (*von selbst*) (CRP, A 533/B 561, 533). A transcendently free cause would be a “first cause,” that is, without a prior cause. Kant justifies this claim by appealing to a requirement of reason, going back to the ancient tradition of the first mover: “The confirmation of the need of reason to appeal to a first beginning from freedom in the series of natural causes is clearly and visibly evident from the fact that (with the exception of the Epicurean school) all the philosophers of Antiquity saw themselves as obliged to assume a *first mover* for the explanation of motions in the world, i.e., a freely acting cause, which began this series of states first and from itself” (CPR, A 450/B 478, 488). The first instance of a free-acting cause is thus the first mover, which allows one to conceive of an origin *of* the world. The origin *of* the world cannot be *in* the world. Yet, as mentioned, the world as a totality is only possible on such basis. In fact, nature and freedom are for Kant thoroughly intertwined: absolute spontaneity is said to begin, “from itself,” “a series of appearances that runs according to natural laws” (CPR, A 446/B 474, 484), this already indicating that free causality, although independent from natural causality, is intertwined with it: just as natural necessity rests on transcendental freedom, freedom in turn produces effects in the world.

Kant recognizes that so far he has only established the necessity of a first beginning of a series of appearances from freedom “only to the extent that this is required to make comprehensible an origin of the world” (CPR, A 448/B 476, 486), which clearly for Kant does not apply to us. However, he insists, because “the faculty of beginning a series in time entirely on its own is thereby proved” (while he immediately recognizes, as alluded to prior, that this proof gives us no insight into it since such a faculty is transcendental and never to be observed within a field of appearances), then “we are permitted,” he continues, “also to allow that in the course of the world different series may begin on their own . . . and to ascribe to the substances in those series the faculty of acting from freedom” (CPR, A 450/B 478, 486). Kant thus posits the capacity to begin absolutely, to be a spontaneous free cause, cause of itself, *causa sui*, while also stating that such power is operating *in* the world. Further, Kant warns us not to be “stopped here by a misunderstanding, namely, that since a successive series in the world can have only a comparatively first beginning, because a state of the world must always precede it, perhaps no absolutely first beginning of the series is possible

during the course of the world” (CPR, A 451/B 479, 488). This is only a misunderstanding, “for here we are talking of an absolute beginning not, as far as time is concerned, but as far as causality is concerned” (CPR, A 451/B 479, 488). There is the origin *of* the world, and there is also an origin *in* the world. It will be possible to speak of an absolute beginning *in* the world.

Kant posits the freedom of the will in terms of the spontaneity of the act, itself resting on the notion of *causa sui*. Now this concept traditionally only applies to God, and Kant does make explicit reference to the tradition of the prime mover. However, such a first cause only pertained to the origin *of* the world. The issue here is determining how can there be also an origin *in* the world and how one can reconcile such a free spontaneity with universal determinism, or causality of nature. How does one begin absolutely when every event must presuppose a prior event that causes it? How can there be an origin within the causal network of nature? Kant himself recognized the difficulty in admitting a free cause that would operate within the world, that is, within a chain of causes, for all that has been established so far was the necessity of a first beginning of a series of appearances from freedom as it pertained to the origin of the world, while “one can take all the subsequent states to be a result of mere natural laws” (CPR, A 448/B 476, 486). This is the antinomy of pure reason, the idea of a free cause or unconditioned causality constituting for Kant “the real stumbling block for philosophy” (CPR, A 448/B 476, 486). Kant attempts to resolve this problem by distinguishing a beginning *in time* from a beginning *in causality*, the latter applying to free agency operating in the world. As (transcendentally) free agents, we can never begin in time, but we can begin in causality. Only in the case of divine creation beginning in time and beginning in causality are merged. For our own free actions, the beginning is only in causality (as we are not origins *of* the world but origins *in* the world, that is, beginning in causality). In the causality by freedom, in beginning in causality, no antecedent cause determines my actions, which in no way can “be regarded as simple causal consequences of the antecedent state of the agent.” In the midst of the world, and within the world and in the course of time itself, certain events somehow happen as absolute beginnings. To the potential objection that no absolute beginning can happen in the world, Kant replies that there can be a *comparatively* first beginning, that there can be an absolute beginning (in causality) occurring *in medias res*. Kant is explicit on this point: namely, that there is an origin *of* the world, but there are also origins *in* the world, writing that “we are permitted also to allow that in the course of the world different series may begin on their own as far as their causality is concerned” (CPR, A 450/B 478, 486). Even though freedom can only take place within the causal network of the world, it remains nonetheless absolute and uncaused, Kant insisting that an absolute first beginning of a series is possible during the course of the world.

Thus, on the one hand, the capacity to begin a new series of causes from oneself is absolute (although it is an absolute beginning only in causality and not in time), and on the other hand this capacity affects the fabric of the world and its causal laws. We introduce something new in the world, out of our own spontaneity,²⁶ but what we introduce is something new *in the world*, which then gets taken up in natural causality. Whatever I decide to do out of this transcendental freedom still has to take place in the world. The new that I introduce is absolute (otherwise it would not be “new”), but that absolute happens in the conditioned world (this is why Kant spoke of a “comparatively first beginning”). All I can do is begin a new series of causes, themselves inscribed in nature. This is why Kant establishes that one must assume a first uncaused beginning, but along with it, “its natural consequences to infinity,” consequences of the free act which follow purely natural laws (CPR, A 450/B 478, 488). In a sense, the act is both free or uncaused *and* part of natural determinism, according to Kant’s distinction between a beginning in time (natural determinism) and a beginning in causality (freedom). To take Kant’s example: “If (for example), I am now entirely free, and get up from my chair without the necessarily determining influence of natural causes, then in this occurrence, along with its natural consequences to infinity, there begins an absolutely new series, even though as far as time is concerned this occurrence is only the continuation of a previous series” (CPR, A 450/B 478, 488). With respect to the event of freedom, natural causes exercise no determining influence whatsoever. Free action does indeed “follow upon them,” but “does not follow from” them (*die zwar auf jene folgt, aber daraus nicht erfolgt*).

This break with natural causality opens the possibility of a rethinking of the event, the happening of which is understood on the basis of this absolute causal spontaneity beginning from itself, “absolute spontaneity of an action” or transcendental freedom, which Hannah Arendt attempted to designate under the name of “natality.” As she puts it in *The Human Condition*, “the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting” (HC, 9). This “natal” power of beginning, this performativity of transcendental freedom (defined by Kant as the *power*, *Vermögen*, of beginning a state spontaneously or from oneself, *von selbst*), as decision to act, outside of natural causality, introduces the new in the world. Hence the importance of the motif of revolution for Arendt, for “the relevance of the problem of beginning to the phenomenon of revolution is obvious”²⁷ Indeed, “revolutions are the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of beginning” (OR, 21). Now such events are never devoid of violence, Arendt noting that “such a beginning must be must be intimately connected with violence” to the extent that “no beginning could be made without using violence, without violating.” The event always carries the violence of absolute beginnings. The event is here synonymous with an anarchic,

violent moment that is outside the law. As Derrida explains with respect to the event of the institution of political authority, “All Nation-States are born and found themselves in violence. I believe that truth to be irrecusable. Without even exhibiting atrocious spectacles on this subject, it suffices to underline a law of structure: the moment of foundation, the instituting moment, is anterior to the law or legitimacy which it founds. It is thus *outside the law*, and violent by that very fact.”²⁸ The event is originary. As such, it has no ground, a groundlessness that is the focus of the next chapter.

2 The Event without Reason

ONE CAN TRACE the twisting free of the event from the categories of causality, reason, and subjectivity in Nietzsche's destructive genealogy of the philosophical tradition, as well as in Heidegger's deconstruction of the principle of reason. If the event in its eventfulness has been neutralized in the metaphysical tradition, enframed in an entire metaphysical and epistemological apparatus, then Nietzsche is a key figure in the task of thinking the event: for it was he who endeavored to provide a deconstructive genealogy of this tradition so as to reveal the processes and events that subtend it. Nietzsche's destructive genealogy of metaphysical concepts consists in exposing their fictitious nature and overturning the values they carry while returning to the origins of the metaphysical tradition's pathological formations in order to determine how its concepts have been *constructed*, for what purpose, and with what motives. It is a matter for Nietzsche of evaluating the value of our values, following the thread of life. "What are our evaluations and moral tables worth? What is the outcome of their rule? For whom? In relation to what?—Answer: for life."¹ Our concepts are symptoms of a certain state of life, and metaphysical constructs are to be read as a reaction against life, if it is the case that the "true world" "has been constructed by contradicting the actual world."²

Nietzsche's deconstruction of our metaphysical concepts is first a critique of *conceptuality* as such. A concept is never the grasp of some essence, of some objective fact, but a human, all-too-human invention, a creation of our mind that is then accepted by convention. By definition, a concept has no objective validity, no "truth-claim." In a sense, a concept is from the outset, as a concept, something "false," what Nietzsche calls a "lie." This recognition cannot but cast a doubt on our traditional beliefs in our concepts and their objectivity. The reliance upon the traditional concepts of objectivity and truth finds itself shaken: our concepts are beginning to appear as beliefs, as constructs. In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche explains that "man has for long ages believed in the concept and names of things as in *aeternae veritates*," that "he really thought that in language he possessed knowledge of the world."³ Of course, only much later did it dawn on humans that "in their belief in language they have propagated a tremendous error" and that we do not possess categories that would give access to a world in itself. This passage indicates the intimate relation between the formations of concepts and the constitutive role of language. Knowledge, concepts, truth itself

are here referred back to language, conceived of as a sort of symbolic activity performed for the sake of life's needs. The name "truth" is the designation of such conventional agreement deposited in language. "That which shall count as 'truth' from now on is established. That is to say, a uniformly valid and binding designation is invented for things, and the legislation of language likewise established the first laws of truth."⁴ The link between language and a corresponding objective reality finds itself severed, as it immediately appears in Nietzsche's questions: "And besides, what about these linguistic conventions themselves? Are they perhaps products of knowledge, that is, of the sense of truth? Are designations congruent with things? Is language the adequate expression of all realities?" (OTL, 81). Clearly, for Nietzsche, they are not, and it is not.

Conceptuality proves to be a linguistic phenomenon. In fact, for Nietzsche reason is nothing but a metaphysics of language, a "crude fetishism" with respect to language. "In its origin, language belongs to the time of the most rudimentary type of psychology: We encounter a crude set of fetishes when we become conscious of the basic presuppositions of the metaphysics of language—or, to put it plainly, *reason*" (TI, 20). Language finds itself severed from any ideal meaning that would anchor it: it is but a material, physiological production: "What is a word? It is the copy in sound of a nerve stimulus" (OTL, 81). The origin of language is not an ideal sphere of intelligibility, but a material production, a radically subjective phenomenon. In one statement, Nietzsche has posited both the material basis of language (nerve stimulus) and the metaphoricity of sense (copy or image). Further, this metaphoricity of sense is as it were unhinged, for it is not anchored in any proper, literal, ideal meaning. The referentiality or transference inherent in metaphor (a word *for* another) is not about connecting a word with a reality, but rather heterogeneous and always subjective realms. "To begin with, a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn, is imitated in a sound: second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overleaping of one sphere, right into the middle of an entirely new and different one" (OTL, 82). Between these spheres, there is no relation of causality, but rather of translation and invention: "For between two absolutely different spheres, as between subject and object, there is no causality, no correctness, and no expression; there is, at most, an *aesthetic* relation: I mean, a suggestive transference, a stammering translation into a completely foreign tongue—for which there is required, in any case, a freely inventive intermediate sphere and mediating force" (OTL, 86). One notes in this transference the radical absence of any necessity (whether natural or otherwise): "even the relationship of a nerve stimulus to the generated image is not a necessary one" (OTL, 87). Both the material basis of language and the metaphoricity of sense collapse the possibility of an objective causality. This is why Nietzsche is able to state that to infer from the nerve stimulus a cause outside of us is a prejudice of reason, of the principle of sufficient

reason: “the further inference from the nerve stimulus to a cause outside us is already the result of a false and unjustifiable application of the principle of sufficient reason” (OTL, 81). No natural connection whatsoever with sense is here allowed. Arbitrary designations are mistakenly taken to be the exact descriptions of the things themselves. However, when one returns to the material genesis of language and sense, one can no longer invoke such thing in itself. “The ‘thing in itself’ (which is precisely what the pure truth, apart from any of its consequences, would be) is likewise something quite incomprehensible to the creator of language and something not in the least worth striving for,” concludes Nietzsche (OTL, 82). One can see how, ironically, it is the activity of the mind that invented such fictions as “objectivity,” “essences,” and “causes,” precisely on the basis of a *forgotten* metaphorical activity. A metaphor is mistakenly taken for a nonmetaphor, and that oblivion is what is called a concept! Man “forgets that the original perceptual metaphors are metaphors and takes them to be the things themselves” (OTL, 86). Hence Nietzsche’s celebrated passage on truth, where truth is declared nothing but a fluid complex of metaphors: “What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins” (OTL, 84).

We may believe that through our linguistic designations, through our concepts, we know things as they truly are, as if we could know “something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers”; in fact, “we possess nothing but metaphors for things—metaphors which correspond in no way to the original entities” (OTL, 83). A concept is the result, the trace, or the residue of a metaphor, and the formation of concepts is an artistic creation. “Anyone who has felt this cool breath [of logic] will hardly believe that even the concept—which is as bony, foursquare, and transposable as a die—is nevertheless merely the *residue of a metaphor*, and that the illusion which is involved in the artistic transference of a nerve stimulus into images is, if not the mother, then the grandmother of every single concept” (OTL, 85). Indeed, a concept must erase the individual experience from which it was formed. As a general representation, it necessarily negates “the unique and entirely individual original experience to which it owes its origin” so that “we obtain the concept, as we do the form, by overlooking what is individual and actual” (OTL, 85). This negation of life through concepts takes place precisely as the concept also *embraces* and includes within it “countless more or less similar cases—which means, purely and simply, cases which are never equal and thus altogether unequal” (OTL, 83).

Each concept “arises from the equation of unequal things” (OTL, 83), abstracting from the differential uniqueness of experience. In fact, as Nietzsche emphasizes, “one leaf is never totally the same as another,” which is another way of saying that the concept “leaf,” as any concept, does not exist and only has an *imaginary* existence. The greatest paradox, of course, is that such a nonexistent notion is then taken to be what is *most real*! Nietzsche points to this paradox when he notes that “the concept ‘leaf’ is formed by arbitrarily discarding these individual differences and by forgetting the distinguishing aspects. This awakens the idea that, in addition to the leaves, there exist in nature the ‘leaf’: the original model according to which all the leaves were perhaps woven, sketched, measured, colored, curled, and painted—but by incompetent hands, so that no specimen turned out to be a correct, trustworthy, and faithful likeness of the original model” (OTL, 83). A concept kills and mummifies metaphorical life, and it has been philosophers’ “idiosyncrasy” to essentialize, dehistoricize, and eternalize metaphorical life. These abstractions—concepts—are ways for humans to secure a stable “conventional” construct of reality on the basis of a forgetting of the primal unstable and creative metaphoricity of life; they are like the hardening, petrification, or congealing of life. “Only by forgetting this primitive world of metaphor can one live with any repose, security, and consistency: only by means of the petrification and coagulation of a mass of images which originally streamed from the primal faculty of human imagination like a fiery liquid, only in the invincible faith that *this sun, this table is a truth in itself*, in short, only by forgetting that he himself is an *artistically creating* subject, does man live with any repose, security, and consistency” (OTL, 86).

Any concept is a construct, an invention, a fiction, what Nietzsche calls an “error.” By “error,” of course, Nietzsche does not mean a falsehood or untruth that could be corrected: rather, it points to the *fictitious nature* of any concept whatsoever. Nietzsche’s critique does not consist in denouncing the falsity of a concept or a judgment: rather, it is to expose the lie *as lie*. In *Ecce Homo*, he writes: “I was the first to *discover* the truth by being the first to experience lies as lies—smelling them out.”⁵ Conceptuality, along with the “fictions of logic,” rest for Nietzsche on assumptions “with which nothing in the real world corresponds” (HH, 16), as, for instance, the assumption of the equality of things, the identity of the thing, causality or the I-cause, free will, agency, intention and accountability, and so on. These categories, which have become idols of worship and belief in the Western tradition (along with the other prejudices of reason that force us “to posit unity, identity, duration, substance, cause, thinghood, being,” making us “entangled in error, *forced* into error” [TI, 20]), are exposed as fictions by way of a deconstructing genealogy that will consist in dismantling idealistic fictions in order to uncover the processes—the events—at play within them. Each time, Nietzsche will attempt to reveal the events that subtend our conceptual

fictions. Now, two fundamental errors stand in the way of letting the event come forth in its eventfulness: the reliance on causality and the belief in the subject.

The Event without Cause

As we saw, for Nietzsche a concept is an imaginary entity. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche makes the claim that, over “immense periods of time,” the intellect “produced nothing but errors”⁶ and that such a concept as that of causality, that is, the duality of cause and effect, “probably never exists” (GS, 172). In fact, cause and effect are not in the least properties of things, but interpretations. They are to be taken as useful instruments, but not for explanation: “one should use ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ only as pure *concepts*, that is to say, as conventional fictions for the purpose of designation and communication—not for explanation.”⁷ There is no causality as some objective order or lawfulness. Rather, cause and effect are *fictions that we have invented*. “It is *we* alone who have devised cause, sequence, for-each-other, relativity, constraint, number, law, freedom, motive, and purpose; and when we project and mix this symbol world into things as if it existed ‘in itself,’ we act once more as we have always acted—*mythologically*” (BGE, 29). Nietzsche emphasizes the artificial character of cause and effect “explanation,” stressing how one separates in the flux of life “two separate things,” cause and effect, whereas there is but “a manifold one-after-another.” Nietzsche sees the flux of becoming whereas metaphysical rationalist thought invented a causal order, that is, the abstraction of a cause distinguished from the effect. However, causality *does not exist*: “Cause and effect: such a duality probably never exists; in truth we are confronted by a continuum out of which we isolate a couple of pieces, just as we perceive motion only as isolated points and then infer it without ever actually seeing it” (GS, 173). Ultimately for Nietzsche, the cause and effect structure is a construct concealing the manifold continuum of life, an artificial construct that we impose on the flux of life. “The suddenness with which many effects stand out misleads us; actually, it is sudden only for us. In this moment of suddenness there is an infinite number of processes that elude us. An intellect that could see cause and effect as a continuum and a flux and not, as we do, in terms of an arbitrary division and dismemberment—would repudiate the concept of cause and effect and deny all conditionality” (GS, 173).

This critique of causality is pursued in “The Four Great Errors” in *Twilight of the Idols*, where Nietzsche shows that the belief in the fictions of consciousness or the ego as “internal fact” rests upon the belief in the will as an efficient cause. Of all these myths regarding such internal facts, Nietzsche singles out the belief in the will as cause, “Of these three ‘internal facts’ which seemed to vouch for causality, the first and most convincing is the ‘fact’ of *will as cause*” (TI, 32), the so-called internal causality. Causality, and in particular the inner causality of

the will, is for Nietzsche a pure invention: “In every age we have believed that we know what a cause is: but where did we get our knowledge, or more precisely, our belief that we have knowledge about this? From the realm of the famous ‘internal facts,’ none of which has up to now proved to be factual” (TI, 31). Ultimately, the issue for Nietzsche is “whether we really recognize the will as *efficient*, whether we believe in the causality of the will” (BGE, 48). In fact, he claims, “Today we don’t believe any word of all that anymore” (TI, 32). The will is not the cause of the event, but an epiphenomenon, a mere superficial accompaniment. “The ‘internal world’ is full of optical illusions and mirages: the will is one of them. The will no longer moves anything, so it no longer explains anything either—it just accompanies events, and it can even be absent” (TI, 32). The will loses its role as motive to become a surface phenomenon, an accompanying thought: “The so-called ‘motive’: another error. Just a surface phenomenon of consciousness, an accessory to the act, which conceals the *antecedentia* of an act rather than representing them” (TI, 32). A similar inversion as that of the belief in causality is at play in our belief in the will as cause. Nietzsche explains that we believe ourselves to be “causal in the act of willing; there, at least, we thought that we were *catching causality in the act*” (TI, 31). As will be covered, the belief in the will gives us the certainty that we are the cause of our actions, giving rise to our belief in the subject.

This position of a cause is an error in several senses. There is first the error, the confusion, or the inversion of cause and effect. In the opening lines of “The Fours Great Errors,” Nietzsche insists, “There is no error more dangerous than *confusing the effect with the cause*” (TI, 30), an inversion that is of course the symptom of a more fateful inversion, that of values with respect to life, an inversion that condemns and negates life. This confusion of cause and effect, which Nietzsche calls “the genuine corruption of reason,” and one of “humanity’s oldest and most contemporary customs,” historically bears the name of religion and morality: “Every statement formulated by religion and morality contains it” (TI, 30). The error lies in the denial of the material basis of life and the idealization of an abstract principle, constructed after the fact, and mistakenly and retroactively posited as cause and origin. The inversion of cause and effect reflects the inversion of material existence into an ideality, an inversion that Nietzsche in turn would precisely seek to invert. Based on such inversion and abstraction, causality is made to play the role of the foundation of events. How does this happen? Through the imaginary position of a cause beneath the event, through the retroactive imputing of such cause to the event. Of course, and I will return to this question shortly, one needs to bear in mind that the doer as such is also a fiction and that in fact the very opposition between a doer and a deed is an error. This error itself rests upon what appears here as a retroactive attribution of a cause to an event by way of an inversion of temporality.

The error of causality pertains to this phenomenon of a retroactive assigning of the cause to the event, which Nietzsche describes as an inversion of temporality, an *Umkehrung der Zeit*. The focus of Nietzsche's analysis bears on the peculiar temporality of cause assigning and the reversal of temporality that takes place in the process of an a posteriori imputation of a cause. Nietzsche calls this phenomenon the error of "false causality," once again pointing to the invention of an imaginary causality to give an account of the event. This delusion lies in the retroactive assigning of a cause, presenting the paradoxical temporality of an after-the-fact (re)construction that is then posited as having existed *before* the event. "I'll begin with dreams: a particular sensation, for instance, a sensation due to a distant cannon shot, has a cause imputed to it [*untergeschoben*] afterwards [*nachträglich*]" (TI, 32–33). Once the cause has been introduced, *after the event*, then, it is then said to exist prior to the event, an occurrence that has now been given an intelligibility: "In the meantime, the sensation persists in a kind of resonance: it waits, as it were, until the drive to find causes allows it to come into the foreground—not as an accident anymore, but as 'meaning'" (TI, 33). As Nietzsche explains, the sensation then becomes part of "a whole little novel in which precisely the dreamer is the protagonist." Everyone knows the experience in a dream when the dreamer hears a sound that then becomes included in the narrative in a causal way. What was first a sheer event, perceived outside any causal network, is then integrated in the dream and reconstructed as causal origin in the narration. The event has been reconstructed and is now said to be happening *according to causality* (one recalls here Kant's analogies of experience, in which it is "deduced transcendently" that events occur according to the law of causality). Of course, the cause was produced *after the fact* and then reinjected as that from which the event occurred. "The cannon shot shows up in a *causal* way, and time seems to flow backward. What comes later, the motivation, is experienced first, often with a hundred details that flash by like lightning; the shot *follows*. . . . What has happened? The representations *generated* by a certain state of affairs were misunderstood as the cause of this state of affairs" (TI, 33).

Now, one must invert this inversion of temporality and posit that the event happens *before* the cause. Only after something has happened can one begin to look for causes. That something happens is the original fact. In that sense, there is nothing before the event. This is why Claude Romano states, in *Event and World*: "Pure beginning from nothing, an event, in its an-archic bursting forth, is absolved from all antecedent causality,"⁸ or also: "An event has no cause, because *it is its own origin*" (EW, 42). It is traditionally admitted that events are determined by prior causes, and we saw how Kant insisted that "everything *that happens* presupposes a previous state, upon which it follows without exception according to a rule."⁹ But do events simply follow predetermined sequences? If this was the case, would they still be events in the proper sense? Instead, there

is the possibility of recognizing that an event, “worthy of the name,” as Derrida would say, represents the surge of the new through which precisely it does not “follow” from a previous cause. By introducing the new in the world, indeed by bringing forth a new world, does an event not disqualify prior causal contexts and networks? To that extent, an event could not be “explained” by prior events because its occurrence has transformed the very context that existed and introduced a new one. Indeed, as Claude Romano explains, “*an event is nothing other than this impersonal reconfiguration of my possibilities and of the world*” (EW, 31). With the event, a new self and a new world come to be. Therefore, as Jean-Luc Marion writes, the event is disconnected from the cause, *has no cause*: “the event does not have an adequate cause and cannot have one. Only in this way can it advance on the wings of a dove: unforeseen, unusual, unexpected, unheard of, and unseen.”¹⁰ The event in the proper sense exceeds causal orders, “any horizon of meaning and any prior condition. . . . It is a pure bursting forth from and in itself, unforeseeable in its radical novelty, and retrospectively establishing a rupture with the entire past” (EW, 42). A new understanding of temporality is here called for: not a ruled sequence unfolding from the past to the present, but a surge coming from the future, transforming the entire complex of temporality, and indeed transforming the past itself. Ultimately causality proves inadequate to the eventfulness of the event. Does the very eventfulness of the event not precisely point to a certain excess with respect to the enframing of causality? Can an event worthy of its name be even conditioned by a causality? Or should one not assume, as Jean-Luc Marion invites us to do, the excess of the event with respect to causality? Marion speaks of “the character and the dignity of an event—that is, an event or a phenomenon that is unforeseeable (on the basis of the past), not exhaustively comprehensible (on the basis of the present), not reproducible (on the basis of the future), in short, absolute, unique, happening. We will therefore call it a *pure event*.”¹¹

The event happens first. The cause is added after the fact. “*In summa*: an event is neither effected nor does it effect. *Causa* is a capacity to produce effects that has been super-added to the events” (WP, 296). There are no causes: the cause is added after the fact *as an interpretation* (Nietzsche speaks of an “interpretation by causality” as a “deception,” WP, 296) insofar as it is sought. The law of causality “has been projected by us into every event.” For Nietzsche, what he significantly calls the “drive to find causes” arises out of a need. Causality is not the order of things but a subjective quest, a subjective *need*. The drive to produce a cause arises out of a perception of a lack (lack of intelligibility, lack of understanding) that needs to be supplemented. In fact, the event manifests the lack of cause in such a way that we are driven to seek it at all costs: “It’s never enough for us just to determine the mere fact *that* we find ourselves in such and such a state: we admit this fact—become *conscious* of it only if we’ve given it some kind

of motivation" (TI, 33). The cause itself is lacking. An event, in its eventfulness and givenness, is indeed happening devoid of a cause: it happens first, from and as itself. Phenomenologically, the event happens in a noncausal way, in an anarchic irruption disrupting any order (we recall here how Kant described freedom as rebellious to causality, as lawless), with a meaning that is either missing, partial, or delayed, still to come, *en souffrance*. The response to this "suffering" is the drive to find causes, or rather, causal *interpretations*. We never "find" actual causes (there are no such things), but invent causal (mis)interpretations, which ultimately are nothing but memories and mental associations with other past events. Causality is a remembering. "Memory, which comes into play in such cases without our knowing it, calls up earlier states of the same kind, and the causal interpretations that are rooted in them—but *not* their causation" (TI, 33). Nietzsche sees a lack of reason at the root of all our cause-seeking: "Most of our general feelings—every kind of inhibition, pressure, tension, and explosion in the play and counterplay of the organs, and in particular the state of the *nervus sympathicus* [sympathetic nervous system]—arouse our drive to find causes: we want to have a *reason* for feeling that we're in *such and such* a state—a bad state or a good state" (TI, 33). It is not enough to simply stay with the fact that has occurred. What is lacking is a reason, a ground, a cause, for our existence and our feelings. What is felt is then nothing else than the groundlessness of existence itself, and a cause would provide a ground that could provisionally suture the lack. A cause then becomes the placeholder of a lack, the placeholder of a nothing.

The need for causes arises out of a *fear*. If causality is rooted in the drive to find causes, in turn this drive responds to a fear, and finding a cause appeases our fears. This is why Nietzsche insists that knowledge is about seeking to make the unfamiliar familiar, reducing the alien character of the pure event and thereby increasing our sense of control. "There is no such thing as a sense of causality, as Kant thinks. One is surprised, one is disturbed, one desires something familiar to hold on to" (WP, 297). The drive to causality is the drive to transform something unfamiliar into something familiar, a motivation that lends itself to a psychological analysis and genealogy by Nietzsche: "A *psychological explanation of this error*.—Tracing something unfamiliar back to something familiar alleviates us, calms us, pacifies us, and in addition provides a feeling of power. The unfamiliar brings with it danger, unrest, and care—our first instinct is to *do away* with these painful conditions. First principle: some explanation is better than none" (TI, 33). What is considered "true" is most often what makes us feel good, and the first representation that explains the unknown as familiar feels so good that one considers it true: "Proof of *pleasure* ('strength') as criterion of truth" (TI, 33). In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche further characterizes this making-familiar of knowledge. In paragraph 355, for instance, entitled "The origin of our concept of 'knowledge,'" Nietzsche asks: "What is it that the common people take for

knowledge? What do they want when they want ‘knowledge’? Nothing more than this: something strange is to be reduced to something *familiar*” (GS, 300). Even in the philosophical tradition, Nietzsche insists, knowledge is a factor of appropriation of the unknown, that is, the unfamiliar. “And we philosophers—have we really meant *more* than this when we have spoken of knowledge? What is familiar means what we are used to so that we no longer marvel at it, our everyday, some rule in which we are stuck, anything at all in which we feel at home” (GS, 300). What could drive such a quest? Clearly no longer in this context some disinterested concern for knowledge as objective truth about things in themselves. Rather, a fear before the alien and uncanny character of the pure event. “Look, isn’t our need for knowledge precisely this need for the familiar, the will to uncover under everything strange, unusual, and questionable something that no longer disturbs us? Is it not the *instinct of fear* that bids us to know? And is the jubilation of those who attain knowledge not the jubilation over the restoration of a sense of security?” (GS, 300–301).

Causality is a fiction created out of fear. “Thus, the drive to find causes is conditioned and aroused by the feeling of fear” (TI, 34). The question “why,” the leading question of the principle of reason, is born out of that fear. The cause alleviates that fear. A proof of this is that the cause given is always something familiar, something we already know, so that “the new, the unexperienced, the alien, is excluded as a cause” (TI, 34). And the “fact that something already *familiar*, something we have experienced, something inscribed in memory is posited as the cause, is the first consequence of this need” (TI, 34, trans. slightly modified). What matters in the position of a causality is to suppress the feeling of the strange, that is, *the eventfulness of the event as ungrounded*. This is why another motif in the tradition that has served to suppress the groundlessness of the event is that of the subject, a *subjectum* or ground. It will also be necessary to deconstruct the notion of the subject in order to think the event in its eventfulness.

The Event without Subject

One of the constitutive errors of the metaphysical tradition’s reliance on causality is the imposition of causes on every existence, on every event, as their *substratum*: causality is the alleged substrate of the event. The belief in causality involves the belief in the subject. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche stresses the fictitious nature of the ego, which is only a word: “And as for the ‘I’! That has become a fable, a fiction, a play on words: it has completely and utterly ceased to think, to feel, and to will!” (TI, 32). Nietzsche recalls that these concepts are products of our invention; “There are simply no mental causes at all! . . . We have invented a world of causes, a world of will . . . we have constituted the ego as a cause” (TI, 32). Events are constructed as actions; actions, constructed as

deed, are distinguished from doers. A doer is then constructed as subject: an agent distinct from the act is invented. All happening “was a doing, all doing the effect of a willing; for it, the world became a multitude of doers, a doer (a ‘subject’) was imputed to everything that happened” (TI, 32). This belongs to the prejudices of reason, which “sees actors and actions everywhere” (TI, 20), which “believes in the will as an absolute cause,” which believes in the “I,” and so on. Ultimately, an ontology of causation is enforced everywhere, by which “being is thought into things everywhere as a cause, is *imputed* to things” (TI, 20). Nietzsche insists that “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming,” that the doer “is merely a fiction added to the deed.”¹² In paragraph 17 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche analyses the supposition of a subject under thinking and denounces it as a fiction. There is a threefold belief: that motives are the antecedents of an act; that thoughts are caused; and that the I is such a cause. First, in a quasi-phenomenological observation, describing a “small terse fact,” Nietzsche notes that a thought does not come from some I-substrate but instead originates *from itself*, and comes when it comes. “With regard to the superstitions of logicians, I shall never tire of emphasizing a small terse fact, which these superstitious minds hate to concede—namely, that a thought comes when ‘it’ wishes, and not when ‘I’ wish” (BGE, 24). It is false to state that the I is the cause of thinking, or even that the I is in a position of subject. The notion of the “I think” as principle and foundation, as it has been established in modern philosophy since Descartes, is said by Nietzsche to be contrary to the *facts*: “it is a *falsification* of the facts of the case to say that the subject ‘I’ is the condition of the predicate ‘think’” (BGE, 24). Even the “it” (in the expression “a thought comes when *it* wishes”) is misleading, for it might suggest that there is some entity, that is, *some substrate*, at the basis of thinking. “It thinks: but that this ‘it’ is precisely the famous old ‘ego’ is, to put it mildly, only a supposition, an assertion, and assuredly not an ‘immediate certainty’” (BGE, 24). The notion of an underlying subjectivity is contrary to the facts, an unphenomenological construction.

The alleged “simplicity” of the “I think” is likewise deceiving, a seduction of words. Nietzsche challenges the reliance on the notion of an immediate certainty (the immediacy and evidence of the “I think”). In *Beyond Good and Evil* (paragraph 16), Nietzsche speaks of the belief of those “harmless self-observers” in the superstition of the “I will” or the “I think,” “as though knowledge here got hold of its object purely and nakedly as ‘the thing in itself,’ without any falsification on the part of either the subject or the object” (BGE, 23). However, the very expressions “immediate certainty,” “absolute knowledge,” and “thing in itself” all involve a *contradictio in adjecto*, a contradiction in terms, since all certainty is constructed, all knowledge is for us and therefore not absolute, and the thing in itself cannot be “in itself” since that would mean absolutely independent from us to the point where we would not even notice it! If one analyzed the process

that is expressed in this sentence, ‘I think,’ one would find many claims therein that are impossible to establish or even less prove, “for example, that it is *I* who think, that there must necessarily be something that thinks, that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of a being who is thought of as a cause, that there is an ‘ego,’ and, finally, that it is already determined what is to be designated by thinking—that I *know* what thinking is” (BGE, 23). Unlike what Descartes asserted, the “I think” is anything but “simple.” In fact, these “simple truths” are more like *decisions*, “for if I had not already decided within myself what it is, by what standard could I determine whether that which is just happening is not perhaps ‘willing’ or ‘feeling’? In short, the assertion ‘I think’ assumes that I *compare* my state at the present moment with other states of myself which I know, in order to determine what it is; on account of this retrospective connection with further ‘knowledge,’ it has, at any rate, no immediate certainty for me” (BGE, 23). Instead of immediate certainties, there are the following questions: “From where do I get the concept of thinking? Why do I believe in cause and effect? What gives me the right to speak of an ego, and even of an ego as cause, and finally of an ego as the cause of thought?” (BGE, 24). All these notions are constructs for Nietzsche, which he understands in terms of the constitutive role of language in thinking. The subject begins to appear as a linguistic construct.

Indeed, an underlying substantial ego is not a phenomenological fact, but a metaphysical idol, and ultimately for Nietzsche a *linguistic* prejudice. The substantialist egology of the Cartesian tradition harbors an implicit metaphysics of grammar. “One infers here according to the grammatical habit: ‘thinking is an activity; every activity requires an agent; consequently—’” (BGE, 24). Metaphysical idols are but grammatical structures: “formerly, one believed in the soul as one believed in grammar and the grammatical subject” (BGE, 67). The difference between a doer and the deed, that is, the position of an agent or subject beneath the event, is made possible by a “seduction of language.” Nietzsche clarifies this dependency of a metaphysics of subjectivity on language in *The Will to Power*. Starting with a critique of the positivists’ view that “there are only facts,” Nietzsche recalls that precisely all there is are not “facts,” but interpretations. The statement that claims that everything is subjective is also an interpretation (this is why, I should note in passing, the statement “there are only interpretations” does not mean “everything is subjective,” and Nietzsche’s perspectivism is not a subjectivism or a relativism). By claiming that all there is are interpretations, and that *even the subjective is an interpretation*, Nietzsche is casting doubt on the belief in the subject. This is why he continues by stating that an interpretation does *not* require an interpreter. “Finally, is it necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretation? Even this is invention, hypothesis” (WP, 267). The subject is “not something given,” that is, not a fact. What is the subject in this case? It is, it is “something added and invented and projected behind what there

is" (WP, 267). In the following paragraphs, Nietzsche approaches the notion of "subject" as both the Cartesian metaphysical cause of thought and as a *word*, that is, as the linguistic "I," in each case in order to stress their fictitious nature. He states, "However habitual and indispensable this fiction [of the subject] may have become by now—that in itself proves nothing against its imaginary origin" (WP, 268). The metaphysical notion of subjectivity as substrate rests upon the linguistic motif of the subject, and not the other way around: "The concept of substance is a consequence of the concept of the subject: not the reverse!" This means that the metaphysician notion of substance rests upon the subject as a linguistic construct. Nietzsche had previously established that the "I" is a word that we set up "at the point at which our ignorance begins," a horizon of our knowledge and not a truth. This is why, after recalling the metaphysical Cartesian motif of (belief in) substantiality ("There is thinking; therefore there is something that thinks': this is the upshot of all Descartes' argumentation. But that means positing as 'true a priori' our belief in the concept of substance"), he adds that such a belief "is simply a formulation of our grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed" (WP, 268).

This impersonality here revealed ("there is" thinking), an impersonality that is constitutive of the event as such, leads us to consider impersonal, subjectless sentences such as "it rains." If the event has no subject underlying it, whether as a cause or substrate, then the danger is to substantify the "it" in such expressions, as if it designated some substrate distinct from the happening. As noted prior, the position of a substrate beneath the event is apparent in Kant's first analogy of experience, which states that "in all change of appearances substance persists" (CPR, A 182/B 224, 299). This substance can also be the ego, the "subject," as cause of its effects, the agent as cause of its actions, or the doer as cause of its deed. All these are for Nietzsche grammatical-metaphysical fictions, prejudices, along with the "fundamental errors of reason that are petrified in it" (GM, 45). Just as the "popular mind" distinguishes the lightning from its flash, just as it reifies the "it" in the "it rains," just as it conceives of the event as an action requiring a subject (as if behind the manifestation of strength, there was an indifferent substratum that would have the freedom to be manifest strength or not), just as it "doubles the deed" ("it posits the same event first as cause and then a second time as its effect," GM, 45), the metaphysician distinguishes a subject from its effects. "If I say: 'Lightning flashes,' I have posited the flashing once as activity and once as subject, and have thus added on to the event [*Geschehen*] a being that is not identical with the event but that *remains, is, and does not 'become'* [*nicht wird*]. — *To posit the event as effecting* [*Wirken*], and effect [*Wirkung*] *as being*: that is the *twofold error, or interpretation, of which we are guilty.*"¹³ In fact, Nietzsche proclaims forcefully: "there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; the doer is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is

everything” (GM, 45). “The deed is everything,” this expression would require and call for another conception of the event in which such event would no longer be anchored in a cause-substrate, but happening from itself and yet happening to someone.

The subject, the substantial I, are only habits, and Nietzsche writes that “perhaps some day we shall accustom ourselves, including the logicians, to get along without the little ‘it’ (which is all that is left of the honest little old ego)” (BGE, 24). The “I,” the “it,” are interpretations added to the event. What this critique reveals is the radical absence of substrate and authorship in an event. After his deconstruction of the imaginary causes and subjects, Nietzsche is able to question the very notion of authorship, whether divine or human, and declares that there is no author for what happens. The event displays a radical absence of ground. This groundlessness thus exposed will lead to a deconstruction of the principle of reason, which claims to establish a rational foundation for events.

The Event without Reason

This critique of the subject, that is to say, of the *subjectum* or substrate underlying events, reveals the abyss beneath any event: an event is always groundless. This is what Heidegger shows in his lecture course from 1955–1956, *The Principle of Reason* (*Der Satz vom Grund*), a title that immediately reveals the proximity between reason and ground, as *Grund* names both reason and ground. Heidegger states in the Address, “In all founding and getting to the bottom we are already on the path to a reason,”¹⁴ as he points to the translation of *ratio* in German as *Grund*. “But *Vernunft* [Reason], just as much as *Grund* [grounds] speak as translations of the one word, *ratio*.” Therefore, “ratio speaks in the word *Grund* and indeed does so with the dual sense of Reason and grounds” (GA 10, 145/PR, 98. Also GA 10, 171–173/PR, 102–104). For Heidegger, the principle of reason is ultimately about foundation, as our existence is ruled by this demand for reasons and grounds: “We have an eye out for grounds in all that surrounds, concerns, and meets us. We require a specification of reasons for our statements. We insist upon a foundation for every attitude” (GA 10, 171/PR, 117). The principle of reason is ultimately concerned with foundation, and the principle of sufficient reason with a sufficient grounding. Derrida evokes “the proximity between many of the figures of reason and those of the bottom or the ground, the foundation, the groundwork, the principle of sufficient reason, the *principium rationis*, the *nihil est sine ratione* as *Satz vom Grund*, the *Satz vom zureichenden Grunde* of the Leibnizian theodicy and its reinterpreted repetition by Heidegger.”¹⁵

Now, what is most striking in that course is how Heidegger reveals the groundlessness of the event of being by following the very principle that is meant to provide a foundation for events: the principle of reason. More precisely, it is

the very claim of the principle of reason, that is, that all events must be founded in reason, that will turn out to be itself groundless. I recall that principle, as enunciated by Leibniz: “*Hanovre le 14 juillet 1686: il faut tousjours qu’il y ait quelque fondement de la connexion des termes d’une proposition, qui se doit trouver dans leur notions. C’est là mon grande principe, dont je croy que tous les philosophes doivent demeurer d’accord, et dont un des corollaires est cet axiome vulgaire que rien n’arrive sans raison, qu’ont peut tousjours rendre pourquoy la chose est plus-tost allé ainsi qu’autrement.*” In translation: “it is always necessary that there be a foundation for the connecting of the parts of a judgment, in whose concepts these connections must be found. Precisely this is my grand Principle about which, I believe, all philosophers must concur—and this common axiom remains one of its corollaries—that nothing happens without a reason that one can always render as to why the matter has run its course this way rather than that” (cited in GA 10, 175–176/PR, 119). The foundation turns out to be itself without foundation, perhaps even requires its own self-deconstruction. Heidegger enters the very heart of the principle of reason to show how it self-deconstructs, as it were, from within. For, he asks, if the principle of reason states that everything that happens must have a reason, what then is the reason for the principle of reason? Indeed, if everything must have a reason, then the principle of reason (which is something) must also have a reason. “Indeed the principle of reason is, as a principle, not nothing. The principle is itself something. Therefore, according to what the principle itself tells us, it is the sort of thing that must have a reason. What is the reason for the principle of reason?” (GA 10, 17/PR, 11). Does the principle of reason have a reason? Nothing could be less certain: “*Nihil est sine ratione*. Nothing is without reason, says the principle of reason. Nothing—which means not even this principle of reason, certainly it least of all. It may then be that the principle of reason, that whereof it speaks, and this speaking itself do not belong within the jurisdiction of the principle of reason. To think this remains a grave burden. In short it means that *the principle of reason is without reason. Said still more clearly: ‘Nothing without reason’—this, which is something, is without reason*” (GA 10, 27/PR, 17, emphasis mine). Further, through this question, “Does the principle of reason have a reason?” it becomes apparent that reason itself does not rest upon a rational basis.

One recalls here how Kant speaks of a drive to reason, a *Trieb*, or also an “interest” of reason (*Interesse der Vernunft*; for instance: CPR, 496–502, 576, 593, 603–604, 614, 645), which reveals a certain nonrational basis of reason, leading Derrida to ask the following questions about the value and even honor of reason, all revealing the nonrational origin of reason: “The honor of reason—is that reason? Is honor reasonable or rational through and through? The very form of this question can be applied analogically to everything that evaluates, affirms, or prescribes reason: to prefer reason, is that rational or, and this is something else,

reasonable? The value of reason, the desire for reason, the dignity of reason—are these rational? Do these have to do wholly with reason?” (R, 120). Is reason rational? Is the principle of reason rational? Does reason have a reason? One already sees here how the principle of reason is situated in a circle (What is the reason of the principle of reason? What is the foundation of a foundation?) that will throw it into a self-deconstruction, that is, into the abyss of its own impossible foundation. Or should one say, instead, that any foundation, as a foundation, must itself be without foundation? This led Deleuze to speak of the paradoxical nature of the logic of grounding, of the “comical ungrounding” of the principle of reason: “But who still speaks of a foundation, when the logic of grounding or the principle of reason leads precisely to its own ‘ungrounding,’ comical and disappointing.”¹⁶ The principle of reason will collapse (“run aground”) at the very place of its impossible foundation, “there where,” as Derrida puts it in *Rogues*, “the *Grund* opens up onto the *Abgrund*, where giving reasons [*rendre-raison*] and giving an account [*rendre-compte*]*—logon didonai* or *principium reddendae rationis*—are threatened by or drawn into the abyss” (R, 122). Heidegger reveals this self-deconstruction of the principle of reason by following the question “why,” which, in its infinite quest for a ground, actually accentuates its own lack of foundation: “Whenever we pursue the ground/reason of a being, we ask: why? Cognition stalks this interrogative word from one reason to another. The ‘why’ allows no rest, offers no stop, gives no support. The ‘why’ is the word for the tireless advance into an and-so-forth that research, in the event that it simply and blindly belabors itself, can take so far that it perforce can go too far with it” (GA 10, 185/PR, 126).

Before dwelling on this paradoxical self-undermining of the principle of reason, I begin by stressing that Heidegger considers our present age to be entirely ruled and “held in the sway of the fundamental principle of rendering sufficient reasons” (GA 10, 187/PR, 128). This principle states that “‘for every truth’ (which means, according to Leibniz, every true proposition) ‘the reason can be rendered’” (GA 10, 34/PR, 22). This principle in fact defines what science answers to (although science does not reflect upon it but is rather driven by it), as Heidegger makes the claim that “the demand to render reasons is, for the sciences, the element within which its cognition moves, as does the fish in water and the bird in air” (GA 10, 46–47/PR, 30). In fact, science as such rests upon and answers to the demand of the principle of reason: “Science responds to the demand of *ratio reddenda* and does so unconditionally. Otherwise, it couldn’t be what it is” (GA 10, 47/PR, 30). Indeed, the principle of reason permeates and rules our entire human existence and historical age to such an extent that in fact it not only rules science but philosophy as such. “The *principium rationis* as thought by Leibniz not only determines, by the sort of demand it makes, modern cognition in general, but it permeates in a decisive manner that thinking known as the thinking of

thinkers—philosophy. As far as I can see, the full import of this fact has not yet been thought through” (GA 10, 64/PR, 43). Further, Heidegger stresses that the scope of the principle of reason is not limited to “the demand of reason to be rendered . . . as an abstract rule of thinking,” for it involves the “practical” scope of an ordering and transformation of nature itself as well as humanity. “The demand was overpowering in a strange way, namely, that the energies of nature as well as the mode of their procurement and use determine the historical existence of humanity on earth” (GA 10, 83/PR, 56).

It is matter of rendering reasons to a demand for a reason. Heidegger insists on the “demand-character of reason,” of *ratio* as *ratio reddenda*. “What is overpowering about the principle of reason is the demand that reasons be rendered” (GA 10, 42/PR, 27). And therefore, the *reddendum*, “the demand that reasons be rendered, now speaks unabatedly and without surcease across the modern age and out over us contemporaries today. The *reddendum*, the claim that reasons be rendered, has insinuated itself between the thinking person and their world in order to take possession of human cognition in a new manner” (GA 10, 37/PR, 24). Ultimately, Heidegger considers the “reign” of the “mighty” principle of reason—the demand to render (sufficient) reasons—to be the great *uprooting* of authentic humanity. Commenting upon the “strange” normative power that the principle of reason has on our lives, he writes: “When I use the word ‘strange’ [*unheimlich*] here, I mean it not in a sentimental sense. One must think it in both a literal and substantive sense, namely, that the unique unleashing of the demand to render reasons threatens everything of humans’ being-at-home and robs them of the roots of their subsistence, the roots from out of which every great human age, every world-opening spirit, every molding of the human form has thus far grown” (GA 10, 47/PR, 30). His critique is quite severe, as he continues by claiming that “the claim of the mighty Principle of rendering reasons withdraws the subsistence from contemporary humanity” (GA 10, 47/PR, 30) and that “the more decisively humans try to harness the ‘mega-energies’ that would, once and for all, satisfy all human energy needs, the more impoverished becomes the human faculty for building and dwelling in the realm of what is essential” (GA 10, 47/PR, 30–31). In short, as he concludes, the demand to render reasons amounts to a “withdrawal of roots” (GA 10, 47–48/PR, 31). In fact, the dominance of the principle of reason corresponds to “the most extreme withdrawal of being” (GA 10, 83/PR, 56). This withdrawal corresponds to the project of total calculability of the real, which goes hand in hand with the project of reducing the event, that is, what is eventful in the event.

This discussion will proceed step by step. Heidegger begins by recalling what the principle of reason states, namely that *nihil est sine ratione*: nothing is without a reason. It asks for a reason so that nothing is without a why: “*Nihil est sine ratione*. Nothing is without reason. There is nothing—and here that means

everything that in some manner is—that is without reason” (GA 10, 6/PR, 5). The principle of reason is a statement about beings as a whole, affirming that every being has a reason, as well as a cause, since Heidegger reminds states that Leibniz had included in the principle of reason a principle of causality. Now, the expression “nothing is without a reason” (or a cause) can be heard positively or negatively. “Nothing is without a sufficient reason, which demands to be rendered. In the affirmative form this means that every being has its sufficient reason, which must be rendered. In short: ‘*nothing is without reason*’” (GA 10, 75/PR, 50). This last expression contains a double negation, which Heidegger understands as concealing an affirmation regarding the meaning of being: “What immediately strikes us about this formulation of the principle of reason is that it contains two negations: *Nihil-sine*; nothing-without. The double negation yields an affirmation: nothing that in any manner is, is without a reason. This means that everything that is, *every being whatsoever*, has a reason” (GA 10, 6/PR, 5, emphasis mine). There must be a reason why there is something rather than nothing. “There is a *reason* in the nature of things why *something* exists rather than nothing” (GA 10, 42/PR, 27). The principle of reason *demands* that everything that happens be founded in reason. This principle is first of all a request, a demand, a claim and a command (*Anspruch*), a call to render reasons, the call of the *ratio reddenda*: that everything, every being, shows or reveals its reason or foundation. The principle of reason is a demand for foundation, for an ultimate *Grund*. The rendering of reason is a response to a demand, the demand to establish a *sufficient* foundation for all that is. “Sufficient” here means, as Heidegger states in the Address, the “completeness of a foundation” (GA 10, 177/PR, 121). The rendering of reason amounts to a rendering of grounds. “Accordingly, the strict formulation of the *principium rationis* as the *principium reddendae rationis* contains a very specific and decisive explanation of what the unrestricted principle of reason says: nothing is without reason. This now says: something ‘is,’ which means, can be identified as being a being, only if it is stated in a sentence that satisfies the fundamental principle of reason *as the fundamental principle of founding*” (GA 10, 36/PR, 23, emphasis mine). *The call for foundation is the true calling of the principle of reason*. This is indeed why the principle of reason has an ontotheological structure as it refers to an unconditioned and ultimate foundation for all beings or nature, namely God. Heidegger clarifies that for Leibniz the principle of reason participates to the ontotheological structure of metaphysics, which posits a supreme being at the foundation of all beings and accounts for beings by appealing to yet another being: “However, because Leibniz and all metaphysics come to a halt with the principle of reason as a fundamental principle about beings, metaphysical thinking requires, according to the fundamental principle, a first reason for being: in a being, and indeed the being that is most of all” (GA 10, 184/PR, 125). As Heidegger explains, for Leibniz there is in the nature of things “a reason why something is

rather than nothing. As the first existing cause of all beings, God is called reason" (GA 10, 42/PR, 27). Thus, "what is to be posited as the *ultima ratio* of *Natura*, as the furthest, highest—and that means the first—existing reason for the nature of things, is what one usually calls God" (GA 10, 42/PR, 27). At the same time, this ontotheological structure of the principle opens onto a circle: "So the principle of reason holds only insofar as God exists. But God exists only insofar as the principle of reason holds. Such thinking moves in a circle" (GA 10, 43/R, 28).

Heidegger makes a further—and decisive—claim: the principle of reason can be taken as a statement on beings, or else as it pertains to being as such. He writes: "We can hear the principle of reason in a twofold manner: on the one hand, as a supreme fundamental principle about beings, and, on the other hand, as a principle of being" (GA 10, 100/PR, 68). First, Heidegger begins by insisting on the ontological (rather than epistemological or metalinguistic) scope of the principle of reason. The principle of reason is a statement about being, not about reason or language: "What the principle of reason says does not come to language, namely, not to that language that corresponds to *that about which* the principle of reason speaks. *The principle of reason is an uttering of being* [ein Sagen vom Sein]. It is this, but in a concealed manner. What remains concealed is not only what it says; what also remains concealed is *that* it speaks of being" (GA 10, 73/PR, 49). Heidegger removes reason from the area of logic and language in order to situate it within the scope of being as such. "*Nihil est sine ratione*': 'Nothing is without reason.' Every being has a reason. The subject of the principle of reason is not reason, rather: 'Every being'; this is predicated as having a reason. *The principle of reason is, according to the ordinary way of understanding it, not a statement about reason, but about beings, insofar as there are beings*" (GA 10, 66/PR, 44, emphasis in the original). Referring to his earlier essay "On the Essence of Ground" (*Vom Wesen des Grundes*), Heidegger insists that the same thought was at play in that earlier text: "We can now apply what was briefly said about seeing, bringing into view, and overlooking to the case of the article entitled 'On the Essence of Reasons.' For in this article, it is plain as day that the principle 'nothing is without reason' says something about beings and doesn't shed the slightest bit of light on what 'reason' means" (GA 10, 68–69/PR, 46). Thus, he concludes, "The principle of reason is a statement about beings. Accordingly, it gives us no information about the essence of reason" (GA 10, 69/PR, 46).

The principle of reason is a statement about beings. *To that extent*, it is also a statement about being itself, if it is the case that "the shining of being is in play in the appearing of beings" (GA 10, 81/PR, 54). If the principle of reason is at first heard as a statement about beings, it then resonates as a statement about being. For to state that every being has a reason implies a prior implicit reference to being: one cannot make any determination with respect to a being without having first decided about the being of that being. "The fundamental principle of

reason says: every being has a reason. The principle is a statement about beings. But we experience a being as a being only when we attend to the fact that and how it *is*. Hence, in order to really hear the principle about beings we must become aware that the ‘is’ in the principle ‘nothing is without reason’ sets the pitch that tunes everything” (GA 10, 183/PR, 125). The principle of reason, even when heard ontically, is already harboring an ontological scope. The determining factor in the principle of reason is not ontical, but *ontological*. This is what allows Heidegger to evoke the other tonality of the principle of reason, the other way of hearing what the principle states, one that indicates the passage (the “leap”: *Satz*) from the ontical to the ontological scope of the principle of reason: “When we listen to it, that is, when we open ourselves to what really speaks in the principle, the principle suddenly intones differently. No longer ‘*nothing is without reason*,’ rather, ‘*nothing is without reason*’” (GA 10, 183/PR, 125). When heard in that way, that is, by highlighting the “is,” one passes (leaps) from the ontical to the ontological, from beings to being: “Whenever it speaks of beings, the tiny word ‘is’ names the *being of beings*” (GA 10, 183/PR, 125).

The saying of the principle of reason, *Nihil est sine ratione*, can thus be heard in two ways: “We can say: ‘*Nihil est sine ratione*.’ ‘*Nothing is without reason*.’ In the affirmative form this means: *everything has* a reason. Yet we can also set the pitch in this way: ‘*Nihil est sine ratione*.’ ‘*Nothing is without reason*’” (GA 10, 60/PR, 39–40). Heidegger emphasizes the “is” in the statement, associating the “is” with reason, revealing that *Grund*, reason/ground, belongs to being as such. “‘Nothing is without reason.’ When one paraphrases this customary formulation of the principle of reason, it reads: ‘Every being has a reason.’ With this, the reason that every being has is itself represented as some being. A reference earlier to a text of Leibniz was supposed to show this. The principle of reason is a statement about beings. In the other tonality, the principle of reason sounds like this: ‘Nothing *is* without reason.’ When paraphrased, this means ‘ground/reason belongs to being.’ Or ‘being and ground/reason—the same.’ Heard in this way the principle speaks of being” (GA 10, 111/PR, 75). If one hears the statement of the principle of reason as emphasized in this way: “Nothing *is* without reason,” one detects an affinity between being and reason itself: “The intonation allows us to hear a unison between the ‘is’ and ‘reason,’ *est* and *ratio*” (GA 10, 69/PR, 46). Now, Heidegger asks, “What do we bring into view when we think about the principle of reason in the tonality introduced here?” The statement, “Nothing *is* . . . without reason,” says: “‘Nothing,’ that is, no being whatsoever ‘is—without reason’” (GA 10, 72–73/PR, 49). No being is without reason: the “is” names being itself: “Even if it does so completely indeterminantly, the ‘is’ always names the being of some being” (GA 10, 73/PR, 49). This means that the statement of the principle of reason addresses beings in their being and is to be heard as an ontological statement. “So the principle of reason, which is offered as a

statement about beings, says: to the being of beings there belongs something like ground/reason" (GA 10, 73/PR, 49). The principle of reason must be approached in its ontological (and not simply ontical) scope: "Consequently, the principle of reason proves to be not only a statement about beings; even more, what we bring into view is that the principle of reason speaks of the being of beings" (GA 10, 73/PR, 49). The new emphasis allows one to bring being into view and to reveal the proximity of reason with being: "But finally we heard the principle of reason in a different tonality. Instead of '*Nothing is without reason*,' it now sounds like this: '*Nothing is without reason*.' The pitch has shifted from the 'nothing' to the 'is' and from the 'without' to the 'reason.' The word 'is' in one fashion or another invariably names being. This shift in pitch lets us hear an accord between being and reason" (GA 10, 75–76/PR, 50).

This should be understood in its ontologico-historical significance, Heidegger evoking the "*Geschick* of being," the destiny, sending, or dispensation of being, which always happens as a withdrawal: "being proffers itself to us while at the same time withdrawing its essence, concealing this essence in the withdrawal" (GA 10, 91/PR, 62). In such a withdrawal, which leaves reasons, causes, and grounds, being appears as ground. In the thirteenth lecture, Heidegger first recalls what he means by "*Geschick* of being," namely that being gives itself as a withdrawal: "When we were led to say more clearly what the talk of the history of being as the *Geschick* of being is supposed to mean, we referred to the fact that being, in that it proffers, clears and lights itself, at the same time withdraws" (GA 10, 164/PR, 110). He then associates such withdrawal with the identification of being with reason/ground: "Now we can more clearly hear the words about the withdrawal of being. The words say that being conceals itself as being; namely, in its inaugural *Geschick* as *logos* being conceals its belonging-together with ground/reason." The withdrawal of being brings reason and ground to the fore: "But the withdrawing does not exhaust itself in this concealment. Rather, inasmuch as it conceals its essence, being allows something else to come to the fore, namely ground/reason in the shape of *archai*, *aitiai*, of *rationes*, of *causae*, of Principles, *Ursachen* [causes] and Rational grounds. In withdrawing being leaves behind these shapes of ground/reason whose provenance goes unrecognized" (GA 10, 164/PR, 110). In its withdrawal, being gives itself as rational ground.

By hearing the principle of reason in its ontological sense, Heidegger is able to stress the affinity between being and reason. Indeed, if beings are said to be founded in reason, and being is that which determines beings as such, then it appears that reason is one possible name in a certain historical configuration for being itself. Now, to state that there is an affinity between being and reason, or that reason "belongs" to being, or even that "being and reason: the same," cannot mean that being itself *has* a reason or is grounded in reason. That never is the case. "Ground/reason belongs to being"—one might be inclined to understand

this in the sense of ‘being has a reason,’ that is, ‘being is grounded.’ The popularly understood and presumably valid *principium rationis* never speaks of this” (GA 10, 76/PR, 51). Why? Because what is grounded in the principle of reason is never being but instead beings, the ontic itself. “According to the principle of reason, *only beings are ever grounded*” (GA 10, 76/PR, 51, emphasis mine). What, then, does the statement “reason belongs to being” mean if not that being itself is grounded in reason? Heidegger suggests that, if only beings are grounded, this means that, as being, being grounds so that beings are thus grounded in this way. “‘Ground/reason belongs to being’ is tantamount to saying: being *qua* being grounds [*Sein ist als Sein gründend*]. Consequently only beings ever have their grounds” (GA 10, 76/PR, 51). Indeed, if the principle of reason claims that all beings must be grounded in reason, then that means that the being of these beings is understood as reason/ground. “What does the principle say? The principle of reason says: *to being there belongs something like ground/reason. Being is akin to grounds, it is ground-like* [*Das Sein ist grundartig, grundhaft*].” This does not mean that being is grounded. “The sentence ‘Being is ground-like’ speaks quite differently than the statement ‘beings have a reason.’ ‘Being is ground-like’ thus in no way means ‘being has a ground’; rather, it says: *being in itself essentially comes to be as grounding* [*Sein west in sich als grundendes*]” (GA 10, 73/PR, 49). If beings *have* a ground, being *is* a ground.

At this point of the analysis, now that it has been established that the principle of reason is to be heard as a principle of being, what remains to be determined is the relation between being and ground. As stated earlier, only beings are grounded while being is said to belong with ground/reason. “Ground/reason receives its essence from its belonging together with being *qua* being,” and conversely, “being reigns *qua* being from out of the essence of ground/reason” (GA 10, 76/PR, 51). Being and reason/ground gather as the same (“Ground/reason and being ‘are’ the same”) since being, as being, grounds. Now, if being is ground/reason, then it cannot in turn be grounded. The ground, as ground, cannot be grounded. Being reveals itself as groundless. “Therefore being can never first have a ground/reason which would supposedly ground it. Accordingly, ground/reason is missing from being. Ground/reason remains at a remove from being” (GA 10, 76/PR, 51). Being is the abyss . . . *as ground*. “Being ‘is’ the abyss in the sense of such a remaining-apart of reason from being [*Im Sinne solchen Ab-bleibens des Grundes vom Sein “ist” das Sein der Ab-grund*]. To the extent that being as such grounds, it remains groundless.” Why? Because in fact being “does not fall within the orbit of the principle of reason, rather only, beings do” (GA 10, 77/PR, 51). The foundation, in order to be the foundation that it is, must itself be without foundation: this is how the principle of reason, which states that all events must be grounded, self-deconstructs. The event of being finds itself freed from the request for a foundation and opens onto an abyss. Heidegger

insists on the latter point: being is groundless. Being has no ground “because every foundation—even and especially self-founded ones—remain inappropriate to being.” Why? Because grounding only applies to beings: as noted earlier, it is beings that can be grounded. This is why “every founding and even every appearance of foundability has inevitably degraded being to some sort of a being” (GA 10, 166/PR, 111). To consider being as grounded would be to treat it as a being. But, as Heidegger reminds us, it is a matter of “*no longer explaining being by way of some sort of being*” (GA 10, 100/PR, 68). As a consequence, being as such is groundless: “Being qua Being remains ground-less” (GA 10, 166/PR, 111). Ultimately, the ground “stays off and away” from being, and being remains without ground.

Heidegger is fully aware of the apparent contradiction between those two statements: on the one hand, being is the “same” as reason/ground; on the other, being is the “a-byss.” He for instance asks, somewhat rhetorically: does the claim that being is the “a-byss” “simply stand next to all we said earlier: being and ground/reason: the same? Or does one even exclude the other? In fact, it seems so if we think according to the rules of ordinary logic. According to these ‘being and ground/reason: the same’ amounts to saying: being = ground/reason. Then how could the other one hold: being: the a-byss?” (GA 10, 166/PR, 111). First, to state that being is the same as ground/reason, or that being and reason: the same, does not signify that being is simply equated with reason, cause, principle, or rational ground, but rather, as Heidegger here retrieves the original sense of *ratio* as Logos, that it is “a letting-lie-present that assembles” (GA 10, 165/PR, 110). This allows him to posit at once the two following propositions: “being and ground/reason: the same. Simultaneously this meant: being: the a-byss [*Sein: der Ab-grund*]” (GA 10, 165/PR, 110–111). Second, and most important, it is *insofar* as being is the ground that it *has* no ground: “This is what shows itself as what is to be thought now, namely, being ‘is’ the a-byss insofar as being and ground/reason: the same. Insofar as being ‘is’ what grounds, and only insofar as it is so, it has no ground/reason” (GA 10, 166/PR, 111). More than an abyss, one should here refer to being as a “groundless ground,” as an *Ab-grund*, groundless *because* it is ground. Further, Heidegger is able to claim that being is groundless on account of the distinction between being and beings: it is indeed the ontological difference that governs this discussion. In the Address, Heidegger recalls that in its classical understanding, the principle of reason demands that every being be founded in reason: “The fundamental principle of reason says: every being has a reason. The principle is a statement about beings” (GA 10, 183/PR, 125). This reveals that only beings are grounded. Now, Heidegger stresses an *ontological* understanding of the principle of reason, an understanding that was not pursued by Leibniz or the tradition because of their exclusive focus on beings. To that extent, the principle of reason must be heard as: nothing *is* without *reason*, which also reveals that being and

reason must be heard together. This is why Heidegger writes: being/reason: the same, or also: “being and reason ring out as belonging together in one” (GA 10, 183/PR, 125). The principle of reason now says: “ground/reason belongs to being” (GA 10, 183/PR, 125) and is no longer the supreme fundamental principle of the cognition of beings. The principle of reason no longer speaks of beings but of being (“The principle of reason now speaks as a word of being,” GA 10, 183/PR, 125). Being does not have a reason but *is* (the same as) reason: this, indeed, is how one can understand how Heidegger is able to claim both that being/ground: the same and that being is the a-byss: being is the a-byss insofar as it is the ground, and as such, has no ground: “what, after all, does ‘being’ mean? Answer: ‘being’ means ‘ground/reason.’ Nevertheless, as a word of being the principle of reason can no longer mean to say: being has a ground/reason. If we were to understand the word of being in this sense, then we would represent being as a being. Only beings have—and indeed necessarily—a ground/reason. A being *is* a being only when grounded. However, being, since it is itself ground/reason, remains without a ground/reason” (GA 10, 184/PR, 125). The event of *being is groundless and abyssal just as reason is groundless and abyssal*.

The Rose Has No Why . . .

Nowhere is that contrast between the logic of foundation of the principle of reason and the groundlessness of being made so apparent than in Heidegger’s repeated invocations of the following saying from the sixteenth-century poet and mystic Angelus Silesius:

The rose is without why: it blooms because it blooms,
It pays no attention to itself, asks not whether it is seen
[Die Ros ist ohn warung; sie blühet weil sie blühet,
Sie acht nicht ihrer selbst, fragt nicht, ob man sie siehet]

On the one hand is the statement that no being is without a reason; on the other hand, that the being has no why. There lies its eventfulness: it has no ground, rather it *happens*. In Marion’s words, the event “suspends the principle of reason” (BG, 160). The principle of reason concentrates in a request and a call for a reason, that is, it concentrates in the question “why?” “In the ‘why?’ we ask for reasons. The strict formulation of the principle of reason—‘Nothing is without rendering its reasons’—can be formulated thus: Nothing is without a why” (GA 10, 53/PR, 35). Heidegger contrasts the two statements. “First, one should recall the short formulation of the Leibnizian *principium reddendae rationis*. It reads: Nothing is without a why. The words of Angelus Silesius speak bluntly to the contrary: ‘The rose is without why’” (GA 10, 55/PR, 36). The principle of reason collapses with

that provocative saying: "According to the words of the poet, the principle of reason does not hold in this field" (GA 10, 55/PR, 36). Nonetheless the following verse by Angelus Silesius states:

The rose is without why; it blooms because it blooms.

It seems that one kind of reason (represented by the "because," which clearly provides a reason), replaces another type of reason, the "why" that is being sought. Yet, Heidegger insists, there is no contradiction here ("Roughly put, the 'without why' says that the rose has no grounds. Contrary to this, the 'because' in the same verse says, roughly speaking, that the rose has a ground," GA 10, 61/PR, 41) because the because is not the same as the why. More precisely, they have a different relation to *ground*. "Does this word not name the relationship to a ground by dragging one in, so to speak? The rose—without why and yet not without a because. So the poet contradicts himself and speaks obscurely. Indeed the mystical consists in this sort of thing. But the poet speaks clearly. 'Why' and 'because' mean different things." What is the difference? The difference is in the relation to ground: "'Why' is the word for the question concerning grounds. The 'because' contains the answer-yielding reference to grounds. The 'why' seeks grounds. The 'because' conveys grounds" (GA 10, 55/PR, 36). To that extent, as Heidegger puts it, "something such as a rose can simultaneously have a ground and be without grounds" (GA 10, 61/PR, 41). In the "why," the relation to ground is one of seeking. In the "because," it is one of providing or conveying. A seeking of reason (the "why") is replaced by a providing of reasons. "The 'why' and 'because' speak of a relationship of our cognition to grounds, a relationship that at times varies. In the 'why' we question, we pursue grounds. In the 'because' we retrieve grounds in giving an answer" (GA 10, 61/PR, 41). In the because, a reason is given.

But what kind of "reason" is here brought forth? Heidegger's answer is most revealing: it is not a reason that is "other" than what it is the reason of (for in our ordinary understanding, "the 'because' is supposed to supply something else, something we can understand as the reason for whatever is to be founded," GA 10, 63/PR, 43), but it is a reason that *belongs to the thing itself*: it is as if the meaning of the thing was entirely contained in the thing itself. When Angelus Silesius states that the rose *blooms because it blooms*, he indicates through this tautology the self-sameness of the event of the rose in its sheer appearing. "What does this mean, the rose 'blooms, because it blooms'? Here the 'because' does not, as is ordinary, point off toward something else which is not a blooming and which is supposed to found the blooming from somewhere else. The 'because' of the fragment simply points the blooming back to itself. The blooming is grounded in itself, it has its ground with and in itself. The blooming is a pure arising on its own, a pure shining" (GA 10, 84–85/PR, 57). The reason here is the *pure event* of

the blooming. Is anything said in the tautology beyond the empty repetition of the same, as Heidegger asks rhetorically: “But Angelus Silesius says: ‘It blooms, because it blooms.’ This really says nothing, for the ‘because’ is supposed to supply something else, something we can understand as the reason for whatever is to be founded” (GA 10, 63/PR, 42–43). In fact, this tautology, far from saying nothing, says all that is to be said: “But this apparently vacuous talk—‘it blooms, because it blooms’—really says everything, namely, it says everything there is to say here” (GA 10, 63/PR, 43). What is that “everything”? “Everything” here means the entire being of the thing in question, *its whole event*. The reason given is harbored entirely within the event of the being: “The ‘because’ names the ground, but in the fragment the ground is the simple blooming of the rose, the fact of its being a rose or its rose-being [*ihr Rose-sein*]” (GA 10, 84/PR, 57, trans. slightly modified), its “rose-hood,” so to speak. Tautology for Heidegger may be a thinking that is more “rigorous” than any scientific causal thought (we know how Heidegger claimed in the Thor seminar that tautological thinking is “the primordial sense of phenomenology,” *der ursprüngliche Sinn der Phänomenologie*),¹⁷ a kind of thinking that comes before scientific representations and the distinction between theory and praxis. Such are the stakes of Heidegger’s contrast between the why and the because: the event reaches further than reason, that is, the reason that asks “why.” In fact, the because *precedes* the why; the seeking of the why presupposes the prior giving of the because. Heidegger explains that “in order for the rose to bloom, it does not need reasons rendered in which its blooming is grounded. The rose is a rose without a *reddere rationem*, a rendering of reasons, having to belong to its rose-being” (GA 10, 57/PR, 37).

It would then be a matter of returning the reason back to the being in its happening, as when Jean-Luc Nancy suggests, with respect to the being of the world, that it is a fact without reason. With respect to the event of the world, he writes in *The Creation of the World*, it might be necessary to consider “a fact without referring it to a cause (either efficient nor final). The world is such a fact: it may well be that it is the only fact of this kind (if it is the case that the other facts take place within the world). It is a fact without reason or end, and it is our fact. To think it, is to think this factuality, which implies not referring it to a meaning capable of appropriating it, but to placing in it, in its truth as a fact, all possible meaning.”¹⁸ Nancy refers several times in this book to the “mystical” rose in terms of the fact of a world without reason and ground, devoid of any given principle or determined end, and he explicitly refers to Heidegger’s *The Principle of Reason* (CW, 47, 120, n. 20), associating it with Wittgenstein’s statement: “It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists” (cited in CW, 52). The tautology of the because—the rose blooms because it blooms—indicates that the reason is resituated in the being of the rose and that in fact this might be its highest reason.¹⁹

Ultimately for Heidegger, the “because” bears the features of both being and groundlessness. (a) Of being, as Heidegger connects the “because” (*das Weil*) with the “while” of being. In fact, Heidegger goes so far as to claim that the “because” designates the “essence of being” (GA 10, 186/PR, 127). In what sense? Heidegger explains that *weil* is a diminutive of *dieweilen*, which means “whereas,” “while.” He then cites as a support the old saying, “One must strike the iron while [*weil*] it is hot.” To that extent, *weil* not only has the causal sense of the “because,” but also that of a temporal *presence*. “‘To while’ [*Weilen*] means: ‘to tarry,’ ‘to remain still,’ ‘to pause and keep to oneself,’ namely in rest” (GA 10, 186/PR, 127). Now, to while, to remain, to tarry, to last, all these terms designate the old sense of the word *being*. Indeed, Heidegger associates *being* with what lasts, *wesen* with *währen*, evoking that “assembling of what does not pass away, but which comes to be, that is, lasts [*sondern west, d. h. währt*]” (GA 10, 89/PR, 60, trans. slightly modified).²⁰ Thus *weil* does not mean “because” but “while” (*dieweilen*). “Here the ‘while’ in no way means: ‘since-because,’ rather ‘while’ denotes *dieweilen* [whereas], which means, as long as—the iron is hot—during. ‘To while’ [*Weilen*] means: ‘to tarry,’ ‘to remain still,’ ‘to pause and keep to oneself,’ namely in rest” (GA 10, 186/PR, 127). Further, elaborating on the contrast between “why” and “because,” Heidegger associates “whileness” and “perdurance” with the sheer presence of being upon which everything rests. “The while [*weil*] that every founding and every ‘why’ guards against names the simple, plain presence that is without why—the presence upon which everything depends, upon which everything rests.” The while names the presence of being as such. “But *qua* the Whereas, ‘whiling’ also names ‘the abiding’: being” (GA 10, 186/PR, 127). The while names both being and the ground, it names the abiding of reason as ground. This is how being and reason/ground: the same. Reason/ground and being hold together in the *weil*, both abiding and ground, both “because” and “while.” To that extent, *weil* also designates groundlessness.

(b) As stated prior, Heidegger opposes the because to the why. We are asked to leave the why for the because. He cites Goethe, who wrote: “How? When? and Where?—The gods remain mute! You stick to the *because* and ask not why?” (cited in GA 10, 185/PR, 126).²¹ What does it mean to “stick to the because”? Heidegger sees in the *weil* the abiding and lingering of a being in its being. Such abiding represents the being of beings, the ontological site for beings. As such, it represents the ground, ontologically understood, and no longer ontically. It is the ground in this following sense: “Ground is that upon which everything rests, that which is already present as what supports all beings” (GA 10, 186/PR, 127). This is the ground that the *weil*, as lasting presence, designates. The *weil* in this sense is the essence of ground, the ontological ground. “The ‘because’ names this supportive presence before which we simply pause. The ‘because’ points to the essence of grounds” (GA 10, 186/PR, 127). Insofar as being and ground/reason: the Same,

then the *weil* represents the essence of being. Just as being, then, the *weil* is, as ground, at once groundless. In contrast with the why, always in quest of foundations, the because remains groundless. The “because” suspends the “why”: “What does ‘because’ mean? It guards against investigating the ‘why,’ therefore, against investigating foundations. It balks at founding and getting to the bottom of something. For the ‘because’ is without ‘why,’ it has no ground, it is ground itself” (GA 10, 186/PR, 127). The why yields to the because: “the force of the claim of the why submits to the enabling appeal of the ‘because’” (GA 10, 188/PR, 128). The event of being remains groundless, without reason, without a why. In the words of Heidegger, being “is groundless and therefore does not know any ‘why.’” Being is “sheer, pure event” (*reines Er-eignis*).²²

Freed up from the demands of reason, arising out of a withdrawal of essence and theological foundation, the event surges as a groundless happening. This lack of foundation beneath the event and the (self-)deconstruction of the metaphysical apparatus suggest that the event is to be taken as the *original phenomenon*. This opens the way for a new philosophical approach to the event, faithful to its eventfulness without attempting to reduce it to the demands of reason. It opens the way for a phenomenological investigation of the event, the task of the next chapter.

3 Event and Phenomenology

The Concept of Phenomenology

The dismantling—deconstruction—of the metaphysical conceptual apparatus of causality, subjectivity, and reason, as it structured the traditional reduction and neutralization of the event, opens the way for a phenomenological investigation into the eventfulness of the event. Once the event is no longer referred to the demands of the principle of reason, no longer anchored in a subject-cause, and no longer ordered according to a causal order, it becomes possible to let it give itself to thinking, in its proper eventfulness. “Thinking the event” would here mean no longer subjecting the event to reason, but *letting it be* (in particular if thinking itself is approached as a kind of letting-be or *Gelassenheit*¹), and in fact grasping phenomenality itself as event, if it is the case, as Françoise Dastur argues, that “there can be no thinking of the event which is not at the same time a thinking of phenomenality.”² Phenomenality could then be rethought, no longer as objectivity, but as an *eventful field*. If thinking the event means to give thought to the being of the event, not to *what* happens, nor to *why* it happens, but to the fact *that* it happens, then an encounter with phenomenology becomes unavoidable. Indeed, Heidegger states in *Being and Time* that phenomena are never simply the given, but instead the *event* of givenness. This from the outset suggests that phenomenality is to be taken as an eventful phenomenality and phenomenology as a phenomenology of the event.

Are phenomena events in the proper sense? As just mentioned, a phenomenon, that is, the phenomenon with which phenomenology is concerned, cannot be reduced to an empirical intuition, an ontical given. In fact, Heidegger rejects explicitly the Kantian notion of an “empirical intuition” to designate the phenomenon with which phenomenology is concerned.³ The phenomenon cannot be reduced to the category of the given and is instead defined from the outset by Heidegger in paragraph 7 of *Being and Time* as an *event*, that is, the event of givenness. The phenomenon must be approached in its verbal sense as that which shows or manifests itself of itself and from itself: “Thus we must *keep in mind* that the expression ‘phenomenon’ signifies that which shows itself in itself, the manifest” (SZ, 28). The phenomenon is “the-showing-itself-in-itself (*das Sich-an-ihm-selbst-zeigen*)” (SZ, 31), which indicates that by phenomenon Heidegger means the verbal sense of an appearing, and not simply an appearance.

The term *phenomenon* has its roots in the Greek verb *phainestai* and means “to appear,” “to show itself.” As a middle-voice construction of *phaino*, *phainestai* means to bring to light, to place in brightness, where something can become visible and manifest. *Phainomenon*, in the plural *ta phainomena*, derives from the verb *phainô*, which means to light up, to make visible. The word *phaos-phôs*, light, has the same root: the adverb *phainomenôs* means manifestly or visibly. A phenomenon is what appears, what shows itself.⁴ The phenomenon is approached by Heidegger *in its verbal sense*, that is, as that which shows or manifests itself of itself and from itself, and not simply as the ontical given or as the entity.

The term *phenomenology* is formed from two Greek words, *phainomenon* and *logos*. Phenomenology is a bringing to light of the phenomena in their original givenness, a *legein*, a “letting something be seen [*sehen lassen*]” (SZ, 34). (I note here again how the motif of letting, *lassen*, is inscribed in phenomenology itself and in fact is inherent in the givenness of the phenomenon proper. It will always be a matter of letting the phenomenon give itself, and not of making it appear or constituting it via the intentional powers of a subjectivity.) Now, if phenomenology is a “letting be seen,” then the phenomenon of phenomenology cannot be that which is simply apparent or manifest; the phenomenon, precisely as that which is to be made phenomenologically visible, must be approached as that which *not show itself* (while nonetheless belonging to what shows itself, for Heidegger also stresses that “‘behind’ the phenomena of phenomenology there is essentially nothing else,” SZ, 36): “What is it that must be called a ‘phenomenon’ in a distinctive sense? What is it that by its very essence is *necessarily* the theme whenever we exhibit something *explicitly*? Manifestly, it is something that proximally and for the most part does *not* show itself at all: it is something that lies *hidden*, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part does show itself; but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground” (SZ, 35). Heidegger shows that the very concept of phenomenology, insofar as it is defined, as noted prior, as a “letting something be seen,” necessarily implies the withdrawal of the phenomenon. “And just because the phenomena are proximally and for the most part *not* given, there is need for phenomenology” (SZ, 36), Heidegger writes provocatively. Phenomenology, in its very essence, is thus a *phenomenology of what does not appear*, to refer to Heidegger’s characterization of the most authentic sense of phenomenology as a phenomenology of the inapparent (*Phänomenologie des Unscheinbaren*) in the 1973 Zähringen seminar. “We are here in the domain of the inapparent: presencing itself presences. . . . Thus understood, phenomenology is a path that leads away to come before . . . and it lets that before which it is led show itself. This phenomenology is a phenomenology of the inapparent.”⁵ The original phenomenon is what does not appear, not

behind what appears (as if it was a noumenal reality), but *in* what appears. The original phenomenon is the inapparent.⁶

Now, for Heidegger, what does not appear in what appears is *being*: “Yet that which remains *hidden* in an egregious sense, or which relapses and gets *covered up* again, or which shows itself only ‘*in disguise*,’ is just not this entity or that, but rather the being of beings” (SZ, 38).⁷ The phenomenon in the authentic sense designates the *being* of entities, not the entity itself. With that claim, Heidegger severs the connection between the phenomenon and the ontic (although the ontic still retains the movement and eventfulness of being: a being is what it is only by virtue of being; it would not be a being otherwise and could not be present except for the movement of presence that brought it forth and that it manifests). The phenomenon is not simply the given, not the entity, but what does not appear in what appears, and which for that reason calls for and requires a phenomenology, Heidegger speaking in his course on Plato’s *Sophist* of “a constant struggle against the tendency to cover over residing at the heart of Dasein.”⁸ Since for Heidegger being is never a being or a thing, but the *event* of the coming into presence of such beings, one can already suspect that a phenomenon in the proper phenomenological sense means “event.”⁹ The task then becomes to understand phenomenology as a phenomenology of the event, which is the purpose of this chapter.

Let me first clarify the concept of phenomenology. At first, phenomenology can be understood as an approach that opposes the dogmatic constructions of theories that are detached from the primordial meaning of phenomena. The very idea of phenomenology is that of a return to the “things themselves”—to the phenomena—via a dismantling of artificial conceptual constructs that obstruct the original givenness of phenomena. In section 7 of *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger explains: “The term ‘phenomenology’ expresses a maxim which can be formulated as ‘To the things themselves!’ It is opposed to all free-floating constructions [*freischwebenden Konstruktionen*],” that is, to all “accidental findings,” to conceptions which only seem to have been demonstrated . . . [and] to those pseudo-questions [*Scheinfragen*] which parade themselves as ‘problems,’ often for generations at a time” (SZ, 27–28). The full concept of phenomenology implies a twofold movement: on the one hand, a distancing from derivative conceptual constructions, and on the other, a positive inquiry into the being of the phenomenon. To this twofold aspect, Heidegger will add a third in the 1927 lecture course *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, where he distinguishes three fundamental features of phenomenology: reduction, construction, and destruction (*Destruktion*). We will see how these three features, as Heidegger defines them, open the way for an understanding of phenomenology as a phenomenology of the event.

In that 1927 course, Heidegger begins by defining phenomenology as the very method of ontology, allowing him to grasp the phenomena (in contrast with

Husserl), not in relation to a constituting consciousness, but to the *event* of being as such. Indeed, Heidegger stresses that phenomenology is concerned about the *being* of phenomena, their modes of givenness, their happening. Unlike his former mentor, Heidegger defines phenomenology in relation to ontology, as giving us access to the being of beings. The opposition that Husserl established between phenomenology and ontology, or rather the “bracketing” of ontological themes in the transcendental phenomenological reduction, is a foreclosure of ontology that can be said to be rooted in the determination of phenomenology as a transcendental idealism, that is, in the subjection of phenomenology to a traditional (Cartesian) idea of philosophy. For Heidegger, on the contrary, as he already stated in *Being and Time*, ontology and phenomenology are not two distinct disciplines, for indeed phenomenology is the “way of access to the theme of ontology” (SZ, 35). Heidegger is very clear on this point: “With regard to its subject-matter, phenomenology is the science of the Being of entities—ontology” (SZ, 37). In turn, and most importantly, ontology itself “*is only possible as phenomenology*” (SZ, 35, modified). In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger defines phenomenology as an “*a priori* knowledge” of being.¹⁰ Phenomenology is that mode of knowledge that seeks to bring out the *a priori* structures of being and to that extent is distinct from all ontical sciences. If being appears as the *a priori* of beings, in the sense that it determines beings as beings, phenomenology “as a science of Being is fundamentally distinct in method from any other science” (GA 24, 28/20). These sciences are positive sciences, sciences of beings; phenomenology, for its part, is a “pure apprehension of Being” (GA 24, 28/19). It is an *ontology*.

Now, this ontological understanding of phenomenology will prove crucial for our thinking of the event, for the emphasis shifts from phenomena (things) to the *being* of these phenomena (their happening or eventfulness), from phenomena to phenomenality. As alluded to earlier, phenomenology consists in showing, not the appearance itself, but the *event* of its appearing. Jean-Luc Marion clarifies, “If in the realm of metaphysics it is a question of proving, in the phenomenological realm it is not a question of simply showing (since in this case apparition could still be the object of a gaze, therefore a mere appearance), but rather of letting apparition show *itself* in its appearance *according to its appearing*.”¹¹ This is what Marion calls phenomenality or manifestation, which, I should note from the outset, is a *self*-manifestation, that is, not initiated by some agent or subject but happening from itself. “The privilege of appearing in its appearance is also named manifestation—manifestation of the thing starting from itself and as itself, privilege of rendering *itself* manifest, of making *itself* visible, of showing *itself*” (BG, 8). Phenomenology is turned toward the self-showing of the phenomenon as such, not to the appearance per se. It is turned toward the event of its manifestation. Nonetheless, this distinction between the ontical and the ontological cannot be taken as a simple separation, for as will be seen, ontical

phenomena, and indeed *things*, manifest ontological potency. In turn, being cannot happen without beings, even though being is not a being. I shall return to this issue as it pertains to a thinking of the event.

Phenomenology is rigorously approached as *ontology*, that is, as Heidegger understands it, in its “possibility.” Indeed, for Heidegger, phenomenology is not exclusively connected to the phenomenological movement founded by Husserl. This is how he presents the issue in this passage from *Being and Time*, beginning with an ambiguous homage to Husserl that is immediately followed by a distancing with his former mentor: “The following investigation would not have been possible if the ground had not been prepared by Edmund Husserl, with whose *Logische Untersuchungen* phenomenology first emerged. Our comments on the preliminary conception of phenomenology have shown that what is essential in it does not lie in its *actuality* as a philosophical ‘movement.’ Higher than actuality stands *possibility*. We can understand phenomenology only by seizing upon it as a possibility” (SZ, 38). He would also insist years later, in the seminar on the lecture “Time and Being,” that phenomenology does not represent “a particular school of philosophy” but must be understood as “something which permeates [*waltet*] every philosophy.”¹² In “My Way to Phenomenology” (1963), Heidegger reiterates the same point: “And today? The age of phenomenological philosophy seems to be over. It is already taken as something past which is only recorded historically along with other schools of philosophy. But in what is most its own phenomenology is not a school. It is the possibility of thinking, at times changing and only thus persisting, of corresponding to the claim of what is to be thought” (GA 14, 101/TB, 82). Last, in a 1969 supplement to that 1963 text, Heidegger referred to the aforementioned passage of *Being and Time*: “In the sense of the last sentence, on can already read in *Being and Time* (1927) pp. 62–63: ‘its (phenomenology’s) essential character does not consist in being *actual* as a philosophical school. Higher than actuality stands *possibility*. The comprehension of phenomenology consists solely in grasping it as possibility’” (GA 14, 102/TB, 82).

Now, one might venture to suggest that to follow this injunction to take phenomenology to its most extreme possibility might lead to approaching it as a phenomenology of the event. This appears in the 1927 course where, as mentioned prior, Heidegger distinguishes three main elements in the conception of the phenomenological method: (a) the phenomenological reduction (*Reduktion*); (b) the phenomenological construction (*Konstruktion*); and (c) the phenomenological destruction (*Destruktion*). A brief reconstruction of each of these features will reveal their relevance to a thinking of the event.

(a) The expression “phenomenological reduction,” although borrowed from Husserl, is nonetheless understood very differently by Heidegger. As he clarifies from the outset: “We are thus adopting a central term of Husserl’s phenomenology

in its literal wording, though not in its substantive intent” (GA 24, 29/21, emphasis mine). In fact, as early as the 1925 course *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time*,¹³ Heidegger had already distanced himself from the Husserlian conception of reduction. In that course, he equates transcendental reduction with an *abstraction* (*Absehen-von*, *Absehung*), not only from the reality of consciousness, but also from the individuation of its lived experiences and ultimately from being itself: whether in the transcendental reduction, in which the question of the *being* of intentionality is not raised, or in the so-called eidetic reduction, in which the individuation (*Vereinzelung*) of experiences is bracketed, it is the question of the *being* of being that is not posed. Husserlian reduction is characterized by Heidegger as a forgetting of the question of being because Husserl’s project is marked by a prior orientation toward an absolute science of consciousness. “Husserl’s primary question is simply not concerned with the character of the being of consciousness. Rather, he is guided by the following concern: *How can consciousness become the possible object of an absolute science?* The primary concern which guides him is the *idea of an absolute science*” (GA 20, 147/107). In the final analysis, according to Heidegger, the very notion of a transcendental reduction is a fundamentally *Cartesian* undertaking: “This idea, that *consciousness is to be the region of an absolute science*, is not simply invented; it is the idea which has occupied modern philosophy ever since Descartes” (GA 20, 147/107). Consequently, the project of returning to pure consciousness, carried out through the various stages of the reduction, rests upon a subjectivist presupposition and can lay no claim to being an authentic phenomenological enterprise. “The elaboration of pure consciousness as the thematic field of phenomenology is *not derived phenomenologically by going back to the matters themselves* but by going back to a traditional idea of philosophy.”¹⁴ To that extent, as Heidegger is not afraid to affirm that Husserlian phenomenology is . . . “unphenomenological!” (GA 20, 178/128).

Nonetheless, Heidegger undertakes a positive reappropriation of the phenomenological reduction. In the context of a critical discussion of the *epoché*, Heidegger challenges the idea that the phenomenological bracketing of existence positing forecloses the very problematic of being. On the contrary, according to him, the “bracketing of the entity takes nothing away from the entity itself, nor does it purport to assume that the entity is not. This reversal of perspective [*Umschaltung des Blickes*] has rather the sense of making the being of the entity present.” Thus, “This phenomenological suspension [*Ausaltung*] of the transcendent thesis has but the sole function of making the entity present in regard to its being. The term ‘suspension’ is thus always misunderstood when it is thought that in suspending the thesis of existence and by doing so, phenomenological reflection simply has nothing more to do with the entity. Quite the contrary: in an extreme and unique way, what really is at issue now is the determination of the being of the very entity” (GA 20, 136/99). On this account, the reduction

applied in the *epoché* no longer forecloses the ontological problematic, but on the contrary *opens it up as such*. The reduction is no longer situated between world and ego, transcendence and immanence, but first of all occurs within the *ontological difference*. Thus reappropriated, the phenomenological reduction is therefore nothing other than the manifestation of the ontological difference itself. It then becomes possible to include the reduction into the concept of the method of ontology. If, for Husserl, the reduction was a kind of leading-back (*Rück-führung*) of the gaze from the natural attitude to transcendental consciousness as constitutive of the world, for Heidegger the reduction is a return from beings to *being*. “We call this basic component of phenomenological method—the leading-back or reduction of investigative vision from a naively apprehended being to Being—phenomenological reduction” (GA 24, 29/21). The phenomenological reduction is “the leading of our vision from beings back to being [*die Rück-führung des Blickes von Seienden zum Sein*]” (GA 24, 29/21). The reduction is a way into being: it allows a shift from entities to their being, that is, to their *happening* as such. Most important, a phenomenology of the event is made possible by Heidegger’s reinterpretation of the phenomenological reduction as a reduction of beings (what is present) to their being (the event of their presence).

(b) Now, the motif of reduction as revelatory of the ontological difference and of the possibility of seizing being as event is not the sole element in the “method of ontology.” The reduction is in fact a merely *negative* process. It constitutes a sort of “leading-away” (*Abwendung*) from beings, proceeding from a “negative methodological measure” (GA 24, 29/21). Beginning with beings (for ontology has an ontical basis: being is always the being of a being, it “belongs to the being”; GA 24, 22/17), the phenomenological gaze turns away from them, abstracts from them. Now, to be sure, this abstraction has its own necessity: in order to grasp a being in its being, one must begin by turning away from it. “Apprehension of being . . . always turns, at first and necessarily, to some being; but then, *in a precise way, it is led away from that being and led back to its being*” (GA 24, 28–29/21). This is why the reduction in the sense of a leading-away of the gaze must be “completed” by another, positive, element of the method, which Heidegger calls the phenomenological *construction*. In the phenomenological construction, a positive approach to the event of being as such becomes possible. The phenomenological method must *positively* manifest the being of beings, not as the mere positive “counter-part” of the reduction, but more radically as what was always *implied* by the reduction. The “leading-back” [*Rückführung*] of the gaze, Heidegger explains, “expressly requires us to be led toward [*Hinführung*] Being; it thus requires guidance [*Leitung*]” (GA 24, 29/21). Heidegger calls this “positive” determination of the method “phenomenological construction.” The term *construction* may be deceptive in light of the opposition of phenomenology to any “conceptual construction.” Indeed, Heidegger generally reserves this term to

designate the dogmatic and artificial constructs of theories that conceal the primordial meaning of phenomena, of “the things themselves.”¹⁵ In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, however, this term is intended positively as the active elucidation of the structure of being [*Seinsverfassung*], the anticipatory projection of the being of a being in understanding. In fact, already in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger had evoked the task of a “phenomenological construction [*phänomenologischen Konstruktion*]” of the existential constitution of historicity, adding to the term *construction* an explanatory note: “projection” (SZ, 375). Let me explain this term: in section 42 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger designates the structure of care as an “ontological construction [*ontologische Konstruktion*],” one that is precisely opposed to “a mere fabrication” (SZ, 197). Indeed, being is not accessible as a being, it cannot be “found” somewhere, like a thing or an immediate given; it must rather give rise to a particular access, a specific and positive understanding, an understanding projection. As defined in *Sein und Zeit*, understanding essentially has the character of a project, or better, projection. Being must in some sense be “projected,” brought into view, that is, “constructed,” Heidegger explaining for instance that the question of the meaning of being must be “constructed” (*gestellt*; SZ, 5, trans. slightly modified). More precisely, beings are projected (constructed) *in terms of their being*. To construct in this context means to manifest being primordially. As one reads in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*: “But construction here does not mean: free-floating thinking-out of something. It is instead a projecting in which the preliminary guidance as well as the taking-off of the projection [*der Absprung des Entwurfs*] must be predetermined and protected. . . . The fundamental-ontological construction is distinguished by the fact that it should expose the inner possibility of something which, precisely as what is best known, thoroughly masters all Dasein.”¹⁶ The phenomenological method, taken in the sense of an a priori knowledge of being, now has a positive meaning; it is an act of *construction*, that is, a making-manifest of the being of beings. It is a matter of “constructing” the being of beings, of revealing its eventfulness.

(c) The conceptual interpretation of being and its structures, the “reductive construction,” does not yet exhaust the meaning of the phenomenological method. One further element is necessary, for the structures of the being of beings are not accessible in some kind of immediate clarity and are not presented to some pure, contemplative, and in that sense abstract gaze. As noted, the event is caught in epistemological and metaphysical concepts that neutralize its eventfulness. Everything takes place as if such eventfulness was covered over by the metaphysical categories of cause, subject, and substance, as if the eventfulness of the event did not appear but remain concealed behind an inadequate metaphysics of foundation, reason, and substantiality. Indeed, Heidegger stresses that Dasein’s self-interpretation is inscribed in a certain conceptual heritage that structures it and provides it with its categories and its modes of apprehension. In paragraph 6

of *Being and Time*, where he defines his project as a “destruction of the history of ontology,” Heidegger emphasizes that any understanding of being—above all, any *preunderstanding* of being that is specific to Dasein—remains in a certain tradition due to the essential historicity of that entity. Dasein is an entity that cannot be explicated except through its own historicity. Dasein always understands itself from within an inherited tradition in which it has “grown up.” “Whatever the way of Being it may have at the time, and thus with whatever understanding of Being it may possess, Dasein has grown up into and in a traditional way of interpreting itself: in terms of this it understands itself proximally, and, within a certain range, constantly” (SZ, 20). This is why the question of the meaning of being is a historical question: the “question [of the meaning of being] thus brings itself to the point where it understands itself as historiological [*historisch*]” (SZ, 21). To raise the question of being implies engaging one’s own tradition. Dasein’s relation to the tradition, however, is far from transparent. On the contrary, tradition withholds from delivering its content to Dasein’s everyday being. Or, rather, it delivers it only as a “result,” that is, through the covering over in “self-evidence” (SZ, 21) of the primordial sources of the categories that have been handed down. The tradition is described by Heidegger as an *obstacle* (it “*blocks our access* to those primordial ‘sources’ from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have in part been quite genuinely drawn”; SZ, 21, emphasis mine), as an *uprooting* (“Dasein has had its historicity so thoroughly uprooted by tradition that it confines its interests to the multiformity of possible types, directions, and standpoints of philosophical activity in the most exotic and alien of cultures; and by this very interest it seeks to veil the fact that it has no ground [*Bodenlosigkeit*] of its own to stand on”; SZ, 21, emphasis mine), and as an *obliteration* or *omission* of the origin (“Indeed [the tradition] makes us *forget* that they have had such an origin, and it makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand”; SZ, 21). Tradition is described as a concealment of origins.

This situation reveals that the access to the event of being (and to the being of the event) requires a deconstructive passage through an inauthentic tradition. A thinking of the event will never go without a deconstruction of the obstacles that obstruct its eventfulness. “If the question of being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved. We understand this task as one in which by taking *the question of being as our clue*, we are to *destroy* the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of being—the ways which have guided us ever since” (SZ, 22). In this sense, the inquiry aims “to go back to the past in a positive manner and make it productively

its own" (SZ, 21), but this reappropriation of the ontological grounds will take the form of a deconstruction (*Destruktion*) of an improper tradition. Deconstruction must be integrated into the concept of method of phenomenology. This is why Heidegger adds to the reductive construction a destruction. "Construction in philosophy," Heidegger explains, "is necessarily deconstruction [*Konstruktion der Philosophie ist notwendig Destruktion*]" (GA 24, 31/23, trans. modified). A thinking of the event of being must assume its deconstructive character. "There necessarily belongs to the conceptual interpretation of being and its structures, that is, to the reductive construction of being, a destruction. . . . Only by means of this destruction can ontology fully assure itself in a philosophical way of the genuine character of its concepts" (GA 24, 31/22–23). Destruction should be taken, literally, as a dis-obstruction or dismantling of what *obstructs* phenomenological vision and thus cannot be identified with a destruction or negative undertaking. It represents rather a positive reappropriation of the tradition since it returns to the sources of the concepts handed down by this tradition. "Construction in philosophy is necessarily destruction, that is to say, a de-construction of traditional concepts carried out in a historical recursion to the tradition. And this is not a negation of the tradition or a condemnation of it as worthless; quite the reverse, it signifies precisely a positive appropriation of tradition" (GA 24, 31/23).¹⁷

Further, deconstruction manifests the historicity and facticity of being. This facticity is apparent in the context of the phenomenological method's "starting point," which, as noted, "begins" with beings in order to reach, by an "aversive" movement, their being. The peculiar genesis of this movement, its "impure" beginnings, so to speak, inescapably affects the concept of being that is sought with a certain *nonessentiality*. The starting point is "obviously always determined by the factual experience of beings" (GA 24, 30/22), and phenomenological research, too, is "determined" (GA 24, 31/22) by this factual experience. This consideration by itself already constitutes a radical break with the Husserlian conception of reduction, which, by bracketing the natural attitude, claims to gain access to a *pure field* of phenomenological investigation. For Heidegger, because of its ontical foundation, ontology is marked by a constitutive "impurity." By his emphasis on the facticity of constructive reduction, Heidegger points to (as early as in his early lectures on the hermeneutics of life) the limits of a conception of phenomenology that claims to gain access to a pure (transcendental) field. Rather, phenomenology is situated in a certain facticity. Furthermore, the very manner in which Heidegger defines this facticity, as the inescapable basis of phenomenological research, indicates a significant opposition to Husserlian phenomenology. "This commencement is obviously always determined by the factual experience of beings and the range of possibilities of experience that at any time are peculiar to a factual Dasein, and hence to the historical situation

of a philosophical investigation" (GA 24, 30/22). Phenomenology no longer provides access to a pure field of essence, but is rooted in a factual and historical experience. Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggested that phenomenology is not to be construed as a philosophy of essences, but rather as a philosophy that situates itself in the facticity of existence and ultimately is about such facticity: "And yet phenomenology is also a philosophy that places essences back within existence and thinks that the only way to understand man and the world is by beginning from their 'facticity.'" ¹⁸ The young Heidegger explained that "a philosophical interpretation which has seen the main issue in philosophy, namely, facticity, is (insofar as it is genuine) factual and specifically philosophical-factual." ¹⁹ If it is the case that facticity is the very horizon of philosophizing, and is an *irreducible* phenomenon for philosophy, then facticity cannot be reduced, appropriately conceived through an intellectual operation or idealistic reduction. This emphasis on facticity severs the connection to any philosophy of essence. As such, the abandonment of such references to essence allows one to seize the phenomenon of being as a happening, as an event.

The motif of deconstruction, as it intervenes in Heidegger's understanding of the concept of phenomenology, constitutes a break with any reference to a philosophy of essence or substance and opens the way for the emergence of a problematic of the event. Deconstructive phenomenology does not give access to a pure field of essences, but to being, which is precisely not a substance but instead *happens*. In fact, the three fundamental features of the phenomenological method (reduction, construction, deconstruction) reveal that phenomenology as such should be approached as a phenomenology of the event, in the following senses: (a) as reduction, it reveals that phenomenology is not simply about phenomena (things, entities), but about their *being*, that is, the event of their coming into presence. (b) As construction, it reveals that there is a domain that is specific to being as event and that a specific mode of thinking must be attuned to it, a thinking of being that is distinct from a thinking related to beings (one recalls here how Heidegger, in *The Principle of Reason*, often referred to the realm of being as being accessed only through a "leap," a *Satz in das Sein* ²⁰). "Construction" designates a thinking of the event of being as such, always reached in a leap from the domain of entities, a leap that as it were is the site of the event. (c) Finally, deconstruction, as just alluded to, reveals how the event of presence is always caught in systems attempting to suppress it; further, it reveals the lack of essence (facticity) to which phenomenology is assigned. As such, being is not a substance that precisely never happens and only "remains the same" as constant presence but an event lacking any prior support or substrate. It becomes necessary to explore further and more concretely the connection between phenomenology and event and, indeed, the very notion of a phenomenology of the event.

Event and Phenomenology

Seized in its ownmost possibility, phenomenology may well prove to be a phenomenology of the event. In her article “Phenomenology of the Event: Waiting and Surprise” (PE), Françoise Dastur reveals the connection between phenomenology and event, indeed develops the resources to understand phenomenology as a phenomenology of the event. She first begins to challenge the tendency in contemporary thought to oppose phenomenology to a thinking of the event on account of the conceit that phenomenology would be a thinking of the present being while the event is not a being but instead simply happens, that is, passes and passes away. As Vladimir Jankélévitch wrote, “One doesn’t say that events are, nor that they are not, but only that they happen or occur, appear in disappearing, are born and die in the same instant . . .”²¹ This view is echoed by Jean-Luc Marion in *Negative Certainties* where, playing on the proximity between the French expressions *passer* (to pass) and *se passer* (to happen, literally: to pass of oneself), he stresses that the event “passes—and thus disappears, without subsisting, enduring, or persisting.”²² The event *is* not, but passes, and passes away (or perhaps also *turns*, as one speaks of a turn of events). Is the past not always what has passed, that is, a past event? On account of this understanding of the event as happening and passing, always “a supplement of being,” some commentators have argued that the event cannot belong to an ontology or, indeed, to a phenomenology taken to be a phenomenology of the present being.²³

Jean-Luc Nancy explains that to the extent that the event is not a present being, that it is “not ‘presentable,’” it then necessarily “exceeds the resources of any phenomenology.”²⁴ Yet he immediately adds, significantly, that “the phenomenological theme in general has never been more magnetized by anything else.” This suggests that even though the event can be seen as an excess to phenomenology, it nonetheless gives itself as what phenomenology may ultimately be concerned with. Dastur argues against those (she explicitly names Levinas and Derrida) who gesture toward a beyond of phenomenology in their attempt to give thought to the otherness of the other, for event and otherness inhabit phenomenology: “The question is not to oppose radically a thinking of being or essence to a thinking of the other or of the accident. Rather it is a matter of showing how a phenomenology of the event constitutes the most appropriate accomplishment of the phenomenological project. It is not the destitution or the impossibility of phenomenological discourse, as some thinkers of the radical exteriority of the Other—I mean Levinas, but also Derrida in his last writings—seem to believe” (PE, 183). On this account, phenomenology and thinking of the event are not to be opposed. “We should not oppose phenomenology and the thinking of the event. We should connect them; openness to phenomena must be identified with openness to unpredictability” (PE, 186). Let me explore this claim, which will

lead to an understanding of how the event pertains to phenomenology, albeit as that which always interrupts and exceeds it.

Dastur begins her essay by recalling the predominantly essentialist tradition of Western philosophy, which, since Plato, has determined itself as a philosophy of substance that can only neutralize the event in its eventfulness, in its unpredictable and sudden occurrence. The question is: can philosophy—and in particular phenomenology—give thought and do justice to the eventfulness of the event? As Dastur asks from the outset: “Can philosophy account for the sudden happening and the factuality of the event if it is still traditionally defined, as it has been since Plato, as a thinking of the invariability and generality of essences?” (PE, 178). Several features of the event appear in this passage: first, it is made mention of the “sudden” character of the happening of the event, which connotes the unexpected surge of presence, discontinuous and interruptive, if not traumatic, breaking the “order of time” and introducing the new in the world. It is “sudden” as the event comes as a surprise, neither expected nor anticipated, not already belonging to an established thread or causal order. It is “sudden” as it constitutes a break or hiatus in temporality, in a radical experience of discontinuity. A further feature of the event is introduced with the notion of “factuality.” A “fact” stands in opposition to a reason or a cause: it is the presence of a pure “that,” without a reason or a why. An event does not happen via a reason or a rational procedure, but is simply a *fact*. Further, the event is contrasted with the “invariability” of essences. The event speaks of change, transformation, difference, becoming or “process,” of a time that is always, as Aristotle noted in *Physics IV*, only perceptible when a change has occurred.²⁵ An event is always the happening of a change, of an otherness. In turn, such change constitutes the event of temporality: it does not take place within an already established order of time, but indeed constitutes an original, eventful temporality. Finally, Dastur also points to another feature of the event, namely its singularity. An event is always singular: just as there is no “general” existence, there are no “general” events. An event is inseparable from the “each” of an “each time,” the scansion of what Nancy calls a “stroke of being” (BSP, 33), a singularity that is constitutive of the event. Through all of these motifs, one already can state that thinking the event will reveal its unsubstantial, “unessential,” or “accidental” character. There is no reference to an essence in an event, which is rather on the side of the “accident” of the “contingent.” The singularity, facticity, and discontinuity of the event point toward its radical contingency and its ungrounded character.

What is striking in this foray into the question of the event is how Dastur encounters and rephrases Hannah Arendt’s reflections on the extraconceptuality of existence. Dastur focuses her reflection on the notion of a “contingency of time”: “The question of time and of the contingency of time has always, as Edmund Husserl recalls at the beginning of his *On the Phenomenology of the*

Consciousness of Internal Time (1991), constituted the most crucial problem for philosophy” (PE, 178). In what does this problem consist? In the difficulty of giving thought to a phenomenon (the event) that exceeds conceptual grasp and understanding, as if a thinking of the event were a thinking of what does not let itself be thought or comprehended: “This problem marks the limits of its [philosophy] enterprise of intellectual possession of the world. For time, which is, as Henri Bergson said, the stuff of which things are made, seems to escape conceptual understanding in a radical manner” (PE, 178). Echoing Hannah Arendt, Dastur posits that the event occurs outside conceptuality, breaking the pretensions of philosophy to imprison it in the thinkable. Thinking the event will amount to thinking this excess. Now, Dastur claims that this new way of thinking is phenomenology itself, against those who believe or claim to believe that in order to think the event one must leave phenomenology (or ontology) behind. “In taking this position I am arguing against those contemporary thinkers who have declared that the thinking of the event and the thinking of the other requires a mode of thinking other than the phenomenological one.” One may wonder: why appeal to phenomenology in the attempt to think the event? Because “there can be no thinking of the event which is not at the same time a thinking of phenomenality” (PE, 187). The following will explore this claim further.

The whole problem hinges on the question of the relation between time and change. Following Merleau-Ponty, one is invited to reject both the idealist and realist “solutions” to the problem of time, which consist in locating time either on the side of consciousness alone or on the contrary in the things themselves. Although a consciousness is required to perceive a succession between a before and an after (which is why one cannot place time in reality alone), time itself cannot be entirely encapsulated in consciousness alone, for precisely consciousness cannot embrace temporality as a whole, as it is “the essence of time to be incompletely present to consciousness, to remain incompletely constituted, as Husserl would say” (PE, 179). Consciousness cannot include time in its realm or dominate temporality, for although not entirely immersed in time, consciousness is nonetheless affected by the passage of time. Ultimately, what is decisive in this discussion is the recognition that time is not an accomplished reality that could be situated within a region of being, whether reality or consciousness. The “error” of both realism and idealism is to consider the different parts of time as already realized, either in the object or in the subject. However, time does not have the substantial completeness of a being. Rather, time “is a process which is always in becoming,” always “of the order of the process, the passage, and that which comes” (PE, 179), and thus, to paraphrase Merleau-Ponty, “never finished” (*jamais chose faite*). This is why neither realism nor idealism are adequate approaches to the problem of time: “Therefore realism (which immerses the subject in time to the point of destroying all possibility of a time-consciousness) and

idealism (which places consciousness in a position of over-viewing a time which no longer proceeds), are both unable to clarify what they pretend to explain, that is, the relation of consciousness to time" (PE, 179). What is important to stress is the transitory character of time, its nonessentiality, or, as Dastur phrases it, "its non-being or non-essence, which *is* not, but proceeds" (PE, 179). In other words, what is important is to stress the *eventful* character of time.

This nonessentiality of becoming indeed marks the character of the *happening* of time. Time happens, and neither realism nor idealism can account for such eventfulness. "Philosophy cannot succeed in accounting for the passage of time when it takes the form of a simple realism or idealism" (PE, 179). That is because they both presuppose an accomplished reality when in fact such "reality" must be traced back to the event of its formation (and deformation), traced back to its happening and genesis. What matters is to recognize that time is not a *given* reality, but the happening of being, and this is what thought—phenomenology—must accommodate. More precisely, what thought must "welcome" is the eventful and discontinuous character of time. "This 'true' philosophy, which would be neither realist nor idealist, should be able to account for the discontinuity of time and for the fact that there are, for us, events" (PE, 179). At this juncture, phenomenology should assume its vocation as a phenomenology of the event. "Such a philosophy," Dastur writes, "should be able to explain the discontinuity of time, or what we could name the structural eventness [*éventualité*] of time" (PE, 179, modified). Dastur uses the term here in a technical sense, to designate eventness as such. This is what she clarifies by distinguishing *éventualité* from the ordinary sense of possibility: "The word *éventualité* should not be taken here in its normal meaning of possibility. Speaking of the *éventualité* of time does not mean that time could 'be' or 'not be.' It should, in my view, mean that time is in itself what brings contingency, unpredictability, and chance into the world. I would like to demonstrate that this 'true' philosophy which could take into account the contingency of time is nothing other than phenomenology itself" (PE, 179, modified).

Phenomenology is assigned to this structural eventness. This is why Husserl did not remain on the level of a static phenomenology, "which could only account for the already constituted object, for what is empirically given," but precisely moved to develop a *genetic* phenomenology, one that would attempt to elucidate the genesis of the subject-object opposition, and indeed the genesis of phenomenality itself. The original meaning of phenomenology is not to explore what lies beyond the phenomena: phenomenology must remain with the phenomena. Dastur insists that it was Husserl's entire project to consider "phenomenology to be the proper name of a philosophy which no longer situates truth beyond phenomena" (PE, 179). This is why phenomenology is not a mere propaedeutic to philosophy but, to paraphrase Goethe, the doctrine itself.²⁶ For Dastur, both Husserl and Heidegger agree on this fundamental point that there is "nothing to

look for behind phenomena, behind what shows itself to us. The object of philosophy is nothing other than phenomenality itself. It is not the ideal world of a being-in-itself which would be completely separated from us" (PE, 180). This expresses the abandonment of an abstract manner of philosophizing, the abandonment of metaphysical speculations and constructs, the return of philosophy to the world in which we live, that is, a world of events, if not an eventful world, a world arising out an event (on the world as event, see this volume, chapter 7).

Phenomenology is concerned neither with the empirical given nor with some noumenal nonappearing reality: it is concerned with the *event* of phenomenality as such. Phenomenality is indeed an occurrence, an event, not a given state. In Husserl's language, the constituted object must be traced back to the constituting act of its genesis. This is the significance of the phenomenological *epoché*: the task of phenomenology is not to describe things as simply present or given, but to elucidate their constitution. "To let the constitutive operation appear, which is at the origin of the completely constituted object which comes into view for us, requires that the existence of this object be, as Husserl says, put into brackets or put to one side" (PE, 180). In this bracketing of the given, one does not reach beyond it toward a nonappearing noumenal world; rather, one reveals the modes of appearing of appearances and their modes of givenness. One brackets the phenomena to access their phenomenality, that is, the event of their givenness, the way in which they happen. This is why the phenomenological reduction "does not amount to the philosopher turning away from the real world in order to access a celestial world of eternal essences. On the contrary, one lets things appear as they are given as phenomena in the natural attitude which is ours in daily life. In this way, one becomes attentive to their modes of appearing and givenness" (PE, 180).

Such mode of appearing, that is, phenomenality, is a *temporal* event: renouncing the appeal to some atemporal or eternal sphere, one retrieves the movement of a temporalization. "What Husserl calls 'phenomenological reduction' does not permit one to escape from the sensible to an intelligible world. It does not permit a movement of becoming into the stability of ideal essences. It lets appear the temporal character of what is given to us" (PE, 180). It is to this extent, as noted, that Husserl attempted to develop a *genetic* phenomenology, moving from the given to the (temporal) event of givenness. It was also from the same perspective that in *Being and Time* Heidegger attempted to think being itself (and Dasein) within the horizon of time and ultimately *as* time. Such genetic phenomenology would return to the event of a temporalization that is at the source of the subject-object opposition, a phenomenology of temporality that Husserl would consider to be a phenomenology of the advent of subjectivity. Such a phenomenology would bring to light the appearing of appearances, what Dastur calls "the conditions of all appearing" (PE, 181). Because such appearing

is not itself an appearance, because, in other words, *it does not appear*, it could be said to be invisible, although, as Dastur remarks (following Merleau-Ponty), this is speaking of an invisibility *of* the world, and not a metaphysical or transcendent invisibility beyond the world. Merleau-Ponty wrote famously in *The Visible and the Invisible* that the invisible is “not a *de facto* invisible, like an object hidden behind another, and not an absolute invisible, which would have nothing to do with the visible. Rather it is the invisible *of* this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it, and renders it visible, its own and interior possibility, the Being of this being.”²⁷ Such invisible is intertwined with the visible, is the other side of the visible, its inner lining, *doublure* or *membrure*: “Meaning is *invisible*, but the invisible is not the opposite of the visible: the visible itself has an invisible inner lining [*membrure*], and the in-visible is the secret counterpart of the visible, it appears only within it” (VI, 215, trans. modified). There is an invisibility of the visible, an invisibility of phenomenality itself, concealed and yet nonetheless sheltered in the visible. This invisibility of the proper event of temporality was seen by Kant when he wrote of the “invisible” or “unappearing” character of time as a pure form of intuition: as the form of inner sense, time itself is not visible in the outer dimension of space. He writes: “For time cannot be a determination of outer appearances; it belongs neither to a shape or a position, etc., but on the contrary determines the relation of representations in our inner state.”²⁸ Time can only be made visible, or represented in space, by way of analogy: “And just because this inner intuition yields no shape we also attempt to remedy this lack through analogies, and represent the temporal sequence through a line progressing to infinity, in which the manifold constitutes a series that is of only one dimension, and infer from the properties of this line to all the properties of time, with the sole difference that the parts of the former are simultaneous but those of the latter always exist successively” (CPR, B 50, 163). One also thinks here of the schematism as a hidden art concealed in the depths of the human soul (CPR, A 141/B 180, 273).

This invisibility accounts for Heidegger’s late characterization of the most authentic sense of phenomenology as a phenomenology of the inapparent (*Phänomenologie des Unscheinbaren*) in the 1973 Zähringen seminar (GA 15, 399/FS, 80), as noted prior. Indeed, the entire phenomenological problematic is rooted in the concealment of being, its *nonappearing*. In a passage from the essay “*Moirai*,” Heidegger thus speaks of how the play of the calling, brightening, expanding light “is not actually visible.” That play, he writes, “shines imperceptibly [*scheint so unscheinbar*], like morning light upon the quiet splendor of lilies in a field or roses in a garden.”²⁹ Being withdraws to only let the being appear. As Heidegger puts it in a crucial passage from “Anaximander Saying” (repeating that statement twice in the essay), stating a veritable law of the givenness of being: “By revealing itself in the being, being withdraws [*Das Sein entzieht sich, indem es sich in das*

Seiende entbirgt].”³⁰ In the essay “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God Is Dead,’” Heidegger also clarifies: “Being does not come to the light of its own essence. In the appearance of beings as such, being itself stays away. The truth of being escapes us. It remains forgotten [*Das Sein kommt nicht an das Licht seines eigenen Wesens. Im Erscheinen des Seienden als solchen bleibt das Sein selbst aus. Die Wahrheit des Seins entfällt. Sie bleibt vergessen*]” (GA 5, 264; *Off the Beaten Track*, 197). Finally, Heidegger posits that being is the mystery because “Being itself withdraws [*entzieht sich*] into its truth. It saves [*birgt*] itself in its truth and conceals [*verbirgt*] itself in such shelter [*Bergen*]” (GA 5, 265; *Off the Beaten Track*, 197, slightly modified). This withdrawal of the phenomenon affects the very definition of phenomenology, now assigned to a secret or mystery, the renewed secret of the event of being, as Heidegger concedes in a later text, “My Way to Phenomenology” (1963): “And today? The age of phenomenological philosophy seems to be over. It is already taken as something past which is only recorded historically along with other schools of philosophy. But in what is most its own phenomenology is not a school. It is the possibility of thinking, at times changing and only thus persisting, of corresponding to the claim of what is to be thought. If phenomenology is thus experienced and retained, it can disappear as a designation in favor of the matter of thinking [*Sache des Denkens*] whose manifestness remains a mystery [*Geheimnis*]” (GA 14, 101/TB, 82, emphasis mine). We see here emerge the notions of mystery or secret in the manifestation of the phenomenon of being. There is an invisibility of phenomenality itself, an invisibility to which phenomenology is assigned. One notes here that what Dastur called the “structural eventness” of phenomenality is properly *invisible*, leading one to consider a certain invisibility of the event, the invisible event of phenomenality.

This invisible phenomenality, as mentioned earlier, is never complete, never given all at once, never *chose faite*. Phenomenality is always in the process of becoming, always happening, always to come and futural. It is in this sense that phenomenology must be taken and engaged anew as a phenomenology of the event, which in fact it *always already was*: “But is such a phenomenology of becoming, which identifies itself with an ontology which remains internal to phenomenality, and which pretends to let the dynamic character of phenomenality appear, already in itself a phenomenology of the event?” The question has merit, for as Dastur adds, it is possible “to think the coming of time, its *advenire*, its coming up to us, without properly thinking its sudden rise, its coming out of itself, which refers to the Latin verb *evenire*, literally ex-venire, from which the word ‘event’ comes” (PE, 181–182). In other words, once the dynamic character of phenomenality is revealed, it still remains to be made explicit in its eventfulness. To that purpose, it is necessary to question more deeply into the very being of the event.

As mentioned prior, proper to the event is its unexpected character, the fact that it always comes *as a surprise*. An event is always unforeseen, perhaps even

unforeseeable, occurring as an *accident*: “At first, we can only define it [an event] as what was not expected, what arrives unexpectedly and comes to us by surprise, what descends upon us, the accident in the literal meaning of the Latin verb *accido* from which the word accident derives” (PE, 182). An event is first what happens as a surprise. To be clear: this surprise is not some occasional accompaniment of an event. Rather, it designates the structural unforeseeability of the event; not an additional aspect of an event, but its constitutive character. Chapter 7 will return to this structural surprise of the event via a reading of Jean-Luc Nancy’s essay “The Surprise of the Event.” In this essay, Nancy claims that the “surprise” is not an additional quality of the event but its most constitutive element: as he puts it, “the event surprises or else it is not an event” (BSP, 167). The event surprises *someone*, a subject or a self, who was not expecting it, who perhaps could not expect it, anticipate it, or foresee it. The event structurally exceeds the subject’s horizons of expectations. Just as the event is structurally surprising, the subject is not surprised *at times*, but structurally, perpetually, surprised. The subject is “structurally surprised,” and a subject could be renamed the surprised one (*l’interloqué*), to use an expression from Jean-Luc Marion to designate how dumfounded the subject is before the event. An event manifests the excess of what cannot be anticipated for a subject. It exceeds the capacities of a subject of anticipation all the while happening to it. “The event in the strong sense of the word is therefore always a surprise, something which takes possession of us in an unforeseen manner, without warning, and which brings us towards an unanticipated future” (PE, 182). The problematic of “surprise” reveals a twofold characteristic of the event: first, that it always happens to someone; there is no event that is not affecting someone, that is received by someone who is thereby affected, transformed, perhaps even destroyed by it; second, it also reveals that an event happens to someone or to a subject by exceeding its very capacities of anticipation, expectation, or appropriation. The event happens to a subject while exceeding it: the event, as will be returned to, happens as an excess.

A further feature appears in this phenomenology of the event: the event introduces a discontinuity in the order of time, in what could be called a “leveled down” temporality. The event cuts time by introducing a hiatus in the continuity and linearity of temporality. “The exteriority of the event introduces a split between past and future and so allows the appearance of different parts of time as dis-located” (PE, 182). The event dislocates time. The event cuts and interrupts time, and yet, it does not bring it to an end: rather, it relaunches it, gives it a new direction, in a word generates it in the pulsation or the beat of the syncopated breathing of an eventful temporality. “The *eventum*, which arises in the becoming, constitutes something which is irremediably excessive in comparison to the usual representation of time as flow. It appears as something that dislocates time and gives a new form to it, something that puts the flow of time out of joint and

changes its direction” (PE, 182). What appears here is that the event dislocates temporality *insofar as it constitutes it, as it produces it*. Dastur writes: “The event produces, in the literal meaning of the word, the difference of past and future and exhibits this difference through its sudden happening” (PE, 182). The event does not take place within a preexisting temporal line, but produces time. In fact, the event does not even occur within the thread of time, in a now that would take its place between an already constituted past and future. Rather, the event is productive of temporality, as its “sudden apparition disconnects the past from the future” (PE, 186), which explains why one dates in terms of such events, as the before and the after of an event.

A leveled-down temporality, conceived of as the “order of time,” gives way to an original, eventful temporality produced by the shock of the event. Such an original temporality is “out of joint” because it is ecstatically disjointed between past, present, and future, circulating differentially in “the mutual implication of the different parts of times: retention and protention for Husserl; thrownness and project [*Geworfenheit und Entwurf*] for Heidegger” (PE, 182). Time is no longer conceived of as a flux or as a flow, but as an ecstatic, interruptive, and differential happening. “The event constitutes the ‘dehiscence’ of time, its coming out of itself in different directions, which Heidegger calls ‘ekstasis,’ the fact that it never coincides with itself, and which Levinas names *dia-chrony*” (PE, 182).³¹ This discontinuity breaks, dislocates, interrupts the order of time, introducing a *difference* in temporality, which then happens in a syncopated, discontinuous, interruptive way. Time is indeed “out of joint.” It happens in that way because it is before anything else an *eventful temporality*, occurring *from the event*. In this way, the event is as it were the arrhythmic beat of temporality, its pulsating generativity. This is what Dastur beautifully shows by drawing from the example of music in an essay called “*Autour de la Phénoménologie*.”³² She refers to the musician Kimura, who explains that the one who listens to music does not perceive a sheer succession or sequence of sounds, but instead grasps the musical piece “from the silences it contains” and in this way listens to the music on the basis of “what Japanese calls *ma*, or interval, which in itself is directed towards the future and which gives to the music its liveliness and its presence.” In other words, it is from the hiatus of such silences that the music is able to happen in its eventfulness and in its “phrasing.” This is why Dastur concludes that “it is indeed a matter of grasping what takes place in its eventful and not substantial character, of seeing it as ‘*koto*,’ as event, and not as ‘*mono*,’ as a thing existing a-temporally.” This constitutes the real break with the Western tradition in philosophy as a philosophy of essence: “With this opposition between the event (*koto*) and its result (*mono*), we are faced with the difference between the verb and the noun. Now, precisely, traditional Western thought has always privileged the noun over the verb, and has proven incapable of thinking the event.”

An event does not take place within an already established temporal order, just as it does not follow a causal order: it disrupts both. “For the event, as such, is upsetting. It does not integrate itself as a specific moment in the flow of time. It changes drastically the whole style of an existence” (PE, 182). Similarly, it can be said that an event does not take place within the world, but on the contrary creates a new world. The event “does not happen in a world—it is, on the contrary, as if a new world opens up through its happening” (PE, 182). By cutting time, the event opens it to the coming of an unpredicted and unpredictable future. The event transforms the world, indeed creates a world. “The event constitutes the critical moment of temporality—a critical moment which nevertheless allows the continuity of time” (PE, 182). It also constitutes (or undoes) a subject. The hiatus of the event affects the subject itself to whom it happens. Merleau-Ponty stressed that the subject should be approached as time and that the “dehiscence” of time is at the same time the split that opens subjectivity to events, a noncoincidence with oneself that “allows the possibility of being open to new events, of being transformed by them or even destroyed by them” (PE, 182). This diachrony, dissymmetry, or *différance* is the site of an openness in the subject, an openness to a future and its accidental arrival: the event is “that which makes of the subject a temporal being, an ex-istant being, a being which is able constantly to get out of itself.” This allows one to redefine subjective existence as openness to the event: “Openness to the accident is therefore constitutive of the existence of the human being” (PE, 182). Existence is not the unfolding of a predetermined conceptual script, but an openness to the event, to the accident. Existence is not a “destiny” but an “adventure.” Here appears the motif of *eventful subjectivity*, or better, of *eventful selfhood*, to which I will return in chapter 6.

Because of this dynamic conception of phenomenality, phenomenology can no longer be conceived of as an eidetic phenomenology, a phenomenology of essences, but a phenomenology of the event: “It becomes clear that a phenomenology which obeyed its own injunction to return to things themselves could not be content to remain an ‘eidetic’ phenomenology—the thinking of what remains invariable in experience. It must become, according to the young Heidegger’s terminology, a ‘hermeneutics of facticity’: an interpretation of all that can be found in existence and is not reducible to ideality, which is essentially variable and transitory” (PE, 182). This is indeed what was at stake in the young Heidegger’s appeal to a renewed sense of phenomenology in terms of what he named a “hermeneutics of facticity” or factual life: it was a matter of envisaging a phenomenology that breaks with any reference to an ideal or essential realm. Factual life designates the event of existence in its proper movement: “In our rough characterization of life, we have often spoken of actualization, nexus of actualization. Elsewhere, people speak of process, stream, the flowing character of life. This latter way of speaking is motivated by and follows a fundamental

aspect in which we encounter life, and we take it as a directive toward the ensemble of the basic structures of life as *movement*, motility” (GA 61, 114/PIA, 85). Heidegger speaks of the motility or “movedness” (*Bewegtheit*) of factual life in contrast with the movement (*Bewegung*) of natural entities. Through this term, Heidegger seeks to establish that life in its givenness is not a theoretical object, does not take a theoretical distance with itself, but rather unfolds as an event, in a singular restlessness or unrest (*die Unruhe*). “The movedness [*Bewegtheit*] of factual life can be provisionally interpreted and described as *unrest* [*die Unruhe*]. The ‘how’ of this unrest, in its fullness as a phenomenon, determines facticity” (GA 61, 93/PIA, 70). The early Heidegger approached the event in terms of the specific movement or motion of factual life.

Through all these motifs, phenomenology appears as radically grounded in the finite eventfulness of life and no longer in some essential realm. Dastur stresses that “phenomenology could no longer be a thinking of being and essence only. It must also be a thinking of what may be and of contingency.” Such thinking can no longer be referred to some *a priori*, but must assume its essential passivity—and delay—in relation to the event. In contrast to an entire philosophical tradition, which claimed to have access to some *a priori*, including Husserl’s notion of constitution, Dastur insists on the finitude of thought and the necessity for thinking to *wait* for the event to happen: “phenomenology should not be only a thinking of the *a priori* of phenomenality. It must also be a thinking of the *a posteriori* and of the ‘after event’” (PE, 183). Thinking the event is thinking after the fact, *post eventum*, like the Hegelian owl that takes its flight after dusk. The paradigm for this is of course birth, which always precedes the self that nonetheless arises from it. The self always finds itself preceded by the event of itself. The very term *eventum* speaks of this sense of the event as that which *has happened*, which has come out of a sheer *evenire*. In Marion’s words, “intrinsic to the event is precisely that it *happens* [*se passe*], that from the outset it has *already passed*, and thus has always *passed us by*; therefore, we find ourselves still asking after the fact, when it is already too late, ‘What [just] happened?’ [*Que s’est-il passé?*]” (NC, 160, trans. slightly modified). Phenomenology becomes a thinking *of* the event in the sense of being a thinking *from* the event.

Now, what can it mean to speak of a phenomenology of the event if an event is essentially characterized by surprise and the impossibility of anticipation? Can there be a phenomenology of what cannot be anticipated or expected? Can one be prepared to be surprised? Can one expect the unexpected? It does not seem so, and Dastur asks: “Is not the very idea of a phenomenology of surprise an absurdity?” (PE, 185). Does the event not break the horizon of what is deemed possible, thus going beyond the very realm of the possible? Is a phenomenology of the event not the impossible itself? In fact, it is that very impossibility that *happens* in an event, Derrida going so far as to say that “only the impossible happens” (*la*

seule chose qui arrive!]³³ It is the unexpected, the unanticipatable, that happens. This is also what Dastur stresses: the event is first of all what happens “against all expectation” (PE, 183). Even when some event was expected, predicted, and anticipated, when it does happen, in the way it happens, it happens unexpectedly and “from itself.” “Against all expectation, even if it has been partially expected and anticipated, such is in fact the ‘essence’ of the event” (PE, 183). An event happens outside of horizons of anticipating and expectation, outside subjectivity, outside of the conditions of possibility that a subject may be able to deploy, in a word, once again, outside of thought. To that extent, by exceeding what is considered expected or possible, the event gives itself as impossible. “Based on this we could say without paradox that it is an ‘impossible possible.’ The event, in its internal contradiction, is the impossible which happens, in spite of everything, in a terrifying or marvelous manner. It always comes to us by surprise, or from that side whence, precisely, it was not expected” (PE, 183). It is an impossible because it happens outside conditions of possibility, outside horizons of expectation, and it is “possible” in the sense in which it nonetheless does happen in the form of the maybe. And it happens, as it were, from a certain exteriority, as if from “without,” although always at the same time in this world, here and now. The event is an exteriority—and thus an excess—that nonetheless happens here and now. A phenomenology of the event would then have to be understood in terms of a relation to such excess, an excess with respect to our expectations: “The difficult task of phenomenology is therefore to think this excess to expectation that is the event,” writes Dastur (PE, 183).

What does it mean to speak of a phenomenology of the excess? To tackle this question, Dastur takes the example of a very particular “impossible event,” namely death, as she considers that “the phenomenology of eventness [*eventualité*] is in a similar position to the phenomenology of mortality” (PE, 183, modified). Indeed, death does happen, it is therefore an event, and it “is also that which always happens against all expectation, always too early, something impossible that nevertheless happens” (PE, 183). It also seems to happen from a certain exteriority, coming “like a thief in the middle of the night,” surprising the living in the midst of life. Like an event, death “happens” as “coming to us without coming from us.” Finally, death also happens in the peculiar impersonal manner that is proper to all events: *it* happens. One might be tempted to say, then, that death is the event *par excellence*, except for the fact that unlike events, which as noted generate time and constitute a world, death closes time and shuts down the world. Additionally, when death does happen, it is properly nothing that happens. In fact, as Dastur stresses, “death is never present, it never presently happens” (PE, 183). When death “happens,” the person to whom it “happens” is no longer there. Death is always in the mode of the not-yet: death has not happened yet. And when it does happen, there is no more Dasein that *can* die. This indicates that human

existence itself happens in the mode of the not-yet, of the possible, or, as Dastur says, of the “impossible possible.” The human being, clarifies Dastur, insofar as it is a being-toward-death, a mortal being, “constantly remains in the mode of possibility.” This led Heidegger to define death as possibility, and not actuality. In fact, it was Heidegger’s entire effort in *Being and Time* to seize death, no longer as actuality, but as possibility. Heidegger was always careful not to simply state that death is the impossibility of existence, but rather the *possibility* of impossibility, stressing that death is a possibility that “must not be weakened” and that “it must be understood *as possibility*, cultivated *as possibility*, and endured *as possibility* in our relation to it” (SZ, 261). Now Dastur will understand this phenomenon as revealing that there is an excess of the possible over actuality. There is an excess of a coming or “arriving” (*arrivée*) with respect to what in fact arrives, a sort of possibility in reserve that is never fully present. As Derrida shows, *arriver*, which in French means both to happen and to arrive, can only occur if what is arriving *has not arrived yet*, if, therefore, there is a possibility (and therefore an alterity) still to come in the happening. A phenomenology of the excess would then take the sense of a phenomenology of the possible. As Dastur puts it, “Phenomenological explanation deals not only with given data, but with potentialities” (PE, 184). The event here must be thought from this excess of the possible with respect to reality, and a phenomenology of the event would be a phenomenology of such “possible,” with an understanding of possibility, as Heidegger put it, as “higher than reality.” “In the phenomenological perspective,” Dastur clarifies, “possibility is the locus of excess with regards to reality. This allows us to consider possibility as a higher category than reality” (PE, 183). A phenomenology of the event is a phenomenology of the excessive advent of existence, an advent that exceeds any given reality, just as phenomenality (givenness) exceeds any given phenomena. “Possibility” names here the structure and excess of existence as finite openness. Possibility names the *eventfulness* of existence as excess. “Possibility is something other than a category which is a structure of things. It is a structure of existence, an existential, as Heidegger calls it, since the mode of being of human existence is not the mode of being of the *res* (that is, *realitas*), but the mode of being as having to be (in other words, as possibility). Because the human being is a mortal being and, in existing, has a constant relation to its own death, it constantly remains in the mode of possibility. It remains in the mode of a structural anticipation towards its own being, which remains unrealized for as long as it exists” (PE, 183). This is another sense of the expression used by Dastur, the “impossible possible”: the event gives itself only as possible (in excess of given realities, the excess of the sheer coming of what comes), although it happens impossibly, in the mode of structural surprise and original delay.

Now, this excess made apparent in the phenomenology of the event can also be approached as the excess of what gives itself with respect to the intentionality

of a consciousness, the excess of the *intentum* with respect to the *intentio*, the excess of intuition with respect to intention (as Jean-Luc Marion would say). Dastur describes this in the following way: phenomenology can no longer rely on the Husserlian notion of correlation, whether between *noesis* and *noema* or between intention and intuition, for there is no adequation between thinking and what it thinks. Instead, phenomenology must take into account “the necessary surpassing of the *intentum* in the *intentio* itself” (PE, 184). The *cogitatum*, the *intentum*, exceeds intentional consciousness in a radical dissymmetry. Phenomenology is thus articulated around an excess, the excess of the happening phenomenon itself. “We could even say that excess is the rule here, because there is always an addition in what is experienced which can never be completely correlated with the intention” (PE, 184). The intention will never be adequate to the intuition. There will always be more in the givenness and happening of the phenomenon than what can be anticipated. Indeed, such excess is properly what is “eventful” in the phenomenon.

Event and Excess

The more excess, the more eventfulness.

—Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given*

Jean-Luc Marion’s work testifies to the attempt to think the event following the guiding thread of the motif of excess. As he puts it in *Being Given*, “The level of eventness—if one can speak thus—is measured by the amount of the phenomenon’s excess over its antecedents” (BG, 171). In his preface to the English edition of *Being Given*, Marion reconstructs his intellectual itinerary in the following sequence: after “ten painful years” following his early work, *Reduction and Givenness* (1989), several key moments are said to have occurred in his elaboration of a phenomenology of givenness, which for him constitutes the authentic sense of phenomenology. These stages take on different names: “the phenomenon as given in terms of givenness, the gift itself reduced to givenness, the determinations of the given, the saturated phenomenon as given *par excellence*, and finally the gifted (the figure of ‘subjectivity’ granted to and by givenness)” (BG, x). The original goal was to grasp phenomenality itself in terms of givenness (*donation*), and no longer in reference to objectivity or even to being. Marion’s attempt to thematize so-called saturated phenomena led him to produce a further work, *De Surcroît*, or *In Excess*, the subtitle of which reads: “*Essais sur les phénomènes saturés*,” “Essays on Saturated Phenomena.”³⁴ Marion characterizes the evolution of his thinking in terms of a fuller, more thorough elaboration of the notion of saturated phenomenon. He explains: “But this work [*Being Given*] was still abstract, at least in its presentation of the givenness of saturated phenomena,

which were sketched formally and too quickly. Hence a final series of studies, *De surcroît*, designed to go into the details of the saturated phenomena, including the phenomenon of Revelation” (BG, x). The intent of these studies remained that of severing phenomenology from the references to both objectivity (Husserl) and being (Heidegger): “This collection aimed to make possible a revival of phenomenology by freeing it from two horizons whose limits had become obvious to me (objectness, Being), without losing the radicality of a method whose fruitfulness was proven throughout the century just ended, a fruitfulness that remains one of the great trump cards held by a philosophy that means to think after and thanks to the end of metaphysics” (BG, x).

The notion of saturated phenomenon is crucial for a phenomenology of the event, as indeed an event can be said to be a singular kind of saturated phenomenon, Marion evoking “the extreme phenomenality of that which happens” (NC, 162). Indeed, it may well be the case that for Marion, the very concept of phenomenon becomes synonymous with that of event: once one distinguishes between phenomena and objects, refusing to reduce phenomena to objects; once one shows how objects are but an alienated or “weak” phenomenality (NC, 173); once, in other words, one establishes that the “objective interpretation of the phenomenon masks and misses its eventness” (NC, 177), the door is thereby opened to seize phenomena in their authentic givenness and eventfulness: “not all phenomena are reduced to objects; certain phenomena happen as events” (NC, 178, and sections 26 and 27). How does Marion characterize the difference between an object and an event? The object constitutes the “impoverished figure of phenomenality, impoverished because diminished in intuition, to the contrary of the event, which is a phenomenon saturated with intuition” (NC, 302). The object is poor in intuition, the event is saturated with intuition. Two features appear: first, the event comes to the fore when it is a matter of defining phenomenality in contrast with objectivity and with being; second, eventful phenomenality becomes connected to the notion of an excess of intuition, or “saturation,” leading to the concept of saturated phenomenon.

What is a saturated phenomenon? Let me first note that this expression is somewhat mistaken in its formulation: for it is not the phenomenon that is saturated, but the intentional subjectivity to whom it happens. The excessive phenomenon (intuition) can saturate intention, and is therefore *saturating*, but it itself is not *saturated* (although at times Marion speaks of the phenomenon as being *saturated with intuition*). This linguistic-conceptual impropriety notwithstanding, what Marion seeks to articulate is clear: there are phenomena that paradoxically exceed the capacity of a subject to receive them. Marion’s basic definition of the saturated phenomenon can be expressed in this way: “intuition exceeds intention,” that is, intuition exceeds the intentionality of a constituting subjectivity that predetermines the objectivity of objects through its concepts.

The object is a phenomenon that has been reduced to the demands of reason, “screened through the filter of the concepts of the understanding, in short judged by the norms of the a priori” (NC, 165). The event, on the other hand, that is, the happening phenomenon, is characterized by the intuition exceeding the concept. “From now on, we are dealing with a saturated phenomenon, in which the intuition overflows the capacity of the concept, which is always lacking and late” (NC, 185–186). Marion constantly refers in his work to Kant’s and Husserl’s vocabularies of intuitions and concepts, and he classifies phenomena in terms of the relation between intuition and concept. This, in fact, constitutes the very limit of his thought as he borrows the categories from the very tradition (the tradition of modern subjectivity) that he claims to overcome and overturn, which I will return to. Accordingly, Marion states that there are three different types of phenomena: there are “poor” phenomena, “common or common-law phenomena” (*phénomènes communs ou de droit-commun*), and finally saturated phenomena (*phénomènes saturés*). Phenomena are poor when there is little intuition that is given (as in metaphysics, for instance); phenomena are “common” when there is an adequation between intuition and concept; and phenomena are said to be saturated when intuition exceeds the concept.

Notwithstanding this triple classification of phenomena, Marion insists that ultimately the *sole* paradigm of phenomenality is the saturated phenomenon. Marion assumes the definition of the phenomenon given by Heidegger in paragraph 7 of *Being and Time* as that which gives or shows itself of itself and from itself (as noted prior, Heidegger writes: “Thus we must *keep in mind* that the expression ‘*phenomenon*’ signifies that which shows itself in itself, the manifest,” SZ, 28). In *Being Given*, Marion explains the following: “What *shows itself* first *gives itself*—this is my one and only theme” (BG, 5). Now, this reveals from the outset that the phenomenon is *an event*: the event of showing itself from itself. This Heideggerian definition of the phenomenon is in the background of all Marion’s analyses of the saturated phenomena, as well as of the event. Indeed, he understands such definition as signifying that the phenomenon gives itself *unconditionally* since it does not give itself following the conditions that a subject may lay out, but instead happens of and from itself. The phenomenon is “saturated” because it gives itself unconditionally, which also explains why it is the paradigm for all phenomena: “Because it gives itself without condition or restraint, the saturated phenomenon would offer the paradigm of the phenomenon finally without reserve” (BG, 218). To appear of itself and from itself means: without conditions, without preestablished limits, as unconditional givenness. Saturated phenomena “accomplish the one and only paradigm of phenomenality” (BG, 227), and in the end the saturated phenomenon “establishes the truth of all phenomenality because it marks, more than any other phenomenon, the givenness from which it comes” (BG, 227). This is why ultimately objects and

events are not too different kinds of phenomena: the only authentic phenomenon is the happening saturated phenomenon. The object is a phenomenon the eventness of which has been suppressed. Marion explains that “starting with a single and univocal phenomenality, the phenomena end up by *diverging* into objects or nonobjects according to the variations that they introduce into the dimensions of the same, unique phenomenality” (NC, 161). The object is a *poor* phenomenon, a “poor, deficient, and diminished phenomenon” (NC, 161–162), “a phenomenon of the second order” (NC, 162), not a different kind of phenomenon. There is only one phenomenality, the “extreme phenomenality of that which happens” (NC, 162).

Access to the saturated phenomenon represents the most profound sense of phenomenology, and this *unconditional* phenomenality subverts the traditional reference to the transcendental *conditions of possibility* of phenomenality (once again revealing the presence of the impossible in the givenness of the phenomenon, in the happening of the event): “In this way, following the guiding thread of the saturated phenomenon, phenomenology finds its final possibility: not only the possibility that surpasses actuality, but the possibility that surpasses the very conditions of possibility, the possibility of unconditioned possibility—in other words, the possibility of the impossible, the saturated phenomenon” (BG, 219). One notes here how the possible itself, which was already an excess with respect to actuality, in turn finds itself exceeded by the impossible happening of the eventful phenomenon. Therein lies the reversal of the possible into the impossible, as Marion recognizes: for events, “their possibility, not being able to be anticipated, remains, strictly speaking, an impossibility with regard to the system of anteriorly indexed causes” (IE, 36). In fact, as he stresses in *Negative Certainties*, the event can only be impossible, the impossible itself: “Moreover, [the event] always appears to us at bottom as impossible, or even as *the* impossible, since it does not belong to the domain of the possible, of that of which we are able” (*Aussi bien nous apparaît-il au fond toujours comme impossible, voire comme l'impossible, puisqu'il n'appartient pas au domaine du possible, de ce que nous pouvons*; NC, 182).

So-called poor or common phenomena are but the restricted, derivative modes of the only true phenomenon worthy of that name, namely, the saturated phenomenon. As Marion states: “My entire project . . . aims to think the common-law phenomenon, and through it the poor phenomenon, on the basis of the paradigm of the saturated phenomenon, of which the former two offer only weakened variants, and from which they derive by progressive extenuation” (BG, 227). The saturated phenomenon, to be clear, designates the phenomenon and experience of excess. And yet, the excess is the norm, the *ordinary* concept of phenomenon, as if the excess, as Dastur put it, was “the rule”: “We could even say that excess is the rule here, because there is always an addition in what is

experienced which can never be completely correlated with the intention" (PE, 184). Phenomenality (givenness) exceeds by right its reception. This is what the saturated phenomenon designates: an unconditional givenness. And givenness is unconditional because it happens from itself, not from a priori conditions that the subject would propose. This is why Marion explains that the excessive or saturated phenomenon is not an exceptional occurrence but the normal mode of occurrence of any phenomenon: "Though paradoxical, or precisely for that very reason, the saturated phenomenon should in no way be understood as an exceptional, indeed vaguely irrational (to say it plainly, 'theological'), case of phenomenality. Rather, it accomplishes the coherent and rational development of the most operative definition of the phenomenon: it alone appears truly as itself, of itself, and on the basis of itself" (BG, 218–219). Thus, the saturated phenomenon is not an exceptional occurrence, "making an exception to the definition of phenomenality; to the contrary, its ownmost property is to render thinkable the measure of manifestation in terms of givenness and to recover it in its common-law variety, indeed in the poor phenomenon. What metaphysics rules out as an exception (the saturated phenomenon), phenomenology here takes for its norm—every phenomenon shows itself in the measure (or the lack of measure) to which it gives itself" (BG, 227). Before focusing on the phenomenological description of the event, this chapter first briefly reconstructs Marion's typology of phenomena.

As indicated, Marion accesses the concept of saturated phenomenon through a contrasted characterization of the phenomena as either poor, common, or saturated. Phenomenality includes various kinds of phenomena: "For the same phenomenality covers all givens, from the poorest (formalism, mathematics), to the common (physical sciences, technical objects), to saturated phenomena (event, idol, flesh, icon)" (IE, 53). I already noted that the event is classified with the saturated phenomena, which represents the sole paradigm of phenomenality. Engaging such analysis of the different types of phenomena, Marion begins by stressing that for any phenomenon, whether poor, common, or saturated, one feature prevails, namely the fundamental definition of the phenomenon as that which "shows itself from itself (Heidegger) and does so only insofar as it gives itself in itself from itself alone; what shows itself does so only to the extent that it gives itself" (BG, 221). This means that the different kinds of phenomena are all variations of such auto-manifestation. The only difference pertains to the *degrees* of givenness in intuition. First, Marion introduces the notion of a phenomenon that is "poor in intuition." Such is, for instance, the case of formal intuitions in mathematics, or categorical intuitions in logic, in which it is a matter of a vision of essences or idealities. In such cases, "what shows itself in and from itself does not need much more than its concept alone, or at least just its intelligibility (the demonstration itself), to give itself" (BG, 222). Interestingly, Marion evaluates mathematics in terms of its relation to the event: "The privilege of mathematics . . .

derives entirely from the aptitude of mathematics to eliminate the least residue of eventness from things—to constitute them into objects by demoting them as events” (NC, 165). This is also the case with metaphysics to the extent that what is sought is an epistemological certainty in the phenomena. Now, this emphasis on certainty implies a “radical phenomenological deficit” in which there is no givenness, “or only a little, since it conveys neither real nor individual intuition, nor the temporalization of an event, in short, no accomplished phenomenality” (BG, 222). As Kant showed, in metaphysics, the phenomena are not given, or barely. They can therefore be called “poor phenomena.” They cannot claim to represent phenomenality; they cannot be the paradigm of phenomenality because metaphysical objects are not given.

In contrast with poor phenomena, where there is a deficit of intuition with respect to the concept, common or common-law phenomena display an adequation between intuition and intention or concept. Common phenomena correspond for Marion to the realm of objects, to an objectivity that conforms—or is summoned to conform—to a constituting subjectivity. What Marion has in mind with common-law phenomena are thus the phenomena that are constituted as objects of scientific representation. “Obviously classed as common phenomena are the objects of physics and the natural sciences” (BG, 223). With such phenomena, “it is a question of establishing the objective certainty of conceptual maximums (signification, theories, etc.) on the basis of intuitive minimums (sense data, experimental protocols, statistical accounts, etc.)” (BG, 223). Any disturbance by some intuitive material coming to frustrate the conceptual content must be diminished or reduced: “The objectification of the phenomenon itself demands restricting the intuitive given to what confirms (or rather does not diminish) the concept” (BG, 223). With common-law phenomena, intuition does not exceed the concept but conforms to it, and to that extent the intention retains a mastery over the intuition, over the givenness of the phenomena. As Marion puts it, givenness is “cut to the size of objectification” (BG, 223). This project of mastery over givenness is the reason why, according to Marion, the sciences along with the metaphysics that make them possible “have always privileged phenomena lacking in intuition, whether poor phenomena like logical statements and mathematical idealities (only formal intuition of space) or common phenomena like physical objects (mechanical, dynamic, and so on, adding to space the formal intuition of time)” (IE, 111).

In addition to such objects of natural science, common-law phenomena that in principle can or must be adequate to the form of the concept, Marion also includes technical or technological objects. In these latter cases, the phenomenon conforms to the “plan,” to the schema or the drawing, “in short, exactly what industry names the ‘concept’ of an object” (BG, 223). With such phenomena, the concept understood in that specific sense presents in advance the object

that will be given. The concept *anticipates* and “*pro-jects*” the givenness of the phenomenon and “renders this product visible before production actually gives it, and sometimes even without any production following the manifestation of its ‘concept’ (simulation, ‘concept car,’ etc.)” (BG, 223). Here the concept precedes and determines the phenomenon (in Sartrean terms, its essence precedes its existence). The technological object does not give itself first, but only comes following its concept. Rather than “*pro-duced*,” one could say that the object is “*in-duced*,” ensuing the concept. If there is some inadequacy between intention and intuition, it would be in the sense of a delay in production, which betrays the primacy of the concept. This confirms the derivative status of the common phenomenon, “the derived, indeed alienated, phenomenal status of the technological object, which always comes after itself and continually recaptures in an always unequal actuality its own supposedly impeccable intelligibility” (BG, 224). There is a chronological priority of the concept over the object or product, over the intuition, which allows one to determine in advance, to “know at the outset and in advance, the characteristics of what comes at the end of the chain of production” (BG, 224). To that extent, the intuition adds nothing to the concept. The product confirms the concept, the intuition the intention. It is clear in this context that any “eventfulness” has been suppressed, that no surprise, no unanticipated presence, no accident, are allowed to occur: “the ‘concept’ never undergoes even the least variation or incident during the course of its intuitive actualization; manifestation never suffers a counter-blow at the hand of givenness. Thus foreseen, production and intuition (therefore givenness) remain beneath the watchful gaze of the concept” (BG, 224). Unpredictability, the very unpredictability of the event, has been suppressed. Interestingly, Marion calls such eventless phenomenon an “alienated phenomenality” (BG, 225), confirming implicitly that eventfulness belongs to the definition of full phenomenality. Indeed, he also explicitly stresses that such alienated phenomenon “should not tolerate any innovation, modification, *or, in short, any event*” (BG, 225, emphasis mine). This is why he goes so far as evoking “the eventmentality that *governs all phenomena*, even the most objective in appearance” (IE, 38, emphasis mine). Both poor and common phenomena testify to a “deficit of givenness,” that is, a deficit of eventfulness.

In contrast with both poor and common phenomena, it is possible to consider phenomena in a way that does not limit a priori their givenness, but lets them give themselves from themselves. It is possible, in other words, to consider an *unconditional phenomenality*. Marion asks: “To the limited possibility of phenomenality, shouldn’t we—in certain cases still to be defined—oppose a finally unconditionally possible phenomenality, whose scope would not be the result of the finitude of the conditions of experience? To the phenomenon supposedly poor in intuition, can’t we oppose a phenomenon saturated with intuition?”

(BG, 197). Hence Marion introduces another kind of phenomenon, so-called saturated phenomenon, to free up his phenomenology of givenness from the dominance of the privilege of the poor phenomenon in traditional metaphysics. “There is no better way of saying that the absolute and unquestioned dominance of the paradigm of a poor phenomenon, indeed one empty of intuition, definitively blocks, in metaphysics at least, every advance toward the liberated phenomenality of givenness” (BG, 203). At issue is to reintegrate within phenomenology saturated phenomena or paradoxes (phenomena that give themselves from themselves, without limits or unconditionally) so as to subvert the paradigm of objectivity and the traditional dominance of poor phenomena (within which Marion includes Heidegger’s notion of *Angst*!). “In contrast to the classic doctrines of phenomenality, which were constructed according to the paradigm of phenomena poor in intuition (logical utterances, mathematical objects, the doubting ego, the I of the reduction, indeed Dasein in anxiety), the phenomenology of givenness follows the paradigm of the unconditional given, quite possibly saturated with intuition and therefore unobjectifiable” (BG, 321).

Pure givenness, which Marion equates with the excess of intuition over intention, can no longer be defined on the basis of what a concept predetermines, but solely on the basis of its own anarchic surge. The concept “no longer foresees, for intuition fore-comes [*le concept ne prévoit plus, car l’intuition le prévient (vient avant)*]” (BG, 226), writes Marion. In the case of poor and common-law phenomena, the concept foresees the intuition and sets limits a priori for its givenness. But in the case of saturated phenomena, intuition “surpasses” the intention, occurs outside concepts, and unfolds without limitations and horizon. The saturated phenomenon does not give itself abnormally but reveals the essence of the phenomenon as unconditioned. What is characteristic of the saturated phenomenon, what makes it a paradox, is that the intuition exceeds or overflows—and thus saturates—the intention: what is given paradoxically exceeds its reception. A saturated phenomenon is one in which “intuition always submerges the expectation of the intention, in which givenness not only entirely invests manifestation but, surpassing it, modifies its common characteristics” so that the intuition “sets forth a surplus that the concept cannot organize, therefore that the intention cannot foresee” (BG, 225). The intuition precedes the intention and exceeds it. “Far from coming after the concept and therefore following the thread of the intention (aim, foresight, repetition), intuition subverts, therefore precedes, every intention, which it exceeds and decenters” (BG, 225). While the object proceeds from vision, the event precedes it (see NC, 186), which accounts for the unforeseeability of the event, the fact that I cannot see it come in advance. There lies the paradox of an intentional receptivity that cannot anticipate the intuition and must receive a given that is greater than itself. The intuition in a sense *contradicts* (paradox) its reception: givenness “contravenes, in its intuition, what previous

experience should reasonably permit us to foresee.” It “happens counter to expectation,” and it happens “against all that representation or intention, in short the concept, would expect” (BG, 226).

To that extent, in addition to subverting the paradigm of objectivity, the saturated phenomenon deconstructs any constituting transcendental subjectivity. Freed phenomenality as pure or absolute givenness subverts any horizon and reverses the transcendental subject into the recipient of an event, a traumatic event: the saturated phenomenon interrupts subjectivity from an outside that it can neither anticipate nor comprehend. In fact, Marion proposes to designate the subject of the event, not as recipient, but as a “witness”: “The phenomenon of the passing reached me and, so to speak, constituted me as not constituting it—to the point that all I have is recognize myself as the mere witness (the one who certainly saw what he has seen, but does not understand what he has seen), and I renounce my claim to be its transcendental subject” (NC, 186). An event undoes the power of a subject, as the event happens of itself, placing us in the position of *witnesses*, rather than actors. “For, far from being able to constitute this phenomenon, the I experiences itself as constituted by it. To the constituting subject, there succeeds the witness—the constituted witness” (BG, 216). The “witness” signifies the undoing of the transcendental subject constituting the event as object: “With the name witness, we must understand a subjectivity stripped of the characteristics that gave it transcendental rank” (BG, 217). The traditional figure of the synthesizing I, which was thematized by Kant as the transcendental unity of apperception and by Husserl as the constituting transcendental consciousness, is defeated by the saturated phenomenon: “here the I of intentionality can neither constitute nor synthesize the intuition into an object defined by a horizon” (BG, 226). In fact, Marion insists that if there is a synthesis, it would be a “passive” synthesis, one that comes, as it were, from the phenomenon itself, “which imposes its arising and its moment on and before all active intentionality of the I” (BG, 226). The saturated phenomenon reverses the subject from its active position as constituting consciousness to a passive recipient, from the nominative “I” to the accusative “me,” to use Levinas’ distinction. The passivity of the passive synthesis “indicates not only that the I does not accomplish it actively and therefore suffers it passively, but above all that activity falls to the phenomenon and to it alone” (BG, 226). Of course the notion of “activity” is improper when it comes to the event, which, as seen with Nietzsche, has neither agent nor subject, and which is an essentially impersonal phenomenon. But it attempts to designate the very being of the phenomenon, which, as Marion often reminds the reader, shows *itself* because it gives *itself first*. “First” means: prior to any constituting power of the subject, as well as prior to any conceptuality, “free of every concept, according to a befalling that delivers its self” (BG, 226). We do not constitute the event; rather, the event makes (and unmakes) us.

This marks our radical passivity before the event, before the *passing* of the event. Let me stress here the capital importance of the motif of passing in the thinking of the event. The event essentially *passes*. In *Negative Certainties* (NC, 183), Marion cites a poem from Baudelaire, “A une Passante,” “To a Passer By” (or alternatively “To a Woman Passing By” or “In Passing”), which reads:

Around me roared the nearly deafening street.
Tall, slim, in mourning, in majestic grief,
A woman passed.
[*Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse, une femme passa.*]³⁵

On such passing, he then adds: “What happens, even if I can expect it, arrives without my being able to expect it at a precise moment. The event arrives, or rather it happens *to me* [*il m’arrive*], by surprising me all of a sudden, unexpectedly” (NC, 184). Such an event “affects me more than I am able to constitute it,” it begins “before me, arrives without me, anticipating my expectation, and disappears from sight” (NC, 185). This “passing” becomes the paradigm of the event: the event “only happens to the extent that she, this woman, passes—and thus disappears, without subsisting, enduring, or persisting” (NC, 184). Only an object can persist in presence. However, the event “gives itself only in abandoning me” (NC, 186). The event does not persist, the event passes, and passes away. The event *passe* (passes) and *se passe* (happens or passes of itself).

The event represents one of the main figures of the saturated phenomenon, indeed perhaps the most distinctive kind of the saturated phenomenon: “The most original saturated phenomenon is the event,” Marion states.³⁶ Marion focuses on the historical event, traditionally privileged in the thinking of the event, in line with the division of the sciences between “human” or “social” sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) and natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*). For Marion, the historical event saturates the category of quantity as it is “not limited to an instant, a place, or an empirical individual, but overflows these singularities and becomes epoch making in time,” as well as “covers a physical space such that no gaze encompasses it with one sweep,” and finally “encompasses a population such that none of those who belong to it can take upon themselves an absolute or even privileged point of view” (BG, 228). No one can describe exhaustively a historical event, which cannot be constituted as an object. Hence at Waterloo, the battle “passes and passes away on its own, without anybody making it or deciding it. It passes, and each watches it pass, fade into the distance, and then disappear, disappear like it had come—that is to say, of itself” (BG, 228). The event happens of itself, not constituted by a transcendental subject.

The event happens “of itself” while exceeding us from all sides. In *In Excess*, in the chapter entitled “The Event or the Happening Phenomenon,” Marion takes

up the question of the event as a saturated phenomenon, beginning once again with a reflection on the essence of the phenomenon as saturated, a character, as noted, that he draws from Heidegger's definition of the phenomenon as that which shows itself *of and from itself*. "All phenomena appear, but only to the extent that they show themselves. Heidegger established and managed to have it admitted that the phenomenon is defined as what shows itself in itself and starting from itself" (IE, 30). Now, for Marion, this definition consecrates the end of a transcendental way of thinking: for how can a phenomenon happen *of and from itself* if one still appeals to a transcendental I that constitutes it as an object? The phenomenality of poor or common-law phenomena, such as, for instance, technical objects, according to Marion is "borrowed" or "derived from the intentionality and from the intuition that we confer on them" (IE, 30). To do justice to the definition of the phenomenon as that which shows itself of and from itself, Marion proposes to establish the following: "To admit, to the contrary, that a phenomenon shows itself, we would have to be able to recognize in it a *self*, such that it takes the initiative of its manifestation. From that point on, the question becomes one of knowing if and how such an initiative of manifestation can fall to a phenomenon" (IE, 30). Aside from the question regarding such a "self" or "initiative," clearly problematic expressions since (a) the phenomenon is impersonal and thus has no self and (b) there can be no "initiative" on the part of a phenomenon that is severed from any action of an agent (the reflexive "itself" in the expression "a phenomenon shows itself" is not the indication of a self but rather conveys the sense of an impersonal statement, a middle-voice form), at this point for Marion it is a matter of letting the phenomena give themselves, "instead of letting them be shown simply as objects" (IE, 31). Hence the question: "Which phenomena keep within them the trace of their givenness, to the point that their mode of phenomenalization will not only open such an access to their original *self* but render it incontestable?" Marion's answer quickly follows: "I propose the hypothesis that it is a question of phenomena of the type of the event" (IE, 31).

The event comes to the fore in Marion's phenomenology of givenness as a privileged case of phenomenality. What is first distinctive about an event is the fact that it does not belong to the realm of objects. Marion systematically attempts to sever phenomenology from the reference to objectivity. In contrast to "objects and the way they follow one another according to laws that are at once presupposed and confirmed," it is possible to ask: "just how far does the domain of objects extend? Can objectness characterize, therefore rationalize, the entire field of phenomenality?" Clearly for Marion the answer is negative. Further, can phenomena be classified under the general horizon of being, as Heidegger proposed? In fact, what Marion seeks to establish is "that neither objectness nor beingness exhaust phenomenality and that the phenomenon shows itself first insofar as it is given, before possibly being qualified as a being or as an object" (BG, 161). If

one makes that move within phenomenology, exceeding both the references to objectivity and being, it then becomes possible to give thought to the event, that is, to the *happening phenomenon*: “Henceforth, the determination of the given phenomenon as event without cause or reason will be seriously justified (and assessed)” (BG, 161). Further, the event is likewise distinguished from technical objects, or any type of produced objects, as an event is not something that can be produced: it is not a product, “decided and foreseen, foreseeable according to its causes and as a consequence reproducible following the repetition, of such causes” (IE, 31). Marion mocks the expression (if not the profession) known as “event-organizer”: “We never put into play the event (nothing is more ridiculously contradictory than the would-be ‘organization of an event’), but, itself, at the initiative of its *self*, it produces us in *giving itself to us*” (IE, 34). An event cannot be produced or organized, just as it cannot be caused; an event instead *happens*, and happens *from itself*. “Whence the turn of phrase ‘event-making’—a formulation that is perfectly contradictory since the event makes *itself* as it gives itself and shows itself” (BG, 165).

The event is not produced by a subject, but happens in such a way as to attest “to an unforeseeable origin, rising up from causes often unknown, even absent, at least not assignable, that one would not therefore any longer reproduce, because its constitution would not have any meaning” (IE, 31). To precisely attest to this claim, and also to defend the view that these characteristics are not extraordinary but belong to the ordinary sense of an event, Marion chooses a banal example, that of the lecture hall in which he was giving a lecture, thus taking the example “of an indisputable factuality, that of this room—the lecture hall where this academic meeting is held today” (IE, 31). An interesting choice to be sure, since Marion chooses, not what one would immediately classify as an event, but rather a place, a location, if not an object or a collection of objects. Marion notes this apparent difficulty, suggesting that in the end objects themselves may need to be recognized as events. “This analysis, as rigorous as one would want it to be, nevertheless presents a difficulty, or at least a peculiarity: it makes us consider as an event that which, at first sight, evidently passes for an object—in the occurrence, this hall. On what basis can an object be interpreted as an event in this way—a hall as a ‘hall’? In pursuing this logic, could every object not be described in the end as an event?” (IE, 34). It is indeed a matter of going back from the object to the event, Marion hinting at the possibility of considering objects as events, as if objects, objective phenomena, were themselves in a sense events (I will return to this question in chapter 4 on “Things as Events”). To the question of whether it would be appropriate to keep the distinction between objects and events, Marion ultimately answers negatively: objects and events are not different kinds of phenomena: the object is an impoverished version of the event, while the event is the more original phenomenon. One must then reverse the question and ask: “how

can the essentially and originally eventmental character of the phenomenon, and even of all phenomena (including the most banal, that I have just described), be dulled, attenuated, and disappear, to the point that it only appears to us as an object?" (IE, 34). The issue is not to ask at what point one can begin to treat of a phenomenon as an event, but rather: why does one lower eventful phenomenality to the rank of objectivity?

As an example of such lowering or reduction of the event to an object, Marion refers to Kant's table of categories and in particular its first rubric, that of quantity, reminding us that the categories of the understanding impose on phenomena the "seal of object-ness." The first rubric, quantity, stipulates that "in order to become an object, every phenomenon must possess a quantity," or an extensive size. In turn, it is possible to circumscribe the totality of the phenomenon in terms of its size and the sum of its parts. As a result, the object can be anticipated in its constitution. "Whence follows another, decisive characteristic: the object can and must be anticipated following the sum of the parts that compose it" (IE, 35). Thus the lecture hall has a quantity, resulting from the sum of its parts, which means that any element of surprise is excluded or suppressed from its presence. "There no longer remains in principle anything in it of the least surprise: what appears will always be inscribed in the sum of what its parameters allow always already to be anticipated" (IE, 35). The lecture hall is at it were foreseen before being seen, predetermined by its quantity, delimited by its measures, reduced to its quantity. Such reduction "of the room to its foreseeable quantity makes of it an object" (IE, 35). The phenomenon of the lecture hall has been reduced to a quantifiable object, and effectively its actuality—or eventfulness—has been reduced to being a representation. As such, it can be anticipated so that nothing in the hall is allowed to *exceed* its representation. We have reduced the hall to "the rank of phenomena of the second order, of common phenomena," that is, "without according to them full, autonomous, and disinterested appearance. They appear to us transparently, in the neutral light of objectivity, without holding up the gaze or overwhelming it" (IE, 35–36).

What indeed has been "removed" from the phenomenon in this objectification? Nothing less than its *eventfulness*. "What has been 'removed' from the foreseen and not seen phenomenon that is the object? Since we qualify it as an anticipated phenomenon, would it not be this anticipation that disqualifies it as a full phenomenon? What does 'anticipation' mean here? That in the object all remains foreseen in advance—that *nothing unforeseen happens*" (IE, 36, emphasis mine). The object is like the "shadow" of the event, a sort of "fallen" phenomenon, characterized by the fact that it does not happen since "nothing new can happen to it anymore." It becomes necessary to reverse the reduction of phenomenon to object and to reclaim the eventful character of the phenomenon as its *most proper determination*: "from there, we can invert the analysis and go

back from the object, transparent phenomenon, fallen from all occurrence, to its original phenomenality, *governed completely by eventmentality*" (IE, 36, emphasis mine). That objects, as suggested prior, must be considered as events is clearly and explicitly stated by Marion at the outset: "Even this hall appears, in effect, according to the mode of the event" (IE, 31). "Even" this lecture hall: this means, even what appears as an object, any object, is also—and perhaps first—an event. Certainly Marion begins by admitting that the lecture hall gives itself first as an object or a series of objects: "I do not question the fact that it offers itself to be seen as an object—four walls, a false ceiling hiding a veranda, a podium, a certain number of seats, available as permanent and subsistent beings, and which stay there, waiting for us to occupy them by using them or noticing their subsistence" (IE, 31–32). The lecture hall appears in its subsisting presence, what Heidegger called *Vorhandenheit*. But precisely, as subsisting *presence*, it cannot conceal the event of presence that it displays, and this "permanence in waiting" is "the contrary to objective availability." With respect to the lecture hall, *this* lecture hall, it is a matter of describing this phenomenon in terms of its presence, its *temporal* presence: "as a triple event according to the 'already' of its facticity, the 'this time, once and for all' of its accomplishment and the 'without end' of its hermeneutic" (IE, 36).

At this point, Marion endeavors to describe the eventful nature of that object, the lecture hall, by focusing on its temporal presence in the threefold modes of past, present, and future. By having recourse to temporality, it becomes possible to see objects as events, as well as the self as event: "it will be necessary to establish eidetic phenomena temporalized as events and, further, temporalized in such a way that they provoke the *ego* to phenomenalize itself according to this unique eventmentality. Can we plead for such a thing?" (IE, 39). The lecture hall is not an object, but a threefold temporal presence, opening onto past and future and unfolding in a present. How does the lecture hall present itself from the perspective of the past? In terms of a certain *facticity*. The lecture hall imposes itself on us, as if it was *already* there, preexisting us. When we enter it, it is already there. It already *was* there. This preexistence, this past, however, are paradoxical, for they point to a being that existed before us, although this past only appears as such once we are present to it. Marion captures this paradox in this way: it is a "being without us, although being there for us" (IE, 32). Now, the facticity of the lecture hall gives it an irreducible unpredictability: the lecture hall gives itself as an "unexpected fact, unforeseeable, coming from an uncontrollable past" (IE, 32). *It comes as a surprise*. In a sense, the surprise arises out of the very facticity of the past (it is a surprise before what was already here), and which by that very fact escapes and exceeds us in its temporal depth: its history exceeds our memory. It is as if the "object" lecture hall opened into a past so deep that it could never be recovered. It is therefore a surprise before the

past, a surprise before the facticity of the past, and before that which exceeds us in the depth of that past. The surprise is “triggered in fact as well in the case of the lecture hall—already there, rising from a past of which we are ignorant, restored many a time by forgotten initiatives, charged with a history exceeding memory (is it a converted ancient cloister?), it imposes itself on me in appearing to me” (IE, 32). The surprise is before the already and the infinite alterity that it harbors, before the event of the already, the event of facticity: “I enter it [the lecture hall] less than it happens by itself to me, takes me in and imposes itself on me. This ‘already’ attests to the event” (IE, 32). What constitutes the eventful character of the facticity of the lecture hall for Marion lies in its excessive character, in the fact there is a dimension in the present “object” of the lecture hall that exceeds us, namely the dimension of the past. Once again, what is characteristic of an event for Marion is the presence of an excess: the event is thought of from the thread of the motif of the excess. What is eventful is what is excessive, a determination that will be questioned further on. Nonetheless, at this stage, the introduction of a reference to temporality is crucial in the shift from a phenomenology of objects to a phenomenology of the event. Temporality is traditionally conceived of as “consecrated entirely to allowing the synthesis of phenomena as objects and therefore works to assure in them permanence in presence” (IE, 38). However, it is here approached as manifestation of the eventful character of phenomenality. “Now, my analysis established the contrary: temporality brings about originally the arrival of the occurrence according to its *fait accompli*, without reason or cause, but in imposing anamorphosis. In short, it allows phenomenality to be understood in the mode of event, against all objectivity, which, at its best, becomes in it a residual case, provisionally permanent, illusorily subsistent” (IE, 38). In other words, temporality no longer constitutes the object but rather reveals the event. The object is nothing but a de-temporalized event.

With respect to the present, the eventful—excessive—character of the lecture hall is even more manifest. First, when looking at the present, we are not considering an abstract object “in general,” but *this* lecture hall, in its very singularity, at this particular moment, for this specific occasion. We are then “no longer dealing with the lecture hall as such, in general, such that it would subsist, in its indifferent emptiness, between such and such an occasion of filling it with an undifferentiated public. It is a question of this hall, this evening, filled for this occasion, to hear these particular speakers, on such a theme” (IE, 32). Further, the present is the present of a *performance*, as we are now engaged in the event of the lecture hall, its occurrence here and now in a particular occasion. The lecture hall becomes the locus of an event as one says that one is going to “an event” this evening: “The lecture hall in this way becomes a ‘house’—in the theatrical sense of a ‘good house tonight’” (IE, 32). The lecture hall is a “stage,” and the people present

become as it were characters in a play, actors and performers. This is why the lecture hall is less the material presence of objects (walls, doors, floor, etc.) than an “impalpable event.” As such, it is unique, unprecedented, and unable to be reproduced. “Tonight, on *this* theme and no other, between us and no one else, an absolutely unique event is played out, unrepeatable and, for a large part, unforeseeable” (IE, 32–33). The event happens *now*, as never before, and never again. “Now” is the time of an “impalpable” occurrence: no matter how much it has been planned or prepared, nobody is able to anticipate the event, direct its occurrence, as it will happen of its own, as if the very instant of the present *exceeded* our grasp; “in this precise moment when I say ‘precise moment,’ neither you, nor the dean who presides, nor I, know yet if this will be a success or a failure. What appears in this given moment before our eyes in this way escapes all constitution: although it has been organized, following clear and amicable intellectual and social intentions, it shows *itself* from itself, starting from itself” (IE, 33). At this point the description of the event seems to merge with that of the phenomenon: they both occur of themselves. Even when events occur, as one says, “according to plan,” they are never identical with the projected plan and still happen in a heterogeneous fashion with respect to the projection or anticipation. In a word, events only happen *on their own*, from themselves. They happen *as they happen*, not as planned or anticipated. The event happens “of itself,” and it is impossible to master this “itself” of the happening phenomenon. The present phenomenon also exceeds our anticipating subjectivity, and once again, it is that very excess that gives it its eventful character.

A third excess appears with the future, for the lecture hall opens onto the three dimensions of past, present, and future, escaping from all sides, as it were, in a threefold inappropriability. It is clear that from the perspective of the future that no one can exhaustively account for all the implications and consequences of an event, just as “no witness, however educated, attentive, and informed he or she is, could, even after the fact, describe what is happening in the present instant” (IE, 33). Further, it is impossible to follow all the consequences of the event. For that task, “a hermeneutic would have to be deployed without end and in an indefinite network.” Through such excess, it becomes clear that no exhaustive constitution of an object can take place. This “without end” of a hermeneutics “attests that the event happened starting from itself, that its phenomenality rose up from the *self* of its givenness” (IE, 33–34). The event of the “hall” of the lecture hall “not only does not proceed from our initiative, or respond to our expectations, and could never be reproduced,” but gives *itself* to us starting from *itself*, “to the point that it affects us, modifies us, almost produces us.” Marion states: “The event, I can wait for it (though most often, it surprises me), I can remember it (or forget it), but I cannot make it, produce it, or provoke it” (BG, 160).

Three features of the event appear in the course of these analyses: (a) unrepeatability and irreversibility, as events cannot be repeated identically: they are uniquely what they are, or were; (b) they cannot be assigned an exhaustive causality or explanation but instead “demand an indefinite number of them”: there is a surplus or an excess of effects and facts over causality; and (c) unforeseeability, as events “cannot be foreseen since their partial causes not only always remain insufficient but are only discovered once the fact of their effect has been accomplished” (IE, 36). Causality, as Nietzsche had intuited, does not precede but follows events. Events, in turn, are incommensurable with causality. It is not a matter of lacking causes, as if a supplement of causality would bridge the gap between the event and its causes. In fact, as Marion recognizes, it is almost as if there were too many causes, too much sense! “It’s not a matter of there being a shortage of causes, which would remain unknown because the information, inquiries, and particular studies would be lacking. Quite to the contrary, the information . . . is overabundant” (BG, 167). The point is that “what qualifies it as event stems from the fact that these causes themselves all result from an arising with which they are *incommensurable*” (BG, 168, emphasis mine). The event *itself* happens outside causality (just as with Arendt the event of existence happens outside of thought, heterogeneous to it). The event arises from itself, not from causes: “We pursue them because the event happens by itself, far from its happening as a consequence of what they teach us. Its irrepressible bursting into the tranquil air of popular enthusiasm in the summer of 1914 does not arise from its causes to come, but from itself, from its unpredictable landing and its incident” (BG, 168).

To recapitulate: first, the chapter explored how it was necessary to grasp phenomena as events, and no longer as objects; second, the event was determined via the thread of the motif of excess: is eventful what is excessive. Now this latter determination raises further questions. Indeed, when Marion thematizes the event as a saturated phenomenon, he characterizes it as such due to its excess with respect to the intentionality of the subject: intuition exceeds intention. Marion seeks to introduce an unbalance between the terms and disrupt adequation. He does so by privileging (after Heidegger in the *Kantbuch*) intuition over concept. Why is intuition privileged over the concept? Because only the intuition can give the phenomenon. “In the kingdom of the phenomenon, the concept is not king, but rather the intuition, which alone has the privilege of giving” (BG, 193). Hence, with respect to the statement “concepts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind,” Marion explains that blindness “counts more” than vacuity: “To be sure, intuition without concept is as blind as the concept without intuition is empty; but blindness *counts more* here than vacuity: even blind, intuition still gives, while the concept, even if it alone can make the

given seen, remains as such perfectly empty, therefore quite incapable of seeing anything whatsoever” (BG, 193, emphasis mine). Marion privileges intuition in his understanding of phenomenality: “To the phenomenon characterized most often by lack or poverty of intuition (a deception of the intentional aim), indeed, exceptionally, by the mere equality of intuition and intention, why wouldn’t there correspond the possibility of a phenomenon where intuition would give *more, indeed immeasurably more*, than the intention would ever have aimed at or foreseen?” (BG, 197). In contrast with the phenomena that are either poor in intuition or defined by the ideal adequation of intuition to intention, Marion advances a phenomenon in which there is a surplus of intuition, of givenness, over intention and concept.

What appears here is that Marion assumes the horizon of subjectivity and intentionality at the precise moment he attempts to exceed it. In this context, the norms of the subject, of intention, of consciousness, *remain*. Marion admits it explicitly in this passage: “I am therefore proposing to follow another way to accede to such an invisible and to justify it phenomenologically: to consider phenomena where *the duality between intention (signification) and intuition (fulfillment) certainly remains, as well as the noetic-noematic correlation*, but where, to the contrary of poor and common phenomena, intuition gives (itself) in exceeding what the concept (signification, intentionality, aim, and so on) can foresee of it and show. I call these saturated phenomena, or paradoxes” (IE, 112, emphasis mine). It becomes clear that the very possibility of the distinction between the three types of phenomena—poor, common, saturated—is the presupposed Kantian conceptuality, as well the Husserlian norm of the intentionality of the subject. Indeed, the three phenomena are defined with respect to whether they conform, and how much, to the intentional expectation of a subject: they are poor if they are less than such intentionality, common if they correspond to it, and saturated if they exceed it. The norm remains the Kantian and Husserlian adequation between intuition and intention, which appears as the paradoxical horizon of Marion’s reflections.

What is determinant in Marion’s analysis is not a phenomenology of the event but the intentional anticipation of the subject, which is simply assumed as given. The thinking of the event finds itself dependent upon this paradigm. For Marion the saturated phenomenon is the paradigm for phenomenality. Now a saturated phenomenon is one in which the intuition exceeds the intention. Thus phenomenality remains defined in terms of the intention of the subject, even if it is approached as that which exceeds it. This dissymmetry between intuition and intention betrays that the hidden, or presupposed paradigm that Marion seeks to subvert is the traditional ideal of adequation between mind and thing, an ideal that was reinvested by Husserl as the adequation between *noesis* and *noema* and indeed present in Kant’s theory of objectivity as unity of sensibility and

understanding. Marion likes to characterize saturated phenomena as paradoxes. However, the most determinative paradox might be that these very saturated phenomena secretly rely on the unquestioned paradigm of modern subjectivity.

It is in this respect not an accident if Marion's constant reference in his elaboration of saturated phenomena is Kant's table of categories, which he purports to exceed. The different types of saturated phenomena are defined by following Kant's table of categories, as revealed in this passage: "If we follow the guiding thread of the Kantian categories, we locate, according to quantity, invisible phenomena of the type of the event (collective or individual); according to quality, phenomena the look cannot bear (the idol and the painting); according to relation, absolute phenomena, because defying any analogy, like flesh (*Leib*); finally, according to modality, phenomena that cannot be looked at, that escape all relation with thought in general, but which are imposed on it, like the icon of the other person *par excellence*" (IE, 112). All the different types of saturated phenomena have been discovered by following Kant's table of categories, revealing, once again, that Marion situates the source of his thinking in this tradition at the very moment he attempts to reverse it. This tradition is of course the modern philosophy of subjectivity that goes from Kant to Husserl, and its model of an adequation between concept and object, between intuition and intention. In *Being Given*, Marion insists that Husserl has maintained throughout his career a definition of the phenomenon that is determined by a fundamental duality, that which enframes correlation between intention and intuition, signification and fulfillment, *noesis* and *noema*. In such a tradition, the "highest" phenomenality is "accomplished" in the adequation between these terms. As Husserl wrote in his *Logical Investigations*: "And so also, *eo ipso*, the ideal of every fulfillment, and therefore of a *significative* fulfillment, is sketched for us; the *intellectus* is in this case the thought-intention, the intention of meaning. And the *adaequatio* is realized when the objectness meant is in the strict sense *given* in our intuition, and given precisely as it is thought and named."³⁷ This adequation is nothing but the traditional, and in particular Kantian, definition of truth. "For it is first Kant who, always defining truth by *adaequatio*, inferred from this the parallel between intuition and the concept, supposedly playing a role tangentially equal in the production of objectivity" (BG, 192). Marion reads Husserl from Kant, describing Husserlian adequation in the Kantian conceptuality of intuition and concept.

Now, what matters in the project of a phenomenology of the event is to approach the event in its givenness and to describe such givenness phenomenologically, without relying, even negatively, on the presupposed norms of subjectivity and conceptuality. What matters is to free this thinking from the dominance of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity and to reorient eventfulness from subjectivity to the very happening of being as such. Before engaging in

this task, it remains to explore further the status of things. For if, as noted in this chapter, the authentic phenomenon is not the mere given, but givenness as such, it remains that “things” participate in such an event. And Marion showed that so-called objects were to be taken ultimately as events. It thus becomes necessary to explore the extent to which things themselves ought to be taken as events, the task of the next chapter.

4 Things as Events

Thing and World

Phenomenology is thus to be taken as a phenomenology of the event. The very term *phenomenon* immediately refers to the event of a self-showing. This is why, as noted, the phenomena are not merely the ontical or empirical given, what Kant called the empirical intuition. Once phenomena are referred back to the event of their givenness, they become affected by such presence and find themselves participating in the proper mobility and happening of being so that they are precisely not simply inert things or objects, but events themselves. In turn, the event of being never takes place in abstraction of beings or things, as if it occurred on a different plane, for “the shining of being is in play in the appearing of beings.”¹ Phenomena, “things,” are to be approached as events. We recall how Marion considered that objects do not belong to another phenomenality than that of events, but that they are the impoverished, reduced, restricted, or alienated version of the unique phenomenality, which is that of unconditioned, “extreme,” saturated eventful phenomenality. The object for Marion is an “alienated” event. The thing “disappears as an event showing itself from itself in order to appear only as an object constituted by me, and thus as an *alienated thing*.”² Unlike the object, which remains, the thing *happens*: “The thing happens, while the object (the thing reduced to certainty) persists” (NC, 165). It is the purpose of this chapter to consider how things are to be taken as events.

I first posit the implication of being with things. If being is not a being, it is also the case that it never happens without beings. In turn, beings are never without being. This is the significance of Heidegger’s rethinking of the relation between being and beings in the *Beiträge*, of his notion of a *simultaneity* (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) of be-ing and beings. Heidegger states that “be-ing is not something earlier—subsisting for and in itself.”³ Rather, he says that *Ereignis* is “the temporal-spatial simultaneity or be-ing and beings” (GA 65, 13/10), Heidegger speaking of *Dasein* as the “simultaneity of time-space,” the “between,” and the midpoint in beings themselves. Whereas in his early courses (in particular in *The History of the Concept of Time*⁴), Heidegger had identified being with the a priori—in contrast with the modern tradition that had identified the a priori with subjectivity—in the *Beiträge* on the contrary he insists that the a priori is a metaphysical motif, indeed the “guiding-question” of metaphysics,

and that the relation between be-ing and beings is “totally different” (GA 65, 222/155). In his 1925 course (GA 20, 99–103/72–75), Heidegger took issue with the modern Cartesian tradition, which situated the a priori in the subject as an immanent sphere. For modern philosophy, the a priori is *consciousness*: “Consciousness is the earlier, the a priori in Descartes’ and Kant’s sense” (GA 20, 145/105). Against this identification of the a priori with subjectivity, Heidegger explains that phenomenology (through its three great “discoveries,” *intentionality*, *categorical intuition*, and precisely the primordial sense of the a priori) has achieved a twofold contribution: on the one hand, “phenomenology has shown that the a priori is not limited to the subjectivity, indeed that in the first instance it has primarily nothing at all to do with subjectivity” (GA 20, 101/74), and on the other hand, as Husserl showed, the a priori designates an essential eidetic necessity, which Heidegger interprets as the highlighting of the *being of beings*. “This already suggests that the a priori phenomenologically understood is not a title for comportment but a title for being” (GA 20, 101/74). Similarly, in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, the a priori is understood as the (temporal) *priority* or *anteriority* of being in relation to beings⁵ (GA 24, 27/20). For the early Heidegger, then, being is the only and true a priori. Now, in the *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger states that the truth of be-ing “and the essential swaying of be-ing is neither what is earlier nor what is later” (GA 65, 223/155). Heidegger rejects both the platonic version of the a priori (priority of the *Eidos* as beingness over beings) and its modern subjectivist version, that is, the priority of the representing subject in Descartes’s second meditation and the Kantian notion of a priori knowledge.

Being cannot be posited prior to beings, but is the between in which both happen through each other. Indeed, this is what the term *Ereignis* designates: the co-belonging of being and beings. Claude Romano describes this co-belonging—indeed the fold or folding between being and beings—in terms of the happening of an event, as a co-happening: “But this two-fold deployment of Being and beings as unconcealing overwhelming and concealing arrival, this movement of difference that is difference itself in motion, the *differentiation* of the two, has the consequence that it is not only Being, as passage ‘towards’ beings, which is thought eventually; it is also beings that are understood and characterized according to the drama of being’s self-differentiation. Therefore, it is not only Being but also beings themselves, conceived in terms of the more profound ‘mobility’ of truth as *Unverborgenheit*, that are characterized as the event of their own uncovering.”⁶ Things themselves must be taken as events, a claim that is supported in key sections in *Being and Time*, where, precisely, Heidegger rethinks the being of “things.”

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger does not describe “things” as discrete, material entities. Indeed, he does not even refer to them as “things” since this term still

relies too heavily on the inadequate ontology of *res* and substance, inadequate in that it precisely does not do justice to the ontological eventfulness of things. Heidegger proposes to determine further their ontological status. This already provides, negatively, the first element of a response: things that appear within the world are not first simply “present-at-hand” (*vorhanden*), as Heidegger calls them, that is, things that would be detached from any worldly context and simply “lying there.” Things that appear in the world are not discrete entities, but exist in *relation* to other things. Things are straight away relational.⁷ We do not encounter isolated things in the world, but things that form or make a world. The eventful character of things begins to appear when we consider the relation of things to the world in which they appear. Things become events by participating in a world that is never given but *happens*. Heidegger makes this point explicitly in “The Origin of the Work of Art” when he writes, “The world is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable things, familiar and unfamiliar things that are present at hand. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things. The *world worlds* [*Welt weltet*].”⁸ The world happens, the world is an event. Things are never devoid of a world, they never exist without a world, and they constitute as such the event of the world. “By the opening of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits” (GA 5, 31/BW, 170). In the tradition, things are considered under the ontological mode of what Heidegger calls *Vorhandenheit*, or presence-at-hand. *Vorhandenheit* represents the ontological determination of the traditional determination of the meaning of being as substantiality and represents within the tradition the preeminent mode of the being of beings: “For, beginning in antiquity and up to and beyond Kant, a being is understood primarily as a being that belongs to ‘nature,’ that is, a being is understood as extant; and the science of beings, as primarily the science of nature.”⁹ Taking issue with the traditional understanding of things in terms of substantiality, Heidegger opens the way for another ontological definition of things, one that would reveal their eventfulness. Things are not “present-at-hand,” and we do not encounter isolated things; rather, things manifest a worldly structure that only exists as it happens. Things give themselves in everyday concern in the general structure of a *significance* (*Bedeutsamkeit*), within a certain reference (*Verweisung*), the referential structure of the world that characterizes the entities with which we deal proximally and for the most part. This referentiality is that in which and through which the world happens. In every instance, in every use of something, we move in the element of an understanding of that to which or that for which such and such a “thing” refers and means. The question becomes: “In what sense are the things of the envining world to be grasped? What ontological character do they have and what is presupposed for their apprehension?” (GA 24, 248/174).

I will briefly reconstitute this reappropriation of the ontological and eventful sense of things in *Being and Time*. The analysis begins with a critique of the traditional understanding of things as sensible data or givens, a critique that would be pursued in several posterior texts, such as *The Origin of the Work of Art*, *What Is a Thing?* and “Building Dwelling Thinking,” among others. Heidegger takes issue with the traditional concept of thinghood as a substrate of qualities, as unity of a multiplicity of sensations, and as informed matter. For Heidegger, the traditional undertaking of the thing as substrate of predicates constitutes a great underestimation and impoverishment of the meaning of the thing. As he puts it in “Building Dwelling Thinking”: “Our thinking has of course long been accustomed to *understate* the nature of the thing. The consequence, in the course of Western thought, has been that the thing is represented as an unknown X to which perceptible properties are attached.”¹⁰ In *Being and Time*, the issue is to develop a phenomenological analysis of things in contrast with the ontology of *Vorhandenheit*. Because of Dasein’s essential immersion in things, the “phenomenological question applies in the first instance to the being of those entities which we encounter in such concern.”¹¹ What are we dealing with in such comportments? We are dealing with “things” that we can *use*: I seize this glass, I turn the pages of this book, I open this window. How are we to determine ontologically such things? Shall one say, quite simply, that they are “things” in the sense of the building-blocks of reality? Heidegger rejects this possibility: not only is this concept of “thing” not phenomenologically attested, but it also presupposes the ontological predeterminations of thinghood, or reality, which, once made explicit, refer to ungrounded concepts such as substantiality, materiality, extension, and so on. To add “values” to these things (like usefulness, for instance) would be artificial, and Heidegger seizes every opportunity to expose the abstract character of such a definition.

If the entity that is encountered within the environment cannot be characterized by the concepts of “Thinghood” or “Reality,” neither does it correspond to the concept of “sensible data.” Things are not present to me, first, through the senses. Heidegger emphasizes the derivative and abstract character of this common place of a certain philosophical tradition up to and including Husserl that asserts the identity of being and perception. For Heidegger (*pace* Merleau-Ponty), perception is not a primordial phenomenon of being-in-the-world. In the everyday relation to the world, we never hear a pure noise, we never see a sheer color. In fact, we never “encounter” pure sensations. “It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to ‘hear’ a ‘pure noise.’ The fact that motor-cycles and wagons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence that in every case Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, already dwells *alongside* what is ready-to-hand within-the-world; it certainly does not dwell proximally alongside ‘sensations’; nor would it first have to give shape to the swirl of sensations to

provide the springboard from which the subject leaps off and finally arrives at a 'world'" (SZ, 164). These "impressions," to use Hume's term, are *abstracted* from a more primordial mode of encounter. It is obviously not a question in this critique of denying the sensible presence of things, or sensible experience itself, but rather of approaching it in its mode of phenomenological givenness. It is a matter of showing that there is no perception abstracted from a world and that it always occurs in a world, that is, in a certain referential meaningful context. When we hear a foreign language *spoken*, for example, we do not hear pure sounds, but "unintelligible words" (SZ, 164). Things encountered in the world reveal an excess with respect to sheer sensations. From the standpoint of sheer sound, we always hear "more." Heidegger reiterates this point in several texts, as for instance in "The Origin of the Work of Art," where he writes: "We never really first perceive a throng of sensations, e.g., tones and noises, in the appearance of things—as this thing-concept alleges; rather we hear the storm whistling in the chimney, we hear the three-motored plane, we hear the Mercedes in immediate distinction from the Volkswagen. Much closer to us than all sensations are the things themselves. We hear the door shut in the house and never hear acoustical sensations or even mere sounds. In order to hear a bare sound we have to listen away from things, divert our ear from them, i.e., listen abstractly" (GA 5, 10–11/BW, 151–152). In fact, what appeared as the most concrete paradoxically turns out to be the most abstract. Sensation, understood as a pure given, is even characterized as a *theoretical* determination: "To say that I am in the first place oriented toward sensations is all just pure theory."¹² Perception is phenomenologically derived from our everyday dealings with things. The "nature" of this window, Heidegger explains, is first to protect the room (GA 24, 96/68), and I can only isolate it in a perception by abstracting from a certain *context* in which it appears. As for perceptual determinations, they do not "belong to the window qua window but as a pure material thing" (GA 24, 96/68). Things in fact first appear in a meaningful instrumental whole, and not as perceptual data. "The window is open, it doesn't close tightly, it is seated well in the wall; the frame's color is such and such and it has this or that extension. What we thus find before us in this present-at-hand entity is, for one thing, determinations that belong to it as a thing of use, or as we also say, as an instrument or equipment [*das Zeug*] and again, determinations like hardness, weight, extendedness, which belong to the window not qua window but as a pure material thing" (GA 24, 96/68, trans. modified). The subsisting presence of the thing as a basis for properties (which are themselves substantial rather than instrumental determinations) is referred to and derived from the ontologico-practical determination of "readiness-to-hand" (*Zuhandenheit*).

In opposition to all these classical determinations of the thing as a support of predicates or as an object of perception, that is to say, as an entity that is present-at-hand, Heidegger proposes another meaning, which he grasps by

retrieving the Greek term *pragmata*. “The Greeks had an appropriate term for ‘things’ [*Dinge*]: *pragmata*—that is to say, that which one has to do with in one’s concernful dealings [*praxis*]” (SZ, 68). This term does not mean “practice” in the ordinary sense of the term (that is, in opposition to theory) but is to be understood as “that which one has to do with in one’s concernful dealings” (SZ, 68). Heidegger calls such things *equipment* (*Zeug*): “The *nearest things* that surround us we call *equipment*” (GA 24, 232/163). The things that are present in this sense are not simply given, but are ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*), that is to say, handy, ready to be used. Equipment designates what one uses in the broad sense of the term. This is why it cannot be reduced to an instrument in the sense of a technical object, in other words, an instrument or a tool that appears in the working world. Heidegger is very clear on this point: “Equipment [*Zeug*], taken in this ontological sense, is not only equipment for writing or sewing; it includes everything we make use of domestically or in public life. In this large ontological sense bridges, streets, street lamps are also items of equipment. We call the whole of these beings, the *handy* [*das Zuhandene*]” (GA 24, 414/292). The entity that is handy or ready-to-hand is the “thing” insofar as it is destined for some use. To that extent, nature is no less ready-to-hand than the hammer. The ready-to-hand designates, in fact, “the whole of all *things of use* [*gebrauchsdinge*], with which we constantly have to do, the whole of all those existent things which are themselves meant to be used on one another, the implement that is employed, and the constantly used *products of nature*: house and yard, forest and field, sun, light and heat” (GA 24, 152–3/108, emphasis mine). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger even speaks of the sun, “whose light and warmth are in everyday use” (SZ, 103), as ready-to-hand. Equipment even includes food, Heidegger alluding to the ready-to-hand character of the bread that one eats (SZ, 245).

Things that appear in the midst of the environment, of the world, are primarily ready-to-hand. How is the ready-to-hand to be defined? At the outset, it is appropriate to say that the ready-to-hand is never singular, that there is never *a* ready-to-hand. “There is no such thing as *an* equipment” (SZ, 68), Heidegger writes. This reveals from the outset, as indicated prior, that things are not isolated items but *form a world*. We never are dealing with *a* thing, *a* wall, but always with a *complex of things*, which is precisely the world. The equipment is never “alone” because it is essentially a “for-which,” that is to say, it is of some use *for* something: the road for walking, the glass for drinking, the pen for writing, the sun for warmth, and so forth. A referential structure belongs essentially to equipment, and its very being is referential: “Each individual piece of equipment is by its own nature *equipment-for—for* traveling, *for* writing, *for* flying” (GA 24, 233/163, emphasis mine). This equipmental context precedes the individuality of this or that piece of equipment. “*Before* [any ‘individual’ item of equipment shows itself], a totality of equipment has already been discovered” (SZ, 68). Equipment

is singular only in a deficient way. Or, one might say, equipment is singularized from the context in which it is situated. For example, the pen refers to an instrumental whole (paper, table, work, etc.) on the basis of which it is recognized as the equipment that it is. The “for-which” of the equipment, its “in-order-to” (*Um-zu*), represents its fundamental ontological character.

Second, equipment *withdraws* before that for which it is used. Because it is always situated in an instrumental whole, it is not grasped thematically for itself. It is not the object, for example, of an explicit perceptual grasp, but is given to a handling that does not stop at what it handles. It withdraws before its use, its “for-which”: the hammer before the hammering, the pen before the writing, and so on. In everyday use, I abide by and follow the “for-which” of the equipment, its “in-order-to.” In this sense, “the less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is—as equipment” (SZ, 69). The submission to the complex of equipmental referentiality is not blind, but has its own kind of sight, which Heidegger calls *circumspection* (*Umsicht*). By submitting itself to the equipmentality of the equipment, to its “for-which,” circumspection unthematically takes sight of that for which the entity is meant. It is in this sense that one should understand the notion of a “non-thematical seeing”: it sights the *for-which* of the equipment. Heidegger calls this “for-which,” or “toward-which,” of the equipment “the work” (*Werk*): the toward-which of the hammer is the shoe to be produced, and so on. Circumspection has the work in view, a work that bears with it that “referential totality within which the equipment is encountered” (SZ, 70). The equipment refers to the work to be done. It is constitutive of the being of the equipment that it not be noticed or perceived thematically. “The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw [*zurückzuziehen*] in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically. That with which our everyday dealings proximally dwell is not the equipment itself [*die Werkzeuge selbst*]. On the contrary, that with which we concern ourselves primarily is the work—that which is to be produced at the time; and this is accordingly ready-to-hand too” (SZ, 69–70, trans. modified). Equipment is for the work. This is why Heidegger states in “The Origin of the Work of Art” that all works have a “thingly character” (*Alle Werke haben dieses Dinghafte*; GA 5, 3/BW, 145).

Things give themselves thematically for a perceptual or theoretical gaze only secondarily. In this interpretation of things, the meaning of being of substantiality loses its claim to primacy. The priority of the mode of being of readiness-to-hand over presence-at-hand becomes visible when one describes the way in which intrawordly entities appear as merely present-at-hand, namely, in a deficient way. For it is on the basis of a deficiency of the ready-to-hand that presence-at-hand begins to emerge. This is why Heidegger at times characterizes

the presence-at-hand entity as something “unready-to-hand” (*Unzuhandenes*; SZ, 73). The entity appears in its presence-at-hand on the basis of a deficiency of concern and, to this extent, *remains related to it*. The secondary status of the presence-at-hand is attested as a deficiency of readiness-to-hand. More precisely, presence-at-hand is given when there is a *disruption* of the totality of references that constitute the being of the ready-to-hand, a threefold disruption of equipment: when the equipment is damaged; when it is missing; or when, neither damaged nor missing, it is an obstacle. This section will briefly reconstruct this ontological genealogy of things.

In the course of its everyday use, the equipment can turn out to be inappropriate or unusable when, for example, it is damaged. It is then no longer capable of referring, and the structure of references that characterizes its being ready-to-hand is interrupted. Becoming “conspicuous,” the equipment changes from being ready-to-hand into being simply present-at-hand, just lying there: “what cannot be used just lies there” (SZ, 73). Its mode of presence has changed; conspicuousness (*Auffälligkeit*) *presents* the equipment in the mode of a certain unreadiness-to-hand (*Unzuhandenheit*). The entity is no longer sighted on the basis of the equipmental whole, but gives itself as an isolated thing that is simply there. The mode of being of presence-at-hand emerges on the basis of this interruption of equipmentality. “Pure presence-at-hand announces itself in (*am*) such equipment” (SZ, 73). This reveals that presence-at-hand (substantiality) is only a derivative mode of readiness-to-hand. Pure “thinghood” is a derivative phenomenon. This is confirmed by the fact that what reveals the unusability of the equipment is not some theoretical consideration concerning the properties of this entity, but rather *circumspection itself*, which finds the equipment as inappropriate for *use*. “Anything ready-to-hand is, at the worst, appropriate [*Geeignetheiten*] for some purposes and inappropriate for others; and its ‘properties’ are, as it were, still bound up in these ways in which it is appropriate or inappropriate, just as presence-at-hand, as a possible kind of Being for something ready-to-hand, is bound up in readiness-to-hand” (SZ, 83). Not only the equipment is discovered to be unusable (inappropriate) *by* circumspection, but it also remains *for* a possible use. The equipment that is seen as present-at-hand is not a mere thing that simply “occurs somewhere” (SZ, 73). The damaged equipment does not become a mere present-at-hand entity, as the “presence-at-hand of something that cannot be used is still not devoid of all readiness-to-hand” (SZ, 73): it appears *to* concern as that which must be repaired, restored, reintegrated into the equipmental whole where it was situated and *continues to be situated*.

The presence-at-hand of an entity can also appear in a second kind of disturbance of the referential complex, when concern “encounters” the *absence* of an equipment, when the latter is missing. The absence of a single piece of equipment, to the extent that it prevents the totality of references from functioning,

immediately presents this totality in the mode of obtrusiveness (*Aufdringlichkeit*). Equipment in that case is no longer ready-to-hand, and the absence of one piece of equipment interrupts concern. The presence-at-hand of the equipment begins to announce itself. The totality of references, which represents the horizon of concern within the environing world, comes to the fore as “obtrusive,” as something “just” present-at-hand, because an equipment that *belongs to it* is missing. But what does this mean if not that the absence of an entity can have meaning only insofar as that entity continues to be referred to the whole *where it should be*? In the *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger clarifies this secondary status of *absence*: “*To be missing always implies an absence of a something belonging-here within the closed context of references*” (GA 20, 256/189, emphasis in the original). The absence of something is certainly a deficiency, a lack, but this missing entity continues to have a presence and a meaning in the environing world, precisely as something which is *unusable*, and which remains inscribed in the equipmental contexture. The helpless way in which we stand when we encounter the absence of that missing thing (and I note here that it is still in relation to circumspection that this absence is manifest) is described by Heidegger as a “deficient mode of concern” (SZ, 73). The absence of a piece of equipment is related to the equipmental complex as its very possibility. A specific absence points toward what makes it possible: the “always-already-there” of the familiar equipmental complex. Whether absent or missing, the entity still depends on the contexture from which it is taken and to which it belongs, as the mode of being of *Vorhandenheit* depends on the mode of being of *Zuhandenheit*.

Finally, a third disturbance of the ready-to-hand can occur, not when a piece of equipment is missing from its place, but when it is out of place and in this sense “stands in the way” of our concern. Here again the entity is present in the mode of a certain unreadiness-to-hand, or “obstinacy” (*Aufsässigkeit*). This “unreadiness-to-hand” of the entity is here in the sense of a “not-belonging here.” Concern is disrupted, and with this obstinacy, “the presence-at-hand of the ready-to-hand makes itself known in a new way” (SZ, 74). Yet the entity discovered does not lose its character of being ready-to-hand, which remains its primary character. Indeed “not belonging here” supposes as its very possibility a previous and primordial belonging of the entity to an instrumental complex that constitutes a world. “Our using or manipulating of any definite item of equipment still remains oriented toward some equipmental complex [*Zeugzusammenhang*]. If, for instance, we are searching for some equipment which we have ‘misplaced,’ then what we have in mind is not merely what we are searching for, or even primarily this; nor do we have it in mind in an isolated ‘act’; but the range of the equipmental totality [*Zeugganzen*] has already been discovered beforehand [*vorentdeckt*]” (SZ, 352). The “not-belonging” supposes and is founded upon a primordial “being-at-home” of the equipment within the environment. If, as

Heidegger explained, “to be missing always implies an absence of a something belonging-here within the closed context of references” (GA 20, 256/189), then and by principle, “there can be something like a not-belonging-here only against the background of a primary familiarity” (GA 20, 255/188–189).

What this threefold existential genealogy reveals is that “things” are not to be taken as simply lying there, as present-at-hand, but primarily as part of the *occurrence* of a referential whole (for such totality is not given a priori but *happens*), which Heidegger calls “the world.” “Things” participate in the happening of the world. As noted, the ontologico-categorical character of things encountered in the environing world is that of a referentiality. If one begins with a particular entity, it seems that it is always appropriate *for* something, the hammer for hammering, the car for driving, the pen for writing, and so on. The equipment is from the outset inscribed in a broader context, which, due to the logic proper to referentiality, is itself referred to another, further referentiality (as possible examples of such a propagation, Heidegger proposes this list: “room, house, neighborhood, town, city”; GA 24, 233/164). The world *happens* in this referentiality as it is not given prior to it. In the references of equipment, it is the world that is at stake. The phenomenon of the interruption of concerned usage just evoked confirms this: for what appears in the interruption of the referential complex is ultimately *neither* the being-present-at-hand of an unusable piece of equipment *nor* simply something ready-to-hand. It can certainly not be presence-at-hand as if it were the “foundation” of the readiness-to-hand. Nor can it be simply something ready-to-hand since precisely there is an *interruption* of the references that characterize such readiness-to-hand. Heidegger clearly notes this twofold impossibility: “What is thus lit up [in the disturbance of references] is not itself just one thing ready-to-hand among others; still less is it *something present-at-hand* upon which equipment ready-to-hand is somehow founded” (SZ, 75). The interruption of the referential complex reveals rather a *break* (*ein Bruch*) in that whole, such that circumspection then encounters a void, a “nothing,” from which the totality of references characterizing the being of equipment—its *for which* (*wofür*) and its *with which* (*womit*), up to that point unthematic—appear *as such*. This reveals the world as nothing, as the pure event of the nothing. The nothing happens (which is felt, either in anxiety—according to *Being and Time*—or in deep boredom—according to *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*).

Indeed, the event lies in this nothing, if it is the case, as Claude Romano writes, that “the event is nothing other than its pure appearing qua appearing out of the nothing, in the forefront of the nothing, in suspense in the nothing.”¹³ Such event is the event of the world: “With this totality, however, the world announces itself” (SZ, 75). This break is the traumatic *event* of the world, irreducible to the “security” of beings and thereby angst-producing. The world is not the totality of intrawordly entities (categorical sense), or of beings as a whole, but the event of

an opening. The world is not something present-at-hand, but rather *exists*. This is why what is decisive in these analyses is not so much that a priority is given to the practical over the theoretical, but rather that an access is opened to an understanding of the world as event. The world is not something present-at-hand, but rather *exists*, that is to say, *happens*. This is the significance of Heidegger's famous expression, "The world worlds," *Die Welt weltet*. What is ultimately at issue in this phenomenology of things is to provide access to the event of the world. The stress on the primordial character of readiness-to-hand had no other purpose than to manifest such event, what Heidegger calls the worldliness (*Weltlichkeit*) of the world. Heidegger would insist on this point in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. "The existential analytic of everydayness does not want to describe how we use a knife and fork. It should show that and how all association with beings, even when it appears as if there were just beings, already *presupposes the transcendence of Dasein—namely, Being-in-the-world*" (GA 3, 235/160, emphasis mine). Things reveal Dasein's being as being-in-the-world. In turn, Dasein's being will appear to be inseparable from things, as if it had a thingly nature, coming to itself, as it were, in an odd reflection from things, echoing what Merleau-Ponty wrote in *The Visible and the Invisible* regarding the subject, the "touching" subject or the subject of touch, who "passes over to the rank of the touched, descends into the things, such that the touch is formed in the midst of the world and as it were in the things."¹⁴

The Thingly Self

What is striking in Heidegger's analysis of Dasein is how he shows that it does not subsist in a pure self-relation, on a plane distinct from things, but is to be found right at the level of things, in the midst of things, and as it were coming to itself *from things*. For Dasein's being is at stake in the totality of references that refer things to each other: between the *toward-which* of the equipment ("things") and the *for-the-sake-of-which* of Dasein ("being"), there is no substantial separation but a singular intertwining. Now, if Dasein's being is at stake in this totality of references of equipment, then this means that "things" are the site where Dasein's being is played out, where it unfolds. This allows one to understand in what sense Heidegger can speak of a reflection of Dasein *from things*. "The Dasein understands itself from the ability to be that is determined by the success and failure, the feasibility and unfeasibility, of its commerce with things. Dasein thus comes toward itself *from out of things*" (GA 24, 410/289, emphasis mine). Dasein will be reflected back to itself from the things with which it is involved.

A word on this notion of reflection. In the tradition of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity, the motif of reflection is identified with the position of self-consciousness as subject. Heidegger himself, from the 1930s on, analyzed

reflection as that movement on the basis of which modern humanity *posits itself* as subject, that is, against the background of an increasing forgetfulness of being. Reflection is even understood as the constitutive moment of the modern epoch, defining the break between the Greeks and the moderns. “For the Greeks,” Heidegger states suggestively in *Four Seminars*, “things appear. For Kant, things appear to me” (GA 15, 329/FS, 36). However, at the time of *Sein und Zeit*, the modern primacy accorded to the reflective and self-reflective subject is apprehended less as the institution of a new configuration of being in its epochality than in terms of Dasein’s selfhood. In this regard, self-consciousness as self-reflection is not so much interrogated in its claim to posit itself as the foundation of entities as it is the object of an effort of ontological clarification. One needs to distinguish between the epistemological or subjectivist problematic of reflection and reflection considered in its phenomenality and proper ontological sense. Hence, in his 1930–1931 winter semester course, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Heidegger distinguishes between reflection as “knowing and consciousness” and reflection as a “mode of being.”¹⁵

Now, considered as a “mode of being,” reflection involves a relation to things and is not considered as an immanent self-relation. Returning in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* to the question of intentionality, insufficiently determined in its being by Husserlian phenomenology, Heidegger asks: how are we to think the relation of the “I” to things? The relation to oneself? Classical idealism answers these questions by appealing to an ego-pole relating in a representational way to its objects and *reflecting itself* as that which accompanies such comportments. Heidegger considers this immanent reflection (*inspectio sui*) on lived experiences and acts, which has the sense of a “bending back” (*Rückwendung*), a self-closure of the I *turning away from things*, to be fundamentally misguided. The demonstration proceeds in several steps. (a) Heidegger begins by explaining that the determinations of the “*res cogitans* as *cogito me cogitare* or self-consciousness” (namely that the “ego as consciousness-of-something . . . is at the same time conscious of itself”) are mere “formal” determinations (GA 24, 225/158–159). By “formal” one must understand “far from an interpretation of the phenomenal circumstances of the Dasein” (GA 24, 226/159). Heidegger returns several pages later to this determination: self-consciousness, “in the formal sense of reflection on the ego,” is “not sufficient” (GA 24, 247/174) to account for the way in which the entity that we are is present to itself and how this presence is to be determined concretely and phenomenally. The phenomenological interpretation of Dasein’s “circumstances” must be able to reveal, on the contrary, “*how this being shows itself to itself in its factual existence*” (GA 24, 226/159). (b) Heidegger also qualifies the distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, between I and not-I—such as is illustrated, for example, in Fichte’s saying—as *formal*, a “constructive violation of the facts, an unphenomenological onset . . . [*ein unphänomenologischer*

Ansatz]" (GA 24, 231/162, emphasis mine). Dasein "is not only, like every being in general, identical with itself in a *formal-ontological sense*" (GA 24, 242/170, emphasis mine). (c) Finally, Heidegger rejects the "formal" identification of Dasein's self-presence (which he designates as Dasein's self-understanding, or *Selbstverständnis*) with a reflection of the ego on itself. "Self-understanding should not be equated *formally* with a reflected ego-experience" (GA 24, 249/175, emphasis mine). Heidegger considers reflection on the basis of a phenomenological domain and of a questioning (concerning the mode of being of the I) that exceed, from the outset, the formality of the traditional representations. The task becomes that of unveiling the *nonformal*, authentically phenomenal, modes of Dasein's self-relation, modes that are not simply the faithful reproduction at an existential level of egoistical reflection, but its very foundation. "It emerges from a correctly conceived self-understanding of the Dasein that the analysis of self-consciousness presupposes the elucidation of the constitution of existence" (GA 24, 247/174).

This task is carried by these questions: "In what way is the self given?" (GA 24, 225/158). Or, "in what way its ego, its self, is given to the Dasein itself?" (GA 24, 225/158). Dasein must not be presupposed (or postulated as an ideal subject; SZ, 229), but on the contrary "deduced" or "drawn" from existence itself. The issue is to let the self be revealed "of itself," on the basis of itself and of the "facts" (*Tatbestände*) that are proper to it. One might object: how could the self show itself from itself if for the most part Dasein is *not* itself, that is, is "lost" in things? How, then, can it give *itself* if one follows its "everyday" mode of givenness? The difficulty, in fact, is only apparent, for "not being a self," in the sense of "not being *authentically* oneself," is not the same as not having the character of selfhood. The "not-being-itself" of everyday existence, its "*Not-I*" (*Nicht-Ich*), as Heidegger writes (SZ, 116), "is by no means tantamount to an entity which essentially lacks 'I-hood' [*Ichheit*], but is rather a *definite kind of Being which the 'I' itself possesses*, such as having lost itself [*Selbstverlorenheit*]" (SZ, 116). To this extent, it will be an issue of showing how the self comes to itself *from and in such a loss of itself* in everyday concern. *Here lies the necessity of reflection: the self can only come to itself on the basis of what it is not*, that is, on the basis of things. It is in this sense that Heidegger is able to characterize the existential analytic as a "reflective explanation" (*Eine Rückdeutung*; SZ, 58, marginal note). The subjectivist sense of reflection, as a "bending back" (*Rückwendung*) to the ego, must be derived from a re-reflection (*Widerspiegelung*) in the sense of a refraction from things that are present to us in our concern. Dasein's being is reflected back from the things with which it is concerned. We can here note how the traditional and formal concept of reflection yields to the phenomenological concreteness of the reflection of factual being-in-the-world. This latter sense of reflection echoes what Merleau-Ponty says of reflection as a "hyper-reflection," which "must plunge into the world instead of surveying it" and "must descend

toward it such as it is instead of working its way back up toward a prior possibility of thinking it—which would impose upon the world in advance the conditions for our control over it” (VI, 388–389).

For Heidegger, reflection, “in the sense of a turning back, is only a mode of self-apprehension [*Selbsterfassung*], but not the mode of primary self-disclosure [*Selbst-Erchließung*]” (GA 24, 226/158). The reflection of consciousness on itself presupposes a more primordial mode of self-disclosure. This is attested, for example, in the phenomenon of affective “disposition” (*Befindlichkeit*) or “moods” (*Stimmungen*), Heidegger explaining that “ontologically mood is a primordial kind of being for Dasein, in which Dasein is disclosed to itself *prior* to all cognition and volition, and *beyond* their range of disclosure” (SZ, 136). Dasein can return reflexively onto itself only on the basis of such a prior self-disclosure. “From what has been said we can see already that a disposition is very remote from anything like coming across a psychical condition by the kind of apprehending which first turns round and then back [*sich um- und rückwenenden Erfassens*]. Indeed it is so far from this, that only because the “there” has already been disclosed in a disposition can immanent reflection come across ‘Experiences’ [*Erlebnisse*] at all” (SZ, 136). Any reflection takes place on the basis of Dasein’s prereflective self-disclosure in moods: “Disposition is so far from being reflected upon [*reflektiert*], that precisely what it does is assail [*überfällt*] Dasein in its *unreflecting* devotion to the ‘world’ with which it is concerned.”¹⁶ Dasein does not need to reflect on itself “as though, keeping itself behind its own back, it were at first standing in front of things” (GA 24, 226/159). On the contrary, the self is there for Dasein “without reflection [*ohne Reflection*] and without inner perception [*innere Wahrnehmung*], before all reflection” (GA 24, 226/159). Dasein is present to itself in an unthematized and nonreflective way, even when it comports itself toward intrawordly entities. “Dasein exists: it is in a world within which it encounters beings and to which the existing Dasein comports itself. However, these inner-worldly beings towards which Dasein comports itself are *revealed* in, through, and for this comportment. But at the same time, the comporting Dasein is also revealed to itself; the one who exists, Dasein, is manifest to itself, without being the object of a penetrating self-observation” (GA 25, 21/15).

How, then, without or before any reflection, does the self come to itself? For Heidegger, the response is unambiguous: we come to ourselves *from things*. No introspection, no internal reflection, and no “extravagant grubbing about in one’s soul” (GA 24, 228/160): the self finds *itself in things*. There is no need, Heidegger explains, to have recourse to “some fabricated concept,” be it the soul, the person, or the subject. We are present to ourselves when “we do not dissect or rack our brains about some soul-life,” when we are “passionately merging into things” (GA 24, 228/160), when “Dasein gives itself over immediately and passionately to the world” (GA 24, 227/159). This, Heidegger asserts, is neither mysticism nor

animism. It simply designates that we exist in the midst of things, with them, and by way of them. They, in turn, manifest the eventful presence of the world.

This presence is brought to *view* by a *saying*, that of the poet Rilke, in the beautiful page from *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* that Heidegger cites and comments upon in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. This passage is introduced in the following terms: “For the others who before it were *blind*, the world first becomes *visible* by what is thus *spoken*” (GA 24, 244/172, emphasis mine). In what constitutes the disclosure of a disclosedness, one finds the articulation of a *sight* (that is to say, an understanding) with a *saying*, which, I must emphasize, constitute together with *disposition* the three existentialia of being-in as constituting the disclosedness of being-in-the-world. Heidegger himself, in fact, underlines this connection, at least implicitly, when he refers, in his commentary on this page of Rilke’s text, the description of the wall to an interpretation [*Auslegung*]¹⁷—in which, as *Being and Time* indicates, “the understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it” (SZ, 148)—and to an elucidation (*Erleuchtung*), which must be linked to the “clearedness” (*Gelichtheit*) characterizing existential sight. Now, what the description of the walls of this abandoned and decrepit house *shows* is in it the unrootable presence of what Rilke calls *life*, which Heidegger interprets as being-in-the-world. The walls of the house are not the abstract correlate of a narrow perception, they carry with them the presence of the world: the decrepit house, in ruins, is inhabited, or haunted by a “life” that literally seems to come out of each of the walls. Each nail, each piece of wood, or glass, each part and each color breathe “the breath of this life.” This “life” of things must not be understood as some kind of “animism,” but as an elemental phenomenological fact (Heidegger writes: “Notice here in how *elemental* a way the world, being-in-the-world—Rilke calls it life—leaps towards us from the things”; GA 24, 246/173). The presence of the world “leaps towards us” from things.

In a sense, this reading of Rilke brings to light the phenomenon through which “Dasein thus comes toward itself from out of the things” (GA 24, 410/289). To use Rilke’s terms: “I recognize all of it here, and that’s why it goes right into me: it’s at home in me” (cited by Heidegger: GA 24, 246/173). It is at this juncture that the traditional, formal model of reflection gives way to an original phenomenon. Another reflection, as it were, comes to take its place. In a sense, even if reflection as *Rückwendung*—the ego’s turning back onto itself—is said to be only a mode of Dasein’s self-apprehension, Heidegger explains that the “way in which the self is unveiled to itself in the factual Dasein can nevertheless be fittingly called reflection [*Reflexion*].” Further, he adds that “the genuine, actual [*echte*], though inauthentic [*uneigentliche*] understanding of the self takes place in such a way that this self, the self of our thoughtlessly random, common, everyday existence, ‘reflects’ itself to itself from out of that to which it has given itself over”

(GA 24, 228/160–161). Dasein understands itself *from things*. In what sense, then, can we speak of *reflection*? Heidegger's answer is quite simple: *literally*: reflection is no longer an introspective or immanent gaze, but a re-flection "in the optical meaning of the term" (GA 24, 226/159). Reflection is not an "ego bent around backward and staring at itself," but an "interconnection" (*Zusammenhang*), a refracting beam, so that "self"-reflection henceforth means "to break at something [*sich an etwas brechen*], to radiate back from there [*zurückstrahlen*], to show itself in a reflection from something" (GA 24, 227/159). This reflection (*Widerschein*) or refraction from things seems at first quite odd. Heidegger recognizes it from the outset: "It is surely a remarkable fact that we encounter ourselves, primarily and daily, for the most part by way of things and are disclosed to ourselves in this manner in our own self" (GA 24, 227/160). Reflection in the existential sense is a reflection that, while altogether occurring in things, is nevertheless a *self*-reflection. In fact, to say that reflection is a reflection "from things," or to say that Dasein is *in* things, clearly does not mean that Dasein shares the same kind of being as things, and, inversely, it does not mean "the assigning of soul to things" (GA 24, 227/159). The "elemental phenomenological fact" is that Dasein finds itself nowhere else than in things themselves, that "it always in some way or other rests in things" (GA 24, 226/159). We find ourselves in things, encounter ourselves in things, and rest in them. This is why the "self that is reflected to us [*widerscheinende Selbst*]" from things is not 'in' the things in the sense that it would be present-at-hand among them as a portion of them or in them as an appendage or a layer deposited on them" (GA 24, 229/161). The self is "in" things as it is *in-the-world*, that is to say, not in the sense of a spatial enclosure or mere juxtaposition, but as a dwelling, a presence-to.

In this existential version of reflection it is possible to note the radical absence of any interiority: the event of existence takes place *outside*, among things, in the very manner that in the process of knowledge, and in the reception and gathering of the "stock" of knowledge, "the perceiving of what is known is not a process of returning with one's booty to the 'cabinet' of consciousness after one has gone out and grasped it; even in perceiving, retaining, and preserving, the Dasein which knows *remains outside* and does so *as Dasein*" (SZ, 62). The immanence of consciousness is here broken open. It is impossible to understand Dasein "as long as one starts from the *ego cogito*; for it is the basic constitution of the *ego cogito* (just as with the monad in Leibniz) to have no windows from which something could either enter or exit. In this way, the *ego cogito* is an enclosed space. The idea of 'exiting' this enclosed space is itself contradictory. This is why one needs to start from something other than the *ego cogito*" (GA 15, 383/FS, 70). From what *place* must one then start? Quite simply from the *outside*; that is to say, from Dasein, as the same passage from the 1973 Zähringen seminar clarifies: "Now, what does the word 'being' mean when one speaks of Dasein? In contrast with the immanence

to consciousness expressed by 'being' in consciousness [*Bewusst-sein*], 'being' in *Da-sein* says being-outside-of. . . . The being in *Da-sein* must preserve an 'outside.' This is why the mode of being of *Dasein* is characterized in *Being and Time* by ek-stasis. *Da-sein* thus rigorously means: ek-statically being the there" (GA 15, 383/FS, 71). In short, by means of the notion of ek-stasis, immanence is *destroyed*: "Immanence, here, is broken through and through" (GA 15, 383/FS, 71). Reflection is not the return to an ego-pole or an interiority, the return to immanence: the self comes back only whence it ek-sists, that is to say, from things.

We are now in a position to make explicit more precisely *how* the self is "re-flected" from things. Indeed, how, exactly, does this self-reflection from things take place? How is the self, itself, "re-flected" from things? We find a first clarification by determining further the ontological status of the "things" in question. Reflection, Heidegger writes, "in the sense of self-understanding by way of the things themselves," or of "a mirroring-back of the self from thing" (GA 24, 247/174), became "clearer for us when we asked: In what sense are the things of the environing world to be grasped? What ontological character do they have and what is presupposed for their apprehension?" (GA 24, 248/174). On the basis of *what* things does *Dasein* come to itself? This provides already, negatively, the first element of a response: we do not reflect ourselves from entities that are simply present-at-hand; rather, we come to ourselves from entities that manifest a worldly structure, that refer to *concernful dealings*. We do not encounter isolated things in the world, but things that form a world. "It is primarily things, not as such, taken in isolation, but as intraworldly, in and from which we encounter ourselves" (GA 24, 244/171). Reflection does not take place from things abstracted from a context where they are inscribed, but from things encountered in everyday concern. *Dasein* is reflected from the things that are encountered in concern and whose ontological-categorical structure is a certain reference (*Verweisung*). "To say that the being of the ready-to-hand has the structure of assignment or reference [*Verweisung*] means that it has in itself the character of *having been assigned or referred* [*Verwiesenheit*]" (SZ, 83–84). The coming-to-oneself from things would then have to be connected with the referential structure of the world. The enigmatic re-flection from things needs to be understood on the basis of the referential structure that characterizes the entities with which we deal proximally and for the most part. *Dasein* is reflected from things when it follows the being-referred of entities. Reflection from things takes place when, by following the constitutive *references* of entities ready-to-hand, the self is referred, finally, to the event of its own being, to what Heidegger calls its being-for-the-sake-of-itself (*Worum-willem*). The discussion now follows the network of these references.

If one begins with a particular thing, one finds it is always appropriate *for* something: the hammer for hammering, the car for driving, the pen for writing,

and so on. Their being is involved with the in-which (*Wobei*) or toward-which (*Wozu*) for which they are destined. The thing is determined on the basis of what it is used for. It is from the outset inscribed in or involved with a broader context, which, due to the logic proper to referentiality, is itself referred to another, broader referentiality that includes it. Thus, for example, the involvement of the hammer is hammering. The “with-which” of involvement is the hammer; the “toward-which” of involvement is hammering. In turn, the toward-which of involvement can become the with-which of involvement: hammering is *for* (building a house, etc.). Each equipment is then situated in a whole in and for which it is inscribed as the equipment that it is; this whole can in its turn be involved with another use. Heidegger designates this phenomenon by the expression “totality of involvements” (*Bewandtnisganzheit*), a quasi-“architectonic” structure of the being of the ready-to-hand. What is important to emphasize here is that the “toward-which” of the equipment precedes and determines the being of the equipment, a toward-which that is itself predetermined by a totality of involvements. Thus, in “a workshop, for example, the totality of involvements which is constitutive for the ready-to-hand in its readiness-to-hand, is ‘earlier’ [*früher*] than any single item of equipment” (SZ, 84). We find a similar argumentation in paragraph 69 of *Sein und Zeit*, where Heidegger explains that whenever we “seize hold of something,” we do so on the basis of “our work,” that is, of a totality of involvements. In short, “in laying hold of an item of equipment, we come back to it from whatever work-world has already been disclosed” (SZ, 352). Involvement, or rather the totality of involvements, outlines in advance the meaning of any particular item of equipment and in principle can in turn be inscribed in a broader totality; this would allow us to speak of *several* totalities of involvement: nothing, in fact, seems to be able to put a stop to this movement by which the *toward-which* of the involvement becomes the *in-which* of the involvement, by which an involvement becomes involved in another broader involvement, and so on. Yet this movement or propagation, or this increasingly larger referential structure, will lead to the *event* of being-in the-world as such.

Indeed, the totality of involvements, that is to say, the totality of references (the toward-which) comes to an end in a final toward-which: with the hammer, there is an involvement in hammering; with hammering there is an involvement in making something fast, namely the construction of a house; the house is for protection against storms. Now the latter for-which no longer refers to an intraworldly entity, but to an entity that needs to protect itself to the extent that its being is at issue for it, that is, Dasein itself. Dasein is here the *primäre Wozu*, that is, that to which the totality of involvements finally refers, without itself being referred to, or involved with, another equipmental whole. The totality of references leads to a final “toward-which,” an ultimate toward-which that is *being-in-the-world* as such. The totality of involvement of the equipment ultimately

refers to Dasein itself insofar as the latter's being is at issue for it, that is, to the *event of its being*. The ultimate or primary toward-which (*primäre Wozu*), then, is not another "toward-this" (*Da-zu*) within-the-world, but a being-for-the-sake-of (*Worum-willen*), which is an ontological structure that defines an entity whose being is an existence-in-the-world, an entity who has its own being "to be."

The entire referential structure that articulates the enviroing world seems here to gather and found itself in an ultimate destination, that of being-for-the-sake-of-oneself in which being is at issue. "We have thus indicated the interconnection by which the structure of an involvement leads [*führt*] to Dasein's very being as the sole authentic 'for-the-sake-of-which'" (SZ, 84). However, the connection between the *toward-which* of the equipment and the *for-the-sake-of-which* of Dasein is by no means a simple one: indeed, between the involvement of the intrawordly entity ready-to-hand and the ultimate involvement of Dasein, there is both rupture and connection. Rupture occurs since Dasein does not have the same kind of being as an entity that is ready-to-hand and since only a "leap" can lead from entities to being. But "connection" nonetheless exists since there is a certain inextricability between Dasein and world, an inextricability that Heidegger refers to as Dasein's "submission" or "assignment" (*Angewiesenheit*) to the world (SZ, 87). Dasein *is* in fact its world. As Heidegger puts it: "Dasein *is* its world existingly" (SZ, 364). The irreducibility between the modes of being of entities-within-the-world and Dasein does not imply that they are two distinct substantial regions. Rather, the issue is to think together Dasein's ontological difference with intrawordly entities *and* its being-bound to the world. Here is how Heidegger presents this question. "Being along-side the ready-to-hand cannot be explained ontically in terms of the ready-to-hand itself, nor can the ready-to-hand be derived contrariwise from this kind of Being. But neither are concern, as a kind of being which belongs to Dasein, and that with which we concern ourselves, as something ready-to-hand within-the-world, just present-at-hand together. All the same, a 'connection' [*Zusammenhang*] subsists between them" (SZ, 352). A connection subsists between Dasein and things.

What is this connection? Dasein understands itself to the extent that it *submits* to the relations of involvement of the ready-to-hand. Dasein understands its own being, it knows where it stands with respect to itself at the very moment when it goes through the network of the for-which of the equipment. The familiarity with the world (*Weltvertrautheit*) is a familiarity with oneself. This is why one cannot appeal to an absolute familiarity-to-oneself of the self prior to its involvement with the world of mediations. For Heidegger, there is indeed such a familiarity with oneself, not as an absolute and simple atom, but as the familiarity that Dasein has with its world. For instance, he explains: "That wherein Dasein already understands itself in this way is always something with which it is *primordially familiar*" (SZ, 86). The necessity of the reflective detour reveals that the

self is not some monadic point, a pure self-identity closed upon itself, but an *open-ness* that it must, as it were, go through in order to come to itself. This does not mean that the self would be the *term* or the *end* of that trajectory, but rather that it is that trajectory itself, the articulation of the openness that it is and has to be. Dasein “‘is’ not in some way *without and before* its being-in-the-world, because it is just this latter that constitutes its Being” (GA 24, 241/169, emphasis mine). In Heidegger’s work the I does not subsist independently of its being-in-the-world, as some “free-floating” ego. Thus, “Dasein is not first an ego-self [*Ich-Selbst*] which then oversteps something or other,” or also: “Dasein does not exist at first in some mysterious way so as then to accomplish the step beyond itself to others or to extant things. Existence, instead, always already means to step beyond [*Überschreiten*] or, better, having stepped beyond [*Überschrittenhaben*]” (GA 24, 426/300). Dasein “holds itself” in familiarity with the world by operating in the element of a significance from which the world is able to signify itself as totality of the references of the ready-to-hand. Dasein’s being is at issue in each hammering of the hammer, in each reference to an equipmental whole. In Françoise Dastur’s terms: “in each of its worldly tasks, Dasein is for itself its own finality,”¹⁸ which means that Dasein understands *itself* on the basis of that with which it is concerned.

The subject no longer teleologically constitutes the world to which it gives meaning, but submits to the referential whole of entities ready-to-hand. Dasein does not constitute, like a transcendental subject, the referential structure of the world: it does not project, on the basis of its own being-for-the-sake-of-itself, the totality of involvements of entities ready-to-hand. If this were the case, it would mean that Dasein would be, first, a worldless subject, a pure “for-itself” existing in the pure element of selfhood, which would then have to project that self-relation into the world in order to then reflect itself from it. In addition to the fact that such an interpretation goes against the grain of Heidegger’s critique of worldless subjectivity, and in particular against the very definition of existence as being-in-the-world, it happens to be explicitly rejected in the text. Dasein comes to itself as the letting-something-be-involved (*Bewendenlassen*) of the entity in its references. “Letting-something-be-involved” is to let the entity be as it appears in concerned usage. But Heidegger adds immediately that to let the entity be does not mean to “first bring it into its Being and produce it”; rather, it means “that something which is already an ‘entity’ must be discovered in its readiness-to-hand” (SZ, 85). Letting the entity ready-to-hand be in the totality of its involvements (which consists in significance) is what existentially defines a There, the world, in which Dasein exists already, that is, finds itself as *already-there*, as *thrown*. This is why understanding does not posit significance as such, rather it “lets itself make assignments both in these relationships themselves and of them” (SZ, 87). Dasein understands its own being when it “abides by” the relations of involvement, when it “follows” the various references of the

ready-to-hand, when it “submits” to the configuration of things. This, indeed, is why there is reflection. One can speak of reflection precisely because the self is not given to itself immediately, in some pure and absolute self-relation. And one can only speak of a reflection *from things* precisely because the self is not presupposed as worldless or as a subjectivity constitutive of its world. The self must reflect itself from something because it comes from it. This reflection, which destroys, delimits, and existentially grounds the self-reflection of an isolated ego, is to be defined as the self-signifying of being-in-the-world, when it abides by and submits to the referentiality of involvement. Reflection can only be understood on the basis of a primordial passivity of the self, that is, ultimately, of its finitude, which Heidegger designates at the time of *Being and Time* by the term *Geworfenheit*. “In existing, it has been thrown; and as something thrown, it has been delivered over to entities which it needs *in order to* be able to be as it is—namely, *for the sake of itself*” (SZ, 364). Everything seems as if it were the things themselves that projected the self rather than the contrary. “Dasein expects its own potentiality-for-Being as the potentiality-for-Being of an entity which relies on what things give or what they refuse. *It is as though the Dasein’s potentiality-for-Being were projected by the things, by the Dasein’s commerce with them, and not primarily by Dasein itself from its ownmost peculiar self*” (GA 24, 410/289, emphasis mine, trans. modified). Dasein is unable, as a being-in-the-world, to come to itself outside of a world. Since the world designates nothing other than significance, that is, the totality of relations of references that are proper to entities ready-to-hand, one must conclude that the for-the-sake-of-itself of Dasein is *unthinkable* apart from the structure of the toward-which or in-order-to of things. Dasein’s being-for-the-sake-of-itself necessarily refers to a “for-which,” which is linked, for its part, to a “toward-this” (*Dazu*), itself referring to a “with-which” (*Womit*), and so on. The self can only let itself be referred according to the totality of these references, in order to be the self that it is. And this, once again, is why there is and must be reflection.

Heidegger calls this implication of Dasein’s for-the-sake-of in the relations of the in-order-to of equipment *submission* or *assignment* (*Angewiesenheit*). The term *Angewiesenheit* means: a necessary being-referred to. As *Weisen*, which also forms the terms *Verweisung* and *Verwiesenheit* (“reference” and “referentiality”), indicates, the term *Angewiesenheit* implies a certain reference. It also has the sense of an assignation to, which implies a submission or dependence. This term is meant to name Dasein’s being-bound, or connected, to the world, but in such a way that this connectedness is not the linking of a subject that is first worldless to a world reduced to an extended substance. It rather underscores the essential belonging, if not the dependence, of the self with/on the world: “Dasein, insofar as it *is*, has always submitted [*angewiesen*] itself already to a ‘world’ which it encounters, and this *submission* [*Angewiesenheit*] belongs essentially to its Being” (SZ, 87). Because of this essential submission, it is not possible to separate

being-for-the-sake-of-oneself from the “toward-which” relationships of equipment, as if they were two substantially distinct levels. And it is even less possible to conceive of Dasein’s immersion in the world as some fall from a pure selfhood to a lower level. The fact is that there is no “primordial *Bedeutung*,” if that means a worldless self, a pure self-reference. The self comes to itself from the world, disclosed to itself equiprimordially with the world. There is no opposition between world and self, understanding of the world and understanding of the self. The relation to entities is a relation to oneself. Being-with things is a being-with oneself. In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger explains that the self and the world “belong together in the single entity, the Dasein” (GA 24, 422/297), not as an aggregate of two entities (that is to say, as subject and object), but as the “unity of the structure of being-in-the-world,” as “basic determination [*Grundbestimmung*] of the Dasein” (GA 24, 422/297). Dasein is a being-in-the-world and to that extent is intertwined with things, that is, does not exist without them, cannot understand its own being in abstraction from them. The self is a thingly self: as Heidegger writes, we human beings are be-thinged (*bedingt*), the *Be-dingen* (GA 79, 20/19).

The Thing Things!

Heidegger would return in later writings to the question of the thing, revealing its eventfulness, indeed approaching things themselves as “events.” As he put it in *What Is a Thing?*, “It now becomes clear that we understand the term ‘thing’ in both a narrower and a broader sense. The narrower or limited meaning of ‘thing’ is that which can be touched, reached, or seen, i.e., what is present-at-hand (*das Vorhandene*). In the *wider* meaning of the term, the ‘thing’ is every affair or transaction, something that is in this or that condition, the things that happen in the world—occurrences, events.”¹⁹ The substantialist interpretation of things gives way to an account that reveals their eventfulness: things are not merely present beings but manifest a *presence*. The thing, as Heidegger says, “things.” In the essay “The Thing,” Heidegger writes: “The jug essences [*west*] as thing. The jug is the jug as a thing. But how does the thing essence? The thing things [*Das Ding dingt*].”²⁰ The thing as noun becomes the thing as a verb: “to thing,” “thing-ing,” the “thinging” of the thing. The thing is approached in terms of the event of its presence. The thing is not an object, a *res*, but an event. “The jug is a thing, neither in the sense of the *res* as meant by the Romans, nor in the sense of the *ens* conceived in the Middle Ages, nor even in the sense of the object of modern representation. The jug is a thing not as object, whether this be one of production or of mere representation. The jug is a thing insofar as it things” (GA 79, 15–16/BL, 15). The things “things,” *happens* as thing. What is important for our work is to show how this rethinking of the thing involves the revealing of the thing in its

eventful character, an aspect that was already disclosed in *Being and Time* insofar as the world *happens* through the referentiality of things. I now explore this rethinking of the thing as event.

As just mentioned, Heidegger returned in later texts to the question of the thing, developing his critique of its metaphysical determinations and engaging in a rethinking of what he calls in “The Origin of the Work of Art” the “thing-being” (*das Dingsein*) or the “thingness” (*die Dingheit, das Dinghafte*) of the thing. “What in truth is the thing, so far as it is a thing? When we inquire in this way, our aim is to come to know the thing-being (thingness) of the thing. The point is to discover the thingly character of the thing” (GA 5, 5/BW, 146). This aim pursues the effort undertaken in *Being and Time* to go beyond the notion of a thing as simply *vorhanden*, merely present-at-hand. In these early analyses the thing was no longer understood as a single item but was part of a referential instrumental whole, thereby constituting the eventful being of the world as reference and relationality. Relationality then became the determinant character of the thing. In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger develops further his critique of the traditional understanding of the thing by listing three inadequate determinations: the thing as a substance with its accidents (with the accompanying subject-predicate logical structure of predication); the thing understood as a complex of sensations; the thing as a unity of matter and form. (a) With respect to the first sense, Heidegger immediately stresses that this “interpretation of the thingness of the thing, the thing as bearer of its characteristic traits, despite its currency, is not as natural as it appears to be” (GA 5, 9/BW, 150). We know how Heidegger had already undertaken in *Being and Time* a deconstruction of the mode of being of *Vorhandenheit* or substantiality as it intervenes in this definition of the thing. This is why he adds that such conception “does not lay hold of the thing as it is in its own being, but makes an assault upon it” (GA 5, 10/BW, 151). The thingness of the thing does not lie in substantiality. (b) The thing understood as a complex of sensations: this is the prejudice of “immediacy,” the belief that a “raw” access to the being of the thing takes place in the “immediacy” of sensations. Now as we saw, Heidegger challenges the belief in the originarity of the senses and derives sense perception from a more “pragmatic” relation to the world. We do not hear pure sounds, but we hear the opening of the entrance door through which my friend just came in to have lunch with me. “Closer” to us than sensations are “things” understood as worldly occurrences and significations, that is, things present to us in their phenomenological givenness. This second definition is “abstract.” This concept of the thing, according to Heidegger, “is not so much an assault upon the thing as rather an inordinate attempt to bring it into the greatest possible proximity to us. But a thing never achieves that position as long as we assign as its thingly feature what is perceived by the senses” (GA 5, 11/BW, 152). (c) A third conception or prejudice is the notion of the thing as a unity

of matter and form, the thing as formed matter. That traditional view is based upon the notion according to which “that which gives things their constancy and pith but is also at the same time the source of their particular mode of sensuous pressure—colored, resonant, hard, massive—is the matter in things,” or, in other words, the notion that “what is constant in a thing, its consistency, lies in the fact that matter stands together with a form” (GA 5, 11/BW, 152). This latter conception is particularly prevalent in the field of aesthetics, in the interpretation of the work of art. Nevertheless, Heidegger is quick to reject it as this “incontestable fact, however, proves neither that the distinction of matter and form is adequately founded, nor that it belongs originally to the domain of art and the artwork” (GA 5, 12/BW, 153). Further, it is not established that it adequately captures the being of the thing, for, as Heidegger writes dismissively, “form and content are the most hackneyed concepts under which anything and everything may be subsumed” (GA 5, 12/BW, 153, modified). Heidegger then refers, as he had done in *Being and Time*, to a more original phenomenon with respect to the presence of a thing, namely its usable character, its “readiness-to-hand.” One has the impression that the origin of the thing, of the thing in the world, that is, equipment (*das Zeug*), “lies in a mere fabrication that impresses a form upon some matter. In fact, however, equipment acquires its equipmental being from a more distant source. Matter and form and their distinction have a deeper origin” (GA 5, 20/BW, 161, modified). Prior to being the unity of matter and form, a “thing” first strikes us, approaches us, is present to us, as usable or of some use: “Usefulness [*Dienlichkeit*] is the basic feature from which this being regards us, that is, flashes at us and thereby is present and thus is this being” (GA 5, 13/BW, 154). Matter and form must be derived from such usefulness, and not the other way around: matter and form “have their proper place in the essential nature of equipment” (GA 5, 13/BW, 154). Heidegger concludes that matter and form “are in no case original determinations of the thingness of the mere thing” (GA 5, 13/BW, 154). This interpretation of a “thing” does not access the “thing-being of the thing” (GA 5, 16/BW, 156). It is rather, as he says, an “assault,” or an “attack,” that is, a violence done against the thing, that has been constant in the tradition. As Heidegger puts it, “Occasionally we still have the feeling that violence has long been done to the thingly element of things and that thought has played a part in this violence” (GA 5, 9/BW, 150). All of those three traditional interpretations of the thing (the thing as a bearer of traits, as the unity of a manifold of sensations, and as formed matter) “obstruct the way towards the thingly character of the thing” (GA 5, 16/BW, 156).

In order to reveal the being of a thing, it is a matter of letting it rest in its thing-being, keeping at a distance all those preconceptions of the tradition just listed. After all, as Heidegger states pleasantly, “What could be easier than allowing a being to be just what it is?” (GA 5, 16/BW, 157, modified). In fact, this may turn out to be the most difficult! Noting an “affinity” between the piece of

equipment and the artwork, in that “it is something produced by the human hand” (GA 5, 13–14/BW, 154), and considering that equipment “has a peculiar intermediate position between thing and work” (GA 5, 14/BW, 155), Heidegger considers the question of the thing in light of the work of art. In his attempt to determine the thingness of the thing, Heidegger claims that “we must aim at the thing’s belonging to the earth” (GA 5, 57/BW, 194). However, as belonging to the earth, the thing also manifests a jutting into a world, revealing a strife between earth and world. The thing as work occurs in and as such strife. At stake in such work is “the happening of truth, the opening up of beings” (GA 5, 58/BW, 195). What is significant in this text is that the thing, as revealed in the work of art, is approached as *happening*, more precisely as the *happening of truth* (*das Geschehen der Wahrheit*). Heidegger indeed stresses that “we have indicated in the work rather a happening and in no sense a repose” (GA 5, 34/BW, 173), and also that the unconcealment of beings (truth) is never a state that is merely present but a happening, so that in the end, “In the work, the happening of truth is at work” (GA 5, 45/BW, 183). The analysis engages the thing understood in its thing-being, or thingness, as eventfulness.

This eventfulness of the thing is taken up in the essay “Building Dwelling Thinking,” where, in the context of a reflection on the “fourfold,” Heidegger stresses that dwelling (which for him represents “*the basic character of being in keeping with which mortals exist*”) is “always a staying with things” (*ein Aufenthalt bei den Dingen*) and that, as preserving, dwelling “keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things” (GA 7, 153/PLT, 149). Human beings’ existence on this earth is characterized as a staying with things, Heidegger returning to the notion of reflection that he describes significantly in terms of its inscription in things. “Even when mortals turn ‘inward,’ taking stock of themselves, they do not leave behind their belonging to the fourfold. When, as we say, we come to our senses and reflect on ourselves, we come back to ourselves from things *without ever abandoning* our stay among things” (GA 7, 159/PLT, 155). Heidegger further clarifies that this staying with things is not a simple appendix to what he calls the fourfold, but rather is an essential component of it. “Staying with things, however, is not merely something attached to this fourfold preserving as a fifth something. On the contrary: staying with things is the only way in which the fourfold stay within the fourfold is accomplished at any time in simple unit” (GA 7, 153/PLT, 149). Things are said to “secure” or preserve the fourfold, indeed to make room for the fourfold—as both admitting and installing—insofar as they are allowed to be in their being as things, that is, Heidegger writes, when they “are let be in their presencing” (GA 7, 153/PLT, 149). There is a “presencing” of things, that is, an eventful occurrence of things *as things*.

Dwelling “keeps or secures the fourfold in things” and is, as this keeping, a building, Heidegger giving the example of a bridge. How does a bridge “secure”

the fourfold? A bridge does not just connect banks that are already there. Rather, “the bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge.” Thereby the banks “emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream” (GA 7, 154/PLT, 150). A bridge becomes that through which a world *occurs*. “With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other’s neighborhood. The bridge *gathers* the earth as landscape around the stream” (GA 7, 154/PLT, 150). The bridge gathers the fourfold. “The bridge *gathers* to itself in *its own* way earth and sky, divinities and mortals” (GA 7, 155/PLT, 151). Such gathering must be understood as a bringing into relation and as event: the gathering of the fourfold is not a container, but must be taken in the verbal active, eventful sense of a happening, Heidegger coining the term “fouring” (*Vierung*) to designate the eventfulness of the fourfold. Such gathering is what the thing “does”: “The bridge is a thing and *only that*. Only? As this thing it gathers the fourfold” (GA 7, 155/PLT, 151).

Further, the bridge gathers the fourfold by allowing a site for it, which brings into play space, or rather *spacing*, for space here must be understood as the event of a spacing.²¹ Heidegger states that “only something *that is itself a place* can make space for a site.” A thing is here approached in terms of location or *place*, Heidegger insisting that it is important “to learn to recognize that things themselves are places and do not merely belong in a place.”²² Thus, “the bridge does not first come to a place to stand in it; rather, a place comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge. The bridge is a thing; it gathers the fourfold, but in such a way that it allows a site for the fourfold. By this site are determined the places and ways by which a space is provided for” (GA 7, 156/PLT, 152, trans. modified). In contrast with an entire tradition, and in particular Kant, for whom various places and locations are possible on the basis of the one a priori space (as infinite given magnitude), Heidegger on the contrary reasserts that “*spaces receive their being from places [Orten] and not from ‘space’*” (GA 7, 156/PLT, 152, emphasis in the original). Heidegger clarifies that “place is not located in a pre-given space, after the manner of physical-technological space. The latter unfolds itself only through the reigning of places of a region” (GA 13, 208/AS, 308). “Space” is here identified with scientific homogeneous space, that abstract space Heidegger characterizes as that “homogeneous separation that is not distinct in any of its possible places” (GA 13, 205/AS, 306). In contrast with such homogeneous space, Heidegger retrieves the being of *place*, stating that “only something *that is itself a place* can make space for a site. *The location is not already there before the bridge is*” (GA 7, 156/PLT, 151, trans. modified, emphasis mine). What kind of place is here spoken of? It is a “thing-place” (a place that would be a thing, and a thing that would be a place), but it is also a place in the sense of what *takes place* so that a place would now name a happening, a taking place. Heidegger indeed refers to spacing

as a happening and states that in spacing, “a happening [*ein Geschehen*] at once speaks and conceals itself,” that the “granting of places happens [*geschieht*]” and that “the character of this happening [*Geschehens*] is such a granting” (GA 13 207/AS, 307–308). Now, with this motif of a *happening of space*, with this attempt to think space (*Raum*) from the event of “spacing” (*Räumen*)—Heidegger states in “Building Dwelling Thinking” (GA 7, 156/PLT 152) that “a space is something that has been spaced, or made room for” (*Ein Raum ist etwas Eingeräumtes*)²³—we are as it were invited to approach space from the event of *Ereignis*.²⁴ Heidegger suggests this explicitly in a passage from *On Time and Being* in an added marginal note in reference to the essay “Art and Space.” Space, he writes, should be thought on the basis of *Ereignis*: “Since time as well as being can only be thought from *Ereignis* as the gifts of *Ereignis*, the relation of space to *Ereignis* must also be considered in an analogous way,” which also implies inquiring into “the origin of space” and “the singular proper being of place.”²⁵

This eventfulness of space is taken up in Heidegger’s rethinking of the body. Drawing from the distinction between *Körper* and *Leib*, Heidegger rethinks the “body” on the basis of the *event* of a “bodying forth” (*Leiben*). In “Art and Space,” Heidegger writes: “The sculptural body embodies [*verkörpert*] something” (GA 13, 205/AS, 306). Does it embody a physical body? No. A head, for instance, he explains in *Remarks on Art-Sculpture-Space*, “is not a physical body [*Körper*] equipped with eyes and ears, but rather a bodily phenomenon [*Leibphänomen*], shaped by the seeing and hearing of a being-in-the-world.”²⁶ Thus, when a sculptor models a head, he or she is not merely making a copy of the visible surface, for “in truth the artist shapes the properly invisible, namely the way in which this head looks into the world, how it abides in the open of space, approached by the humans and things therein” (KPR, 14). The sculpture does not shape the physical body but the “bodying” (*Leiben*) of being-in-the-world, which is, I should note, *invisible*. *Sculpture brings into view the invisible*. This is why Heidegger adds: “The artist brings the essentially invisible into figure and, when he or she corresponds to the essence of art, each time allows something to come into view that until then was never seen” (KPR, 14). There again, one must note the indissociability between space and world and how things in space are occurrences in the world. In *Remarks on Art-Sculpture-Space*, Heidegger insists on how space is intertwined, indissociable, from world: “The human is not bounded by the surface of his supposed body. When I stand here, then I only stand here as a human insofar as I am simultaneously there by the window and, for example, outside on the street and in town, *briefly put: I am in a world*” (KPR, 13–14, emphasis mine). And when Heidegger thematizes the bodying of the body as *Leib*, he refers it to the existential structure of *Dasein* as being-in-the-world: “The *bodying* [*Leiben*] of the body is determined by the way of my being. The bodying of the body, therefore, is a way of *Da-sein*’s being.”²⁷ And ultimately: “*Bodying* as such belongs to

being-in-the-world" (GA 89, 244/Z, 196). In Heidegger's distinction between *Körper* and *Leib*, there is a shift from the body as an object to the body as an event. In Jean-Luc Nancy's words, the body is the "taking place" of existence.²⁸

In "The Thing," as mentioned prior, Heidegger would insist on the event of the thing, going so far as to evoke a "thinging" (*dingen*) of things, a verbal presence, indeed an "essencing" (*Wesen*) of things. Beginning with a reflection on "nearness," in the context of an increasing abolishment of distances that paradoxically does not provide access to genuine nearness, Heidegger introduces the question of the thing. For indeed things are what precisely is "near": "How do things stand with nearness? How can we experience its essence? Nearness, it seems, cannot be immediately found. We sooner achieve this by pursuing what is in the vicinity [*in der Nähe*]. In the vicinity are what we customarily name 'things'" (GA 79, 4–5/BL, 5). Now, even though "things" are what is near to us, Heidegger is quick to point out that little thought has been given to what thing is *as a thing*, and in fact to what nearness as such means: "Up to now, the human has considered the thing as a thing just as little as he has considered nearness" (GA 79, 4–5/BL, 5). The question remains: what is a thing as a thing? He begins by distinguishing a thing from an object: an object is always that which is ob-jected (*ob-jectum*) by an act of representation. A thing, however, is not an object of representation, in other words, it is not an object. Through this distinction, Heidegger's thinking parts from the scientific approach, which according to him obliterates things to the profit of objects. He even writes provocatively, "Within its purview, that of objects, the compelling knowledge of science has already annihilated the thing as thing long before the atomic bomb exploded" (GA 79, 8–9/BL, 8). Even more provocatively, he adds that the nuclear bomb's destruction is but the consequence of the metaphysical annihilation of the thing: "The explosion of the atomic bomb is only the crudest of all crude confirmations of an annihilation of things that occurred long ago: confirmation that the thing as thing remains nullified" (GA 79, 8–9/BL, 8). Things have not been "allowed" to be as things. The first step in the thinking of the thingly nature of things is to recognize that things are not objects.

Heidegger characteristically takes the example of a particular thing, that of a jug. Certainly, as he admits, the jug is something self-sustained, something that stands on its own, like an object. This standing-on-its-own characterizes the jug as something independent. And yet, this self-supporting independence of the thing differs from that of an object. "As the self-standing [*Selbststand*] of something independent, the jug is distinguished from an object [*Gegenstand*]" (GA 79, 4–5/BL, 5). An independent, self-supporting thing "can become an object when we represent it to ourselves, be it in immediate perception, be it in a thoughtful remembrance that makes it present. The thinghood of the thing, however, does not reside in the thing becoming the object of a representation, nor can the thinghood of the thing at all be determined by the objectivity of the object" (GA 79,

4–5/BL, 5). The jug’s presence does not depend upon an act of representation, is not posited (*ob-jectum*) by an act of representation, and its self-supporting nature is irreducible to objectivity. To be sure, in the case of the jug, the thing has been produced, brought, and set forth. However, Heidegger interprets this setting and production not so much as the act of a sovereign author or subject as producer/creator, but in terms of a belonging to the earth: the potter “completes the earthen jug from out of the earth that has been especially selected and prepared for it” (GA 79, 5–7/BL, 6). As a consequence, the jug consists of the earth. “By virtue of what it consists of, the jug is also able to stand upon the earth, be it directly, be it indirectly upon a table and bench” (GA 79, 5–7/BL, 6). Now, as Heidegger explained in “Building Dwelling Thinking,” the earth, as one knows, belongs in a fourfold with the sky, the divinities, and the mortals. “But ‘on the earth’ already means ‘under the sky.’ Both of these *also* mean ‘remaining before the divinities’ and include a ‘belonging to men’s being with one another.’ By a *primal* oneness the four—earth and sky, divinities and mortals—belong together in one” (GA 5, 151/PLT, 147). This is why Heidegger clarifies in “The Thing” that “when we say earth then we already think, in case we are thinking, the other three along with it from the single fold of the fourfold” (GA 79, 16–17/BL, 16). The thing will hence be thought of in the context of this thinking of the fourfold.

However, the characterization of the jug as produced remains insufficient because the production aims at making the product stand on its own, a self-supporting feature that ultimately still retains too much of the objectivity of the object, as the thing is now thought of as an “object of making”: “Standing-on-its-own is that toward which producing is directed. Standing-on-its-own is therefore still thought, and despite everything is ever still thought, in terms of an objectivity, even if the objective-stance of what is produced is no longer grounded in a mere representing” (GA 5–7/BL, 6). To that extent, neither objectivity nor the self-supporting characteristic are adequate to characterize the thingness of the thing. “Indeed, from the objectivity of the object and the objectivity of what is self-standing, no road leads to the thinghood of the thing” (GA 5–7/BL, 6). The question remains: “What is it that is thing-like in the thing? What is the thing in itself? We only arrive at the thing in itself if our thinking has previously reached the thing as thing” (GA 5–7/BL, 6). What, then, is a jug *as a thing*?

The thing is a kind of “vessel,” that is, something that “holds something else within it.” Although it has been produced, its being as a thing does not depend on the production. In fact, it would rather be the opposite: “The jug is a thing as a vessel. To be sure, this holder requires a producing. But the production by the potter by no means constitutes what is proper to the jug insofar as it is a jug. The jug is not a vessel because it was produced, rather the thing must be produced because it is this vessel” (GA 79, 5–7/BL, 6). Holding firm on the notion of the jug as a vessel, Heidegger avoids defining the jug as a merely present thing, for in

fact what allows for the holding in that vessel is a certain *nothing* or emptiness: “When we fill up the jug, in the filling, the pour flows into the empty jug. The empty is what holds in the vessel. The empty, this nothing in the jug, is what the jug is as a holding vessel” (GA 79, 7–8/BL, 7). It is as if the vessel’s thingness did not rest “in the material of which it consists, but instead in the emptiness that holds” (GA 79, 7–8/BL, 7), as if the being—the event—of the thing rested in such a void.²⁹ Of course, such void cannot be addressed or even recognized by science because science does not concern itself with things, but with objects. The issue is to do justice to the “jughood” of the jug and ask: how does the jug’s void hold? Holding, we are told, needs the void as that which holds. The void holds as taking and keeping, the taking of what is poured in and the keeping of what was poured. Yet both belong to what constitutes the jug-character of the jug, namely the giving of an outpouring: “The twofold holding of the empty consequently lies in the outpouring. As this, the holding is authentically how it is. The outpour from out of the jug is a giving [*Schenken*]. In the gift of the pour there essences the holding of the vessel. This holding requires the empty as what holds” (GA 79, 10–11/BL, 10). Heidegger then endeavors to think this outpouring (which represents the being of the jug, that which “makes the jug a jug”) as that which gathers the fourfold, how “in the gift of the pour there abides at the same time earth and sky, divinities and mortals” (GA 79, 11–12/BL, 11) and how “in the gift of the pour abides the single fold [*Einfalt*] of the four” (GA 79, 11–12/BL, 11). What matters to this argument is how Heidegger then begins to speak of the jug, of the thing, as an event, that is, as *the event of the thing*. He for instance writes, “In the gift, however, the jug essences as jug” (GA 79, 12–13/BL, 12), revealing that the thingness of the thing lies in its *eventful* character.

Returning to the etymology of the word *thing* in Old High German, and reflecting on the lineage between *res*, *Ding*, *causa*, *cosa*, *chose*, and *Thing*, Heidegger explains that the term meant a gathering (*Versammlung*) of some sort: the “The Old High German word *thing* means gathering and indeed a gathering for the negotiation of an affair under discussion, a disputed case” (GA 79, 12–13/BL, 12). Further, Heidegger also recalls that the Roman word *res* designates that which concerns somebody, an affair, a contested matter, a case at law, something the Romans also called *causa*. Originally *causa* did not simply mean “cause” but a case. This is also the origin of the French *la chose*, which conveys the senses of a matter, an affair, or a case (for instance: “*la chose en question*,” the matter at hand, the case in question). It is this latter sense that is conveyed in the Old High German term *Dinc*, which translates appropriately the Latin *res*. “The Old High German word *thing* or *dinc*, with its meaning of gathering, namely for the negotiation of an affair, is thus appropriate like no other for fittingly translating the Roman word *res*, that which concernfully approaches” (GA 79, 14–15/BL, 13). In the context of the essay, Heidegger retrieves this sense of gathering as it

pertains to the being of the fourfold, the thing being understood as that which gathers the fourfold. Recalling the being of the thing—of the jug—as the gift of outpouring (“The gift of the pour . . . is the jughood of the jug,” GA 79, 11–12/BL, 11), Heidegger declares: “In the gift of the pour that is a libation, the mortals abide in their way. In the gift of the pour that is an oblation, the divinities abide in their way, divinities who receive back the gift of the giving as the gift of a donation. In the gift of the pour, the mortals and divinities each abide differently. In the gift of the pour, the earth and sky abide. In the gift of the pour there abides at the same time earth and sky, divinities and mortals. These four, united of themselves, belong together” (GA 79, 11–12/BL, 11). The gift of the outpouring is a gift, Heidegger continues, because it *stays* or lets abide (*verweilt*) earth and sky, divinities and mortals. This abiding (*Verweilen*) (already encountered in an earlier chapter when Heidegger was rethinking *Das Weil* as abiding (*weilen*) and as tarrying and such “while” as the essence of being itself), is not the permanence or persistence of a substance, but the appropriation that gathers the four into their mutual belonging. The “core” of the thing is not the presence-at-hand of a mere material thing (“Indeed letting abide [*verweilen*] is now no longer the mere perseverance of something present at hand [*nicht mehr das bloße Beharren eines Vorhandenen*],” GA 79, 11–12/BL, 11), but the essencing that gathers the four in their simple singlefoldness. As Heidegger puts it, “The gift of the pour lets the single fold of the fourfold of the four abide [*Das Geschenk des Gusses verweilt die Einfalt des Gevierts der Vier*];” GA 79, 12–13/BL, 12).

Now this is what Heidegger calls the essencing of things, the way in which they gather and in this way stay or secure the event of the fourfold. At that point, Heidegger seems to recognize that a thing is indeed properly an event, and to that extent, he offers a verbal form for the term *dingen*, at the risk of stretching the limits of language: the “thing things,” *Das Ding dingt*, the thing is a thing insofar as it “things”! “Our language names what gathering [*Versammlung*] is with an old word. It reads: *thing* [thing]. The essence of the jug exists as the pure giving gathering of the simple fourfold in a while [*eine Weile*]. The jug essences as thing. The jug is the jug as a thing. But how does the thing essence? The thing things. Thing-ing gathers. Appropriating the fourfold, it gathers the fourfold’s duration [*dessen Weile*] each time into something that abides [*je Weiliges*]: into this or that thing” (GA 79, 12–13/BL, 12). Ultimately for Heidegger, this event of gathering names the most authentic sense of the term *thing*: for, as he puts it, of all the traditional sense of the word *thing*, whether *res*, thing-in-itself, or even *ens*, he retains only the sense of gathering: “one aspect of meaning from the old linguistic usage of the word ‘thing’ does address the essence of the jug as thought here, namely that of ‘gathering’” (GA 79, 15–16/BL, 15). Therefore, the thing is neither the Roman *res*, nor the medieval *ens*, nor an object, nor a present-at-hand entity. Rather, the thing is a thing, that is, insofar as “it things,” that is, *insofar as it happens*.

The thing is a thing insofar as it things, and in thinging, it “stays” earth and sky, divinities and mortals. This means that there are no things prior to such thinging; rather, there is a thing insofar as there is thinging.

What then appears in this thinking of things is that they are not merely lying there, as mere present-at-hand entities, but that they are constitutive of the “worlding of the world,” as the fouring of the four. This indeed was the scope of the analysis in *Being and Time* of “equipmentality,” which designates how things belong to a network of relations, indeed that things are relations, thereby constituting “the world.” In a sense, that very thought remains at play in the later essays on the thing in terms of the fourfold, for indeed, what the fourfold designates is the world itself in its worlding. Heidegger for instance writes that “the fouring essences as the worlding of world” (GA 79, 18–20/BL, 18), and also: “We name the appropriating mirror-play of the single fold of the earth and sky, divinities and mortals, the world” (GA 79, 18–20/BL, 18). In the essay “Language” (1950), he writes: “The unitary fourfold of sky and earth, mortals and divinities, which is stayed in the thinging of things, we call—the world” (GA 12, 19/PLT, 197). Indeed, insofar as the thing stays the fourfold, it makes the world happen, it “gestures” the world. Still in the essay “Language” (1950), he writes: “Our old language names carrying out [*Austragen*]: *bern*, *bären*, and thus the words ‘to bear’ [*gebären*]; ‘to carry,’ ‘to give birth’] and ‘gesture’ [*Gebärde*]. Thingingly, the things are things. Thingingly they gesture [*gebärden*] world” (GA 12, 19/PLT, 197, trans. modified). The relation between thing and world “entrusts world to things and at the same time shelters the things in the radiance [*Glanz*] of world. This grants to the things their essence. Things gesture [*gebärden*] world. World grants [*gönnt*] things” (GA 12, 21/PLT, 199, trans. modified). This is why Heidegger then writes that the thing “things world”: “The thing lets the fourfold abide. The thing things the world. Every thing lets the fourfold abide in something that each time abides from the single fold of the world” (GA 79, 20–21/BL, 19). One could say, to use Heidegger’s language, that the world worlds when the thing things! As Mitchell puts it, there “would be no world without things. They are the pinions of world, the axes upon which it turns. The movement of the thing beyond itself effulges forth a space of relation. Relations stream away from things, through the cracks of the four, along the avenues of the four, billowing out from the thing. In so doing, these relations articulate world. . . . In this regard there is something initiatory about things. They let a world be born around them. They are not simply relations of intellectual affinity, but bodily instantiated meanings, connections, relations, accidental alliances and tendencies, all of which push out the world that is being born around the thing.”³⁰ Already in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger insisted that the happening of truth occurs in things, via the work (a phenomenon that he would refer to as the “sheltering” [*Bergung*] of the truth of being in beings, a theme he would develop in the *Beiträge*). It is “in the essence of

truth,” he claims, “to establish itself within beings” (GA 5, 50/BW, 187), marking, at once, the thingly manifestation of the truth of being and the eventful character of things. In every instance, Heidegger brings out the eventful in phenomena: hence his recourse to those verbal forms to designate the world, the thing, and the fourfold: the *worlding* of the world, the *fouring* of the fourfold, the *thinging* of the thing.

5 Historical Happening and the Motion of Life

The Deconstruction of Substance

In the wake of the deconstruction of the categories of reason, causality, and subjectivity that have in the tradition enframed and neutralized the event in its eventfulness, it became possible to do justice to the phenomenon of the event, indeed to grasp the phenomenon itself as an event, allowing phenomenology to appear as a phenomenology of the event. Now, if on the one hand phenomenology proves to be a phenomenology of the event, and if, on the other hand, the distinctive original phenomenon of phenomenology is being as such, then it becomes possible to grasp being itself as event, and no longer as some substantial ground. Returning from beings to the event of their being, from the given to the event of givenness, Heidegger's thought determines itself as a thinking of the event. Heidegger does not begin by assuming metaphysical or subjectivist categories, to then attempt to retrieve their eventfulness as excess to such categories, as one finds, for instance, in Marion's work. Rather, Heidegger engages philosophical categories on the basis of the *original event* of being as such.

Heidegger constantly sought to attune thought to the event of being, breaking with the inadequate metaphysical tradition of substantiality. Whether via the expressions of factual life and formal indication in the early work, existentials versus categories in *Being and Time*, being-historical thinking (*seynsgeschichtliches Denken*) or "bethinking" (*Er-denken*) in the *Beiträge*,¹ meditative thinking (*Besinnung*) or remembering (*Andenken*) in later writings, in each case, it has been a matter for him to attune thinking to the eventfulness of being. Such eventfulness was missed in the metaphysical tradition due to its reliance on the inadequate categories of constant presence, permanence, or substantiality. Being (presence) was conflated with a supreme being (a present being), which neutralized its eventfulness. It is a matter of seizing being as such as an event—indeed an extraordinary event—calling for a thought entirely assigned to its eventfulness, a "thinking of the event" in both senses of the genitive: thinking the event and thinking *from* the event. I will attempt in the following pages to unfold this thinking of the event of being, beginning by tracing the emergence of such thinking in the work of the early Heidegger, in particular in his deconstruction of substantiality.

In *Being and Time*, the decisive break with the inadequate ontology of substantiality, and the opening to a thinking of the event, occurred in the distinction between the categories of existence, or existentials, with the categories pertaining to “presence-at-hand” (*Vorhandenheit*). One cannot apply to being in its eventfulness categories that only pertain to determine the “whatness” of entities. For Heidegger, being must be approached in its “how,” that is, in its way of happening, and not as a “what.” Being itself is not a being (even though it is always the being of a being) and consequently cannot be questioned like a being: “Hence being, as that which is asked about, must be exhibited in a way of its own, essentially different from the way in which beings are discovered.”² It is necessary to forge an appropriate, and, as it were, unprecedented, conceptuality to do justice to the event of being, as Heidegger recognizes at the end of the introduction of *Being and Time*: “With regard to the awkwardness and ‘inelegance’ of expression in the analyses to come, we may remark that it is one thing to give a report in which we tell about *entities*, but another to grasp entities in their *being*. For the latter task we lack not only the words but, above all, the ‘grammar’” (SZ, 39). It is a matter of forging a language that is appropriate to being in its eventfulness, distinct from a traditional conceptuality overly attached to ontical determinations. Hence the distinction that Heidegger establishes in paragraph 9 of *Being and Time* between *existentials* and *categories*. Existentials pertain to the event of an existence; categories apply to those entities that do not participate in the event of being. A fundamental distinction is established between Dasein’s characters of being (existentials) and the determinations of the being of entities that are not of the order of Dasein (categories). It is necessary to remove the understanding that Dasein (who is happening through the happening of being) has of itself from categories pertaining to beings that are not “Dasein-like.”

This is the sense of the opposition between the “who” and the “what.” If Dasein’s ontological constitution is to participate in the event of being, it must be distinguished from what is present-at-hand, and the question that inquires about its being must equally be distinguished from the question that interrogates entities as merely present-at-hand. In order to reveal the eventfulness of Dasein’s being, a distinctive kind of *legen* is required. The being that we are answers to the question “who” while the being of entities that are “present-at-hand” answers to the question “what.” “*Existentials* and *categories* are the two basic possibilities for characters of being. The entities that correspond to them require different kinds of primary interrogation respectively: any entity is either a “who” (existence) or a “what” (presence-at-hand in the broadest sense)” (SZ, 45). In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger distinguishes the questioning of “whoness” (*Werheit*) from that of “whatness” (*Washeit*), explaining that the ontological specificity of Dasein is always in danger of being covered over by the question of the *quid*. Now, it is almost as if the question of the “what,” the question of essence,

was unavoidable, as if one could not help but ask: *what* of this *who*, *what* is this *who*? However, just as it is possible, to some extent and “within certain limits,” to speak of Dasein’s presence-at-hand,³ it is also possible to conceive of a “whatness” of the “who” that is irreducible to “whatness” as such. “What is the *who* in distinction from the aforementioned *what* in the narrower sense of reality of the present-at-hand? No doubt we do ask such a question. But this only shows that this *what*, with which we also ask about the nature of the *who*, obviously cannot coincide with the *what* in the sense of whatness” (GA 24, 169/120, trans. slightly modified). Heidegger rejects the possibility of conflating the *who* and the *what*, and the ontological distinction between the two is preserved: to interrogate the “*what*” of the “*who*” is not to interrogate the “*who*” as a “*what*.” On the contrary, it is by bringing to light the specific being of an entity that answers only to the question “*who*?” that it becomes possible to problematize the concept of essence and challenge an ontology whose inadequacy lies in that it does not recognize how “each being can be interrogated regarding its *what* but also in which sense a being must be queried by the *who*-question” (SZ, 120).

The present-at-hand being answers to the question, *quid, what*? This question, of course, is the question of essence, which aims at the *essentia* of the entity in question. Now, as noted, Heidegger writes that the “essence” of Dasein *lies in its existence* (“*Das ‘Wesen’ des Daseins liegt in seiner Existenz*”; SZ, 42). The *quid* (*essentia*) of the entity that we are (“so far as we can speak of it at all,” Heidegger adds) must necessarily be conceived of *on the basis of* Dasein’s being, that is to say, on the basis of existence. When Heidegger speaks of Dasein’s “essence,” he makes sure to write it within quotation marks in order to mark its contrast with the classical determination of *essentia* and ultimately in order to indicate that Dasein *does not have an essence*. As he explained in the “Letter on Humanism,” “This is why the sentence cited from *Being and Time* (p. 42) [“the ‘essence’ of Dasein lies in its existence”] is careful to enclose the word ‘essence’ in quotation marks. This indicates that ‘essence’ is now being defined from neither *esse essentiae* nor *esse existentiae* but rather from the ek-static character of Dasein.”⁴ This signifies that Dasein does not exhibit “properties” (*Eigenschaften*) of a present-at-hand entity but rather “possible ways for it to be, and no more than that” (SZ, 42). Dasein’s being is a “*way of existing* [*Weise zu existieren*], and therefore not [as] an entity present-at-hand” (SZ, 267). Here is the motif of the *possible*, which constitutes a key thread in the deconstruction of substance and for the emergence of a problematic of the event. Dasein “never becomes accessible as something present-at-hand, because being-possible [*Möglichsein*] belongs in its own way to Dasein’s kind of being” (SZ, 248). Dasein is an existence (distinguishing this term, as Heidegger intends, from *existentia*⁵), that is, a pure possibility to be, that is, a pure eventfulness.

Similarly, Dasein’s selfhood cannot be understood as if it was a substantial and subsistent characteristic of Dasein: I have this self *to be*, each time, as

a possibility and as an event: my self is “to be” (*Zu-sein*), it is the character of an existence. Certainly, this characteristic of being (eventful selfhood) can be misinterpreted within an inappropriate conceptuality, via an ontology of the *subjectum*, which reintroduces the paradigm of substantiality and thereby the mode of being of presence-at-hand. In paragraph 25 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger shows how the “I,” the self, is traditionally interpreted in terms of that which remains at the basis, as the *subjectum*, ultimately perpetuating the primacy of substantiality to understand the being of beings. “Substantiality is the ontological clue for determining which entity is to provide the answer to the question of the ‘who’” (SZ, 114). The critique of the “what-question,” the question of essence, must then be accompanied by a critique of the ontology of the *subjectum*. “Even if one rejects the ‘soul substance’ and the Thinghood of consciousness, or denies that a person is an object, ontologically one is still positing something whose being retains the meaning of present-at-hand” (SZ, 114). Being is understood as constant, subsistent presence (*subjectum*). It is this sense of being as presence-at-hand that remains determinant in the metaphysics of subjectivity. “For the ontological concept of the subject *characterizes not the Selfhood of the ‘I’ qua Self, but the selfsameness and steadiness of something that is always present-at-hand*. To define the ‘I’ ontologically as ‘subject’ means to regard it as something always present-at-hand” (SZ, 320). To understand the self from the ontical self-evidence of the I obstructs its eventfulness. The task is to guard against covering up eventful Dasein under a prevailing interpretation of the “self” as *the* immediate self-givenness of the self, where the “I” is taken as an empty identity-to-itself. To grasp being as an event, and the being of the self as eventful, requires the deconstruction of the substantial permanence of an entity present-at-hand. This will require, in short, a deconstruction of substantiality, whose ontological name Heidegger calls *Vorhandenheit*.

Being has been identified in the tradition with substantiality. For something to be properly, it has to be constantly present or satisfy the requirements of substantiality: a being is that which remains constantly what it is. Miguel De Beistegui notes, “In the eyes of metaphysics, only those things—those beings—that can be represented, only those beings with a minimal structure of identity and permanence that allow them to be identified and recognized by way of nouns or substantives can be said to ‘be.’ In one way or another, it argues, beings are substances, or derived from substances, or attached and attributed to substances . . . being has been and continues to be mistaken for a substance and for the essence of what is.”⁶ In fact, to the extent that “‘being’ is not a thing, because it is no-thing, it is the most singular exception to the rule and the logic of substance” (*Truth and Genesis*, 111). This is why, as just indicated, to retrieve the eventfulness of being requires undertaking a deconstruction of substantiality, that is, of *Vorhandenheit*. Now, in the narrow sense,

Vorhandenheit for Heidegger only refers to natural entities and essentially characterizes the being of natural things: “For what Kant calls existence, using either *Dasein* or *Existenz*, and what Scholasticism calls *existentia*, we employ the terms ‘*Vorhandensein*,’ ‘being-present-at-hand,’ ‘being-at-hand,’ or ‘*Vorhandenheit*,’ ‘presence-at-hand.’ *These are all names for the way of being of natural things in the broadest sense*” (GA 24, 36/28, trans. slightly modified, emphasis mine). However, *Vorhandenheit* is made to apply to all beings, including the being of that we are, and ultimately represents within the tradition the pre-eminent mode of the being of entities. Even the so-called distinctions between *essentia* and *existentia*, between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, continue to posit the unitary meaning of being of substantiality or presence-at-hand, a meaning that is incompatible with *Dasein*’s eventful being: “Ontologically, *existentia* is tantamount to *being-present-at-hand*, a kind of being which is essentially inappropriate to entities of *Dasein*’s character” (SZ, 42).

The deconstruction of *Vorhandenheit* follows several threads. First, Heidegger stresses that in such an interpretation of the being of beings the *diversity* of being is passed over. Why, indeed, should all entities be reduced to the sole mode of natural entities? Why interpret different domains of entities according to the same model? Heidegger raises the problem in the following way: “the question remains whether the *whole universe* of beings is exhausted by the present-at-hand. Does the realm of the present-at-hand coincide with the realm of beings in general? Or is there any being that, precisely due to the sense of its being, cannot be conceived of as being-present-at-hand?” (GA 24, 168–169/119, trans. modified, emphasis in the original). For example, the entity that is ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*), that is, which is involved in the referential structure of the world, is not present-at-hand. *Dasein* exists, yet is not present-at-hand: “Accordingly, not every being is present-at-hand, but also not everything which is not a being that is present-at-hand is therefore also a non-entity or something that *is not*” (GA 24, 37/28). The critique of the predominance of *Vorhandenheit* consists first in challenging the impoverished and narrow character of the ontological tradition, an ontology that obscures the diverse kinds of being of entities. Second, as noted prior, the predominance of *Vorhandenheit*, *as that which remains constantly the same*, covers up the eventful being of the self, its proper happening. The predominance of *Vorhandenheit* focuses on the present being, thereby missing the coming into presence of such being.

Heidegger claims that nature, in the broadest sense of the term, represents in the philosophical tradition “the ontologically exemplary entity, the being from which being and its meaning are gathered” (GA 24, 174/123). Understood ontologically, nature designates presence-at-hand, *Vorhandenheit*, a mode of being according to which *Dasein* tends to grasp every entity, whether natural or subjective. This exclusive predominance comes, among other reasons, from

a misrecognition of the *phenomenon of the world*. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger reverses the hierarchical relation between nature and world. Indeed, he inscribes nature within the enviroing world and considers it a mode of a ready-to-hand entity: nature is nothing but a *Zuhandenes*: “Here, however, ‘Nature’ is not to be understood as that which is just present-at-hand, nor as the *power of Nature*. The wood is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock; the river is water-power, the wind is wind ‘in the sails.’ As the ‘environment’ is discovered, the ‘Nature’ thus discovered is encountered too” (SZ, 70). Nature is *situated* in a chain of references that are constitutive of the world. Here I will briefly reconstruct this chain. The being of “equipment” lies in the “for-which” or “toward-which.” The “toward-which” of equipment is the work to be produced. In turn, the work itself has the kind of being that belongs to equipment: “The shoe which is to be produced is *for* wearing (footgear); the clock is manufactured *for* telling the time” (SZ, 70, emphasis mine). But production is not simply “for” something, it includes as well the use “of something.” In the production of something, there is necessarily a reference to an “of-which”: “The production itself is a using of something for something” (SZ, 70). The “of which” can be characterized as the *material* of production. Now this material is nothing other than *nature*, insofar as nature is always already involved in the production of the work. Nature is here revealed, no longer as *present-at-hand*, nor as a *force*, but rather as material *for* a production. “In equipment that is used, ‘Nature’ is discovered along with it by that use—the ‘Nature’ we find in natural products” (SZ, 70). Nature gives itself in the enviroing world of concern as material, more precisely as that material that does not need to be produced: to produce a shoe, one needs “leather, thread, needles and the like” (SZ, 70). Leather refers to hides, which are taken from animals, which human beings raise. Even if humans raise animals, they in fact “re-produce” themselves. Within the environment, there are entities that do not need to be produced. Does this mean that the chain of references that characterize equipment would be interrupted at the threshold of natural entities? In others words, does this mean that nature would not fall within the realm of readiness-to-hand and would instead subsist in itself as an independent mode of being? Nothing could be less certain, if it turns out that nature, even as unproduced, remains as *material for* a production.

In its very being as “not needing to be produced,” nature continues to be inscribed in the process of production as a material. “Not needing to be produced” does not mean that nature would escape the sphere of *Zuhandenheit*. Heidegger is quite clear on this point. “So in the environment certain entities become accessible which are always-already ready-to-hand [*immer schon zuhanden ist*], but which, in themselves, do not need to be produced” (SZ, 70). Moreover, the determination “not needing to be produced” can make sense only in terms of the comportment of production itself and in fact presupposes it. It belongs to

the essence of production to be the production of something *from* something (GA 24, 163/116). Heidegger characterizes such a “thing” as that which is “already present.” But far from implying a “positive,” “originary” or “irreducible” meaning of *Vorhandenheit*, nature is on the contrary that which is present-at-hand “before all production and for all further production” (GA 24, 163/116). The very concept of material implies the productive comportment as “that *from which* something is produced” (GA 24, 163/116). The analysis of nature as a “material to be produced” confirms the foundation of nature in the world. It is a genuine reversal between world and nature that takes place since whereas in classical ontology Dasein was considered ontologically in terms of nature (that is, as a present-at-hand entity), here it is nature that is considered on the basis of concern, which is none other than a mode of being of Dasein. Thus Heidegger, immediately following the statement, “‘Nature,’ as the categorial aggregate of those structures of being which a definite entity encountered within-the-world may possess, can never make *worldhood* intelligible” (SZ, 65), exclaims in a note added to his personal manuscript: “*Sondern umgekehrt!*”—“It is even the contrary!” Ultimately, nature “can be grasped ontologically only in terms of the concept of the world—that is to say, in terms of the analytic of Dasein” (SZ, 65). Nature no longer appears as the exemplary entity, but is no more than “a limit case of a possible entity within-the-world.” Nature appears within the horizon of the world. “Only in some definite mode of its own being-in-the-world can Dasein discover entities as nature.”⁷

The derivation of nature from the world in *Being and Time* reveals the event of the world. Heidegger describes the familiar and everyday opening of the world, which he calls “the environment” (*Umwelt*), in this way: “Dasein’s facticity is such that its Being-in-the-world has always dispersed (*zerstreut*) itself or even split itself up into definite ways of Being-in. The multiplicity of these is indicated by the following examples: having to do with something, producing something, attending to something and looking after it, making use of something, giving something up and letting it go, undertaking, accomplishing, evincing, interrogating, considering, discussing, determining” (SZ, 56). The environment in which I “live” each day is a world in which I am involved with something, in which I take up this or that activity or task, in which, as one says, I have “a thousand things” to do. A busy and eventful world indeed! Nature, the privileged traditional “object” of philosophical reflection, finds itself based upon such an eventful world. Nature is given within the world, on the basis of the world: it is inscribed in the world. “Nature is itself an entity which is encountered within the world and which can be discovered in various ways and at various stages” (SZ, 63).

Ultimately, the issue is to reveal the ontological senses of substantiality, of presence-at-hand. *Vorhandenheit* is said to essentially originate from the comportment of production that ancient ontology followed in its determination of

the being of beings. "Beings present-at-hand [*Vorhanden*] can be interpreted ontologically in the horizon of production" (GA 24, 168/119). According to Heidegger, the productive comportment is characterized by its way of relating to that which it produces as something which "is supposed to be present-at-hand as finished *in its own self*" (GA 24, 159/113). The product is as it were "freed to itself," and insofar as it is conceived as the "being-in-itself" of that which is finished, it is "in-itself." There is in the structure of productive comportment something like an "absolving" of that to which it is related, an absolving or a releasing of entities, letting them be as entities that are present-at-hand. To this extent, *Vorhandenheit* is said to originate in productive comportment, an interpretation that one finds, unchanged, in the summary of the lecture "On Time and Being": "The presencing of what is present—that is, letting-presence: what is present—is interpreted by Aristotle as *poiesis*. Later interpreted as *creatio*, this leads in a straight line of admirable simplicity up to positing, as the transcendental consciousness of objects. *Thus it becomes evident that the fundamental characteristic of the letting-presence of metaphysics is production in its various forms.*"⁸ Not only does Heidegger not see a fundamental difference between creation and production, he in fact claims that *creatio* derives from production, notwithstanding their differences: "Even if creation out of nothing is not identical with producing something out of a material that is found already on hand, nevertheless, this creating of the creation has the general ontological character of producing" (GA 24, 167/118). The demonstration is made through the angle of causality: God, as *ens increatum*, is the only entity that does not need to be produced. On the contrary, all created entities need, in a sense, to be "produced." To this extent, Heidegger considers that the Christian problematic of *creatio* depends on the Greek ontology of production, and that the latter is "cut to fit the Christian world-view and interpretation of that which is as *ens creatum*" (GA 24, 168/118). On the basis of such a "homogenization" of the two domains of production and of creation, Heidegger is then able to describe creation as a mode of production and the latter as the dominant horizon in which being is understood. "All entities other than God need to be 'produced' in the widest sense and also need to be sustained. 'Being' is to be understood within a horizon which ranges from the production of what is to be present-at-hand to something which has no need of being produced" (SZ, 92).

Heidegger pursues this appropriation of the ontological senses of substantiality in his interpretation of Descartes. He engages in *Being and Time* Descartes's uncritical reception of the medieval tradition of substantiality, but already explained in the *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time*: "Whenever Descartes asks about the being of the entity, he is asking, in the spirit of the tradition, about *substance*."⁹ In the *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes defines the substantiality of substance according to the feature of *self-sufficiency*. A substantial

entity is one that needs nothing other than itself in order to be. "By substance we can understand nothing else than an entity which *is* in such a way that it needs no other entity in order to *be*."¹⁰ This criteria, by any measure, can only apply to God as *ens increatum* and *ens perfectissimum*. God is the being which, in order to be, does not "need anything." Indeed, "the being of a substance is characterized by not needing anything [*Unbedürftigkeit*]" (SZ, 92). Only God meets this criterion of substantiality, as created entities need divine concurrence in order to be. God, on the other hand, is *increatum* and sole substance. It here appears that, for modern philosophy, as was the case for the ancient and medieval tradition, a definite being, namely God, stands out as "the prototype of all being" (GA 24, 210/148). God is, "as *ens realissimum*, the ontological prototype, the *prototypon transcendentale*, the ontological model [*Urbild*], in conformity with which the idea of original being is conceived and the determinations of all derivative beings are normalized" (GA 24, 210/148). This determination is none other than that of production, insofar as God, because it is *ens increatum*, is the being that does not need to be *produced*. Now, for Descartes, although created, certain entities are themselves *self-sufficient* and for that reason can be called substances, more precisely *finite* substances.¹¹ Substantiality can embrace *both* the *ens increatum* and the *ens creatum*. This strange "extension" of substance makes it embrace the infinite distance that separates the finite from the infinite. "Every entity which is not God is an *ens creatum*. The being which belongs to one of these entities is 'infinitely' different from that which belongs to the other; yet we still consider creation and creator alike *as entities*" (SZ, 92). Substantiality determines both *ens increatum* and *ens creatum*, finite being and infinite being.

Now, how could substantiality have the *same* meaning for beings that are separated by an "infinite difference of being" (SZ, 93)? Certainly, God "is," and a created entity also "is." But can the meaning of that "is" be the same? For Heidegger, this means that the expression *substantia* "functions sometimes with a signification which is ontological, sometimes with one which is ontical, but mostly with one which is hazily onto-ontological" (SZ, 94). Substance is accounted for through a substantial entity: "something ontical is made to underlie the ontological" (SZ, 94). Heidegger's conclusion is unambiguous: Descartes's inability to problematize the question of substance reveals the confusion of the ontic with the ontological and amounts finally to a "failure to master the basic problem of being" (SZ, 94). Descartes did not see the difference between substantiality and substance, between being and beings; his discourse was thus condemned to an unavoidable ambiguity. I note in passing that this ambiguity also affects the Greek term *ousia*, as Heidegger himself points out: "The term for the being of an entity that is in itself, is '*substantia*.' Sometimes this expression means the *being* of an entity as substance, *substantiality*; at other times, it means the entity

itself, a *substance*. That ‘*substantia*’ is used in these two ways is not accidental; this already holds for the ancient conception of *ousia*” (SZ, 90, emphasis mine).

Nonetheless, the meaning of substance can be “read off” from its attributes. With respect to *res corporea*, for instance, one such meaning is *permanence*. The piece of wax may vary infinitely, to testing the very limits of the imagination, yet it *remains*, constantly, this piece of extension, retaining the same *quantity* that is proper to it. Extension remains identical to itself, “constantly the same” *through* its various modifications. “After” the destruction of sensible qualities (but in fact always already) there *remains* “something,” which Descartes identifies as something *extended*: the substantiality of the *res corporea* lies in extension to the extent that extension is what remains beneath the “accidents,” what “maintains itself [*remanet*] through all these changes” (SZ, 92). It maintains itself in the sense that it *can* undergo modifications (*capax mutationum*), that it is *capable* of its own modifications, able to endure its own alteration. The meaning of the being of substantiality becomes clearer: it provides the entity the “possibility of a *remaining constant*” (SZ, 92). In this way, Descartes limits himself to borrowing the ancient determination of the being of beings according to which “that truly is which always is” (GA 20, 240/178).

The sense of permanence is further secured by the mode of access to entities that Descartes privileges, namely, mathematical-physical knowledge. The appropriate mode of access that Descartes grants to beings determined on the basis of *extensio* is *intellectio*, in the form of the “kind of knowledge we get in mathematics and physics” (SZ, 95).¹² Why this privilege of mathematico-physical knowledge? Not because of some particular excellence, but because of a fundamental ontological orientation that this mode of cognition serves. The issue is to reveal the *metaphysical* meaning of mathematics, which presents the being as that which is “always what it is,” having the character of something that *constantly remains*. Heidegger makes it clear in a condensed formulation: “That which enduringly remains really *is*. This is the sort of thing which mathematics knows” (SZ, 96). *Intellectio* (in the guise of mathematical knowledge) has the property of *not* letting the entity *happen* in the everyday world, in the complexity of references that are constitutive of the world, but rather of depriving it of its worldly and eventful character (we saw in our last chapter how the mathematization of things into objects neutralized their eventness) by reducing it to an entity that can be made a securely grasped object, insofar as those entities “*always are what they are*” (SZ, 95). Mathematical knowledge is privileged *to the extent* that it *is well suited* for the predetermination of the meaning of being as substantiality, that is to say, as *that which remains constantly present*. Descartes presupposes, then, a certain meaning of being, whose elaboration is not guided by a phenomenal content, but by a traditional idea of philosophy: the idea of substantiality, that is, of constant

presence. Descartes “prescribes for the world its ‘real’ being, as it were, on the basis of an idea of being whose source has not been unveiled and which has not been demonstrated in its own right—an idea in which being is equated with constant presence-at-hand [*ständige Vorhandenheit*]” (SZ, 96).

Presence-at-hand (substantiality, or constant presence) becomes the mode that improperly determines the meaning of being. Ancient ontology, according to Heidegger, is an ontology that orients itself toward nature in the broad sense and determines it as *ousia*. Now, for Heidegger, the highly polysemic term *ousia*, grasped in its fundamental signification, signifies but one thing: *constant presence*. In *The Essence of Human Freedom*, a course given in 1930, Heidegger explores the philosophical meaning of the Greek term *ousia* by first discussing its “pre-philosophical” usage in everyday language. Indeed, philosophical thought borrowed that term from an ordinary linguistic context: “*ousia* is not an artificial expression which first occurs in philosophy, but belongs to the everyday language and speech of the Greeks.”¹³ Now, a pre-philosophical understanding is already philosophical! “Philosophy took up the word from its pre-philosophical usage. If this could happen so easily, and with no artificiality, then we must conclude that the *pre-philosophical* language of the Greeks was already *philosophical*” (GA 31, 50/35). Thus, as Heidegger insists, “If we wish to hearken to the fundamental meaning of this basic word *ousia*, we must pay attention to everyday speech” (GA 31, 51/36). In everyday usage, *ousia* designated the beings that *belong* to someone, one’s possessions or goods, such as a house or a home, in other words, beings that are *available*, and available *constantly*: “These beings stand at one’s disposal because they are fixed and stable, because they are *constantly attainable and at hand* [*vorhanden*], in the immediate or proximate environment” (GA 31, 51/36). Constant presence is the characteristic that philosophical thought retained in its treatment of the word *ousia*. In its technical sense, *ousia* then means: constant presence, *beständige Anwesenheit*. For the Greeks, being means: constant presence, *Vorhandenheit*. “House and home, possessions, are constantly attainable. As constantly attainable they lie close at hand, presented on a plate as it were, *constantly presenting themselves*. . . . Because they are present and at hand in an exemplary sense, we call possessions, house and home, etc. (what the Greeks call *ousia*) estate [*Anwesen*].” In fact, by *ousia* “nothing else is meant but constant presence [*ständige Anwesenheit*], and just this is what is understood by beingness [*Seiendheit*]” (GA 31, 51–52/36). Being means constant presence. “By being we mean nothing else but constant presence [*ständige Anwesenheit*], enduring constancy [*anwesende Ständigkeit*]” (GA 31, 52/36). The Greeks call what is properly being what *satisfies* that understanding of being—constant presence, or that which is *always present* and *present-at-hand*.

The meaning of being is understood as *Vorhandenheit*, presence-at-hand. But this implies, in turn, that presence-at-hand nonetheless designates the being of

beings, albeit inadequately. It is thus possible to reopen the question of the meaning of being from this determination. In particular, to the extent that “presence” has the meaning of *being constantly present*, it turns out to be an intrinsically *temporal* (that is, as will be seen, *eventful*) determination. In the Greek interpretation of being as *ousia* therein lies concealed the temporal-ontological meaning of presence (*Anwesenheit*), that is, the *event* of presence. This implies that the meaning of being is to be approached in light of the problematic of temporality. In that way, the temporal eventfulness of being can appear. From an orientation toward the natural given, the entity that is present-at-hand, one moves to an inquiry into the *event* of its givenness. This emphasis on the event of presence, as opposed to the substantialization of beings in the tradition, was in fact sketched by Heidegger in his early courses in the 1920s. There one finds a critique of atemporal ontology and an attempt at grasping the temporal *happening* of being.

The Happening of Original History

This break with the paradigm of nature and substantiality, and the opening of the question of the event, occurs in the problematics of history as Heidegger developed it in his early writings.¹⁴ It is striking to note that when the question of history first emerged in Heidegger’s path of thinking, namely in the 1915 essay, “The Concept of Time in Historical Science,”¹⁵ it was in contrast with and in opposition to the motif of nature and natural sciences,¹⁶ signaling an attempt to think the being of history away from the natural, the biological, and the ontical. This attempt to access what is most proper to historical time takes place in various ways: through the overcoming of the theoretical paradigm; through the distinctions between historical facticity and natural factuality, authentic temporality and inauthentic or natural time, time of the psyche and natural time; and, last but not least, through the distinction between *Geschichte* and *Historie*. At stake in all these distinctions is to seize the eventfulness of historical time away from the model of natural sciences. I will follow this enterprise from its first articulation in the 1915 lecture to Heidegger’s overcoming of the epistemological horizon of the question and the eventual subordination of nature under historical time in *Being and Time*.

In the formal trial lecture he delivered in Freiburg on July 27, 1915, “The Concept of Time in the Science of History” (*Der Zeitbegriff in der Geschichtswissenschaft*), Heidegger left behind the logical questions that had occupied him in earlier works (whether in *The Doctrine of Judgment in Psychologism* or in his 1916 habilitation thesis, *The Theory of Categories and Signification in Duns Scotus*) in order to focus on the motif of the historical, first grasped in a concrete, pre-phenomenological manner. Indeed, the concept of time in historical science rests upon a lived, phenomenological, and concrete experience, which Heidegger

begins to explore in an otherwise epistemological essay. This is why even though these reflections still take place within an epistemological horizon, they nonetheless already anticipate the ontological inquiries to follow in the 1920s regarding the being of time and history.¹⁷ In fact, in his opening remarks, Heidegger draws the limits of an epistemological approach. If the “emphasis on epistemological problems is born out of a legitimate and lively awareness of the need and value of critique,” nonetheless “it does not permit philosophy’s questions about ultimate issues and goals to achieve their intrinsic significance” (BH, 61). It is thus legitimate to note that if Heidegger does share with Dilthey the view that there is a radical difference between the method of natural sciences and that of the human sciences, yet, as Françoise Dastur notes, “over and above the purely epistemological problem, some ontological considerations already appear about what constitutes ‘true’ time, which is not the time of physics, and which is characterized by diversity and heterogeneity.”¹⁸ With the latter characteristics, one already notes the emergence of a problematic of the event, marked both by singularity and otherness.

Heidegger begins by defining the object of his inquiry, namely, the determination of the concept of historical time: “we shall single out and clarify a specific individual category (or basic logical element): the concept of time.” More specifically: “What we need to articulate is this determination of the concept of ‘time in general’ as the concept of ‘historical time’” (BH, 62). Heidegger approaches the meaning of historical time in contrast with the concept of time in natural sciences. At issue is to approach the concept of time in a way that is irreducible to a “purely logical or chronological apprehension.”¹⁹ Historical time is not reducible to the logical, Heidegger breaking with the horizon of epistemological questions and disciplines, with natural sciences. More precisely, Heidegger attempts to determine the specific nature of the concept of time that pertains to *historical* science, in contrast with the concept of time one finds in natural sciences. “The peculiar structure of the concept of time in the science of history will no doubt stand out more clearly if we contrast it with a very different articulation of the structure of time. To do so, we shall briefly characterize the concept of time in natural sciences—specifically physics” (BH, 63).

What is the role of time in the natural sciences? It is “*to make measurement possible*” (BH, 66) so that time only appears as “a necessary moment in the *definition* of motion.” As Heidegger expresses it, “concisely put,” the “object of physics is law-governed motion” (BH, 65). In such an approach, time becomes reduced to a “homogeneous ordering of points, a scale, and a parameter” (BH, 66), that is, the measure of motion. Further, time in this context is reduced to simply functioning as the “condition of possibility for mathematically determining the object of physics (i.e., motion)” (BH, 66). This is in fact consistent with the traditional metaphysical account of time, which since Aristotle has always been understood

in terms of the measurement of motion, within the general context of a philosophy of nature. Heidegger stresses this point in his 1925 Kassel lectures, "Wilhelm Dilthey's Research and the Current Struggle for a Historical Worldview": "Time, says Aristotle, is what is counted in motion with respect to the before and after. This definition has remained essentially unchanged into modern times. Kant, too, determines time by starting from an apprehension of nature" (BH, 270). While time in the natural sciences is constituted as a homogenous, spatialized universal flow, allowing for measurement of motion ("the relation of motion and time has to do with *measuring* motion by means of time," BH, 65) and therefore reduced to being "a mere parameter" (HQT, 2), historical time is characterized by a *qualitative heterogeneity*, that is, by a certain eventfulness.

In contrast to such natural time, the time of physics, historical time engages *events*, Heidegger also clarifying that the object of the science of history "is human beings" (BH, 68). Heidegger uses the word *Ereignis* in the 1915 essay to name such historical event (BH, 71) while making the point that time-reckoning systems in calendars always begin with an *event* (he gives the examples of the founding of the city of Rome, the birth of Christ, and the Hegira), that is, with a "historically significant event [*Ereignis*]" (BH, 72). The starting point of time reckoning is a qualitative event. In fact, the event is that through which Heidegger differentiates historical time from the time of physics, insofar as the event is irreducible to quantitative measurement: "Consequently, the concept of time in the science of history has none of the homogeneity characterizing the concept of time in the natural sciences. That is also why historical time cannot be expressed mathematically by way of a series, for there is no law determining how the time-periods succeed one another" (BH, 71). Heidegger severs historical time from any quantitative approach and approaches it in terms of its qualitative occurrence. "*Time-periods [Zeiten] in history are distinguished qualitatively*" (BH, 71). Certainly, Heidegger concedes, the historian works with a concept of time as a certain "ordering of points," that is, he or she works with historical dates, with "quantities," such as the number 1515 for the battle of Marignan. Yet these numbers are not treated as *quantities* (that is, as an element within the numerical series from 1 to infinity or as a number per se), and neither is the historian interested in dates *as dates*, for he/she considers them only insofar as they refer to meaningful *events*. A date has "meaning and value within the science of history only as regards its historically significant content" (BH, 71). The question "when" has two different meanings in history and in physics. When asking about the "when" of a historical event (*Ereignis*), "I am asking not about its quantity but about its place in a *qualitative historical context*" (BH, 71). What is specific to the concept of time in history is that it designates *an event*: "Thus the concept 'the famine in Fulda in the year 750' indicates a very specific individual event [*Ereignis*] and accordingly is a historical concept" (BH, 67). This

is why historical dates are only “convenient tokens for counting,” but in themselves have no meaning. What gives them meaning is a *qualitative* determination. This also implies that history as a science, as historiography, rests upon and presupposes historical reality itself (which still demands to be elaborated and clarified ontologically), rendering Heidegger’s distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* necessary, as well as the overcoming of the theoretical paradigm, since this ontologizing of the problematic of history shows that the epistemological horizon proves inadequate.

History engages events, and indeed designates eventfulness as such, Heidegger stating in the 1934 summer semester course, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language*, that “History [*Geschichte*] is an event [*Ereignis*], insofar as it *happens* [*geschieht*].”²⁰ In the early texts, Heidegger characterizes such historical event in terms of the presence of *life* in history, explaining that “the qualitative factor of the historical concept of time is nothing but the congealing—the crystallization—of an objectification of life within history” (BH, 71). This is a decisive passage as Heidegger clearly states that the concept of historical time needs to be grounded in the phenomenological event of life itself, to which I will return. It also reveals that the concept itself is grounded in a phenomenological pre-theoretical domain. Indeed, as early as 1919, in an early Freiburg lecture course, Heidegger explained that “the theoretical itself and as such refers back to something pre-theoretical” so that, on the way to an originary phenomenology of the facticity of life, later renamed *Dasein*, “the primacy of the theoretical must be broken.”²¹ Such a pre-theoretical basis is approached by Heidegger as *life*, and more precisely as *factual life* (*faktische Leben*) in order to avoid any psychologism, a life that is characterized as “ultimate fact.” Life is the fundamental fact, “something ultimate.”²² Life in its givenness is not a theoretical object, does not take a theoretical distance with itself, but rather interprets itself in a radically immanent manner. Such life is “lived life” (GA 56/57, 48/40), not in the sense of a psychical process, not as *Erlebnis*, but indeed and already as *Er-eignis*, appropriative event. “The experiences are appropriative events in so far as they live out of one’s ownness, and life only lives in this way” (*Die Erlebnisse sind Er-eignisse, insofern sie aus dem Eigenen leben und Leben nur so lebt*; GA 56/57, 75/64, trans. slightly modified). And since life understood as *Ereignis* constitutes the essence of the historical as such, since it “is itself *historical* in an absolute sense” (GA 56/57, 21/18), one can see how the opposition between quantitative time and qualitative historical time from the 1915 lecture finds itself rethought in terms of an originary hermeneutics of factual life. Historical time now designates life’s proper motion (*Bewegtheit*)—distinguished from the *Bewegung* or natural movement of natural entities—in its restlessness and self-unfolding. Heidegger calls this movement *Geschichlichkeit* (“historicity”), borrowing the term from Count York via Dilthey.

Unfolding in these discussions is a critique of the reliance on the metaphysical and epistemological primacy of natural sciences, as well as the beginning of an ontological derivation of nature as such. Heidegger takes issue with the motif of objectivity—and nature—as the standard model for being. “It is not the case that objects are first present as bare realities, as objects in some sort of natural state, and that they then in the course of our experience receive the garb of a value-character, so they do not have to run around naked. . . . *On the contrary, the objectivity, ‘nature,’ first arises out of the basic sense of the being of objects of the lived, experienced, encountered world*” (GA 61, 91/PIA, 69, emphasis mine). Objectivity, nature, are here derived from a more primordial sense of being, namely life in its facticity happening pre-theoretically. This break with the theoretical, with the epistemological, in a new approach that Heidegger referred to in the 1919 course (GA 56/57, 13–17/11–14) as “primordial science” (*Urwissenschaft*), appears clearly in the opening pages of the 1925 summer semester course, *History of the Concept of Time*, the subtitle of which reads: “Prolegomena to the Phenomenology of History [*Geschichte*] and Nature [*Natur*].” Heidegger begins by noting the epistemological background of the very distinction between nature and history through their respective empirical disciplines, natural sciences and human sciences, and he immediately raises a doubt with respect to the legitimacy of this scientific approach: for, on the one hand, “history and nature would be accessible only insofar as they are objects thematized in these sciences,” which would not provide “the actual area of subject matter out of which the thematic of the sciences is first carved” (GA 20, 1/1), and, on the other hand, due to this situation in which history as a science misses the “authentic reality of history,” one may claim that “it might well be that something essential necessarily remains closed” to the scientific way of disclosure. This is why Heidegger treats of the opposition between nature and history as a strictly and merely scientific division (“the separation comes first from these sciences”) that is not validated phenomenologically: “the separation of the two domains may well indicate that an original and undivided context of subject matter remains hidden” (GA 20, 2/2). Instead of remaining with the “obvious” fact of these scientific divisions, it is a matter of leaping ahead “into the primary field of subject matter of a potential science and first [making] available the basic structure of the possible object of the science” (GA 20, 2/2, slightly modified). This does not amount to undertaking, Heidegger clarifies, a phenomenology of these disciplines, or even a phenomenology of their respective areas, domains of being, or subject matter: “Here it is not a matter of a phenomenology of the sciences of history and nature, or even of a phenomenology of history and nature as objects of these sciences” (GA 20, 2/2). The scope of the analysis is neither a phenomenology of science nor a regional ontology.

It is, rather, a matter “of a phenomenological disclosure of the original kind of being and constitution of both” (GA 20, 2/2). How can this be achieved?

Heidegger answers: “by disclosing the constitution of the being of that field.” This would constitute the “original science” of which he spoke in the 1919 course (referred to in this 1925 lecture course as “a productive logic,” GA 20, 2/2), original because it investigates a domain prior to its scientific thematization. And what is that primary field prior to the domains of nature and history? *Original Dasein*. Indeed, Heidegger tells us, sciences must receive “the possibility of their being” from “their meaning in human Dasein.” Original Dasein signifies: original historicity and temporality. This is why the next section is titled, “Prolegomena to a phenomenology of history and nature *under the guidance of the history of the concept of time*” (GA 20, 7/5, emphasis mine), as both nature and history can be said to stand under the horizon of time. The task is to reveal the horizon within which history and nature can be set against and find the “actual constituents which underlie history and nature” (GA 20, 7/5). Thus, what Heidegger seeks to achieve is to grasp nature and history *prior to* scientific thematization (“We wish to exhibit history and nature so that we may regard them before scientific elaboration,” GA 20, 7/5). This is why it became necessary to overcome the theoretical and epistemological paradigms. Such overcoming—as well as the exhibiting of the ontological basis of historical time—is achieved through Heidegger’s problematizing of the distinction between the terms *Historie* and *Geschichte*, a distinction that he had not treated of in the 1915 essay and that is found for the first time addressed by him thematically in the 1925 Kassel lectures,²³ although already this passage in the 1920–1921 winter semester course on the *Phenomenology of Religious Life* reads: “We mean the historical in the way we encounter it in life; not in the science of history.”²⁴ The problem lies in the fact that the question of history is usually approached via the angle of historical science (*Historie*), a discipline which for Heidegger *does not master its own subject matter*, that is, historical reality itself (*Geschichte*). Heidegger reminds the reader that “the historiological sciences are currently troubled by the question of historical reality itself,” a situation presumably made worse by the fact that “historiological sciences generally dispensed with any philosophical reflection” (GA 20, 14/14)! One could add here that *Historie* is an investigation of ontic “facts” while *Geschichte* designates the *being* of history. *Historie* presupposes *Geschichte*, all the while missing it. As Heidegger put it in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, “the science of history does not at all determine, as science, the originary relation to history; instead, it always already presupposes such a relation.”²⁵

In paragraph 74 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger distinguishes between *Geschichte* and *Historie*, history as the eventfulness of Dasein’s being and history as the science of objectively present objects (*Objekts-geschichte*). History as *Geschichte* designates the absolutely originary history (*ursprüngliche Geschichte*) whereas history as *Historie* designates the objectification of *Geschichte*. *Geschichte* refers to history from the perspective of being and its event while *Historie*

designates the scientific account of historiography. In this distinction is the opening of an access to ontological time, to the *event* of historical time. At issue in this distinction is the radicalizing of historical time from an external object of inquiry (*Historie*, from the Greek *historein*, to inquire) to history as an event (*Geschichte*, from the verb *geschehen*, to happen), indeed as “the happening that we ourselves are” (BH, 271). This happening as *geschehen* is to be distinguished from a *natural* happening, or *Vorgang* (from *vorgehen*, as in the processes or *vorgänge* of nature). Let me recall here the distinction made by Heidegger in the 1934 course among three types of change: one speaks of a “flow” (*Ablauf*) for the earth, of a “movement” (*Bewegung*) or “process” (*Vorgang*) for life, and of a “happening” (*Geschehen*) for human beings (GA 38, 89/75).

In the Kassel lectures, Heidegger pursues a phenomenological inquiry into the senses of life and the “being of the human being.” In these lectures, Heidegger begins by lamenting the fact that in post-Kantian philosophy the question of the sense of historical being “died out” due to the predominance of the mathematical natural sciences and the reduction of philosophy to epistemology. In such a context, the question concerning the *being* of history became all the more pressing, and Heidegger credits Dilthey for having revived such an inquiry, although Dilthey was not able to sufficiently distinguish his approach from the epistemological and as a consequence could not raise the question of the *being* of history phenomenologically. As Heidegger puts it: “It is a matter of elaborating the being of the historical, i.e., historicity and not the historical, being and not beings, reality and not the real. It is therefore not a question of empirical research in history. Even a universal history still would not deal with historicity. Dilthey made his way to the reality that *is* properly historical and has the sense of *being* historical, namely, human Dasein. Dilthey succeeded in bringing this reality to givenness, defining it as living, free, and historical. But he did not raise the question of historicity *itself*, the question of the sense of being, the question of the being of beings. It is only with the development of phenomenology that we are in a position to raise this question overtly” (BH, 255). A few pages later, Heidegger emphasizes that “Dilthey never raised the question of the reality of life itself” and never “had an answer to the question of what it means *to be* historical” (BH, 258).

In order to gain access to the *being* of the historical, it becomes necessary to break with the theoretical or epistemological perspectives and distinguish more fully between historical science and history as such. This is what Heidegger attempts by stressing the phenomenological scope of his analyses, clarifying that the “fundamental attitude of phenomenological research is defined by a principle which at first seems self-evident: to the matters themselves” (BH, 256). The issue is to reveal the *phenomenon* of history. This is all the more necessary since the ontological structure of historicity is concealed by historical science. In terms of the question of history, it becomes a matter “of bringing historical

reality itself to givenness so that the sense of its being can be read off from it" (BH, 256). This phenomenological task is only misleadingly self-evident, for the matters themselves are covered over by the unphenomenological representations concerning historical time, by the epistemological perspective and the reductive outlook on natural time. "By way of preparation," Heidegger then proceeds to distinguish *Geschichte* from *Historie*, noting that those terms, although from an entirely different origin, can "yet both get used interchangeably." This is a confusion that of course needs to be clarified: history as *Geschichte* designates a happening "that we ourselves are" whereas historical science, from its etymological source, is an "ascertaining and reporting [of] what has happened" and means "a knowledge of a happening" (BH, 271). The being of the historical is the happening that we ourselves are ("History happens to me; I am this happening"²⁶) while historical science is the thematic investigation of such happening. To this extent, it is not simply a matter of distinguishing those two terms, but of showing how one is grounded in the other, since *Historie* presupposes *Geschichte*. Dasein exists historically before historiography, and what is world-historical is always already there in the occurrence of existing being-in-the-world, even "without being grasped historiographically" (SZ, 389). This ontological foundation is developed in *Being and Time*, where Heidegger proposes to reveal "the ontological genesis of historiography as a science in terms of the historicity of Da-sein" (SZ, 392).

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger notes once again the ambiguity of the term "history," which designates both "'historical reality' as well as the possibility of a science of it" (SZ, 378). However, Heidegger's focus is neither the science of history nor even history as an object of such science. Instead, he is interested in thinking "this being itself which has not necessarily been objectified," namely, the historical itself. Heidegger explains in paragraph 72 that the problem of history cannot be raised from historical science or historiography, because in such an approach, history is taken as an *object* of science. The basic phenomenon of history is "prior to the possibility of making something thematic by historiography and underlies it," so that the question of the relation between the two becomes the following: "How history [*Geschichte*] can become a possible *object* for historiography [*Historie*], can be gathered only from the kind of being of what is historical [*Geschichtlichen*], from historicity and its rootedness in temporality" (SZ, 375). Heidegger makes this point in three different ways in this section: first, by defining historiography as an existentiell possibility of Dasein ("from the kind of being of this being that exists historically, there arises the existentiell possibility of an explicit disclosure and grasp of history"), which betrays that it presupposes an existential basis that needs to be fleshed out; secondly, by characterizing historical science as the "thematizing" (proper to any science) of a pre-given domain, as *Historie* is "primarily constituted by thematizing" (SZ, 392); and thirdly, by characterizing

this discussion in terms of ontological foundation: “the existential interpretation of historiography as a science aims solely at a demonstration of its ontological provenance from the historicity of Da-sein” (SZ, 376).

This ontological foundation of history is the task of paragraph 76 of *Being and Time*, which is concerned with deriving the “existential origin of Historiography from the Historicity of Dasein” and proposes to “inquire into the ontological possibility of the origin of the sciences [here of historical science] from the constitution of being of Da-sein” (SZ, 392), an existential derivation that had already been established in paragraph 3 of *Being and Time*. The presuppositions of the historicity of Dasein by historiography are several: one can, for instance, note from the outset that the very possibility of disclosing the past through historiography presupposes that “the ‘past’ has always already been disclosed in general” (SZ, 393). Things such as “antiquities” can become historiographical objects only because they are already in themselves historical. As Heidegger explains, the historical character of antiquities is “grounded in the ‘past’ of Da-sein to whose world that past belongs” (SZ, 380). This means that the historiographical disclosure (*Erschliessung*) of history “is in itself rooted in the historicity of Da-sein in accordance with its ontological structure, whether it is factually carried out or not” (SZ, 392). Thus, historiography should not be given a positivist interpretation, as its objects are not “the facts” in their positivity, but rather the having-been of historical Dasein.

The acquisition, sifting, and securing of material “does not first bring about a return to the ‘past,’ but rather already presupposes historical being toward the Da-sein that has-been-there” (SZ, 394). For Dasein to be “factually” does not point to “facts” but to a world-history. This is why remains, monuments, and records are all possible material for historical research and “can become historiographical material only because they have a world-historical character” (SZ, 394). The object of historical science is not “the facts,” but historical Dasein. This is why, as Heidegger states, “what is philosophically primary is neither a theory of the concept-formation of historiology nor the theory of historiological knowledge, nor yet the theory of history as the Object of historiology; what is primary is rather the Interpretation of authentically historical entities as regards their historicity” (SZ, 10). This, in turn, presupposes the historicity of the historian’s existence as the thematization of the past (historiography) presupposes the historicity of Dasein. This does not indicate some subjectivism in Heidegger’s analysis, but rather the fact that historiography is a possibility of existence: the central theme of historiography “is always a possibility of existence that has-been-there” and rests upon the historicity of Dasein’s existence.²⁷ Ultimately, the fundamental concepts of historiographical sciences “are concepts of existence” (SZ, 397). The epistemological problematic of historiography (*Historie*) rests upon and presupposes the ontological constitution of history (*Geschichte*). The question

of history is displaced from the epistemological horizon of the 1915 essay to the ontological level.

This ontological foundation of *Historie* in *Geschichte* has radical consequences for a thinking of the event. Recall how for Heidegger the world is not given but happens. The ontological foundation of historical science in historicity implies the subordination of nature to history via the reference to the world or, to be more precise, the so-called “secondarily historical,” “World History,” or the “world-historical” (*das Weltgeschichtliche*). As Heidegger explains, *Dasein* is the “primarily historical,” and the “secondarily historical” is “what is encountered within the world, not only useful things at hand in the broadest sense, but also *nature* in the surrounding world as the ‘historical ground’” (SZ, 381). Nature gives itself against the background of the world, which itself is happening temporally. “With the factual disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*] of *Dasein*’s world, nature has been uncovered [*entdeckt*] for *Dasein*” (SZ, 412). Whereas *Dasein* is “disclosed,” nature is “uncovered,” marking here the ontological distinction between the two. As Heidegger explicitly states, “even nature is historical” (SZ, 388). Not historical in the sense of “natural history,” for, as he would say in the 1934 course, it is senseless and vacuous to speak of natural history. Nature *has no history*, for “only the human being has history” (GA 38, 78/67). Nonetheless, nature is in a certain sense historical to the extent that it appears within the world as an intraworldly being: “nature is historical as a countryside, as areas that have been inhabited or exploited, as battlefields and cultic sites” (SZ, 388–389).

Dasein’s concern, which is always thrown, surrendered to night and day (for Heidegger nature also designates thrownness and in fact will be described a few years later as earth, as that in which historical *Dasein* is already “cast,” that is, already thrown, *schon geworfen*; GA 5, 63/BW, 200), is connected to the environment it is involved with, such as “the rising of the sun” (SZ, 412). What is significant in this description is that nature, in other words, the sun, gives itself in terms of and on the basis of concerned time: “Then, when the sun rises, it is *time* for so and so” (SZ, 412). Now, the time of concern, or the counting of time, is what Aristotle understood time to be, the counting of *natural* movement, which is, as Françoise Dastur writes, “the counting of the now in relation to the now that is no longer and the now that is not yet. Time is thus that which is numbered in movement encountered in the horizon of the earlier and later, which is precisely the Aristotelian definition of time in Book IV of *The Physics*” (HQT, 49). What is significant here is that the Aristotelian conception of time as number of movement takes place within “the natural understanding of Being as *Vorhandenheit*” (HQT, 49). There is a profound affinity between the time of concern and the sphere of the natural. This is why it should not come as a surprise if, as noted prior, Heidegger defines “nature” as a kind of ready-to-hand, that is, an intraworldly entity that is encountered within a world that has been disclosed within the horizon of

temporality. "Concern makes use of the 'handiness' of the sun, which sheds forth light and warmth" (SZ, 412, modified). The sun is "used" in terms of the time-reckoning of Dasein: "The sun dates the time interpreted in concern" (SZ, 412, modified), such "natural clock" constituting the origin, Heidegger tells us, of "artificial clocks" as such (as these artificial clocks must be "adjusted" to the natural clock). The natural concept of time is hence a derivative mode of temporality, a mode of Dasein's concern with entities within-the-world. Natural time is derivative, vulgar time. Time as measured refers to Dasein's time-reckoning, also a function of concern. "The disclosedness of natural clock belongs to the Dasein which exists as thrown and falling" (SZ, 415). Natural time is in any case fallen temporality and represents the leveling down of original temporality (*Nivellierung der ursprunghchen Zeit*). In section 82, Heidegger is careful to note that time has traditionally been interpreted, from Aristotle to Hegel, within a philosophy of nature, which characterizes the *inauthentic* approach to the concept of time, and how "since Aristotle, time has been defined as physical time, the time of the objective world" (HQT, 7). Time is approached from within an ontology of the present-at-hand, to which nature belongs. As such, it is subject to a phenomenological destruction.

Nature gives itself within the world (the secondarily historical) and is grounded in Dasein's historicity, that is, the primarily historical. Therein lies the reduction of nature, which in fact could lead, in Heidegger's most extreme formulations, to an expulsion or rejection of nature outside of the realm of history and historical Dasein. For instance, in *On the Essence of Truth*, Heidegger states: "Only the ek-sistent human being is historical. 'Nature' has no history."²⁸ As mentioned prior, one finds a similar claim in the 1934 summer semester course, where Heidegger states that "nature is without history" (GA 38, 136/113). Certainly, nature can be in time, but it is not historical, it is outside history. As Heidegger states, one never speaks of a past or futural nature (GA 38, 102/85)! Heidegger insists at length on this point, reiterating, "In nature there is neither historicity nor unhistoricity, but it is *without history* [*geschichtlos*], not dependent on the happening [*Geschehen*]. Nature is without history because it is atemporal [*Zeitlos*]" (GA 38, 136/113). Certainly, he concedes, "natural processes are measurable and ascertainable by time. Nature, insofar as it is measurable by time, is in a certain manner in time." But one needs to distinguish between "being-in-time" (*in-der-Zeit-Sein*) and "being-temporal" (*Zeitlich-Sein*), "which befits only the human being" (GA 38, 136/113). Nature is within-timely, while the human being is temporal. Certainly, Heidegger concedes, "the occurrences on the earth, in plants or animals are certainly *flows* and *processes* in the framework of time, but stones, animals, plants are themselves not temporal in the original sense as we ourselves" (GA 38, 132/110). Only the human being is historical, and the natural occurrences within the human being ("the changing of the gastric

juices, of the blood circulation, the graying of the hair,” GA 38, 85/72) do not constitute history. History designates the being of the human being: “We determine . . . history *as being of the human being*,” and: “History is a distinctive character of human being” (GA 38, 86/73). What is history? It is the *happening* of the human being. The question of history in Heidegger’s early work opens onto a problematic of the event.

History does not designate “the past” (*Vergangenheit*) in the sense of what has gone by, the bygone, *das Vergangene*, but rather the world of Dasein as having-been, *das Gewesene*, which ultimately for Heidegger is *yet to come*, and futural, still *in the process of happening*. Heidegger states in the “Letter on Humanism”: the “history of being is never past, but stands ever before us” (GA 9, 314/PA, 240). *Gewesenheit* comes toward us, happens to us, is futural. Dasein, which I will return to, is “to be” and always (each time) to come, always futural (*zukünftig*). Therein, indeed, lies the eventfulness of history, insofar as history “is determined from the future.”²⁹ Indeed, if the future is the very meaning of Dasein’s existence, should one not see “behind” those alleged past facts the presence of the possible itself? “Does historiography thus have *what is possible* as its theme? Does not its whole ‘meaning’ lie in ‘facts,’ in what has factually been?” (SZ, 394). In this sense, as Heidegger would state in that 1934 course, “we mean by ‘history’ not the past, but the future”: “To enter into history means, therefore, not simply that something that is bygone, merely because it is bygone, is classed with the past. Yes, it is, generally speaking, questionable whether the entering into history always means to be sent to the past, as it were . . . we mean by ‘history’ not the past, *but the future*” (GA 38, 84/71, emphasis mine). Decades later, in the Zollikon seminars, Heidegger would return to this question, maintaining the distinction between an ontic past and an ontological “having been” and claiming that the confrontation with such having-been—no mere “retaining”—engages the future: “The present confronts what has been in relation to what is coming [*das Künftige*].”³⁰ With this motif of the “to come,” the event announces itself. History engages eventfulness as such, the coming of the to-come.

The Motion of Life

I now explore further how the event is approached in Heidegger’s early writings, prior to *Being and Time*. Life understood as *Ereignis* was said to designate the essence of the historical as such, and Heidegger kept referring to the original phenomenon of life. This is why he engaged in developing a “hermeneutics of factual life,” against the various metaphysical objectivisms, idealist philosophies, and scientist prejudices prevalent at the time (but also against the objective metaphysics of life, à la Bergson, for instance). At that time, Heidegger stressed that factual life is an irreducible phenomenon for philosophy, explaining for instance in the

1921–1922 winter semester course, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, that the determinations of factual life “are not merely trivial and arbitrary observations, such as the statement that ‘the thing there is red.’ Furthermore, it must be understood that they are alive *in facticity*; i.e., they include factual possibilities, from which they are (thank God) never to be freed. Therefore a philosophical interpretation which has seen the main issue in philosophy, namely, facticity, is (insofar as it is genuine) factual and specifically philosophical-factual” (GA 61, 99/PIA, 74). The very element of philosophizing is facticity, and in turn the theme of philosophy is nothing but facticity itself. The very idea of facticity (“understood in the literal sense of the word: one’s own [*eigene*] facticity—that is, the facticity of one’s own time and generation”) is “the genuine object of research.” In turn, philosophy is nothing but the explication of factual life. “Philosophy, in the way it asks questions and finds answers, also stands within this movement of facticity, since philosophy itself is simply the explicit exposition and interpretation of factic life” (GA 62, 366/BH, 163). Facticity, I should note, is never a brute fact, and this why facticity is not factuality. Indeed, Dasein is not thrown only once and for all or thrown as a brute fact (rather, “as long as Dasein is, Dasein, as care, *is* constantly its ‘that-it-is,’” SZ, 284). Thrownness “does not lie behind it as some event which has happened to Dasein, which has factually befallen and fallen loose from Dasein again” (SZ, 284). Dasein has to be its “that-it-is,” in the mode of a having to be. To that extent, facticity displays an irreducible eventfulness, to which thought is assigned.

One often reads that Heidegger excluded the theme of “life” from his ontological inquiries, reduced it to an ontic domain, aligned with animality—always said to be foreign to the “essence of the human”—and generally treated it with great skepticism. Life philosophies are characterized as metaphysical problematics in the various guises of vitalism, biologism, Darwinism, and so on. One recalls paragraph 10 of *Being and Time*, where the analytic of Dasein is clearly distinguished from any biology, and life philosophy in general. The existential analytic of Dasein has a methodological priority over such ontic investigations, Heidegger even singling out biological science in this way: “The existential analytic of Dasein is *prior* to any psychology, anthropology, and especially biology” (SZ, 45). Heidegger guards against any biologism in the thinking of the human being. These disciplines are said to be incapable of mastering their own fundamental-ontological basis; they do not undertake an ontological clarification of the very domain and subject matter that they propose to investigate scientifically. It is the very sense of the being of life that requires further explication, a sense that according to Heidegger biology simply assumes and presupposes. Because of such a neglect, those disciplines have become “completely questionable” and “in need” of “new impulses which must arise from the ontological problematic” (SZ, 45). Heidegger writes that life itself cannot be that through which we are to be defined. “Dasein

should never be defined ontologically by regarding it as life (ontologically undetermined) and then as something else on top of that" (SZ, 50), such as personhood, for instance, but also reason or Logos. What is important in this sentence is what is in the parentheses: life as "ontologically undetermined." In biologism in all of its forms, the question "What is the *being* of life?" is simply not asked. It is this omission that Heidegger takes issue with. He is very clear on this point: "What strikes us first of all in such a philosophy (and this is its fundamental lack) is that life itself as a kind of being does not become a problem ontologically" (SZ, 46). This indicates straightaway that in his critique of biology and life philosophy, what is at issue are only the *metaphysical* accounts of life, Heidegger rejecting less the motif of life as such than the problematics that presuppose and ignore its ontological meaning. And in fact, his early courses show that he undertook then a *positive* investigation of life, under the use of the expression of "factual life" (*faktisches Leben*). Heidegger was calling for an authentic return to (factual) life as the very ground of experience and thought. His eventual rejection of the motif of life, then, can only be approached and understood in light of his first *embracing* of an ontology of life, however paradoxical this may seem.

The issue, for the young Heidegger, was to undertake an *ontological clarification* of life. He even identifies life as *the* fundamental fact, the central concern of his thought, the *Sache selbst* of phenomenology. In *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, he states from the outset: "'Factual life': 'life' expresses a basic phenomenological category; it signifies a basic phenomenon" (GA 61, 80/PIA, 61). Phenomenology, for Heidegger at that time, is a phenomenology of life itself. Far from reducing it to an ontic, regional domain, subordinated to a prior, more originary, ontological level, Heidegger on the contrary approaches life as the ground to which all thought must return. He also places himself explicitly within the tradition of life-philosophy in its various forms, which are for him like the foreshadowing of a genuine phenomenology of what he terms "factual life." He recognizes, for instance, that some of his analyses "came forth already in modern life-philosophy," a philosophical movement he praises in these terms: "I understand [life-philosophy] to be no mere fashionable philosophy but, for its time, an actual attempt to come to philosophy rather than babble idly over academic frivolities." He then puts forward two names, placing himself under their authority: "Dilthey, Bergson" (GA 61, 80/PIA, 61). Against the neo-Kantians, and in particular Rickert, he also suggests: "Instead, we need to read Nietzsche, Bergson, and Dilthey" (GA 61, 80/PIA, 62). Nonetheless, he immediately marks his reservation, stating that the "coming forth" initiated in modern life-philosophy "was in itself unclear" (GA 61, 80/PIA, 61) and encouraged the unhelpful "gushing" of "litterateurs," "those who would rather gush with enthusiasm than think" (GA 61, 80/PIA, 61). Against these "decadent productions," it is a matter for Heidegger of "explicating life," which will turn out to mean, and this is a crucial point, "life

explicating itself.” Indeed, on the one hand, the term *life* is vague, unclarified, and used in a variety of contexts, and on the other hand, it has been “captured,” as it were, by biology, or biological thinking, that is to say, by a scientific thinking oblivious of its ontological basis. Therein lies the first decisive step in Heidegger’s analysis: one needs to separate life from biology. He writes in no uncertain terms: “Biological concepts of life are to be set aside from the very outset”; they are, he continues, “unnecessary burdens” and subordinated to “an understanding of life which is essentially older than that of modern biology” (GA 61, 81/PIA, 62). The issue is to explicate—to unfold—such an “older” understanding of life, that is, an ontological understanding of the *being* of life, which for Heidegger at that time lies in facticity: “The Being of life as its ‘facticity’” (GA 61, 114/PIA, 85).

I will briefly mention the fundamental characteristics of life (which will be further elaborated a few years later as the very existentials of Dasein in *Being and Time*) as Heidegger phenomenologically retrieves them in this lecture course, and underline their eventful sense: life is said to be worldly, that is, not a self-enclosed phenomenon, but essentially ek-static. *Life is an openness*. It is said to be essentially relational, that is, constituted by a series of intentional involvements. It is marked by a fundamental caring, by the difficult weightiness of a task, and by an irreducible problematicity or questionableness. Finally, and most importantly, factual life is said to have a specific *motion*, *motility*, or *movedness* (*Bewegtheit*), which is contrasted with natural movement (*Bewegung*), a movedness specified as “Relucence” (*Reluzenz*) and “Prestruction” (*Praestruktion*) and further qualified as so-called ruinance (*Ruinanz*), an “uneventing” in the event of life to which I will return. Indeed, unlike substantial permanence, life manifests a specific *eventfulness*, which Heidegger also characterizes as a fundamental *unrest* (*Unruhe*). “The movedness of factual life [*Die Bewegtheit des faktischen Lebens*] can be provisionally interpreted and described as *unrest*. The ‘how’ of this unrest, in its fullness as a phenomenon, determines facticity” (GA 61, 93/PIA, 70). The ultimate phenomenon of life is thus characterized by such movement and unrest, far from the constant presence of a substance. The so-called flow of life must itself be understood in terms of such movedness: “people speak of process, stream, the flowing character of life. This latter way of speaking is motivated by and follows a fundamental aspect in which we encounter life, and we take it as a directive toward the ensemble of the basic structures of life as *movement*, *motility*” (GA 61, 114/PIA, 85). The “explication” of factual life is hence assigned to such “characters of movement” (*Bewegungscharaktere*) that are proper to life, and which Heidegger specifies as inclination, distantiation, and sequestration under the heading of care or “caring” (*Das Sorgen*): living is a caring, and such caring constitutes the “drama” and eventfulness of one’s life.

What is key in this emphasis is that thinking becomes nothing but the thinking of this unrest, of the event of factual life in its proper motion. This is what

the expression “thinking the event,” the guiding thread of this work, signifies: thought is concerned with the event of factual life, and not with metaphysical abstractions. For Heidegger, the phenomenologist only deals with the phenomena of life as they are lived, and not with anything extravagant, extraordinary, or mystical. Let us not be afraid, he exclaims, of “trivialities” (GA 58, 103) for in a sense this is what philosophy is about! Thinking is “immanent” to the event, or, as Jean-Luc Nancy would write, *à même* the event, “right at” it. All life or existence, as Nietzsche wrote in *The Gay Science*, is an *interpreting* existence. Hence the fundamental hermeneutical character of life, which is grounded on the fact that life is at issue for itself, “anxiously concerned” with itself. Understanding is life’s self-interpretation, out of an anxious concern for itself. And philosophy or thought then becomes a phenomenon of life, radically immanent to it. In its very ontological constitution, life calls for philosophy, that is, is self-interpretative, and in turn philosophy or thought is radically dependent on the event of life.

This immanence of thought to the event of life is first addressed in Heidegger’s critique of the notion of objectivity, along with the corresponding “reflexive attitude,” and his critique of philosophies of reflection engaging in abstract theorizing, ruled by the demands of universal validity. Heidegger takes issue with the scientific and reflexive ideal of objectivity and its positioning with nature as the standard model for being. Objectivity, nature, are considered to be derivative from a more primordial sense of being, that is, factual life. Thought, Heidegger insists, does not make one accede to any objective realm, that is, a realm that somehow would lie beyond or be distinct from life as factually lived. He speaks disparagingly of “so-called Objective life,” one that would be “totally lived in the world of objects,” which would be, as it were, “self-sufficient,” “full of possessions,” “self-sure,” and so on, in short all characteristics that are foreign—indeed contrary—to eventful life itself. One thinks here of the implicit contrast that Heidegger draws with respect to the ancient meaning of being as *ousia* and its original sense as a “having,” a “possession.” Here on the contrary factual life is marked by restlessness, privation, lack, and need. Heidegger would go so far as to claim that “privation (*privatio, carentia*) is both the relational and the intrinsic basic mode and sense of the Being of life” (GA 61, 90/PIA, 68).

Having been misrepresented in the tradition as its contrary, that is, substantial presence, factual life is subjected to the inappropriate categories of “theory.” The categories of objective reflection are for Heidegger “something forced upon [factual life] capriciously,” “an unwarranted forcing, with the violence and arbitrariness of a rootless, foreign, and ordering systematization, typologization, or the like” (GA 61, 87/PIA, 66). To “brood upon . . . universal validity,” he continues, is to completely misconstrue the basic meaning of life, as well as of thought. Both life and thought are misconstrued respectively as objectivity and as abstract reflection: they are neither. One thinks here of Merleau-Ponty, his claim that

perception is the origin of thought, and how this led him to recognize that if the lived body is indeed the original experience, then the task of philosophy can only be to reflect upon such original perception, that is, to bring into language the mute experience of the perceptual world, and to make, as he says, the implicit explicit. There is no independence of philosophical reflection whatsoever, no proper realm of thought, because of its radical dependency on facticity. Once brought back to the factual site from which it springs, reflection loses any pretense to independence or autonomy, any pretense to an access to some idealized objective realm. Here can be recognized the birthplace of philosophy in facticity. With Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology as such can be defined as a return to facticity, away from the idealistic constructions of metaphysical thought. Phenomenology is not about essences but rather is concerned with the facticity of existence. As cited prior, Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggested that phenomenology is not to be construed as a philosophy of essences, but rather concerned with the facticity of existence: phenomenology is “a philosophy that places essences back within existence and thinks that the only way to understand man and the world is by beginning from their ‘facticity.’”³¹ This is echoed by Dominique Janicaud, who writes: “From a philosophical point of view, [facticity] designates above all the actual anchoring point [*le point d’ancrage effectif*] of existential thought, which no longer speculates about pure essences, but is committed to articulating our being-in-the-world as it is given in a situation as thrown.”³² Philosophy is not some overview of the world and of life. Consequently, one should not fear facticity, or so-called relativism, by appealing to an illusory “freedom from stand-points,” for in fact the issue in relativism is not the relativity of perspectives with respect to (an actually nonexistent) universality, but *the very facticity and finitude of experience*. Heidegger rejects the dogmatic tendencies that claim to espouse an absolute principle, that absolutize claims: “basically the ideal possibility of absolute knowledge is but a dream. As historiological knowledge, philosophy not only *can* not, but also *must* not, entertain any such a dream” (GA 61, 163/PIA, 123). It is instead a matter in this renewed sense of phenomenology of paying attention to the very event of factual life. Because it renounces the false category of the absolute, a phenomenology of the event could not even be characterized as relativistic: for if “absolute truth thus has no claim to be taken as the norm and the goal,” then its contraries, relativism and skepticism, “cannot be considered valid labels” (GA 61, 164/PIA, 124). Fear in the face of facticity is fear in the face of philosophy. The calls for objectivity are nothing but “the masked cries of anxiety before Philosophy,” Heidegger writes. “Self-sure Objectivity is insecure flight from facticity, and this Objectivity mistakes itself precisely in believing that this flight increases Objectivity, whereas it is precisely in facticity that Objectivity is most radically appropriated” (GA 61, 90/PIA, 68). Factual life is the basis for any sense of objectivity that could be phenomenologically attested.

In the 1923 summer semester course, *Ontology. The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, targeting scientific ideals as well as Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger insists that the relationship between interpretation (hermeneutics) and life (facticity) "is not a relationship between the grasping of an object and the object grasped."³³ Existence would be "ruined" if measured against the ideal of objectivity: "Existence is never an 'object'; existence is 'rather being—it is *there* only insofar as in each case a living 'is' it" (GA 63, 19/15). Therefore, thought cannot be the theoretical grasp of an objectivity, under the vain pursuit of universality, but instead the phenomenological and hermeneutic seizing of the event of life itself. Heidegger states firmly: "The question in philosophy is not whether its propositions can be shown to have universal validity, or whether the approval of very many or even all people can be exacted, as if these matters determined in the least the sense and sense-intention of a philosophical explication. What is in question is not the Objective demonstrability to the whole world but whether the intended binding force of the interpretation is a *living* one" (GA 61, 166/PIA, 125). Such living, however, remains to be determined in its sense of being, and not simply presupposed as the "lived experience" of a transcendental consciousness. It will indeed also be a matter for Heidegger of breaking with the Cartesian horizon still prevalent in Husserl's phenomenology when attempting to think life phenomenologically, breaking with the understanding of life as a feature of consciousness or of the subject.

Correspondingly, as suggested prior, thought cannot be the reflexive grasp of such objectivity. In fact, if all there is is life, thought can never be an external gaze *upon* life, from a position outside of it. This is why Heidegger rejects the understanding of thinking as an overview detached from what it sees. Thinking is entirely grounded in life, and enjoys no independence whatsoever with respect to life, to the extent that thought *itself* will be described as a form of the movedness of life, Heidegger writing suggestively that "reflection is a way within movedness [*Weg in der Bewegtheit*]" (GA 61, 157/PIA, 119). Reflection is understood as a motion proper to life itself, life re-flecting on itself. Philosophizing "about" (an inappropriate formulation) life is a phenomenon that belongs to life itself, Heidegger insisting that "philosophy is a basic mode of life itself" (GA 61, 80/PIA, 62). Interpretation is a phenomenon of life: "Hermeneutics is not an artificially devised mode of analysis which is imposed on Dasein and pursued out of curiosity. What needs to be brought into relief from out of facticity itself is in what way and when it calls for the kind of interpretation put forth" (GA 63, 15/12). Here can be seen the emergence of a certain calling, out of factual life itself, a call for an interpretation, which Heidegger will specify further as a need. Thought is called out of the motion of life itself so that "interpreting is a being which belongs to the being of factual life itself" (GA 63, 15/12).

To that extent, the categories of thought (a category is that which interprets a phenomenon in the direction of sense) will not need, as with Kant, a transcendental deduction to ensure that they indeed correspond to what they are the categories of. Categories are not “logical schemata” or “inventions,” and they are not “foreign to life itself,” “as if they pounced down upon life from the outside” (GA 61, 87/PIA, 66). Quite the reverse: “it is in these categories that life itself *comes to itself*” (GA 61, 87/PIA, 66, trans. modified), in an original hermeneutics. Categories represent life’s own self-understanding, if one understands that life is not some brute biological datum prior to sense, but a hermeneutical movement through and through. There is therefore no opposition here between meaning and fact, life and sense, as if meaning were added “from above” to an otherwise senseless or irrational life. As Heidegger writes playfully, meaning “does not fall from the heavens” (especially if the “problem of facticity—most radical phenomenology . . . begins ‘from below’ in the genuine sense,” GA 61, 195/PIA, 146). Heidegger clearly has Husserl in mind in this critique as he writes: “What has always disturbed me: did intentionality come down from heaven? If it is something ultimate, in which ultimacy is it to be taken? Indeed, not secured as discoverable and experienceable in a determinate theoretical way. That I must live and ‘exist’ intentionally—‘explain!’” (GA 61, 131/PIA, 98).

Further, echoing Nietzsche, Heidegger explains that the categories of thought are grounded in language, what he calls the “immanent speaking of life itself.” The genitive here is clearly subjective: it is life that speaks itself in language, sense, and thought, and the categories of grammar, insists Heidegger, “in fact originate in those of living speech, in those of the immanent speaking of life itself” (GA 61, 83/PIA, 63): this immanent self-speaking, I might add, is historical through and through. “The grammatical categories originate, in great part, historiologically, which explains how the explication of life itself fell very early on into the hands of a determinate theoretical explication and articulation of life; see the development of grammar by the Greeks” (GA 61, 83/PIA, 63). There is a basic hermeneutic “capability” of life, always already explicating itself, getting a sense of itself: thinking itself. Philosophy is not a reflection upon life, but springs out of life itself: “The object of philosophical research is human Dasein insofar as it is interrogated with respect to the character of its being. This basic direction of philosophical questioning is not externally added and attached to the interrogated object, factual life. Rather, it needs to be understood as an explicit taking up of a basic movement of life.”³⁴ If there is any sense of reflection, it would only be a reflection, not *on* life, but *of* life and *from* life.

Reflection, which has defined thinking since Descartes all the way to Husserl, should be renamed in light of this new conception of the radical immanence of thought to life. This new name is: *repetition* as in “Relucence” (*Reluzenz*), from

the Latin *reluceo*, “to reflect a gleam.” How is this term to be understood? I have already stressed that thinking can only be a movement proper to life itself. Now life is characterized by a fundamental caring, a caring that is inclined toward the world with which it is inextricably related. What life encounters in its inclined caring, says Heidegger, “is life itself” (GA 61, 119/PIA, 88). Therefore, inclination is by itself reflexive: life encounters *itself* from its inclined caring in the world. This is how Heidegger describes such “relucence”: “Self-dispersed life encounters its world as ‘dispersion,’ as dispersing, manifold, absorbing, engaging, unfulfilling, boring. This means that inclination shows itself as something that moves itself toward itself. Life, caring for itself in this relationality, reflects light back on itself, which produces a clarification of the surroundings of the currently immediate nexus of care. As so characterized, *the movement of life toward itself within every encounter* is what we call *relucence*” (GA 61, 119/PIA, 88–89).

Thinking the event here means: life reflecting itself, reflecting *its own event*. To think is to reflect in the sense of *repeating*, of appropriating the event. “‘Repetition’: everything depends on its sense. Philosophy is a mode of life itself, in such a way that it authentically ‘brings back,’ i.e., brings life back from its downward fall into decadence, and this ‘bringing back’ [or re-petition, ‘re-seeking’], as radical re-search, is life itself” (GA 61, 81/PIA, 62). Philosophy is not the cognition of ideal supratemporal principles but, instead, the actualization of such a “re-turn” of life to itself. This return is *needed*: cognitive categories “can be understood only insofar as factual life itself is compelled to interpretation” (GA 61, 87/PIA, 66). Interpretation can only arise out of an “existentiell concern.” Here appears the problematic of a “need” for interpretation and thinking. Thinking is *needed* by life in the sense that life *needs* to repeat itself in the attempt to appropriate itself (or overcome its own expropriation, an expropriation to which I will return), in the form of the interpretive categories that guide reflection. Far from being a detached, self-sure knowledge of an objective, absolute, and universal order, thinking is instead in a constant state of neediness, the neediness of finite factual life. What is at stake is clearly stated: it is a matter for Heidegger of a “derivation of the phenomenological interpretation out of the facticity of life itself” (GA 61, 87/PIA, 66), that is, out of the compulsion to philosophize. Philosophy (that is, first and foremost, philosophizing) arises out of the need to philosophize. This compulsion, Heidegger specifies, is not an “unwarranted forcing,” “capriciously or for the sake of acquiring a novel sphere of knowledge.” No: the compulsion or *need* for philosophy “is demanded by factual life itself, still in privation” (GA 61, 87/PIA, 66). What privation? What lack? What need? Before addressing these questions, I will first digress and consider how Heidegger addresses the “need for philosophy” in his *Four Seminars*, Heidegger’s last seminars held in France and Germany in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Heidegger undertakes in the 1968 Thor seminar a close reading—line-by-line analysis—of some passages from

Hegel's *Differenzschrift*, focusing on the nature of separation, division, and difference within Hegelian thought. Heidegger begins by pondering Hegel's expression according to which "a torn sock is better than a mended one."³⁵ Beginning by noting the paradoxical nature of this claim, its reversal of common sense, Heidegger then proceeds to give a phenomenological account of Hegel's notion of tear, tearing, and tearing apart (*zer-reissen*). Calling for an exercise in "phenomenological kindergarten" (GA 15, 288/FS, 11), Heidegger analyses: "To tear apart means: to tear into two parts, to separate: to make two out of one. If a sock is torn, then the sock is no longer present-at-hand—but note: precisely not *as* a sock. Indeed, the sock 'in a good state;' if I have it on my foot, I precisely do not grasp it *as* sock. On the contrary, if it is torn, then THE sock appears with more force through the 'sock torn into pieces.' In other words, what is lacking in the torn sock is the UNITY of the sock" (GA 15, 288/FS, 11). It then appears that the torn sock is what allows the sock to come forth as sock, in its unity of a sock, so that the tear is not the destruction of the unity, but its condition. This is why Heidegger specifies: "However, this lack is paradoxically the most positive, for this Unity in the tear is *present* [*gegenwärtig*] as a *lost* unity" (GA 15, 288/FS, 11). The tear remains in the work of unification—conjoining—of philosophy. "In the conjoining—insofar as it is the work of the Absolute—the *oppositions do not disappear*" (GA 15, 289–290/FS, 12). It is even asked: since "philosophy is not a piecing-together and if the tearing is necessary, *then can one speak of a unity before the tearing?*" (GA 15, 291/FS, 13). Heidegger stresses further that for Hegel the tear or dichotomy (*Entzweiung*) is the source of the *need of philosophy*. The expression "need of philosophy" is to be taken in both senses of the genitive, as *genitivus objectivus* and *genitivus subjectivus*, with the *genitivus subjectivus* predominant. The human being, Heidegger says, is "used/needed" (*gebraucht*) by being, as indicated in the verb *Brauchen*. The human being is used in the sense that one has need of that which one uses. One can not emphasize enough the importance of such a neediness for Heidegger, as it affects the very definition of the human being (needed by the event of being) but also the definition of the essence of being itself, Heidegger going so far as to state that needing (*Brauchen*) constitutes the "very essence of be-ing" (GA 65, 251). Being needs humans because being is finite: it is not without its relation to us. We are needed in this sense. This means that the tear from which the need arises is maintained throughout, a tear or *Zug* that appropriates being and human beings. Hegel's quote, "a torn sock is better than a mended one," is an expression that Heidegger appropriates in terms of the finitude of being and of the tear of the play between appropriation and expropriation. What is alive and eventful in life is the tear, and philosophy is what preserves life alive in its proper unity by keeping the tear open. This is why Heidegger concludes, "All the attempts to suppress the 'tearing' [*Zerrissenheit*] must be abandoned—insofar as the 'tearing' is what remains and must remain

at the basis. Why? Answer: it is only in the tearing that the Unity, as absent, can appear.” “In the tearing,” Heidegger concludes, “the unity, or necessary conjoining, always reigns, that is, the *living* unity” (GA 15, 289/FS, 11).

The tear constitutes what is eventful in life and is designated by the terms *privation*, *lack*, and *neediness*. Heidegger clarifies that to live essentially means to care: “In unrestrained rapture, in indifference, in stagnation—here, as everywhere, ‘to live’ means to care” (GA 61, 90/PIA, 68). Caring is for and about something, living from something and caring for it. In its broadest sense, to care is to care for one’s daily bread. Heidegger names this phenomenon “privation,” defining it as being both the relational and intrinsic basic mode and sense of the being of life. This reveals that life manifests a radical lack and deficiency to the extent that neediness constitutes its fundamental character. This lack is not a temporary situation, and even less an accident, but rather what is ownmost to life. Heidegger calls it “ruinance” (*Ruinanz*; GA 61, 131/PIA, 98). Ruinance or lack is the condition—or incondition, rather—of factual life, its essential movement, which explains why it cannot even be identified in any determinable way: “In ruinance, as a basic movedness of caring, what becomes validated is the fact that somehow or other something is constantly lacking in factual life itself and indeed in such a way that at the same time there is also lacking a determination of that which properly is lacking” (GA 61, 155/PIA, 115). This expropriation constitutes the very eventfulness of life, life’s own motion and possibility, if it is the case, as Heidegger wrote in *The Event*, that “the expropriation points towards what is most proper to the event” (GA 71, 150/129). Life’s movedness (which Heidegger also calls “collapse,” *der Sturtz*), is a movement which “by itself forms itself—and yet not by itself but by the emptiness in which it moves; its emptiness is its possibility of movement” (GA 61, 131/PIA, 98). Life happens from a “not,” if it is the case that this “not” determines facticity. Ruinance can be characterized as “the movedness of factual life which ‘actualizes itself’ and ‘is’ factual life *in* itself, *as* itself, *for* itself, *out* of itself, and, in all this, *against* itself” (GA 61, 131/PIA, 98).

This motion of life going “against itself” betrays that Heidegger does not, and cannot, equate life and its caring with some Darwinian struggle for existence, as it is still too often alleged. He actually says so explicitly in this 1921–1922 course, stressing that “caring is not a factually occurring *struggle for existence* [*Kampf ums Dasein*]” (GA 61, 134/PIA, 100). If life is indeed a struggle, it is fundamentally a struggle *with and against itself*, a movement that goes against itself. Let me mention here Heidegger’s understanding of the meaning of being as “at issue” in *Dasein*: it is at issue, that is, is in contention, it is a site of struggle. No social Darwinism here; rather, life is at war *with itself*, an essential *polemos* that also constitutes the life of thought. One can see this phenomenon of struggle in the notion of the difficulty of life. With respect to such difficulty, Heidegger stresses the following: “A characteristic of the being of factual life is that it finds itself

hard to bear. The most unmistakable manifestation of this is the fact that factual life has the tendency to make itself easy for itself. In finding itself hard to bear, life *is* difficult in accord with the basic sense of its being, not in the sense of a contingent feature. If it is the case that factual life authentically is what it is in this being-hard and being-difficult, then the genuinely fitting way of gaining access to it and truly safekeeping it can only consist in making itself hard for itself" (S, 113). In this hardness and difficulty, life is marked by an essential struggle to such an extent that Heidegger states that life unfolds as such a struggle, comes to itself in such a struggle, and *is* a struggle, then, for and with itself. The struggle defines life: this is why life is polemical by essence, at war and at war with itself. This aporetic structure constitutes the event of factual life as such.

Life's expropriation from itself is characterized by a constant moving-away from itself (*Abfallen*), a constant fleeing from itself. This inclination takes the form of a "propensity" to become absorbed in the world and to be taken along by it, a movement that is a falling away. "This propensity of the anxious concern of life is the expression of a basic factual tendency in life toward *falling away* from itself and, as included in this, *falling into* the world and itself *falling into ruin*" (S, 117). Further, he clarifies that such a propensity "is the most profound fate that life factually has to endure within itself" (S, 117). Heidegger speaks indeed of this falling away as "the ownmost character of movement belonging to life" and the expropriation of ruinance as the most "proper" movement of life, a kind of singular ex-appropriation, to use Derrida's neologism. Ruinance is life going to its ruin, always going "against itself," the event of an "uneventing," as it were. Heidegger speaks of this negativity (which nonetheless happens) in this way: "the nothingness of factual life's own proper *non-occurrence of itself in ruinant existence* [*Nichtvorkommen im ruinanten Dasein seiner selbst*], a non-occurrence brought to maturation by and for factual life itself, within life and within the surrounding world (facticity)" (GA 61, 148/PIA, 110).

What is thinking? It is a going against life's "own" tendency to go against itself and fall into ruins. Thinking the event is thinking against the expropriation of the event. Thinking is the countermotion to the countermovement of life, as if thinking the event meant thinking against the expropriation or "uneventing" in the event. Heidegger speaks of the need to bring life back from its "downward fall," from its tendency to fall into decline, from its "ruinance," which designates the "ex-propriation" that tears life apart from itself. It is therefore ruinance that is the origin of philosophy: not wonder, but *ruinance*. Recall in this respect how in the 1929–1930 lecture course, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, referring to Novalis, Heidegger defines philosophy as *homesickness* (*Das Heimweh*) exiled as it is in the "not-at-home" of expropriated existence (GA 29–30, 7/5). Thinking is brought to itself from these ruins: it runs counter to the countermovement of ruinance; thought is "a motion running counter to the falling of

its care" (S, 118). Also in the 1921–1922 winter semester course, Heidegger wrote of "the constant *struggle* of factual, philosophical interpretation *against its own factual ruinance*, a struggle that accompanies the process of the actualization of philosophizing" (GA 61, 153/PIA, 114). Thought is a movement going against life's ruinance. Thought is "counterruinance." The reflection mentioned prior can now be further determined as re-flexion, not simply as a repetition or as a return *to*, but rather a return *against* the very going-against-itself of life, a "counter-movement": "Phenomenological interpretation . . . manifests by its very essence a 'counter-movedness'" (GA 61, 132/PIA, 99). It is a counter-movedness to the prior going against itself of life as ruinance, a motion responding to the first "not" of life's expropriation. This is the counterviolence of thought addressed to the originary violence of the ruinance and self-estrangement of life. The violence of interpretation responds to the violence of the self-estrangement of life and goes against it. This is how Heidegger conceives of life's relation to thought and to philosophy. This could be called a logic of negation: "Here the '*counter to*' as a '*not*' attests to a primordial achievement that is constitutive on the level of being. In view of its constitutive sense, negation has an original primacy over any position-taking" (S, 120).

Indeed, even when life attempts to flee from itself, "even when it goes out of its way to avoid itself," it nevertheless and constantly "is anxiously concerned about its being" (S, 113). This concern for itself, which always takes the form of a going-against itself, is the very life of thought. Thinking originates from the inner movement of life as concerned with itself. More precisely, as noted, Heidegger states that thinking originates from a *need*: the need to go against life's own tendency to move away from itself. In his *Ontology; Hermeneutics of Facticity* (GA 63, 15/11), he explains that the object of hermeneutics is "in need of interpretation." Life needs to be "encountered, seen, grasped, and expressed in concepts" (GA 63, 15/11). It *needs* to be made "accessible" to itself. Heidegger clarifies: "communicating Dasein to itself, hunting down the alienation from itself with which it is smitten" (GA 63, 15/11).

The task of philosophy is not to overcome such estrangement and expropriation, it is not to appropriate life by reducing life's distance from itself. Ruinance is not a fall from a pure origin, as life itself *is* in its very movement and happening *in ruins*. The fall of existence is its advent. *It happens as it falls. Its fall is its movement*. Heidegger is very clear on this point: the collapse of life does not "arrive" anywhere; it does not come to rest "in anything whose objective or ontological character would be different from its own" (GA 61, 145/PIA, 108). To the question of what the collapse of life crashes down upon, he answers: it falls on itself, its fall is its advent and maturation, it is "*the nothingness of factual life*" (GA 61, 145/PIA, 108). By thinking ruinance, philosophical interpretation in fact accompanies this fall, perhaps accomplishes it as one accomplishes a negation.

The going-against the going-against-itself of life—thinking—does not overcome ruinance but *reveals it as such*. The ex-appropriative event is its own happening, is not anchored to anything else than itself. Nothing else, no principle, guarantees its course and fate.

Several features appeared in this chapter: (a) being or existence (which Heidegger approached terminologically as “factual life” and original history in these early texts) is not some substantial presence, but an event and a happening, with a specific “movedness.” (b) Life is understood as the “primal phenomenon” (*Leben als Urphänomen*; GA 59, 18/12). (c) As the ultimate phenomenon, the event of life is not anchored in another reality that itself would not be happening. (d) This event is marked by an expropriation or negativity that already appeared in the thematic of the exteriority of the event in relation to thought. (e) To such expropriation corresponds thought as counterevent or counterruinance.

6 The Event of Being

Event and Possibility

As seen in prior chapters, phenomenology should be taken as a phenomenology of the event, and as noted, according to Heidegger, the original phenomenon of phenomenology is being itself. This twofold premise leads to engaging the task of understanding being itself as event. This was made possible in Heidegger's early work through the deconstruction of the inadequate ontology of *Vorhandenheit* and substantiality and the revealing of the motion and eventfulness of historical life. In fact, Heidegger develops a powerful thought of the event, seizing being itself as eventfulness and temporal happening, as the very event of presence. As Levinas often underlined, the fundamental contribution of Heidegger's thought is to have grasped being no longer as a noun, as a substantive, but in its *verbality* and eventfulness. In one of his last classes taught at the Sorbonne, on November 17, 1975, Levinas explained: "I will recall here some fundamental motifs of Heidegger's thought: I. The most extraordinary thing that Heidegger brings us is a new *sonority* of the verb 'to be': precisely its *verbal* sonority. To be: not what is, but the verb, the 'act' of being. (In German, the difference is easily drawn between *Sein* [to be] and *Seiendes* [beings], and the latter word does not have in German the foreign sonority that the French *étant* [a being] carries, such that Heidegger's first French translators had to set it between quotation marks.) This contribution is what is unforgettable in the work of Heidegger."¹ Being is not a substance, but an event, a "doing," a "happening." One could say, in an impossible English: being is not, but being be-ings.

Being "is" not, but *happens*. By approaching being in distinction from beings (as early as *Being and Time*: "The being of beings 'is' not itself a being"),² and in particular in severing the understanding of being from any reference to a supreme being, substrate, or substance (senses that in the ontotheological tradition have determined the meaning of being), Heidegger is able to consider being in its eventfulness. This is indeed the import of the ontological difference, as Levinas saw very clearly: "The radical distinction between being and beings, the famous ontological difference. There is a radical difference between the verbal resonance of the word 'being' and its resonance as a noun. It is the difference *par excellence*. It is Difference" (*God, Death, and Time*, p. 122). Being itself is not a substance, but an event of presence, an event in which we human beings

participate, to which we correspond and belong. Indeed, *we happen through the happening of being*. Heidegger's thought determined itself as a thinking of the event of being. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to state that Heidegger's constant concern was to give thought to the event of being, that is, to grasp being itself *as* an event. In the expression "event of being," the genitive is clearly subjective. To speak of an "event of being" indicates that being, as such, *happens*. This is why it is difficult to follow Claude Romano when he claims that the expression "the event of being" implies some anteriority of the event with respect to being: he writes, "Earlier' than Being is the event by which it *occurs*" and concludes by speaking of the "priority by right [of the event] over Being."³ I would contend instead that to speak of the event of being (in the subjective genitive) amounts to seizing being itself *as* an event. Conversely, I also cannot follow Jean Grondin, who for his part claims that in the expression "event of being," the stress is on "being" rather than on "event." He writes that "in his [Heidegger's] case, it was obvious . . . that the event he was aiming at was the event of *Being* (however one wants to spell it, as *Seyn* or *Sein*)" and concludes from this that "the paramount notion here was finally less that of the event than that of Being."⁴ In fact, both terms are identified in Heidegger's work: the event is the event of being, and being is, as such, an event. The paramount notion here is that of "eventful being." To that extent, it becomes clear that it is not necessary to go beyond being, beyond ontology, to seize the event, for being itself happens as an event. It is the purpose of the following pages to establish such a claim.

Regarding the emergence of a thinking of being as an event, in his early work, as for instance in the 1924 lecture on "The Concept of Time,"⁵ Heidegger ascribed the ontological event to the effects of a temporal constitution. He defines Dasein (now replacing "factual life") as the being that is constituted by temporal specificity, or more literally "being-in-each-case" or "at-each-time" (*Jeweiligkeit*). The term *Jeweiligkeit* names one of Dasein's basic features, namely that of being each time the being of the entity that it is, and has the sense of a temporal specificity: it is *each time* such a being. *Jeweiligkeit* should indeed be understood as an indication of an "at each time" (the adverb *je* meaning "at each time," *jeweils* "at each particular time," *jeweilig* "respective" in the sense of what belongs to a particular time), an "each time" that has also the sense of a temporal fate: to each his or her own time. *Jeweiligkeit* designates Dasein's character of being temporally situated and individuated. "The fundamental character of the being of Dasein is therefore first adequately grasped in the determination, *an entity which is in the to-be-it-at-its-time* [*das ist im Jeweilig-es-zu-sein*]."⁶ This indicates that the event of being happens singularly, in the singularity of an each time.

I begin by noting the discontinuity of this event as *Jeweiligkeit* points to the essential "discontinuous" singularity of existence. "In each case" or "each time" precisely does not mean "always" and indeed indicates the interruption of any

continuity. There is no “general” or continuous existence. Existence is not the particularization of a universal essence, but the putting into play of being, each time. “Thus Dasein is never to be taken ontologically as an instance or special case of some genus of entities as things that are present-at-hand” (SZ, 42). Existence is never generic, but a singularity “toward death,” and being “in general” is declined only in the singular, that of a factual existence that is each time mine. This is why, as Heidegger put it, “The question of the meaning of being is the most universal and the emptiest. But at the same time the possibility inheres of its most acute individualization in each particular Dasein” (SZ, 39). Being cannot be distinguished from the singular event of an existence which is each time delivered over to itself. Being happens to Dasein, Heidegger speaking of the “offensive” or “challenging” character of the question of being, its “strike-power,” reaching to the singular being thus “touched” by being.⁷ In its very givenness, being is singularized by “touching” or reaching Dasein, by engaging Dasein in its event. The event of existence happens singularly, even when, as Jean-Luc Nancy would insist, such singularity is necessarily plural: nonetheless, it still remains singular in its very plurality. The event of existence is and can only be singular, in an “interrupted” or syncopated way. This determination takes us “closer” to the essence of the event, according to Derrida, who speaks of the event as “what comes to pass only once, only one time, a single time, a first and last time, in an always singular, unique, exceptional, irreplaceable, unforeseeable, and incalculable fashion.”⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy elaborates on this logic of singularity, on the “each time” of existence. In *Being Singular Plural*, he insists on the singularity of being, understood in terms of the temporal scansion of an “each time.” Being happens “*au coup par coup*,” stroke by stroke, or blow by blow, Nancy going so far as the claim that “the essence of being is the stroke.”⁹ This could also be said in this way: the essence of being is the event, and only happening in the each time. Being happens each time as a “stroke of being”: “a lash, blow, beating, shock, knock, an encounter, an access” (BSP, 33). *Being happens each time singularly.*

Nonetheless, in the repetition of this “each time” (and the logic of this “each” implies its repetition: there is never a single time, save in relation to other times), there is constituted a kind of permanence, such that being “each time its own” almost means “always its own.” Here the “always” must be derived from the succession of an “each time.” Merleau-Ponty compared time to a fountain whose renewed discontinuous thrust can give the appearance of continuity and even permanence: “We say that there is time as we say that there is a fountain: the water changes and the fountain remains, because the form is preserved; the form is preserved because *each* successive burst takes up the functions of the previous one.”¹⁰ Heidegger’s statement in section 9 of *Sein und Zeit* is significant in this regard: he explains that “Because Dasein is each time mine, one must always [*stets*] use a personal pronoun when one addresses it: ‘I am,’ ‘you are.’” (SZ, 42).

In the Zollikon seminar, Heidegger would also stress the temporal origin of the “always,” relating Dasein’s “constancy” (*Ständigkeit*) back not to its substantial or subjective character, but to the fact that “the self is always able to come back to itself and always finds itself as the same in its sojourn [*Aufenthalt*].”¹¹ This sameness, which is traced back to a “while” or a “sojourn,” is in the mode of temporalization (*Zeitigung*). The event is structured according to the temporal rhythm of an “each” and not assigned to an atemporal substance. Dasein is not *always* itself; rather, it is itself *each time*.

The structure of the “each time” is constitutive of Dasein. Each time, Dasein is delivered over to itself, given to itself as its own. Time is no longer natural time, but the true principle of individuation: *I am* time, better, I am *my* time, states the 1924 lecture.¹² Each time my being is at issue, and it is this very being-at-issue that constitutes my self. Dasein “is *each time its own and is specific as its own* [*je eigenes und als eigenes jeweiliges*]” (CT, 8E). What Heidegger calls *Jemeinigkeit*, “mineness,” is constituted in the “each time”: Dasein is each time mine, not in the sense that the I accompanies its representations in each case but in the sense that Dasein is mine *on the basis of* the each time: “If this entity is to be determined in its ontological character, then we must not abstract from its specificity *as each time mine* [*so ist von der Jeweiligkeit als der je meiningen nicht zu abstrahieren*]” (CT, 8E). Indeed, in the lecture “The Concept of Time,” Heidegger explains that all the fundamental characters of Dasein are to be found in the *Jeweiligkeit* of Dasein insofar as the latter is each time mine. Strokes of existence, each time interrupted, and each time renewed, the “each time” constitutes the singular and unique character of Dasein. “[Dasein] becomes visible as the singular ‘this time’ (*Diesmaligkeit*) of its singular fate in the possibility of its singular past” (CT, 21E, trans. modified). The event is to be thought from out of the singular “throw” of being.

Now this singularity does not close the existent from others and the world. As Nancy insists, “each time mine” means: each time *with*. The interruption of the stroke of the “each” immediately throws the singular “I” in the relation. In *The Experience of Freedom*, Nancy develops this peculiar logic by thinking the constitutive effects of the scansion or “syncope” of an “each.” Analyzing Heidegger’s statement in *Being and Time* that Dasein is *each time* mine (*je meines*), Nancy shows how the singularity of the existent originates or is constituted from the cutting edge of an “each time.” The “each time” of *Jeweiligkeit* or *Jemeinigkeit* interrupts any continuum; it has, says Nancy, “the structure of an interval.” To that extent, the singularity delineated by the syncope of the “each time” is immediately thrown into a relation. Because Dasein is each time its own, each time singular, each time cut and separated by the discrete scansion of this “each time,” it is thrown into relation with others, it is a *mit-Dasein*. The logic of the “each” constitutes the being-with of the singular being. “Each time, it cuts itself

off from everything, but each *time* [*fois*], as a *time* [*fois*] (the strike and cut [*coup et coupe*] of existence) opens itself as a relation to other times, to the extent that continuous relation is withdrawn from them.”¹³ The “each time” at once dislocates and constitutes both singularity and community. Singularity follows the dislocating effect of the relation; the “each” institutes the relation as a withdrawal of identity and institutes commonality as a withdrawal of communion. This is why singularity can only be written in the plural, as “singularities.” There is no single singularity. If being were singular, that is, unique, it would absorb all other beings and, therefore, would not be singular: “if there is *just one* time, there is never ‘once’” (EF, 67). Hence his notion of the “singular/plural”: the singular is plural and the plural is singular, *each time*. “One could say: the singular of ‘mine’ is by itself a plural” (EF, 67).

To that extent, in Nancy’s reading, being could not be written in the third person of the singular (“there is,” “it is”), but only in the first person . . . of the plural: we are. However, that “we” is a singular plural: it does not designate a subject, it is not composed of subjects, it is not a universal “we.” “‘We’ neither says the ‘One’ nor does it say the adding together of ‘ones’ and ‘others’; rather, ‘we’ says ‘one’ in a way that is singular plural, *one by one and one with one*” (BSP, 76, emphasis mine). The “each time” does not represent the repetition of the *same* occurrence, of the same subject. The event of the “each time” is not the succession of the identical, but the simultaneity of the different. “The ‘each’ of the ‘each time,’ the taking place of the *there* and as *there*, does not involve primarily the succession of the identical; it involves the simultaneity of the different” (BSP, 97).

The stroke of the “each” constitutes the eventfulness of existence, an eventfulness that Heidegger thinks in *Being and Time* in terms of *possibility*, even if, in the end, such possibility will have to be referred to an impossible as to *its very condition*.¹⁴ Phenomenology, Françoise Dastur wrote, must be a “thinking of what may be and of contingency,”¹⁵ so that the event can be thought through the guiding thread of the possible. Derrida stressed this affinity between the event and the possible. The event, he states, must be possible, structured in the possibility of a perhaps: “There is no event, to be sure, that is not preceded and followed by its own perhaps.”¹⁶ The *perhaps* or the *maybe* (*peut-être*) of the event is the primary and irreducible form of experience, the primary tense of being. This maybe of the event represents the most authentic form of openness to the coming of the other, to the “to-come”: “the thought of the ‘perhaps’ perhaps engages the only possible thought of the event” (PF, 29). Heidegger approached such a motif via the phenomenon of the “to be” (*Zu-sein*): the “essence” of this being (*Dasein*) “lies in its ‘to be’” (*Zu-sein*; SZ, 42). *Dasein* is not thrown only once and for all, but rather it is thrown into the event of existing (and that very thrownness is an event): each time, *Dasein* is thrown into a *possibility* that it is and has to be. *Dasein* is “to be,” that is, not a theoretical consciousness and self-consciousness, but a task and an

event of being, a possibility to be. This ontological characteristic reveals Dasein's eventfulness, which was already established in paragraph 4 of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger wrote that Dasein does not "simply occur among other beings," but instead "is concerned *about* its very being" (SZ, 12). Dasein designates that entity in which being is at issue. It is not simply given as an entity that would be present-at-hand, but rather is an event, a task, and adventure, the opening of its possibilities. Further, Dasein does not have possibilities, but *is* its possibilities. "Dasein is not something present-at-hand which possesses its ability to be something as an extra; it is primarily being-possible [*Möglichsein*]. Dasein is always what it can be, and in the way in which it is its possibility [*Möglichkeit*]" (SZ, 143). This, indeed, is the definition of existence: "In determining itself as an entity, Dasein always does so in the light of a possibility which it *is* itself and which, in its very Being, it somehow understands. This is the formal meaning of Dasein's existential constitution" (SZ, 43). Further, such existence cannot in any way be directed from above by some divine principle or essential purpose or enframed in some essential property; it is nothing but the event of itself. This is what Dasein means: "And because the essential definition of this being cannot be accomplished by ascribing to it a what that specifies its material content, because its essence lies rather in the fact that in each instance it has to be its being [*Sein*] as its own, the term Dasein, as a pure expression of being, has been chosen to designate this being [*Seienden*]" (SZ, 12).

Because Dasein *is* its possibilities, it is nonindifferent to its own being. An entity that is not Dasein-like, that is, present-at-hand, is indifferent to its own being; or rather, as Heidegger clarifies, "its being can neither be indifferent nor non-indifferent to it" (SZ, 42). In fact, there is a distinction here. For there are different kinds of "indifference," so to speak. One indifference is absolute and characterizes a present-at-hand being's total closure to its being; the other is merely *privation* and derives from Dasein's primordial non-indifference-to-itself, which is irreducible inasmuch as it characterizes the *openness* of Dasein to its own being. Jacques Derrida distinguishes three types of indifference (*Gleichgültigkeit* or *Indifferenz*): "Here then are *three types of indifference*. First, there is the absolute indifference of the *vorhandene* entity: the stone is placed even before the difference between indifference and its opposite. Second, there is indifference (*Indifferenz*) as a positive phenomenon of *Dasein*. There is further, *third*, that indifference which in the history of metaphysics, for example since Descartes, manifests this remarkable *Bedürfnislosigkeit nach dem Sein . . . zu fragen*, this lack of the need to ask questions about Being."¹⁷ To a present-at-hand entity, its being is *absolutely* indifferent to it (that is, neither indifferent nor not indifferent). That entity does not relate to its being as its ownmost possibility, and it is not given over to this being as having to be it. In fact, its closure to its own being is so absolute that one cannot even speak of "in-difference." Of such beings, it

must be said that “they ‘are’ such that their being can be neither a matter of indifference to them, nor the opposite” (SZ, 42). On the contrary, the indifference to one’s own being that characterizes *inauthentic* existence could never be absolute. Dasein can be indifferent, or rather can *feign* indifference, only because it is radically non-indifferent to its own being. Indifference presupposes non-indifference (concern) as its condition of possibility. One’s *indifference* to one’s own being is founded upon a *non-self-indifference*: only a being for whom being is at issue, a being that is defined as *care* (for one’s own being), is capable of in-difference. Being indifferent to oneself is still a way of having one’s being at issue and testifies to Dasein’s eventfulness as openness to itself.

Dasein is then that being who is not indifferent to itself, who is open to the event of itself, and who is *concerned* about its own being. For us, being is *at issue* and is “to be.” If Dasein—according to the opening formulations of *Being and Time*—is the being for which “in its very being, that being is *at issue* for it” (SZ, 12), then Dasein means nothing else than the bringing into play of being in its originary eventfulness. One need only read the first lines of paragraph 9 to be convinced of this: after having stated that the being of the being that we are is “each time mine,” Heidegger explains: “*Being* is that which is each time an issue for such an entity” (*Das Sein ist es, darum es diesem Seienden je selbst geht*; SZ, 42, trans. modified). What is at stake in Dasein is then nothing but the event of being. As Jean-Luc Nancy explains in *The Banality of Heidegger*, “it is indeed in the putting into play of ‘being’ [*être*] (without an article) as coming, arrival, event (*Geschehen*) and destiny (*Geschick*), irreducible to any substantial or substantifiable given (such as ‘Being’ [*l’être*] precisely) that the initial and essential resource of Heidegger’s thought resides.”¹⁸ The most proper destination or vocation of the human being is thus *to let being happen*: “as Dasein the human being is called to put being into play, or to offer the opening by which being [*être*] is put into play—that is, exposed to being (as a verb, not a substantive), as the meaning, the sense, of its own putting-into-play” (TBH, 16, trans. modified).

This eventfulness of being in Dasein is described in section 9 of *Being and Time*. Dasein is approached *as existence* and no longer as substrate or substance, that is, as a present-at-hand being. “The ‘essence’ of Dasein lies in its existence. Accordingly those characteristics which can be exhibited in this entity are not ‘properties’ present-at-hand of some entity which ‘looks’ so and so and is itself present-at-hand; they are each time possible ways for it to be, and no more than that” (SZ, 42). This is why, pace Romano, *all* of Dasein’s existentials must be approached in an evental sense. They all are “to be,” all to be engaged as events, because Dasein as a whole is defined as *possibility*: “Dasein in general never becomes accessible as something present-at-hand, because Being-possible belongs in its own way to Dasein’s kind of being” (SZ, 248). To that extent, Claude Romano completely misunderstands Heidegger’s thinking of the possible, believing that it represents a neutralization of the event (for instance, EW,

16, 50–51, 71–72). Romano mistakenly conflates the possible in Heidegger's sense with some Kantian-like condition of possibility that would prestructure—and thus neutralize—the field of events. In fact, Heidegger always insists that Dasein is thrown into a possibility, thrown into a field of decision, which in no way is prestructured or organized. Dasein is not a transcendental subject projecting the meaning of the world. Dasein is thrown. To be one's possibilities does not mean to transcendently project and neutralize the event. The possible is never circumscribed, exhausted, planned in advance: it is the dimension of the to-come, of the unpredictability of what comes. The possible for Heidegger is not antinomical to the value of the unpredictability of the event but is rather synonymous with it. Existence is "to be," a possibility to be, and must be chosen and decided upon, each time, without any transcendental organizing frame. The event of being is tied to the possible, to the to-be of existence. Further, the being of this being is each time *mine*: "That being which is an *issue* for this entity in its very being, is each time mine" (SZ, 42). The expression "mine" should not be understood in the sense of a substantial property, but as an event. Dasein is not "mine" as if I *had* myself as a property. I do not have my being as a predicate. Rather, I have it *to be*: the essence of Dasein lies "in the fact that each time it has its Being to be, *and has it as its own*" (SZ, 12). I am not this being in the sense of a having or a possession, but I *have* this being *to be* (*Zu-sein*). Hence existence is each time "mine" in the sense that I have the entity that I am *to be*.

Indeed, the self as such is not a substantial property, but a possibility to be, that is, an event. Heidegger explains: "Each time Dasein is its Self only in *existing*" (SZ, 117). Since the essence of Dasein lies in existence, mineness, as an *essential* determination of this being, stems from existentiality itself and should be interpreted as such: "*If the 'I' is an Essential characteristic of Dasein, then it is one which must be Interpreted existentially*" (SZ, 117). One cannot begin with a pregiven concept of the self as if it subtended existence. The self is not what lies beneath this being. Instead it is to be understood from the event of being. The self is a "predicate" of being. Dasein is delivered over to itself *as* existence, which as mentioned prior is itself determined as *Zu-sein*, having-to-be, in both senses of the temporal opening of the future and as an ontological obligation. I have my own being to be in the sense that I am in the mode of a possibility of myself. "As a being, Dasein always defines itself in terms of a possibility which it *is*" (SZ, 43). Dasein is a being that never "is" what it is (as a present-at-hand being), but is instead approached in terms of an event that is in the process of happening, and event that is also a call: each time, Dasein is called to itself, a call that I have to answer singularly. Such is the originary responsibility of Dasein, which can be heard in the "Become what you are" evoked by Heidegger in *Being and Time* (SZ, 145), a command that is not to be understood ontically, as "Realize your potential!" but ontologically, as: what you are, you can only become it because your being is "to be" because Dasein *is* its possibility (which as noted

“stands higher than actuality,” SZ, 38) and “is what it becomes or does not become” (SZ, 145).

The definition of Dasein as “essenceless” and as a possibility reveals that Dasein’s being lies in freedom, a freedom that is another figure of the event, that is, of the eventfulness of being. Heidegger explains, “The existence which always makes up our being . . . is a matter of our *freedom*” (GA 25, 20/15). Existence is always a matter of decision, of choice and of freedom, of possibilities: therein lies its eventfulness. Heidegger understands being itself in terms of freedom, approached away from the subjectivity and causality of the will, and precisely not as “free-will” (in *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger asserts that “the essence of freedom is *originally* not connected with the will or even with the causality of human willing [*Das Wesen der Freiheit ist ursprünglich nicht dem Willen oder gar nur der Kausalität des menschlichen Wollens zugeordnet*].”¹⁹ In *The Essence of Human Freedom*, he had already attempted to “free” freedom from the enframing of causality, arguing that causality only pertains to beings as present-at-hand. Reversing the relation between freedom and causality (freedom is not a problem of causality; rather, “causality is a problem of freedom,” GA 31, 300/205), Heidegger breaks with the predominance of subjectivity (freedom as a faculty), with the domination of will (freedom as causal power), and also with an ontic interpretation of nature given over to rational calculation (called “cosmological freedom” in Kant). The metaphysical ways of enframing freedom in subjectivity, in the will, and in causality prove inadequate to an ontological thought of freedom, in which freedom is approached outside of the anthropological horizon and in terms of the *happening of being* itself.²⁰ For Heidegger existence is a matter of freedom. However, this freedom is not the free spontaneous project of a subject: freedom cannot be decided by a subject, but rather is “the freedom that breaks through in man and takes him up unto itself, thus making man possible” (GA 31, 135/93, modified). Humans do not have freedom; rather, the very being of humans lies in freedom, in the *event* of freedom. “Dasein,” Heidegger writes in the 1929–1930 course, “occurs in freedom [*geschieht in Freiheit*],”²¹ an expression reformulated in the 1930 summer semester course in this way: “Human freedom now no longer means freedom as a property of man, but *man as a possibility of freedom* [*Menschliche Freiheit heißt jetzt nicht mehr: Freiheit als Eigenschaft des Menschen, sondern umgekehrt: der Mensch als eine Möglichkeit der Freiheit*],” GA 31, 135/93). To exist means to exist on the basis of freedom, as freedom. Certainly, as Heidegger concedes in the *Beiträge*, one might state that it “is hardly possible in the end not to approach freedom as cause and faculty, hardly possible not to push the question of decision off into the ‘moral-anthropological’ dimension”²² (GA 65, 87/60). Yet the task is to do just that. In fact, freedom is never something merely human since, as the 1930 course makes clear, it is rather the possibility of man. It is a matter of thinking the “free-ing” in freedom, what is freeing in our

being, what makes us free, “sets us free,” in what could be called “the free scope of freedom.” This scope of freedom is what Heidegger indicated when, already in *Being and Time*, he claimed that Dasein is characterized as “being free [*Frei-sein*] for its ownmost potentiality-for-being” or that Dasein’s “being toward a potentiality-for-being is itself determined by freedom” (SZ, 191). The issue is to think freedom as originary to being itself, a freedom that is synonymous, as it were, with eventfulness itself.

The Event of Being

As noted, by approaching being in distinction from beings, by distinguishing the present being from its presence, Heidegger allows the seizing of being in its eventfulness, as the event of presence. Now in the tradition being was indeed approached as presence, *Anwesenheit*, but its proper eventfulness was nonetheless “repressed” in the reference to *constant* presence (*beständige Anwesenheit*), substantiality, Heidegger speaking of how in such tradition of substantiality the temporal meaning of *Anwesenheit* was “repressed” (*abgedrängt*).²³ In fact, the very term *Anwesenheit*, presence, harbors the motion of an event: the *an-* in *An-wesen* or *An-wesenheit* suggests a movement from concealment to unconcealment, a coming into presence, in a word, an *event* of presence. To characterize a being as *an-wesend* “is to implicitly understand presence as an *event*.”²⁴ Further, the preposition *an* “indicates a movement of approach that enters in a conflict with a movement of withdrawal,” a play between unconcealment and concealment already captured by the Greeks in the contrast between the prepositions *para* and *apo* in *parousia* and *apousia*. This implies, in turn, a break with the model of constant presence, that is, with a kind of “stability” that represses the temporal happening in the phenomenon of presence, including the phenomenon of withdrawal that seems to affect, each time, such event of presence. It is a matter of hearing again the temporal meaning of presence and breaking with the notion of a *constant* presence, that is, with the metaphysics of *Vorhandenheit* that has governed the philosophical tradition. Instead of supposing a substrate, an underlying permanent substance and foundation, it is a matter of approaching being as a *coming into presence*.

This approach to being as event of presence (*Anwesenheit*), or “presencing” (*Anwesen*), is developed in a remarkable way in the 1962 lecture, “On Time and Being.” It is striking to note that Heidegger begins the lecture by recalling that being is not a being, thereby opening the way for grasping being, no longer as a present entity, but as eventfulness, that is, the event of presence. In fact, the prologue of “On Time and Being” is the place where Heidegger famously claimed that it becomes “necessary” to “think being without beings” (*Sein ohne das Seiende zu denken*).²⁵ This sentence has often been commented upon and perhaps

misinterpreted as if it meant that Heidegger was engaging in a discourse that would no longer take beings into consideration. Now Heidegger immediately clarifies its meaning in the passage. After explaining that another kind of thinking in philosophy is required today, one that is neither “worldly wisdom” nor some “Way to the Blessed Life,” but rather a type of thinking that is “far removed from any useful, practical wisdom,” Heidegger states the following: “We want to say something about the attempt to think Being without regard to *its being grounded in terms of beings* [*ohne die Rücksicht auf eine Begründung des Seins aus dem Seienden*]” (GA 14, 5/TB, 2, emphasis mine). He then adds in the very next sentence: “The attempt to think being without beings becomes necessary because otherwise, it seems to me, there is no longer any possibility of explicitly bringing into view the being of what *is* today all over the earth, let alone of adequately determining the relation of the human being to what has been called ‘being’ up to now” (GA 14, 5–6/TB, 2, modified). The expression “to think being without beings” is immediately explained as the attempt to no longer grasp being as the *foundation* or *ground* of beings, which would still amount to think being in terms of beings, as in traditional metaphysics. In fact, Heidegger clarifies a few pages further that “to think being itself explicitly requires disregarding being to the extent that it is only grounded and interpreted in terms of beings and for beings as their ground, as in all metaphysics” (GA 14, 9–10/TB, 6). At the end of the lecture, Heidegger returns to that sentence and states: “The task or our thinking has been to trace being to its own from Appropriation—by way of looking through true time without regard to the relation of being to beings. . . . To think being without beings means: to think being *without regard to metaphysics*” (GA 14, 29/TB, 24, emphasis mine). This interpretation is confirmed in the “Summary of a Seminar on the Lecture ‘Time and Being’” where one finds a discussion regarding the expression from the lecture, “to think being without beings,” as well as this latter expression, “without regard to the relation of being to beings.” It is clarified that this expression is the “abbreviated formulation” of the full statement, which reads: “to think being without regard to grounding being in terms of beings.” To think being without beings means without thinking being *from* or *on the basis of* beings, that is, as foundation. It does not mean, however, to disregard beings. “To think Being without beings” “does not mean that the relation to beings is inessential to being, that we should disregard this relation” (GA 14, 41/TB, 33). This expression signifies that one should no longer understand being in terms of beings and as their foundation, which is the metaphysical way of thinking: “Rather, it means that being is not to be thought in the manner of metaphysics, which consists in the fact that the *summum ens* as *causa sui* accomplishes the grounding of all beings as such” (GA 14, 41/TB, 33). What must be avoided is the way in which “being is thought and conceived for the sake of beings, so that being, regardless of being the ground, is subjugated to beings” (GA 14, 41/TB, 33). What that sentence attempts

to accomplish is to dispel the confusion between being and beings, to open the possibility of making the distinction between them appear: "Above all, we are thinking of the metaphysical character of the ontological difference according to which being is thought and conceived for the sake of beings" (GA 14, 41/TB, 33). With that passage, Heidegger takes leave with the metaphysical way of thinking, which fails to distinguish between being and beings.

Attention is brought upon the "is" that is italicized in the text ("there is no longer any possibility of explicitly bringing into view the being of what *is* today all over the earth"), an "is" that a few pages later Heidegger will contrast with *the whole of entities* and that is instead identified with the "there is" or *es gibt* of the event of presence. Being is no longer referred to beings, but to the event of their givenness, and in fact to the giving as such. There is the "there is" of beings, and then there is the "there is" of . . . the "there is" itself: "To think being explicitly requires us to relinquish being as the ground of beings [*als den Grund des Seien-den*] in favor of the giving which prevails concealed in unconcealment, that is, in favor of the It gives" (GA 14, 9–10/TB, 6). The "there is" of being is not the same as the foundation of beings or the totality of beings. To distinguish the "there is" from the whole of beings allows one to seize being as event. This is the scope of that famed passage in which Heidegger evokes the task of thinking being "without beings." To understand being as substance, as underlying constant presence, still identifies being with the ontic and misses the difference between being and beings. From the very start of the 1962 lecture, then, an attempt is made to sever being from the realm of entities, from the ontic, opening the possibility of understanding being as event. This is why, in the opening paragraphs, Heidegger insists on the difference between being and beings. In response to the claim that "anything of which we say 'it is' is a being," Heidegger immediately counters: "But being is not a being" (GA 14, 12/TB, 8). It will thus not be possible to say "being is."

After having posited the implication of time in the very notion of presence ("From the dawn of Western-European thinking until today, being means the same as presencing [*Anwesen*]. Presencing, presence [*Anwesenheit*] speaks of the present. According to current representations, the present, together with past and future, forms the character of time," GA 14, 6/TB, 2), thereby establishing that being "is determined as presence by time," Heidegger asks how one is to understand this determination of being by time: if things are determined by time in the sense in which they all have their time and are all in time, can one say that being is "in" time as all things are? Heidegger's answer is clear: being is not "in" time because being is not a being. "But is being a thing? Is being like an actual being in time? *Is* being at all? If it were, then we would incontestably have to recognize it as something which is and consequently discover it as such among other beings. This lecture hall *is*. The lecture hall *is* illuminated. We recognize

the illuminated lecture hall at once and with no reservations as something that is. But where in the whole lecture hall do we find the 'is'? Nowhere among things do we find being. Every thing has its time. But being is not a thing, is not in time" (GA 14, 7/TB, 3). And yet, he continues, being as presence does refer to time; being as presencing "remains determined as presence by time, by what is temporal" (GA 14, 7/TB, 3). The temporal meaning of being does not mean that being is in time, although it remains determined by time: "being is not a thing, thus nothing temporal, and yet it is determined by time as presence." In this difference between "nothing temporal" and "determined by time," one shifts from ontical categories to another way of thinking, attentive to the givenness of being and time. This difference is apparent in the very phenomenon of time, the "temporal": the temporal can either refer to what is within time or to time itself. All things pass in time, but since time itself is not a thing, and is nothing temporal, it itself does not pass. This led Kant to establish that time was the "Permanent" precisely because as time, time itself cannot pass in time.²⁶ This phenomenon also led Merleau-Ponty, as noted prior, to compare time to a fountain whose renewed thrust can give the appearance of permanence. Heidegger describes this phenomenon of a "constant passing" in terms of the ontological difference: "Time is not a thing, thus nothing which is, and yet it remains constant in its passing away without being something temporal like the beings in time" (GA 14, 7/TB, 3). This shift from the ontical to the ontological will allow Heidegger to develop a specific questioning attuned to the very givenness of time and being, to the *Sache* of time, the *Sache* of being. Time and being are not things (*Dinge*), but they are the *Sachen*, the "matters" of thinking: "But may we take being, may we take time, as matters? They are not matters if 'matter' means: something which is. The word 'matter,' 'a matter,' should mean for us now what is decisively at stake in that something inevitable is concealed within it. Being—a matter, presumably *the* matter of thinking" (GA 14, 8/TB, 4).

If neither time nor being are entities, how can one speak of them? In what language? Clearly, one can no longer say that being or time *are*. Only beings are, and being and time are not beings or entities. One will thus not say that being *is*, that time *is*, but rather, Heidegger proposes: *there is* being, *there is* time. "We say of beings: they are. With regard to the matter 'being' and with regard to the matter 'time,' we remain cautious. We do not say: being is, time is, but rather: there is being and there is time [*Wir sagen nicht: Sein ist, Zeit ist, sondern: Es gibt Sein und es gibt Zeit*]" (GA 14, 8–9/TB, 4–5). The emphasis shifts to the *es gibt*, that is, the impersonal giving of being. "For the moment we have only changed the idiom with this expression. Instead of saying 'it is,' we say 'there is,' 'It gives'" (GA 14, 9/TB, 5). While attempting to unfold this expression, Heidegger singles out three phenomena: the "it" (*es*) in the expression "it gives," what is given in the "it gives," and the giving as such. Heidegger seeks to avoid any ontical interpretation of

the *es gibt*. In fact, a few years later, in *Four Seminars*, he would distance himself from the expression itself, at least its French rendering as *il y a*, because, as he explained, the *il y a* is “too ontic.”²⁷ For Heidegger, the *il y a* “refers to the presence of beings” (GA 15, 364/FS, 59) when the issue is the giving of being. Indeed, what matters first is to show how the “*es gibt*,” the “there is,” applies not to ontical beings, but to time and being as such. What “there is” is time, and being: “In this way, the manner must become clear how there is, It gives being and how there is, It gives time” (GA 14, 9/TB, 5).

In addition to what is given in the “it gives” and the giving as such, Heidegger isolates in the expression *es gibt* the “it” as such, the “it” (*es*) in the “it gives.” On several occasions, Heidegger notes the enigmatic presence of this “it,” echoing the enigma of another “it,” the one described in the analysis of the call of conscience in *Being and Time*, which was determined as *es ruft*, “it calls.” What Heidegger stressed in *Being and Time* was the impersonality of the *es*, the fact that precisely in the *es ruft* no one is calling: the “author” of the call, he wrote, “escapes all attempts at identification” (SZ, 274–275). The caller has no identity, remains “in a striking indefiniteness,” and “fails to answer questions about name, status, origin, and repute” (SZ, 274). The author of the call remains foreign and “absolutely distances any kind of becoming familiar” (SZ, 275). The one who calls is uncanniness itself: neither a “who” nor a “what,” but a bare “that” in its sheer thrownness: “In its ‘who,’ the caller [*der Rufer*] is definable in a worldly way by *nothing* at all. The caller is Dasein in its uncanniness: primordial, thrown being-in-the-world as the ‘not-at-home’—the bare ‘that-it-is’ in the ‘nothing’ of the world” (SZ, 276–277). No one calls Dasein to its own event. There lies the enigma of the *es* in *es gibt* as well: it is no one. The event of being is hence characterized as an impersonal phenomenon as if an event was to be determined essentially as impersonal: “there is,” “it” happened. Even when involving the self, myself, the event of myself, the event would still remain impersonal. As if the “I,” in its happening, was also essentially an “it,” as when one looks at oneself as if looking at an impersonal event, looking at oneself as another. Is that not one of the possible senses of Rimbaud’s saying: “I is another”?

“It gives being, it gives time.” But what of this “it”? Heidegger underlies its enigma (we “are still faced with the enigmatic It which we named in the expression: It gives time; it gives being,” GA 14, 22/TB, 16), speaks of the obscurity of the “it” that gives in the giving (GA 14, 9/TB, 6), and underlies its indetermination: “Thus the ‘It’ continues to be undetermined, and we ourselves continue to be puzzled” (GA 14, 9/TB, 17). He wonders: “But how is the ‘It’ which gives being to be thought?” (GA 14, 14/TB, 10). When speaking of the “it” (and indeed, as will be discussed, it is matter of language here and how its syntax determines and even misleads thought), there is risk that we involuntarily posit some “indeterminate power” that somehow would bring about or cause, like a subject, the givenness of

time and being (GA 14, 22–23/TB, 16–17). It is, however, possible to avoid falling back into an inappropriate ontology of the *subjectum* “as long as we hold fast to the determination of giving which we attempted to show, if only we look ahead toward being as presence” (GA 14, 22/TB, 17), that is, if we hold fast to the motif of the eventfulness of being and time to understand the *es gibt*. It would be “advisable,” he thus states, to “determine the It which gives in terms of the giving that we have already described” (GA 14, 22/TB, 17), that is, in terms of the sending of being and the dimensionality or extensiveness of time that Heidegger also thematizes in that 1962 lecture.

The problem might reside, as just mentioned, in the very structure of language, in the metaphysics of grammar, and Heidegger wonders (after Nietzsche) whether his puzzlement might not be due to the way in which language leads us astray: “are we puzzled now only because we have allowed ourselves to be led astray by language or, more precisely, by the grammatical interpretation of language; staring at an It that is supposed to give, but that itself is precisely not there” (GA 14, 23/TB, 17). Is a certain grammar that divides subject and predicate not the cause for assuming this *es* as a separate entity with an efficiency of its own, as some metaphysical substrate? “When we say ‘It gives being,’ ‘It gives time,’ we are speaking sentences. Grammatically, a sentence consists of a subject and a predicate” (GA 14, 23/TB, 18). Is this linguistic structure appropriate to the matter at hand, to what is proper to being, to time? Nothing could be less certain. However, although the statements “It gives being” and “It gives time” are not statements about beings, nonetheless “the syntax of sentences as we have it from the Greek and Roman grammarians has such statements exclusively in view” (GA 14, 23/TB, 18). Such grammar is bound to an inappropriate ontology, one that relies on beings as substrates. This is what the “Summary” clarifies. First, it provides a reminder that the discussion is concerned with “the relation existing between so-called common speech and the language of thought” and thus with the problematic situation of having to say being in an ontic language. The problem is presented as follows: “Speaking about ontic models presupposes that language in principle has an ontic character, so that thinking finds itself in the situation of having to use ontic models for what it wishes to say ontologically, since it can only make something evident through words” (GA 14, 60–61/TB, 51). The metaphysics of grammar is tied to a metaphysics that misinterprets the meaning of being in terms of beings, in other words, that reduces the ontological level to the ontic. Recall how Heidegger had famously stated in the introduction to *Being and Time* that “it is one thing to give a report in which we tell about *entities*, but another to grasp entities in their *being*,” then adding dramatically: “For the latter task we lack not only most of the words but, above all, the ‘grammar’” (SZ, 39). In 1962, Heidegger is faced with the same problem: in what language can one say the truth of being, that is, the eventfulness of being? How can one disengage oneself from the language of metaphysics?

Even apart from the fact that language is not only ontic, but from the outset ontic-ontological, we can ask whether there cannot be a language of thinking which expresses the *simplicity* of language in such a way that the language of thinking precisely brings to view the limitations of metaphysical language. But about this one cannot talk. The question is decided by success or failure of such Saying. Finally, common language is not the only metaphysical one. Rather, our interpretation of common speech, bound to Greek ontology, also speaks a metaphysical language. But the human being's relation to language could transform itself analogously to the change of the relation to being (GA 14, 61/TB, 51, modified)

Heidegger first emphasizes the ontic orientation of metaphysical language, which confuses being with the supreme being as ultimate ground or *subjectum*. This is why, second, such grammar is inappropriate to the matter at hand: it keeps relying on the belief in the "subject," which, Heidegger recalls, does not even need to be an ego or a self ("The subject of a sentence is not necessarily a subject in the sense of an ego or a person"), but refers to a *subjectum*, a ground. "Interpreted by the rules of grammar and logic, that about which a statement is made appears as the subject: *hypokeimenon*—that which already lies before us, which is present in some way. What is then predicated of the subject appears as what is already present along with the present subject, the *symbebekos*, *accidens*: 'The auditorium is illuminated.' In the 'It' of 'It gives' speaks a presence of something that is present, that is, there speaks, in a way, a being" (GA 14, 23/TB, 18). The grammar of subject-predicate reinforces the ontology of the *subjectum*, itself bound to an orientation toward the ontic, one that isolates a substrate or a subject in distinction from the predicate.

Now, the question arises: in the expression "It gives," can one isolate the "it" from the "gives"? Heidegger rejects this option as he forcefully declares: "We shall therefore now abandon the attempt to determine 'It' by itself, in isolation, so to speak" (GA 14, 23/TB, 18). Is the *es* in the *es gibt* a subject, a ground, a *thing*? No. Therefore, and "in view of this fact we must also consider the possibility that, contrary to all appearances, in saying 'It gives being,' 'It gives time,' we are not dealing with statements that are always fixed in the sentence structure of the subject-predicate relation" (GA 14, 24/TB, 18–19). The "it-sentences" must rather be approached as impersonal or subjectless sentences: "Grammar and logic, accordingly, construe it-sentences as impersonal, subject-less sentences. In other Indo-Germanic languages, in Greek and Latin, the It is lacking, at least as a separate word and phonetic form; but that does not mean that what is meant by the It is not also in their thought: in Latin, *pluit*, it is raining; in Greek, *chre*, it is needful" (GA 14, 23/TB, 18). Heidegger had already addressed in *What Is Called Thinking?* the question of the neutral as it appears in "impersonal" or "subject-less" locutions such as *es gibt*. Giving the example of several expressions, such as

“it is useful” or “it is raining, it is windy, it is dawning,” he refers to how grammar and logic classify such expressions as impersonal, subjectless sentences. “The Latin *pluit*, it is raining, is of that kind. Raining refers to no person. Accordingly, the sentence is impersonal.”²⁸ The issue is to understand the “it-sentences” as nonprepositional, as impersonal or subjectless sentences, as mentioned in the “Summary.” “A few grammatical discussions about the It in ‘It gives,’ about the kind of sentences characterized by grammar as impersonal sentences without a subject, and also a short reminder about the Greek metaphysical foundations of the interpretation of the sentence as a relation of subject and predicate, today a matter of course, hinted at the possibility of understanding the saying of ‘It gives being,’ ‘It gives time’ other than as prepositional statements” (GA 14, 49/TB, 40).

Now, if the “it” must not be thought in distinction from the giving but precisely in terms of it, then it is not enough to say that “it gives” is an impersonal sentence. This is why Heidegger adds in that passage from *What is Called Thinking?* that “the term ‘impersonal, subjectless sentences’ determines only something negative, and even that perhaps inadequately” (GA 8, 191/WCT, 188). One still needs to understand the “it” in terms of the matter at hand, that is, in terms of the givenness and event of being: “And yet, how *else* are we to bring the ‘It’ into view which we say when we say ‘It gives being,’ ‘It gives time’? Simply by thinking the ‘It’ in the light of the kind of giving that belongs to it: giving as destiny, giving as an opening up which reaches out” (GA 14, 24/TB, 19). It is as if the “it” disappeared in the giving. This implies that the “it” does not refer to a subject existing under the event of being, but is coextensive with such event. If I say “it rains,” the “it” means: the raining, that is, the *event* of raining. *The “it” might then name the very eventfulness of the event.* The “it” in “it gives” is no one, except the very happening of being and time.

What is at stake is to think the proper of time, the proper of being, which will include both the givenness of the *es gibt*, that is to say, the *event* of being and time, and the human being as recipient of such event (for the event always happens to someone). If one focuses on *what* is given in the *es gibt*, then one misses the *giving* in the *es gibt* in favor of the given, a giving as it were concealed by the given. Such is perhaps the ambiguity of the expression *es gibt*, which points both to the motion of giving as such and to what is given ontically. This is why Heidegger is careful to distinguish these two senses: “being, by which all beings as such are marked, being means presencing [*Anwesen*]. Thought with regard to what presences, presencing shows itself as letting-presence [*Anwesenlassen*]. But now we must try to think this letting-presence explicitly insofar as presencing is admitted” (GA 14, 9/TB, 5). This distinction is clearly emphasized in the “Summary of a Seminar on ‘Time and Being.’” Commenting upon the passage just cited, the following clarification is provided: the “crux” of the passage is said to lie in the “But now” insofar as it “sharply delineates what follows from what

preceded and announces the introduction of something new" (GA 14, 45/TB, 36). The difference lies in how one should hear *Anwesenlassen*, "letting-presence." "It is a difference in the letting-presence, and that means above all in *letting*." More precisely, there is, on the one hand: "Letting-presence: Letting-presence: what is present," and, on the other hand, there is: "Letting-presence: *Letting*-presence (that is, thought in terms of Appropriation)" (GA 14, 45/TB, 37). In the first case, presence is related to the ontic, to what is, that is, to the present. However, what matters for Heidegger is the "difference underlying all metaphysics between being and beings and the relation of the two." To that extent, the present being must refer the event of presence that allows for it. "What is present, which has been 'freed' by letting-presence, is only thus admitted as something present for itself to the openness of co-present beings." If letting means to "set free *into the open*," then the question shifts toward the open itself. "Whence and how 'the open' is given remains unsaid and worthy of question here" (GA 14, 45–46/TB, 37). At this point, what matters is no longer the present but presencing itself. Presencing is what matters in letting-presence: "But when letting-presence [*Anwesenlassen*] is thought explicitly, then what is affected by *this* letting is no longer what is present [*das Anwesende*], but presencing itself [*das Anwesen selbst*]" (GA 14, 46/TB, 37). Heidegger not only distinguishes between the two understandings of the expression "letting-presence," that is, between presence and the present, but he also determines the hierarchical order of their relation: "*Only because there is letting of presence, is the letting-presence of what is present possible*" (GA 14, 46/TB, 37).

From a reflection on the present, and the presence of beings, the emphasis shifts toward the presencing of presence itself, as found in *Four Seminars*, where it is said that the giving in the *es gibt* refers neither to the present being nor to the presence of beings but to the presencing or the letting of presence. In that later seminar, more than ever the issue is that of avoiding the ontic misinterpretation of the *es gibt*. Heidegger begins with the striking claim that "the deepest meaning of being is *letting*" (GA 15, 363/FS, 59). One could immediately echo this statement by stating that the deepest meaning of the event is letting as well, if it is the case, as Jacques Derrida writes, that when it comes to the event, it is a matter of abandoning the will and *letting* the event happen, as opposed to *making* it happen (a "making happen" that always mobilizes the power and will of a subject). "Must there not be an absence of the will to abandon, whence the question of letting-happen rather than making-happen?"²⁹ For an event happens *of itself*, so that an event is never prepared, produced or made, but precisely *let be*. To the letting of being corresponds the fundamental disposition of thinking as *Gelassenheit*, as letting-be, if it is the case that "the essence of thinking that we are now searching for is engaged in releasement [*in die Gelassenheit eingelassen*]" (GA 77, 77/71). Letting the event be corresponds to the letting of the event. In the words

of Bret Davis, the translator of *Country Path Conversations*, “In *Gelassenheit*, human being properly corresponds to the *Seinlassen* of being itself.”³⁰

“Thinking the event” would mean here: letting . . . the letting, letting the letting be. Similarly, Heidegger insists that the happening of letting is neither a doing nor a causal efficiency, referring to the lecture “On Time and Being” and its attempt to think such letting as a giving. “Letting the being be, this is the non-causal meaning of ‘letting’ in ‘Time and Being.’ This ‘letting’ is something fundamentally different from ‘doing.’ *The text ‘Time and Being’ attempted to think this ‘letting’ still more originarily as ‘giving’*” (GA 15, 363/FS, 59, emphasis mine). In *Four Seminars*, Heidegger contrasts the metaphysical meaning of being as foundation with the meaning of being as letting. Beginning with a reflection on the sense of *Ereignis* as event of the givenness of presence (described as the “event [*Ereignis*] of being as condition for the arrival of beings,” GA 15, 363/FS, 59), Heidegger attempts to rethink the meaning of being as “letting” (as the “deepest meaning” of being). Being is not the horizon for the encountering of beings, nor the “there is” of beings, and not simply time itself. Rather, being means now: letting the being be (*Das seiende sein-lassen*). This “letting” should not be understood ontically, for that would reduce its eventfulness. This is why Heidegger clarifies that letting is not a cause, for causality only applies to the ontic and therefore still draws from the logic of beings and their “sufficient” grounding: causality aims at the foundation of beings and to that extent is foreign to what is proper to being. “Letting” is also not a “doing,” for “doing” supposes the activity of a subject. As noted, an event is impersonal, not directed by a subject. Letting is to be approached instead from “giving.” Heidegger then pursues the analysis by focusing on the senses of giving in the *es gibt*, placing the emphasis not on the giving of the presence of things, on *what* is given in the *es gibt* (ontic interpretation), but on the giving as such. Heidegger begins by warning against such ontic reduction of the *es gibt*: “*Es gibt*, in Latin: *habet*. Constructed with the accusative it expresses an ontic relation. Here one must take pains to avoid possible errors. For as we have just seen, the expression ‘*Es gibt*’ is not safe from an ontic conception” (GA 15, 364/FS, 59). It is tempting, he continues, to understand the *es gibt* as signifying: “It lets [something] come to presence,” in other words, it lets the being be present. In such an approach, “the giving in ‘*Es gibt*’ is ontically conceived.” As mentioned above, in order to give an example of this ontical conception, Heidegger refers to the French language, insofar as the French *il y a*, according to him, is “too ontic.” The *il y a* would represent an ontical interpretation of the *es gibt*. Hence, Heidegger argues, “if I say in French: there are trout in this stream [*Il y a des truites dans ce ruisseau*], the ‘*Il y a*’ is understood in regard to the presence of beings, to their presencing [*Anwesenung*—and the ‘to let come to presence’ is already on the verge of being understood as ‘to make present.’ Heard in this way, the ‘*Es gibt*’ is grasped ontically so that the emphasis lies upon the fact of being” (GA 15, 364/FS, 59).

Regardless of whether the *il y a* is more ontic than the *es gibt* (a dubious claim at best), what matters for Heidegger is to approach the *es gibt* from the perspective of sheer letting. The emphasis changes in the following way: it is no longer presence that comes to the fore, with the risk of immediately referring to the presence of things, but the letting as such: “Presence is no longer emphasized, but rather the *letting* itself. ‘*Es gibt*’ then has the precise meaning: ‘to let the presencing’” (GA 15, 364/FS, 59). At that point, Heidegger shows how one can avoid the ontical interpretation of the *es gibt*, referring to a passage from the lecture “On Time and Being”: “Then it is no longer the presence of a being which draws one’s attention, but the ground from which the being makes itself independent by means of a covering of that ground—letting as such, the gift of a ‘giving which gives only its gift, but in the giving holds itself back and withdraws’ [GA 14, 12/TB, 8]” (GA 15, 364/FS, 59). One is able to shift from the expression “being is” to the more proper “it gives being” or even “it lets being.” “Now a possibility is perhaps offered to find a way out of the insoluble difficulty which here tempts one to say ‘the impossible’: ‘being is.’ Perhaps one should sooner say, ‘There is being’ [*Es gibt Sein*], in the sense of, ‘it lets being’ [*Es lässt Sein*]” (GA 15, 364–5/FS, 59). Ultimately, Heidegger distinguishes three ways of understanding the *es gibt*: (a) first, in reference to what is, to beings; (b) second, when “the attention is drawn less towards *what* is given (towards what is), than towards *the presencing* itself” (GA 15, 365/FS, 59–60); and (c) finally, when the emphasis is placed on the letting itself, the letting “which *allows* the presencing” (GA 15, 364/FS, 60).

Three levels are distinguished in *Four Seminars*. The first refers to “that which is (to the being)”: that is the ontic interpretation. In contrast with this first sense, a second sense emphasizes presence. This second sense refers to the metaphysical understanding as it focuses on presence. It pertains to an “interpretation of being of the sort given by metaphysics” (GA 15, 365/FS, 60). In contrast with this second sense, a third approach attaches itself to the letting as such, and no longer to the presence of things or even to presence as such. This last sense refers to that which gives being, to that which allows or lets being: it lets presencing. In this conception, it is the very question of being that gives way to the thematic of letting. “If the emphasis is: *to let* presencing, there is no longer room for the very name of being. *Letting* is then the pure *giving*, which itself refers to the it [*das Es*] that gives, which is understood as *Ereignis*” (GA 15, 365/FS, 60). Before returning to this problematic formulation, let me stress here that the giving in question does not refer primarily to a present being or even to the *presence* of beings. “Giving” is approached away from metaphysical beingness. Heidegger demonstrates this in several stages: First, he explains that if “it is tempting to understand ‘*Es gibt*’ as meaning ‘It lets [something] come to presence’” (GA 15, 364/FS, 59), this emphasis makes one conceive of the giving in “*es gibt*” inappropriately, that is, ontically, in reference to a being. Second, the “giving” should be separated from presence

itself for the issue instead is to give thought to giving from an interpretation of the letting itself. Further, Heidegger stresses that the letting as such points not to the given, but to the gift of a giving as such, a giving that withdraws in the very movement of its event. One should therefore not say “being is” or “There is being” (*Es gibt Sein*). Instead, one should say “it lets being” (*Es läßt Sein*), which reveals that Heidegger seeks to emphasize the *event* of being as opposed to remaining within the horizon of beingness.

The emphasis falls upon “letting-presence,” a letting that means bringing into unconcealment, to unconceal, to bring into the open. This is also the sense of giving in the *es gibt*. “In unconcealing prevails a giving, the giving that gives presencing, that is, being, in letting-presence” (GA 14, 9/TB, 5). In unconcealing, Heidegger writes, “speaks a giving, an It gives” (GA 14, 9/TB, 5). The event of being is hence characterized as a giving to the extent that Heidegger can write, “As the gift of this It gives, being belongs to giving” (GA 14, 10/TB, 6). In the stress on giving and unconcealment as letting-presence, Heidegger hence avoids falling in an ontical interpretation of being, one that could still be heard in the expression “being is”: “being is not. There is, It gives being as the unconcealing; as the gift of unconcealing it is retained in the giving. being is not. There is, It gives being as the unconcealing of presencing” (GA 14, 9/TB, 6). What is meant by giving? What does it mean to say “it gives” or “there is” being? In order to give thought to such givenness, to its abundance and overflow, one must relinquish the traditional understanding of being as an empty abstraction, as the emptiest of all concepts. “This ‘It gives, there is being’ might emerge somewhat more clearly once we think out more decisively the giving we have in mind here. We can succeed by paying heed to the wealth of the transformation of what, indeterminately enough, is called being, and at the same time is misunderstood in its core as long as it is taken for the emptiest of all empty concepts” (GA 14, 10/TB, 6). One must instead retrieve its sense as presence or presencing, as *Anwesen*, which for Heidegger was already the determinative meaning of being in Greek philosophy. Heidegger justifies himself in this way: “But what gives us the right to characterize being as presencing? This question comes too late. For this character of being has long since been decided without our contribution, let alone our merit. Thus we are bound to the characterization of being as presencing. It derives its binding force from the beginning of the unconcealment of being as something that can be said, that is, can be thought. Ever since the beginning of Western thinking with the Greeks, all saying of ‘being’ and ‘Is’ is held in remembrance of the determination of being as presencing which is binding for thinking” (GA 14, 10–11/TB, 6–7). Indeed, for Heidegger being is synonymous with presence: one speaks of being “in the presence” of guests, in their being-present (once again hearing the temporal implication of time in being). “Thus we might read somewhere the notice: ‘The celebration took place in the presence [*Anwesenheit*] of

many guests.' The sentence could be formulated just as well: 'with many guests being present'" (GA 14, 14/TB, 10). One needs to distinguish, however, the present (*Gegenwart*) understood on the basis of the now (*Jetzt*) with the present rightly understood as the being-present or presence (*Anwesenheit*) of the guests. "But the present understood in terms of the now is not at all identical with the present in the sense in which the guests are present. We never say and we cannot say: 'The celebration took place in the now of many guests'" (GA 14, 15/TB, 10). The present is not reducible to the now because "the present speaks at the same time of presence" (GA 14, 15/TB, 11) and because "In the present, too, presencing is given" (GA 14, 18/TB, 13). Heidegger carefully distinguishes two senses of the present, the present as now and the present as presence: "However, the present in the sense of presence differs so vastly from the present in the sense of the now that the present as presence can in no way be determined in terms of the present as the now" (GA 14, 16/TB, 11). Presence cannot be reduced to the present; indeed, it is the opposite that is the case: the present needs to be determined on the basis of presence (which itself is to be determined in terms of the givenness of the *es gibt* or *Ereignis*).

Heidegger is then able to reveal being as an overflow of presence, as a *gift of presence*, as opposed to an empty abstraction. He begins by stating that at the beginning of Western philosophy, "being is thought, but not the 'It gives' as such" (GA 14, 12/TB, 8). The "it gives" has as it were *withdrawn* behind what is given, and indeed what is specific in the *es gibt* is a certain movement of withdrawal in the very giving. Interestingly, Heidegger incorporates the withdrawal that metaphysics has manifested in its oblivion of the *es gibt* ("Metaphysics is the oblivion of being," GA 14, 50/TB, 41) in his own thinking of the event of presence as harboring an irreducible withdrawal and expropriation. This play between those two concealments, the concealment of metaphysics and the concealment proper to *Ereignis*,³¹ is discussed in the "Summary of a Seminar on the Lecture 'Time and Being,'" which reads: "But the concealment which belongs to metaphysics as its limit must belong to Appropriation [*Ereignis*] itself. That means that the withdrawal which characterized metaphysics in the form of the oblivion of being now shows itself as the dimension of concealment itself" (GA 14, 50/TB, 41). The difference between the two concealments lies in whether the concealment itself is concealed or not! Whereas in metaphysics there is a forgetting of the forgetting, since the withdrawal of being itself withdraws ("Metaphysics is the oblivion of being, and that means the history of the concealment and withdrawal of that which gives being," GA 14, 50/TB, 41), in the thinking of the truth of being such concealment is meditated upon and *remembered*. Whereas in the tradition, "this withdrawal [*Entzug*] of being is concealed [*verborgen*]" (GA 14, 62/TB, 52), "now this concealment does not conceal itself. Rather, the attention of thinking is concerned with it" (GA 14, 50/TB, 41). Indeed, Heidegger determines the thinking

of being, as early as *Being and Time*, as a movement of remembering, which is itself to be understood paradoxically as a standing in oblivion. “The thinking that begins with *Being and Time* is thus, on the one hand, an awakening from the oblivion of being—an awakening which must be understood as a recollection of something which has never been thought—but on the other hand, as this awakening, not an extinguishing of the oblivion of being, but placing oneself in it and standing within it. Thus the awakening from the oblivion of being to the oblivion of being is the awakening into Appropriation. The oblivion of being can first be experienced as such in the thinking on being itself, on Appropriation” (GA 14, 37–38/TB, 29–30).

Such a remembering is not the overcoming of oblivion, but its *guarding*: one remembers that there is forgetting, *and nothing else*. Heidegger’s thinking is grappling with an irreducible concealment and expropriation at the heart of the event of being. If this thinking could still be understood at the time of *Being and Time* as “the preparation and beginning of a foundation upon which all metaphysics rests as its inaccessible ground, in such a way that the preceding oblivion of being would thus be overcome and negated,” it ultimately develops in a way that stresses the irreducible nature of oblivion: “However, for the correct understanding it is a matter of realizing that this previous non-thinking is not an omission, but is to be thought as the consequence of the self-concealment of being. . . . The oblivion of being which constitutes the essence of metaphysics and became the stimulus for *Being and Time* belongs to the essence of being itself. Thus there is put to the thinking of being the task of thinking being-in such a way that oblivion essentially belongs to it” (GA 14, 37/TB, 29). *The event of being is the event of a withdrawal and expropriation*, which explains why Heidegger states that *Ereignis* is in itself *Enteignis*, expropriation: “With the entry of thinking into Appropriation, its own way of concealment proper to it also arrives. Appropriation is in itself *expropriation*” (GA 14, 50/TB, 41). Recall how Heidegger delineated the task, in order to give thought what is proper to being, of relinquishing being as ground of beings in favor of “the giving which prevails concealed in unconcealment, that is, in favor of the It gives” (GA 14, 10/TB, 6). Instead of being as foundation of beings, we are invited to think being as the withdrawal harbored in the giving of beings, indeed in the giving of being itself. “Being thus withdraws itself” (GA 14, 62/TB, 52). Being withdraws (*entzieht*) to give way to the gift that it gives. The giving withdraws to let what is given appear. This is why, as noted earlier, Heidegger characterized phenomenology as a phenomenology of the inapparent (*Phänomenologie des Unscheinbaren*; GA 15, 397, 399/FS, 79–80). On account of this inapparent or invisible dimension, metaphysical thinking only “sees” the gift and does not see the giving. In a sense, this blindness defines metaphysics itself, which is structurally oblivious of being as a giving in favor of the given, that is, beings: “That gift is thought and conceptualized from then on exclusively as being

with regard to beings" (GA 14, 12/TB, 8). Heidegger names the phenomenon of the gift, that is, of a giving that is concealed within the gift, *sending* (*Schiken*). "A giving which gives only its gift, but in the giving holds itself back and withdraws, such a giving we call sending" (GA 14, 12/TB, 8). Being becomes *das Geschickte*. At this point, Heidegger considers that he has been able to name what is most proper to being. Being itself, he writes, "receives its appropriate determination, from the 'there is, it gives being'" (GA 14, 14/TB, 10).

What is most proper to being is to be sought in the giving of the *es gibt*, a giving now determined as sending, as play of a withdrawal and of a sending. "While we were just now thinking about being, we found: what is proper to being [*das Eigentümliche des Seins*], that to which being belongs and in which it remains retained, shows itself in the It gives and its giving as sending" (GA 14, 14/TB, 10, modified). Thinking the proper of being, and indeed the proper of time, leads to an *event* that gives being, that gives time, the event of the *es gibt*. As stressed throughout this chapter, the issue is to avoid an ontic interpretation of being so as to seize it in its eventfulness. This is why Heidegger explains first that when the meditation bears on what is proper to being, one is led into the dimension of an event, the event of givenness: "What is peculiar to being is not anything having the character of being. When we explicitly think about being, the matter itself leads us in a certain sense away from being, and we think the destiny [*das Geschick*] that gives being as a gift" (GA 14, 14/TB, 10). Being is then *given*, and thereby assigned to the event of what Heidegger precisely calls *Ereignis*, the event of appropriation. Indeed, *Ereignis* designates nothing other than the *es gibt* of being, as Heidegger states in "On the Way to Language": "The appropriating event is not the outcome (result) of something else, but the giving yield whose giving reach alone is what gives us such things as a 'there is,' a 'there is' of which even being itself stands in need to come into its own as presence" (GA 12, 247/OWL, 127).

We know that the problematic of *Ereignis* in its mature form was introduced between 1936 and 1938, Heidegger clarifying that "the relations and contexts constituting the essential structure of Appropriation were worked out between 1936 and 1938" (GA 14, 52/TB, 43).³² *Ereignis* designates the event of being, the event of the "there is." In this context the enigmatic formulation in the 1962 lecture states that "being vanishes in *Ereignis*" (*Sein verschwindet im Ereignis*; GA 14, 27/TB, 22), a statement that seems to indicate that *Ereignis* exceeds the economy of being and its epochs. This is described in the "Summary" in this way: "If Appropriation is not a new formation of being in the history of being, but if it is rather the case that being belongs to Appropriation and is reabsorbed in it (in whatever manner), then the history of being is at an end for thinking *in* Appropriation, that is, for the thinking which enters into Appropriation—in that being, which lies in sending—is no longer what is to be thought explicitly. Thinking then stands

in and before That which has sent the various forms of epochal being" (GA 14, 49–50/TB, 40–41). Further, it is wondered whether "the entry into Appropriation would mean the end of the history of being" (GA 14, 59/TB, 49–50). Indeed, one must "consider whether one can still speak in such a way about being and the history of being after the entry [of thinking into Appropriation], if the history of being is understood as the history of the destinies in which Appropriation conceals itself" (GA 14, 59–60/TB, 50). It has often been concluded from these passages that the problematic of being was abandoned to the benefit of the thinking of *Ereignis*. Did Heidegger not stress in *Four Seminars*, as cited prior, that if the emphasis is on the *to let* presencing, then "there is no longer room for the very name of being" (GA 15, 365/FS, 60)? Further, the letting, now taken as giving, "itself refers to the it [*das Es*] that gives, which is understood as *Ereignis*" (GA 15, 365/FS, 60).

An objection is raised in the "Summary." Indeed, *Letter on Humanism* contains the following statement from Heidegger (as translated by Joan Stambaugh: TB, 43): "For the It which gives here is being itself" (*Denn das Es, das hier gibt, ist das Sein selbst*; in the translation from *Pathmarks*: "For the 'it' that here 'gives' is being itself," PA, 254–255). This statement does not seem to concord with what is said in "On Time and Being" regarding the declared intent to think being from Appropriation (*Ereignis*). This latter claim should lead to a predominance of *Ereignis* and to the disappearance of being. To this objection it is replied that in the *Letter on Humanism*, in the very passage cited and "almost throughout, the term 'being itself' already names Appropriation" (GA 14, 52/TB, 43). Being itself is approached as *Ereignis*, as appropriative event. As Heidegger states in the *Beiträge*, "*Das Seyn west als das Ereignis*" (GA 65, 30), and also in *Besinnung*: "*Das Seyn ist Er-ignis*" (GA 66, 100). In fact, in the very lecture "On Time and Being," Heidegger makes the striking statement that "the sole aim of this lecture has been to bring into view being itself as *Ereignis*" (GA 14, 26/TB, 21). *Ereignis* would be the name for being approached in its eventfulness and does not signify an abandonment of the reference to being. Being "disappears" in *Ereignis* to the extent that it comes to view as *Ereignis*: "it is precisely a matter of seeing that being, by coming to view as Appropriation, disappears as being" (GA 14, 52/TB, 43). Therefore, it is concluded, "there is no contradiction between the two statements" insofar as both "name the same matter with differing emphasis" (GA 14, 52/TB, 43). This is why it is also not possible to claim that the very title of the lecture, "On Time and Being," contradicts the motif of a disappearance of being. Indeed, the title was chosen in order to trace and recall a relation to *Being and Time*. This, however, "does not mean that 'Being' and 'Time' are retained." Rather, what is meant is that "Appropriation is to be thought in such a way that it can neither be retained as being nor as time. It is, so to speak, a '*neutrale tantum*,' the neutral 'and' in the title 'Time and Being.' However, this does not exclude the

fact that sending and giving are also explicitly thought in Appropriation, so that being and time, too, in a way continue to be thematic" (GA 14, 52–53/TB, 43–44). This is why, as Richard Capobianco explains:

Does this comment ["there is no longer room for the very name of being"] reveal that Heidegger ultimately abandoned "the name of being" for *die Sache selbst*? No, not at all. We must consider the remark in the context of the whole discussion of this seminar. Insofar as he sometimes uses *Sein* (and *Anwesen*) in the seminar to refer to the various forms of *Seiendheit* (and *Anwesenheit*) that came to pass in the history of metaphysics, then indeed there can be no "room" for the name "being" in thinking the fundamental matter of the letting or giving of beings in their beingness. But insofar as he explicitly and precisely names his ownmost concern being as being (*Sein als Sein*) as *letting and as giving—which in turn is to be understood as appropriating event (das Ereignis)*—then quite clearly he did not abandon the name being for *die Sache selbst*.³³

What can be retained from this discussion is the following: *Ereignis* designates the event of being, which immediately amounts to state that being, as such, is an event. Nonetheless, with respect to the term *Ereignis*, the following clarifications are necessary. In ordinary German, the term means "event," which explains why it has still recently been translated as the "event."³⁴ Now, in the 1962 lecture, among other places, Heidegger insists that *Ereignis* should not be simply understood as "event." He writes, for instance, that "what the name *Ereignis* names can no longer be represented by means of the current meaning of the word; for in that meaning *Ereignis* is understood in the sense of occurrence and happening [*Vorkommen und Geschehnis*]" (GA 14, 25–26/TB, 20). The same point is made, for instance, in *Identity and Difference* (GA 11, 45/36) and *On the Way to Language* (GA 12, 247/OWL, 127), where Heidegger writes that "Appropriation . . . cannot be represented either as an occurrence or a happening." However, this does not mean that *Ereignis* is unrelated to event. On the contrary: *Ereignis* is not an event in the ordinary sense (event as a factual, ontical occurrence) because it is the *happening* in all events, the eventfulness of any event, and first of all the event of time and being. Heidegger writes: "What determines both, time and being, in their own, that is, in their belonging together, we shall call: *Ereignis*, the event of Appropriation. *Ereignis* will be translated as Appropriation or event of Appropriation. One should bear in mind, however, that 'event' is not simply an occurrence, but that which makes any occurrence possible" (GA 14, 24/TB, 19). Heidegger had already developed the senses of that term, and of the scope of the event within it, in "The Principle of Identity," which reads: "The word 'event' [*Ereignis*] is taken from ordinary language. To appropriate [*Er-eignen*] means originally to eye [*eräugen*], i.e., to catch sight of, to call into view, to take possession [*an-eignen*]. More originally thought, the word 'event' is now, as a guiding word, taken into the service

of a thinking that attempts to keep in memory that dark word of Parmenides: τὸ αὐτό—the same is thinking and being. The word ‘event of appropriation’ [*Ereignis*] can be translated just as little as the Greek guiding word λόγος or the Chinese *Tao*. The word event of appropriation here no longer means that which we otherwise name an occurrence, an incident. The word is now used as a *singulare tantum*” (GA 79, 124–125/BL, 117).³⁵ For Heidegger, *Ereignis* names the event of being, for, as he writes, “if the word ‘event’ is heard in the context of a discussion of being, and if we take the word only in its current meaning, it becomes almost inevitable to speak of the event of being. For without being, no being is capable of being as such. Accordingly, being can be proffered as the highest, most significant event of all” (GA 14, 26/TB, 21). *The highest, most significant, event is to be.*

The thinking of being approached from the giving of *Ereignis* leads to a pure thinking of the event, that is, of the *eventfulness of the event*, if it is also understood (as seen from the discussion on oblivion) that there is no event without an irreducible expropriation in its very happening. For Heidegger is very insistent on the fact that what is most proper to giving, to sending, is a certain holding back: the “fundamental characteristic of sending,” he writes, is the holding-back of a withdrawal; it gives by not giving: such is the very happening of history, of the history of being in its epochs: “The history of being means destiny of being in whose sendings both the sending and the It which sends forth hold back with their self-manifestation. To hold back is, in Greek, *epoche*. Hence we speak of the epochs of the destiny of being” (GA 14, 13/TB, 9). An epoch is the holding back—the *epoche*—of a giving. “Epoch does not mean here a span of time in occurrence, but rather the fundamental characteristic of sending, the actual holding-back of itself in favor of the discernibility of the gift, that is, of being with regard to the grounding of beings” (GA 14, 13/TB, 9). What is most proper to the gift—the giving—remains concealed. What is most proper to the event, that is, its eventfulness, remains as well withdrawn, a withdrawal that nonetheless claims us, if it is the case, as Heidegger explained in *What is called Thinking?* that “withdrawing is not nothing. Withdrawing is an event [*Entzug ist Ereignis*]. In fact, what withdraws may even concern and claim man more essentially than anything present that strikes and touches him” (GA 8, 10/WCT, 9).

Another key feature appears at this juncture. Indeed, what is peculiar to this determination of what is proper to being and time, this meditation on the giving of presencing, on the event of being, is that it necessarily involves the human being, or at least *someone*, some self, to whom it happens. Throughout his entire work Heidegger has consistently posited the distinctive role and place of the human being in the givenness of being. And how could it be otherwise if, as he explains in the Zollikon seminars, “there cannot be the being of beings at all *without* the human being” (GA 89, 221/Z, 176)? If *Dasein* is needed, required, for the event of being? For the manifestedness of being, Heidegger stresses, “what is needed is

the [ecstatic] standing-in [*Innestehen*] of the human being in the *Da* [there]" (GA 89, 221/Z, 176). Indeed, for Heidegger, "Presence means: the constant abiding that approaches human beings, reaches them, is extended to them" (GA 14, 17/TB, 12, modified). Presence comes toward us, happens to us: "What is present concerns us, the present, that is: what, lasting, comes toward us, us human beings" (GA 14, 16/TB, 12, modified). In the words of the *Bremen Lectures*: "And being? Let us think being according to its inceptual sense as presencing [*An-wesen*]. Being does not presence for the human incidentally or as an exception. Rather, being essences and endures only in that it concernfully approaches [*an-geht*] the human. For it is the human, open for being, who first lets this arrive [*ankommen*] as presencing" (GA 79, 121/BL, 114). In fact, human beings are defined as those who are approached by the gift of presence. Thus, when asking the question, "Who are we?" (a question that is repeated throughout Heidegger's work), the reply is: "We remain cautious in our answer. For it might be that that which distinguishes human beings as human beings is determined precisely by what we must think about here: human beings, who are concerned with and approached by presence, who, through being thus approached, are themselves present in their own way for all present and absent beings" (GA 14, 16/TB, 12, modified). More precisely, we are those who *receive* this gift of presence, and the human being becomes rethought as the *recipient* of the event. This "receptivity" is what makes us humans: "Human beings: standing within the approach of presence, but in such a way that they receive as a gift the presencing that It gives by perceiving what appears in letting-presence. If human beings were not the constant receivers of the gift given by the 'It gives presence,' if that which is extended in the gift did not reach human beings, then not only would being remain concealed in the absence of this gift, not only closed off, but human beings would remain excluded from the scope of: It gives being. *Humans beings would not be human beings*" (GA 14, 17/TB, 12, emphasis mine, modified). In short, the *es gibt* of *Ereignis* engages the human being. "In the simple use of 'It gives,' 'there is,' there already lies the relation to the human being" (GA 14, 47/TB, 38, modified).

For Heidegger, the event of *Ereignis* itself brings human beings into their own. He states clearly in the lecture: "We catch sight of the other peculiar property in Appropriation as soon as we think clearly enough what has already been said. In being as presence, there is manifest the concern which concerns us humans in such a way that in perceiving and receiving it we have attained the distinction of human being." Or also: "Because being and time are there only in Appropriating, Appropriating has the peculiar property of bringing human beings into their own as the beings who perceive being by standing within true time. Thus Appropriated, human beings belong to Appropriation" (GA 14, 28/TB, 23, modified). In fact, *Ereignis* names the "relation" of being and the human being, that is, the conjunction of the "opening of the human being to the gift of what happens."³⁶

As Heidegger explains in the *Bremen Lectures*, “Event of appropriation names the letting belong that is to be thought from it, and thus the authentic letting belong that brings the human and being into the ownership of each other” (GA 79, 124–125/BL, 117). *Ereignis* “lets the human and being *belong* in a togetherness” (GA 79, 125/118). *Ereignis* names the *belonging-together of humans and being*. The human and being are appropriated to each other and belong to each other: being needs the human to hold sway; and the human’s own is be-ing. *Ereignis* is the name of such co-belonging, trans-appropriation.³⁷

It will thus be necessary, to understanding the event, to think together the impersonality of the event with the arising and responding of a self as if the *es gibt* involved the human being in its selfhood, a self that is paradoxically emerging from an otherwise impersonal, selfless phenomenon. In this respect, one ought not to be too quick to contrast the impersonality of the event with the selfhood that is engaged by it. Such primordial impersonal dimension of the event does not constitute a “limit” of selfhood or what “interrupts” it, because the self arises precisely in the reception of such event, in which the I suffers the “shock” of the event. The self comes to be in the exposure to that which exceeds it. I am myself on the basis of this primordial alteration of the event. What is at stake here is to reveal how the self itself is an event, happening, as it were, in and from the happening of being. It is this eventfulness of the self that this chapter now explores further.

The Eventful Self

In later writings, Heidegger increasingly approached the question of the self from the key word in his thought, *Ereignis*, that is, from the happening of the truth of be-ing. Being is an event that is nothing subjective, and yet it calls for a self, for the original responsiveness and responsibility of a self. As Heidegger stresses: “Be-ing is nothing ‘human,’ and no human product; and nevertheless the essence of be-ing needs Da-sein and thus the inhabiting of the human being” (GA 65, 265/187, modified). This suggests that selfhood itself must be understood, no longer in terms of subjectivity, but as an *event*. One cannot assume a pregiven concept of the self as if it subtended existence, but rather the self must be taken as arising from the event. In *The Contributions to Philosophy*, a renewed thinking of selfhood as event, of what Heidegger calls “self-being” (*Selbst-sein*), is enacted precisely at the same time that a subjectivistic understanding of the self is more radically abandoned. Such a selfhood is to be taken in a radically nonsubjectivistic sense and rethought from what is most proper to the human being, that is, both as event and in its belonging to the event of be-ing. “The very first task, however, is precisely to discontinue postulating the human being as a subject and to grasp this being primarily and exclusively on the basis of the question of being, and only in this way” (GA 65, 489/385).

In paragraph 4 of the preview of the *Contributions*, entitled “Of the Event,” Heidegger makes the following statement: “The question concerning the ‘meaning’ [of being], i.e., in accordance with the elucidation in *Being and Time*, the question concerning grounding the domain of projecting-open—and then, the question of the *truth of be-ing*—is and remains *my* question, and is *my one and only* question; for this question concerns what is *most sole and unique*. In the age of *total lack of questioning anything*, it is sufficient as a start to inquire into the question of all questions” (GA 65, 10–11/8). From the very inception of his thought, Heidegger has attempted, on the “way” (if, as he remarks, “stumbling and getting up again can be called that,” GA 65, 84/58) to a genuine thinking of being, its meaning, and its truth, to rethink the proper selfhood of human beings—that is, what is most proper to them—away from the traditional and inadequate categories of substance, subjectivity, reflection, egohood, and self-consciousness, categories that do not do justice to the eventfulness of the self. This led him in the late 1920s to forge the notions of ek-static Dasein and transcendence in order to rethink the being of the self. However, after the turn, Heidegger considered that these notions are still too attached—reactively—to the metaphysical subjectivistic way of thinking and attempted to think, beyond transcendence and beyond the very ontological difference, the *event* and the truth of be-ing out of itself. In fact, the very expression “truth of be-ing” leads away from subjectivism as it points to a dimension that lies beyond the opposition between subject and object. Truth “of” be-ing does not mean truth about being (objectification), but it is not to be taken simply as a subjective genitive. In fact, Heidegger clarifies that the “of” “can never be grasped by the heretofore ‘grammatical’ genitive” (GA 65, 428/302). The “of” instead names the event of the happening of the truth “of” be-ing (which is also the happening of the be-ing “of” truth), a dimension that is more originary than the subjective-objective opposition. This is why Heidegger renames the genitive “of” an “ur-own” (*ein ureigener*). Dasein’s being does not lie in subjectivity but indeed in the dimension of being itself, especially since “in the determination of the humanity of the human being as ek-sistence what is essential is not the human being but being—as the dimension of the *ecstasis* of ek-sistence” (GA 9, 333–334/PA, 254). *Ecstasis*, precisely, is related to being, and not simply to the reversal of an immanent subjectivity. “The ecstatic essence of existence is therefore still understood inadequately as long as one thinks of it as merely a ‘standing out,’ while interpreting the ‘out’ as meaning ‘away from’ the interior of an immanence of consciousness or spirit” (GA 9, 374/PA, 284). The “out” should be taken in terms of the openness of being itself. The following clarification is stated in *Four Seminars*: “Today, Heidegger adds, I would formulate this relation differently. I would no longer speak simply of ek-stasis, but of *instancy* in the clearing [*Inständigkeit in der Lichtung*]” (GA 15, 384/FS, 71). Heidegger understands “in-stancy” or “in-standing” (*Inständigkeit*) as standing-in

the *Da* of being. “What is meant by ‘existence’ in the context of a thinking that is prompted by, and directed toward, the truth of being, could be most felicitously designated by the word ‘in-standing’ [*Inständigkeit*]” (GA 9, 374/PA, 284). *Da-sein* is rethought as standing-in the truth of being: “The ‘being’ of the *Da*, and only it, has the fundamental character of ek-sistence, that is, of an ecstatic inherence in the truth of being” (GA 9, 325/PA, 248).

Heidegger’s thinking thus increasingly turned toward the truth of being as such (and no longer beingness) and inquired into the truth of being out of being itself. As just indicated, he recognized in the *Beiträge* (GA 65, 295/208) that “In *Being and Time* *Da-sein* still stands in the shadow of the ‘anthropological,’ the ‘subjectivistic,’ and the individualistic,’ etc.,” and he explained as well, in paragraph 138 (GA 65, 259/182–183), that the initial position of the question of being in *Being and Time* in terms of “meaning of being” and “understanding of being” suffered from an excessive dependence upon the language of subjectivity. To that extent, it exposed itself to a series of misunderstandings, all sharing the same subjectivism: “Understanding” is taken in terms of the “inner lived-experiences” of a subject; the one who understands is taken in turn as “an I-subject”; the accessibility of being in an understanding is taken as an indication of the “dependency” of being upon a subject and therefore as a sign of idealism, and so on. In 1969, in the Thor seminar, Heidegger returned to this question in order to clarify it. In contrast with the metaphysical question concerning the beingness of being, Heidegger explains that he attempted in *Being and Time* to pose the question concerning the “is-ness” of the “is” in terms of the *meaning* of being. Why? Because, precisely, metaphysics does *not* ask about the meaning of being, but only about the beingness of beings (itself ontically predetermined as substance). The expression “meaning of being” was used as a first attempt to step out of the metaphysical conflation of being with beingness or beinghood (*Seiendheit*). “According to the tradition, the ‘question of being’ means the question concerning the being of beings, in other words: the question concerning the beinghood of beings, in which a being is determined in regard to its being-a-being [*Seiendsein*]. This question is *the* question of metaphysics. . . . With *Being and Time*, however, the ‘question of being’ receives an entirely other meaning. Here it concerns the question of being as being. It becomes thematic in *Being and Time* under the name of the ‘question of the meaning [*Sinn*] of being” (GA 15, 344/FS, 46). Now, “meaning of being” is further clarified in *Being and Time* in terms of the project or projecting unfolded by the understanding of being: “Here ‘meaning’ is to be understood from ‘project,’ which is explained by ‘understanding” (GA 15, 335/FS, 40). At this point, Heidegger notes that this formulation is inadequate *because it runs the risk of reinforcing the establishment of subjectivity*: “What is inappropriate in this formulation of the question is that it makes it all too possible to understand the ‘project’ as a human performance. Accordingly, project is then only taken to be

a structure of subjectivity—which is how Sartre takes it, by basing himself upon Descartes” (GA 15, 335/FS, 41). This statement echoes the well-known passage from the *Nietzsche* volumes where Heidegger, discussing the unfinished or interrupted character of *Being and Time*, explained that it was in order to conjure such a risk that *Being and Time* was interrupted. “The reason for the disruption is that the attempt and the path it chose confront the danger of *unwillingly becoming merely another entrenchment of subjectivity*.”³⁸

In the *Contributions*, on the contrary, Heidegger is very careful to stress that “the projecting of the essence of be-ing is merely a response to the call” (GA 65, 56/39). Any projecting is thrown, and thrownness is decidedly understood as belonging to be-ing (that is, *not* as the project of the subject!), so that to be thrown now means to be appropriated. “Thrownness will be experienced above all from within the truth of be-ing. In the first pre-liminary interpretation (*Being and Time*) thrownness still remains misunderstandable in the sense of man’s accidentally appearing among other beings” (GA 65, 318/223). In paragraph 134, Heidegger explains that the relation between Da-sein and be-ing was first grasped in *Being and Time* as “‘understanding of being,’ whereby understanding is grasped as projecting—and the projecting as thrown, and that means: belonging to the event by be-ing itself” (GA 65, 252/178). The notion of an understanding of being is rethought as belongingness to being, rather than as a projection of a subject. With respect to such “projection,” “Letter on Humanism” provides this clarification: “if we understand what *Being and Time* calls ‘projection’ as a representational positing, we take it to be an achievement of subjectivity” (GA 9, 327/PA, 249), and consequently we do not grasp the notion of “understanding of being” *in the way it was intended in a work of fundamental ontology*, “namely as the ecstatic relation to the clearing of being [*als der ekstatische Bezug zur Lichtung des Seins*]” or as “ekstatic in-standing [*ekstatisches Inne-stehen*] within the clearing” (GA 9, 327/PA, 249). It was thus in order to avoid the subjectivizing of the question of being that the expression “truth of being” was adopted. “In order to counter this mistaken conception and to retain the meaning of ‘project’ as it is to be taken (that of the opening disclosure), the thinking after *Being and Time* replaced the expression ‘meaning of being’ with ‘truth of being’” (GA 15, 335/FS, 41).

Now, the difference between the expressions “meaning of being” and “truth of be-ing” is crucial for a rethinking of the *Selbst* as event. Indeed, how does Heidegger explain the shift from “meaning of being” to “truth of be-ing”? In terms of a *turning* of the question of being, a turning that would have the question part from a certain subjectivism and anthropocentrism still dangerously threatening to affect the analyses of *Being and Time*. Heidegger gives examples of such a “turning in thinking” when, for instance in paragraph 41, he explains that the word *decision* can be taken first as an anthropological human act “until

it suddenly means the essential sway of be-ing" (GA 65, 84/58). Already in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger had stressed the ontological—rather than anthropological or subjectivist—scope of decision, explaining that “de-cision [Ent-scheidung] here does not mean the judgment and choice of human beings but rather a division [Scheidung] in the . . . togetherness of being, unconcealment, seeming and not-Being.”³⁹ The measure of decision is no longer the subject but the event of being itself. Thinking “from *Ereignis*,” from the event of appropriation, will involve that “the human being [be] put back into the essential sway of be-ing and cut off from the fetters of ‘anthropology’” (GA 65, 84/58). This turning in the question, it should be stressed, does not lead to an abandonment of the reference to human beings, but rather to their *transformation*, which is, Heidegger clarifies, a “becoming other in its essence [*das Anderswerden seines Wesens*]” (GA 65, 84/58). Referred back to the event of being, that is, *Ereignis*, the human being undergoes such a becoming other: therein lies the “*transformation of human beings themselves*” (GA 65, 84/67), from the subjectivist horizon to the belonging to the truth of be-ing (Da-sein).

This turn, from a subjectivist understanding of the self to the notion of a happening of the self, can in fact be traced in the development of Heidegger’s work. The relation of being and the human was first determined in terms of the notion of the understanding of being, as Heidegger himself recognized in “On Time and Being”: “we must keep in mind the fact that it [the relation of being and the human] belongs essentially to every step of the question of being. Here we must note a double role of thinking. The thinking which essentially belongs to the openness of being is, on the one hand, the thinking which distinguishes the human being. In terms of *Being and Time*, it can be called *understanding thinking*” (GA 14, 43/TB, 35, modified). This was rigorously how Dasein was defined in *Being and Time*: Dasein has, indeed *is*, an understanding of being. When Heidegger introduced the term *Dasein* in its technical sense in *Being and Time*, it was in the perspective of providing an *access* (*Zugang*) to the question of the meaning of being. “The question of being demands that the right access to beings be gained and secured in advance with regard to what it interrogates” (SZ, 6). The term *Dasein*, which ordinarily in German means “existence,” is said to designate “the being of human being” (SZ, 25), our most proper being. Heidegger states that “this being [*Seiende*] which we ourselves in each case are . . . we formulate terminologically as *Dasein*” (SZ, 7). Now, the analysis of the being of Dasein (the very task of *Being and Time*) must, in the final analysis, allow for the interpretation of that which is *asked about* (*das Gefragte*) in the questioning, namely the *meaning of being*, and in fact presupposes it. The analysis of Dasein is strictly subordinated to the elaboration of the question of being: “the possibility of carrying out the analysis of Dasein depends upon the prior elaboration of the question of the meaning of being in general” (SZ, 13). From the outset, the problematic of

Dasein supposes the openness of being in its questionability: Dasein arises out of the opening of being *in and as a question*.

The question of being is such that, once its *questionableness* or *problematicity* (*Fraglichkeit*) is unfolded, it includes us in an essential way. Heidegger presents this implication in “What Is Metaphysics?” in the following way: “First, every metaphysical question always encompasses the whole range of metaphysical problems. Each question is itself always the whole [*das Ganze*]. Therefore, second, every metaphysical question can be asked only in such a way that the questioner as such is also there within the question, that is, is placed in question” (GA 9, 103/PA, 82).⁴⁰ The issue, as he also stated in *What Is Called Thinking?* is “to properly raise the question of the being of beings—to raise it in a way which will put in question our own being (*Wesen*) so that it becomes questionable (*fragwürdig*) in its relatedness to being, and thereby open to being” (GA 8, 84/WCT, 78). Note that the *question* of Dasein, as a question concerning who we are, indicates, first and foremost, that the human being must essentially remain a question. As Heidegger writes in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, “The determination of the essence of the human being is *never* an answer, but is essentially a question” (GA 40, 107/IM, 149). To that extent, it is a matter of rendering human beings themselves questionable, setting them, as Heidegger states in the *Beiträge*, “beyond themselves into an untrodden domain” (GA 65, 53/43). The human being becomes “dangerous” (Heidegger speaking of the “dangerousness of the question ‘who are we?’”; GA 65, 54/38), and even uncanny, if it is the case that “the human being is *to deinotaton*, the uncanniest of the uncanny” (GA 40, 114/IM, 159). Here one glimpses the intimate relation between the questionableness (*Fraglichkeit*) of Dasein in *Being and Time* and the dangerousness (*Gefährlichkeit*) of the human being in the *Contributions*.

At the time of *Being and Time*, Dasein’s implication in the general question of the meaning of being is analyzed as Dasein’s privilege or priority (*Vorrang*), a threefold privilege: ontical, ontological, and ontico-ontological. Ontical, because out of all other *entities*, it alone exists; ontological, because the understanding of being belongs to Dasein as an ontological characteristic (*Bestimmtheit*); ontico-ontological, because it is the condition of the possibility of all ontologies. Ultimately, Heidegger stresses that Dasein is distinctive because it has—*is*—an understanding of being. To that precise extent, “Dasein has proven itself to be that which, before all other beings, is ontologically the primary being to be interrogated” (SZ, 13). Dasein emerges as what is “interrogated” (*das Befragte*) in the question of the meaning of being because it has an understanding of being, that is, because it is that being who can *understand* the question of what it means to be. Further, Dasein does not “simply occur among other beings,” but rather “is concerned *about* its very being” (SZ, 12). Only a being who can have a relationship to other beings and who at the same time has the possibility of questioning, that

is, a being who does not simply appear “among” other beings, but whose constitution of being is to have “in its very being, a relation of being to this being” (SZ, 12), should be *interrogated* in its being. “The explicit and lucid formulation of the question of the meaning of being requires a prior suitable explication of a being (Dasein) with regard to its being” (SZ, 7), which explains that “to work out the question of being means to make a being—one who questions—transparent in its being” (SZ, 7).

The problematic of an analysis of Dasein must therefore be situated in the *Seinsverständnis*, which Heidegger presents, quite simply, as a “fact” (*Faktum*; SZ, 5). In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, he stressed that “being is given only if the understanding of being, hence Dasein, exists. This being accordingly lays claim to a distinctive privilege in ontological inquiry. It makes itself manifest in all discussions of the basic problems of ontology and above all in the fundamental question of the meaning of being in general” (GA 24, 26). This question is hence situated in the understanding of being that Dasein manifests. This is why, in the 1930 course on *The Essence of Human Freedom*, Heidegger went so far as to state that “we have access to the problem of being only through the understanding of being” (GA 31, 125/86–87). The understanding of being is taken both as the sole possible access to the problem of being and as the ontological determination of the human being. Now, in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger stressed that privilege of the understanding of being while describing it as an event, rather than as a faculty of the human being: “if the understanding of being did not occur, humans could never be as the beings which they are, and this would be so regardless of the wonderful faculties with which human beings have been equipped” (GA 3, 227/159, trans. modified). This is why such understanding is *not* a “human” determination, but a *characteristic of being*. The privilege of Dasein is not ontic or anthropological, but ultimately *ontological*. “Understanding of being is itself a determination of being of Dasein [*Seinsverständnis* is selbst eine Seinsbestimmtheit des Daseins]. The ontic distinction of Dasein lies in the fact that it is ontological” (SZ, 12). In the *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger also emphasized the *ontological*—rather than anthropological or epistemological—character of Dasein’s privilege, a privilege, once again, that comes from the understanding of being. “This being that we ourselves are, the Dasein, thus has its own distinction in the field of ontological inquiry. We shall, there, speak of the *ontological privilege of the Dasein*. . . . We have already roughly characterized the reason for this ontological privilege of the Dasein. It lies in the circumstance that this being is so uniquely constituted in its very makeup that the *understanding of being* belongs to its existence” (GA 24, 317–319/223, trans. slightly modified, emphasis mine). Dasein is thus the ontological name of the human being and constitutes a radical break with the traditions of anthropology and subjectivity, a break that Sartre and the early existentialists missed in their

misunderstanding and translation of Dasein as *réalité humaine*, or human reality. In fact, the very terminological choice inherent in the notion of Dasein was motivated by the project “to liberate the determination of the human essence from subjectivity, but also from the definition of *animal rationale*” (GA 9, 368/PA, 282–283). Heidegger already had stressed in *Being and Time* that the thinking of Dasein—that is, “the beings that we ourselves are”—must “avoid terms such as subject, soul, consciousness, spirit, person, and even life [*Leben*] and man [*Mensch*]” (SZ, 46). Dasein is the place where being is at stake, in play, where being *happens*. It is therefore not tantamount to the position of a subjectivity. This is why the coming to the fore (to the “center”) of Dasein in the analysis should not be taken as a sign of anthropocentrism, as Heidegger clarified in a footnote from *On the Essence of Ground* [*Vom Wesen des Grundes*]:

All concrete interpretations [in *Sein und Zeit*], above all that of time, are to be evaluated *solely* in the perspective of *enabling* the *question* of being . . . As regards the reproach . . . of an “anthropocentric standpoint” in *Being and Time*, this objection . . . says nothing so long as one omits to think through the approach, the *entire thrust*, and the *goal* of the development of the problems in *Being and Time* and to comprehend how, precisely through the elaboration of the transcendence of Dasein, “the human being” comes into the “center” in such a way that his nothingness amid being as a whole can and must become a *problem* in the first place. What dangers are entailed, then, by an “anthropocentric standpoint” that precisely puts its *entire effort solely* into showing that the *essence* of Dasein that there stands “at the center” is ecstatic, i.e., “*excentric*.” (GA 9, 162, n. 59/PA, 371, n. 66)

Being and Time thus already enacted a break with anthropocentrism and subjectivism and was already engaged in the turn toward the thinking of the event of being as such.

With the term *Dasein*, Heidegger undertook an *ontological* questioning on the human being, interrogated solely in terms of its *being*, that is to say, in terms of being itself. This is what he clarified in 1940 in *Der europäische Nihilismus*, explaining that in *Being and Time*, on the basis of the question concerning no longer the truth of beings but the truth of being itself, “an attempt is made to determine the essence of humans solely in terms of their relationship to being [*aus seinem Bezug zum Sein*]. That essence was described in a firmly delineated sense as *Da-sein*” (GA 6.2, 194/N III, 141). The term *Dasein* is increasingly hyphenated as *Da-sein* in order to stress this sheer relatedness to being. The term *Da-sein*, as Heidegger specified in his 1949 introduction added to *What Is Metaphysics?* designates in the *same* stroke human beings’ relation (opening) to being and being’s relation to humans: “To characterize with a *single* term both the relation of being to the essence of the human and the essential relation of the human to the openness (‘there’ [*Da*]) of being [*Sein*] as such, the name of ‘Dasein’ [there-being]

was chosen for the essential realm in which the human being stands as human being" (GA 9, 372/PA, 283, modified). Therein lies the turn in Heidegger's thinking from a thinking centered on Dasein's openness to a thinking that meditates the openness of being to Dasein: "The thinking that proceeds from *Being and Time*, in that it gives up the word 'meaning of being' in favor of 'truth of being,' henceforth emphasizes the openness of being itself, rather than the openness of Dasein in regard to this openness of being. This signifies 'the turn,' in which thinking always more decisively turns to being as being" (GA 15, 345/FS, 47). Heidegger returned to the significance of the turn (*Kehre*) in his letter to William Richardson (1962) to explain that it corresponded to a moving away from the language of subjectivity: "Whoever is ready to accept the simple fact that, in *Being and Time*, the starting point of subjectivity is deconstructed [*abgebaut*], that every anthropological enquiry is kept at a distance, and moreover that the sole decisive experience is that of Da-sein with a constant look ahead to the being-question, will agree that the 'being' which *Being and Time* inquires into cannot remain something that the human subject posits."⁴¹ The turn was thus already present in *Being and Time* insofar as the thinking of Dasein already exceeded the problematic of subjectivity: "Being is something that matters to Da-sein as the presence determined by its time-character. Accordingly thought is also already called upon, in the initial steps of the being-question of *Being and Time*, to undergo a change whose movement corresponds with the reversal [*Kehre*]" (HR, 302).

Now, what is most significant in the turn, from a thinking centered on Dasein's openness to being to a thinking of the openness of being to Dasein, is that the emphasis shifts toward the event of being itself, to which Dasein belongs. As Françoise Dastur explains, "What seems to me particularly interesting in Heidegger's approach, which led him from the thirties on to no longer see the human being as the basis of the clearing that is the world but on the contrary as the one who originally stands in it and guards it, is that it understands the relation of the human being to being as *an event*."⁴² As suggested prior, the understanding of being is not a property of humans among others, but that which defines the human being. The understanding of being pervades "all comportments to beings, including his comportment to himself" (GA 31, 125/87). Humans are made possible by the understanding of being and not the inverse. "Accordingly, the understanding of being is the ground of the possibility of the essence of the human being" (GA 31, 125/87, modified). Further, the understanding of being is described as an *event*: an *event* in which we find ourselves among all other beings. "With the existence of human beings there occurs an irruption into the totality of beings, so that now the being in itself first becomes manifest" (GA 3, 228/160). Dasein names something awesome (*ungeheuerlich*), indeed "awesome in a way that a god can never be," and remarkable, "namely, that human beings exist as the beings

in whom the being of beings, thus beings in the whole, are revealed. The human being is that being in whose ownmost being and essential ground there *occurs the understanding of being*" (GA 31, 135/94). With such an event, as Heidegger put it in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, the emphasis shifts "*from the understanding of being to the happening of being* [vom Seinsverständnis zu Seinsgeschehnis]" (GA 40, 219/IM, 233).⁴³ The self must then be understood as arising from the event of being, not from the position of a subjectivity. "Da-sein," as "the overcoming [Überwindung] of all subjectivity, arises out of the essential occurrence of being [Wesung des Seyns]" (GA 65, 303/240).

This belonging to the event, or the eventful character of the self, is described in several key sections of the *Contributions*, starting with the way in which Heidegger rethinks the motif of self-consciousness in terms of self-mindfulness (*Selbstbesinnung*). Heidegger claims that "as mindfulness of be-ing [*Besinnung auf das Seyn*], philosophy is necessarily self-mindfulness [*Selbstbesinnung*]" (GA 65, 48/34). That statement is repeated like a leitmotif in various forms and in several places in the text (paragraphs 16, 19, and 30). How is one to understand this proposition? The paradigm of theoretical self-consciousness is replaced by the notion of self-mindfulness, which is to be taken in an eventful—and no longer cognitive—sense. Heidegger notes that in the history of metaphysics, the motifs of the soul, reason, spirit, thinking, representing, and so on have come to the fore for essential reasons.⁴⁴ What this situation reveals, although in an unclarified way, is that human Dasein is required, implicated in, and needed in the question of be-ing and that, as Heidegger puts it, "somehow the human being and then again not the human being—and indeed always through an extending and a displacing—is in play in grounding the truth of be-ing. And it is this question-worthy matter that I call Da-sein" (GA 65, 313/220). Mindfulness is necessarily self-mindfulness because, first and above all, Dasein is necessarily "in play" in the *event of be-ing*. What is "mindfulness"? It is, Heidegger states in paragraph 16, the "inquiring into the *meaning* (cf. *Being and Time*), i.e., into the truth of be-ing" (GA 65, 43/31). It is thus an inquiring into the event of being. As such, it is inceptual thinking and, in fact, Heidegger claims, the essence of philosophy itself (GA 65, 49/34), if philosophy is indeed to be understood as an inquiring into the truth of being. This indicates straightaway that *Besinnung* cannot be rendered by "reflection" any more than *Selbstbesinnung* can be rendered by "self-reflection." This is indeed no longer within the context of the tradition of reflection as it has structured modern philosophy from Descartes through Husserl, no longer following a subjectivist understanding of the human being: the human being is no longer taken as a subject or substrate but in terms of the event and truth of being. To think be-ing and its truth is not about the thinking ego reflecting upon itself. And yet, Heidegger immediately insists, mindfulness is *necessarily* self-mindfulness.

This is not the case because in some sense the question of the truth of being would be directed back to us for our *cogitationes*, but rather because we are *called by the event of be-ing*, because the event of being “needs us.” “But belongingness to be-ing holds sway only because being in its uniqueness needs Da-sein [*das Da-sein braucht*] and, grounded therein and grounding it, needs the human being. No truth holds sway otherwise” (GA 65, 317/223, trans. slightly modified). I already noted the importance of such a neediness for a thinking of the self and for a redefinition of the human itself, *as well as for the determination of the essence of be-ing itself*. In a remarkably compact saying, Heidegger writes: “Be-ing needs the human being in order to hold sway; and human beings belong to be-ing so that they can establish their utmost vocation [*Bestimmung*] as Da-sein” (GA 65, 251/177, trans. modified). In fact, there is no human being except as belonging to such event: “Be-ing needs Da-sein and does not hold sway at all without this appropriating event” (GA 65, 254/179). This represents what Heidegger calls the “counter-resonance” (*Gegenschwung*) of needing and belonging—making up be-ing as *Ereignis*—or the “mirroring of call and belongingness” (GA 65, 311/219). This constitutes the “between” as the very dimension of selfhood, approached in the *Contributions* under the expression of “ownhood” (*Eigentum*), a notion to which I will return in the following. Be-ing needs us, Heidegger clarifies further, because “be-ing comes to truth only on the ground of Da-sein” (GA 65, 293/207). To that extent, “the essence of be-ing needs the grounding of the *truth* of be-ing and this grounding must be enacted as *Da-sein*” (GA 65, 176/124). In fact, Da-sein is defined by Heidegger, no longer as that entity who has, and is, an understanding of being as “projecting,” but rather as being “the grounding of the truth of be-ing” (GA 65, 170/120). It is important to note that this grounding is not another subjective operation: since “the origin of Dasein is in appropriating event and its turning” and consequently “Dasein has only to be *grounded* as and in the truth of be-ing,” the grounding of the truth of be-ing by Dasein, from “the *human* side,” can only mean: “grounding—not creating—is letting the ground be . . . so that man once again comes to himself and recovers self-being” (GA 65, 31/23).⁴⁵

The way in which “we” are needed by the truth of be-ing (and who “we” are is precisely nothing other than such a being-needed), and claimed by it, the manner in which the truth of be-ing can only *happen* in such a claim reveals the following: first, that indeed mindfulness is necessarily self-mindfulness; second, that the question of the event of be-ing is inseparable from the question of our “belonging” to be-ing; finally, that “who” we are, our proper selfhood, is to be approached in terms of that belonging to such event, and no longer in terms of the Cartesian *ego cogito*. This is why Heidegger refers to our selfhood, not as the reflexive ego, but as what he calls suggestively “self-being” (*Selbst-sein*), a self that is, as it were, given by being, or better, *appropriated* by be-ing in the event of its truth. The human being belongs, is grounded, granted, appropriated, by the event

of be-ing, and is called to itself by it. Being a self does not lie in some clinging to the I, but arises out of an “event” that appropriates us. Heidegger writes: “Hence mindfulness—leap into the truth of being—is necessarily self-mindfulness. This does not mean (cf. Grounding) an observation turned back upon us as ‘given.’ Rather, it is grounding the truth of self-being [*Selbstseins*] according to Da-sein’s ownhood [*Eigentum*]” (GA 65, 44/31).

In paragraph 19, entitled: “Philosophy (On the Question: Who Are We?),” Heidegger returns to what he terms the “interconnection” between mindfulness and self-mindfulness. He proceeds to carefully distinguish self-mindfulness from inadequate representations drawn from the tradition. First, self-mindfulness is essentially different from the concern for the self-certainty of the I (here again Heidegger distinguishes his approach from any lingering Cartesian motif), and he in fact explicitly contrasts a thinking performed “for the sake of ‘certainty’” with a thinking enacted “for the sake of the truth of *be-ing*” (GA 65, 48/34). A few pages later, Heidegger pursues this critique of Descartes by stating that self-mindfulness “is far removed from that *clara et distincta perceptio* in which the *ego* rises and becomes certain” (GA 65, 52/37). Yet this negative first characterization is immediately counterbalanced by a positive assertion regarding the reach of self-mindfulness. It is not, however, from Descartes that Heidegger now separates himself, but from his own earlier effort in *Being and Time*! Self-mindfulness is said to reach “deeper” than the existential analytic into a “domain that is more originary than the one which the ‘fundamental ontological’ approach to Da-sein in *Being and Time* had to set forth in *crossing*” (GA 65, 52/37). Heidegger’s thinking is indeed a “thinking in the crossing” (*Das übergängliche Denken, Das Denken im Übergang*), which does not start from beings, that is, this or that being, but is already engaged in a “leap” (*sprung*) beyond beings and into the truth of being as such. It is a matter of entering into a passage or a transition, a crossing if not already a “turning,” from the “guiding-question” (*Leitfrage*) of metaphysics, which questions about beingness, to the “grounding-question” (*Grundfrage*) of being, which inquires about the truth of being. “The question of being is the question of the truth of be-ing [*Seyns*]. When accomplished and grasped as it historically unfolds, it becomes the *grounding-question*—over against the hitherto ‘guiding-question’ of philosophy, which has been the question about beings” (GA 65, 6/5). Heidegger insists that this crossing—turning—toward the “other beginning” of thought was already underway in *Being and Time*. “Going from the guiding-question to the grounding-question, there is never an immediate, equi-directional and continual process that once again applies the guiding-question (to be-ing); rather, there is only a leap, i.e., the necessity of an *other* beginning. Indeed and on the contrary, a *crossing* can and should be created in the unfolding overcoming of the posing of the guiding-question and its answers as such, a crossing that prepares the other beginning and makes it

generally visible and allows a presentiment of it. *Being and Time* is in service to this preparation” (GA 65, 76/53, emphasis mine). In such crossing, a domain is opened, which the expressions “self-being” and “ownhood” designate more appropriately.

Second, one finds an implicit critique of Husserl’s phenomenology, in which Heidegger claims that self-mindfulness has “nothing in common” with what he describes as “a curious ego-addicted lostness in the full-fledged brooding over ‘one’s own’ lived-experiences” (GA 65, 51/36). Far from indicating a return to the lived experiences of the ego, self-mindfulness needs to be resolutely situated in that domain that is the event of be-ing itself. Any originary thought of the self, one that grasps the very origin and possibility of selfhood, will have to go through a *topological* revolution by which the self is “dis-placed” from the *ego cogito* and resituated within the event of the truth of be-ing, an event to which it is exposed. To decisively overcome any remaining subjectivism, Heidegger insists that “any attempt at thoughtfulness” would be “thwarted as long as one is satisfied with the observation that in *Being and Time* the term ‘Dasein’ is used in place of ‘consciousness.’ As if this were simply a matter of using different words!” (GA 9, 373/PA, 283). Dasein is not another word for either consciousness or subjectivity. With the choice of the term *Dasein*, it is a question of a topological revolution of the essence of the human being. “The term ‘Dasein’ neither takes the place of the term ‘consciousness,’ nor does the ‘matter’ designated as ‘Dasein’ take the place of what we represent to ourselves when we speak of ‘consciousness.’ Rather, ‘Dasein’ names that which is first of all to be experienced, and subsequently thought of accordingly, as a place [*Stelle*]*—*namely, as the locality of the truth of being [*die Ortschaft der Wahrheit des Seins*]” (GA 9, 373/PA, 283). Self-mindfulness is further distinguished from self-reflection in the following way: whereas self-reflection implies a return upon the self, mindfulness implies a self-displacement, indeed even a self-sacrifice (GA 65, 52/37). The self is a self when standing out in the openness of be-ing, away from all “reflective posture,” sustaining the “exposedness” (GA 65, 302/213) to the event of be-ing. In short: “This self-mindfulness has left all ‘subjectivity’ behind” (GA 65, 52/37). What is most striking is that it is through this very abandonment of subjectivity that the self comes to itself *for the first time*. Ultimately, what has to be left behind is the reliance on any certainty about being human, for as noted the issue is to render the human being questionable and “dangerous,” that is, *exposed to the event of being*.

The necessary interconnection between mindfulness and self-mindfulness is revelatory of the inescapable necessity of the presence of the self in the thought of the truth and event of be-ing as *Ereignis* and ultimately reveals the co-belonging of Da-sein to the event of be-ing. This is attested as well by the presence of the question “who?” in the *Contributions*, in the form of “Who are we?” a question that is “the one and only way to come to ourselves” (GA 65, 54/38). The question

“who” is certainly not a new one in Heidegger’s trajectory, and in fact it can be found throughout his work. In *Being and Time*, the issue was to provide access to a specific being whose ontological constitution was fundamentally different from that of present-at-hand beings. The question that inquired into Dasein’s proper being had to be distinguished from the question that interrogates beings that are simply present-at-hand. Those beings answer to the question, *quid, what*, the question of essence. Now, for a being whose “essence” lies solely in its existence, the question could not be “what?” as if such a being would exhibit properties; instead it could only be accessed by the question “who?” Heidegger emphasized that the “who” points toward an entity who, in its being, *has a relation to that being*. The question “who?” aims at a particular entity whose mode of being is existence and who is characterized by selfhood. This is why in the *Contributions* (GA 65, 300/212), Heidegger would remark that Dasein’s what-being is its who-being, that is, its selfhood. One finds this question again in the 1930s on the basis of a meditation on the historical essence of the human being (for example in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, where the question “who?” aims at selfhood as the historical taking over of the opening of being,⁴⁶ as well as, in the same perspective, in the 1934–1935 winter semester course on Hölderlin where the question “Who are we?” is addressed to the historical people⁴⁷) and of course in the *Contributions*, where Heidegger stresses the importance of “recasting this question [what is the human being?] into the form: *Who* is the human being?” (GA 65, 245/173, slightly modified). That question is found up to the last lectures. In “On Time and Being” (1962), as noted, a meditation on being as presence (*Anwesenheit*) requires the question “*Who* are we?” In the Zollikon seminar (GA 89, 204–205/Z, 159–160), Heidegger once again addressed the “who” of Dasein, *in contrast with the substantiality of subjectivity*, insofar as Dasein designates the singular presence of a being (that I am) who is open to being and to others. The “who,” he explains, must be thought on the basis of a sojourn (*Aufenthalt*) in the open of the I, present to things and to oneself *as* presence to things. Thus, up to the final determination of the thinking of being as a thinking of *Ereignis*, the question of the “who” is maintained as the question of human beings, of their essence and of what is proper to them, insofar as the human being is the very place where presence presences, insofar as the human being is “the constant receiver [*der stete Empfänger*] of the gift given by the ‘It gives presence’ [*Es gibt Anwesenheit*]” (GS 14, 16/TB, 12). Human beings are the ones “needed” by being, the question of the “who” revealing them each time as recipients for the event of presence.

The question “who?” does not betray some subjectivism but rather seeks to access the proper being of the human self. “The who-question asks the question concerning the *self*-being and thus the question concerning what is most proper to selfhood” (GA 65, 51/36). Now, in the *Contributions*, the question reads: who are *we*? The self is a plural (Nancy would say a “singular/plural”), although a

clarification is needed concerning the sense and role of that “we,” which might be misconstrued, superficially, as the collective form of the people as opposed to the individual “I” or singular “mine” of *Being and Time*. In fact, Heidegger indicates from the outset that neither the I nor the we—understood as the opposition between the individual and the collective—are adequate to determine the self, and even less what is most proper to humans. He explains that the mindfulness enacted in ineptual thinking “does not assume that the *self*-being of today’s humans can be immediately obtained by representing the ‘I’ and the we and their situation” (GA 65, 67/47). In fact, through the “I” or the “we” “the selfhood is precisely *not* obtained *thus* but rather definitely lost and distorted” (GA 65, 67/47). In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger had already explained that selfhood “does not mean that humanity is primarily an ‘I’ and an individual. Humanity is not this any more than it is a We and a community” (GA 40, 152/IM, 153). One therefore needs to be careful not to interpret the presence of this “we” as the sign of the passage from an individualistic problematic to a communal one because for Heidegger both the individualistic and the communal orientations are nothing but two variants of the traditional metaphysics of subjectivity. Consequently, “there is nowhere here a place for the interpretation of the human being as ‘subject,’ *neither in the sense of a subject with the character of an I nor in the sense of subject that belongs to a community*” (GA 65, 488/344, emphasis mine).

Now what characterizes the tradition of the subject, *whether understood as an I or as a we*, is that it leaves the very ontological constitution of selfhood unclarified. “No ‘we’ and ‘you’ and no ‘I’ and ‘thou,’ no *community* setting itself up by itself, ever reaches the self; rather it only misses the self and continues to be excluded from the self, unless it grounds itself first of all on *Da-sein*” (GA 65, 322/226). In fact, any orientation toward the I or the we accomplishes the forgetfulness of self-being, of the event of selfhood. One might ask, then, how is the question “who are we?” to be taken? And what does “we” mean, or, as Heidegger puts it, “*whom* do we mean with the ‘we’”? (GA 65, 48/34). First, Heidegger clarifies, the “we” is not us ourselves as some given present people. The “we” cannot be our own people because “even then we are not the only ones but a people among other peoples,” and thus the question remains of how what is most proper to a people is to be determined. The problematic is therefore neither restricted to nor aimed at the figure of the people—here relegated to both subjectivism and biologism—as Heidegger makes patently clear in paragraph 196: “*It is only from Da-sein that what is most proper to a people can be grasped* and that means at the same time knowing that the people can never be goal and purpose and that such an opinion is only a ‘popular’ [*völkische*] extension of the ‘liberal’ thought of the ‘I’ and of the economic idea of the preservation of ‘life’” (GA 65, 319/224). The “we” does not refer to an ontic presence or to an actual people or community. Instead, the “we” must be aligned with the event of be-ing itself: “above all the

question ‘who are we?’ must remain purely and fully enjoined with the inquiry into the grounding question: How does be-ing holds sway? [*wie west das Seyn*]” (GA 65, 54/38). In the question “who are we?” what is inquired about is not some given “us” but rather what is proper to *being* ourselves, that is, to being a self: to self-being. This is why any question concerning the “we” presupposes the question of the who. In the question “who are we?” the emphasis is on the “who.” The “we” presupposes the who. The “we” is to be determined in terms of the who, which itself asks about self-being in terms of the grounding question of be-ing. Asking about who *we* are “already contains a decision about the Who” (GA 65, 48/34), Heidegger writes, and he sees in this circle of the we and the who the very reverberation of the turning (*Widerschein der Kehre*). The question “who are we?” aims at determining the proper selfhood of historical Da-sein, a dimension that is said to be more originary than any I or we. “*Selfhood* is more originary [*ursprünglicher*] than any I and you and we. These are primarily gathered as such in the *self*, thus each becoming each ‘itself’” (GA 65, 320/225). It remains for us to explore such an originary selfhood, a self “in whose domain ‘we,’ I and you, each come to *ourselves*” (GA 65, 67/47).

For such a clarification, I focus on paragraph 197, entitled “Da-sein—Ownhood—Selfhood.” Next to this title, a note refers back to paragraph 16 of the preview, which states that the question of the truth of be-ing “has to be asked *for the sake of the essential sway of being, which needs us*—needs us, not as beings who happen to be extant, but insofar as we sustain and inabide—by persevering in—Da-sein, and ground Da-sein as the truth of being” (GA 65, 44/31): not as extant beings, as but as those who endure the exposure to the eventfulness of being. Indeed, the self cannot be identified with some extant presence if it is the case that Dasein “never lets itself be demonstrated and described as something extant” (GA 65, 231/226). This also implies the shift from the anthropological enclosure (man) to the belongingness to the truth of be-ing (Da-sein) where originary selfhood originates. Therefore, and in sum: “One is used to grasping the ‘self’ initially in the relation of the I to ‘itself.’ This relation is taken as a representing one. Then finally the self-sameness of representing and the represented is grasped as what is most proper to the ‘self.’ But what is most proper to self can never be obtained in this way, or correspondingly modified ways” (GA 65, 319/224). All the elements that define Heidegger’s thought of selfhood in paragraph 197 are here laid out, in particular the rejection of the reference to an extant self in the guise of the ego, the affirmation of the emergence of a self at the heart of the event of be-ing, and the necessity of thinking what is most proper to self. Paragraph 197 takes up from this initial characterization and develops it by distinguishing further selfhood from both the extant presence of the human being and the paradigm of the I with its representational or self-reflexive structure. Proper self-being is not to be situated either in consciousness or in a particular I

(any more than in a you or a we, as noted prior). Who “we” are is just not of the order of egohood, for, as Heidegger states bluntly and definitively: “The *self* is never I” (GA 65, 322/226).

What is crucial here is that the selfhood of Da-sein cannot be presupposed as a pregiven or preconstituted subject but rather originates *in and as an event*. To originate first means to come into being as coming into one’s own so that the self is not already constituted, whether in the inappropriate form of egohood or in extant “man.” Instead, the self originates from a dimension (be-ing as appropriating event or *Er-eignis*) in which the human being comes to his or her own self-being. The self is not to be presupposed as a given precisely because it is not some extant presence; rather, one needs to think the possibility of a self as such and to consider selfhood as an event: *there is* self (self-being). This is why the analysis in paragraph 197 consists in retrieving the nonsubjective *origin* of selfhood, which Heidegger designates as *Eigentum*, ownhood. “As essential swaying of Da-sein, selfhood springs forth from the origin of Da-sein. And the origin of the self is *own-hood* [*Eigen-tum*; as in ‘own-dom’], when this word is taken in the same way as the word *king-dom* [*Fürsten-tum*]” (GA 65, 319–320/224). Let me state from the outset, in order to prevent possible misunderstandings, that ownhood is not a possessive appropriation but rather designates an “ownness” that is at play in the very event of be-ing, an event that has to be sustained as one’s very own. One’s own is no simple possessive appropriation of otherness in an absolute “at-home,” since one’s most proper is to stand in the uncanniness of be-ing, and indeed Heidegger stresses throughout the *Contributions* the irreducible dis-owning (*Enteignis*) at the heart of *Ereignis*. Such ownhood is thus an event, and Heidegger speaks indeed of the “occurrence” or “happening” (*Geschehnis*) of ownhood, an event that eventuates us, enabling “human beings to come to ‘themselves’ historically [*geschichtlich*] and to be with-themselves” (GA 65, 319–320/224, modified). In such an appropriating event, there arises the original coming to oneself, ground of all selfhood, and from thence, of all possible I, you, and we.⁴⁸ It is by belonging to this appropriating event that Dasein is properly *itself*: “Insofar as Da-sein is owned-to *itself* as belonging to *Ereignis*, it comes to *itself*” (GA 65, 320/224). Further, as indicated, it does not come to itself as a separate self (“coming-to-oneself is never a prior, detached I-representation,” GA 65, 320/225) since the self does not preexist the event from which it springs. This is why Heidegger insists that Da-sein comes to itself, but not “in such a manner as if the self were already an extant stock that has just not yet been reached” (GA 65, 320/224). The self is not already there, pregiven, and *then* returning to itself: the self *first* comes to itself from the appropriating event, which indicates that it can only come to itself by first being exposed to the event of be-ing and by sustaining such an exposure. This is why ownhood designates Da-sein’s belonging to the event of being, which constitutes its proper selfhood.

Exposed to the event of being, attuned to its coming, responding and corresponding to it, the self proves to be an original responsibility for the event. Heidegger explains that the essential mode of being-a-self is one of taking-over (*Übernahme*) such a belongingness to the truth of be-ing into which we are *thrown*; thrown, that is to say—once rethought from be-ing-historical thinking—appropriated. In paragraph 198, Heidegger also speaks of the *Übernahme der Er-eignung*, a sort of primordial responsibility of the self, the taking-over of en-ownment as the way in which the self, the with-itself of the self, “holds sway” (*west*; GA 65, 322/226). That with-itself, however, is entirely *away* from and outside of any interiority of an ego and happens instead by standing-in (*Inständigkeit*) the open. Any being-with-oneself can only happen in the open, that open dimension in which we are thrown and appropriated, that is to say, always already struck, touched, called by the event of be-ing. In fact, intimacy (*Innigkeit*) is rethought in such a way that “the more originally we are ourselves, the further we are already removed into the essential swaying of be-ing, and vice-versa.” Intimacy occurs when *Ereignis* “shines into selfhood” (GA 65, 265/187). Being-a-self then means: appropriated by the truth of be-ing and owning up to such *Ereignis* by inabiding it, enduring the exposure to it. Heidegger captures this correspondence or co-belonging between belongingness and taking-over (being owned-to, owning up to) through the expressions *Zueignung* and *Übereignung*, owning-to and owning-over-to, which are said at the end of paragraph 197 to constitute the way in which what is most proper to the self happens. The self is here no longer understood as a subject or a punctual ego, but instead as the “unfolding of the ownhoodship of the most proper” (GA 65, 489/344).

What appears here, most importantly, is that the self can no longer be said to constitute a separate sphere, distinct from the event of be-ing it would represent to itself as an object. On the contrary, Da-sein is *itself* and *its self* through its exposure to the event of be-ing. This is what Levinas emphasized in *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, where he wrote that “*Dasein* signifies that the *Dasein* has to be. But this ‘obligation’ to be, this manner of being, is an exposition to being that is so direct that it thereby becomes mine.”⁴⁹ It is in this perspective that Heidegger insists that Da-sein is to be thought as the *between*, a “between” clearly marked in the new writing of *Dasein* with a hyphen as *Da-sein*. That “between” is of course the play between the appropriating throwing call of be-ing and the belongingness of *Dasein* as standing in; it is what Heidegger calls the “counter-resonance” of *Ereignis* because *Ereignis* itself is the resonance between the two: “Appropriation in its turning [*Kehre*] is made up neither solely of the call nor solely of the belongingness, is in neither of the two and yet resonates deeply in both” (GA 65, 342/240). Heidegger goes so far as to state that the “counter-resonance of *need-ing* and *belonging* makes up be-ing as appropriating event” (GA 65, 251/177). It is in that dimension that a self originates as response to the call of be-ing, and

Heidegger speaks significantly of the “range in which the self resonates” (GA 65, 321/225) to stress the dimensionality of such a self appropriated by be-ing. The self is not some subject-point but “the turning-point in the turning of *Ereignis*, the self-opening midpoint of the mirroring of call and belongingness, the ownhood or own-dom” (GA 65, 311/219). What is that turning? The turning lies in that being only holds sway where and when there is Dasein and that *in turn* Da-sein “is” only where and when there is be-ing. The turning speaks to the self as co-belonging of Da-sein and be-ing. The self does not relate representationally to be-ing; in fact, the very term *relation* is explicitly excluded by Heidegger because it presupposes two distinct spheres entering a posteriori into a relation.⁵⁰ There is no representation of be-ing, but there is an *intimation* (*Ahnung*) of be-ing because be-ing appropriates Da-sein to itself. Appropriated by be-ing, Da-sein belongs to it by inabiding its “reign” (ownhood) and by responding to its call. Da-sein is itself by standing in be-ing and is exhausted in such a between. Who are we? We are the ones called by be-ing, needed by be-ing—the so-called *Zuruf der Notschaft*—to sustain its essential sway. Be-ing is my own, indeed my most proper. The most proper of the self is to belong; not to beings, but precisely to be-ing. “[Human beings] draw out of their belongingness—and precisely out of it—what is most originally their most proper” (GA 65, 499–500/351).

In the *Contributions*, selfhood is no longer conceived of as a feature of Dasein projecting an understanding of being, as was the case in *Being and Time*. Rather, selfhood is rethought “from *Ereignis*,” out of the truth of be-ing itself as *Ereignis*, that is, from the event of being. Being-one’s-own is here approached in its ultimate possibility as the taking over of the belongingness to the truth of being, as leap into the There. It is on the basis of belongingness to be-ing that the nonsubjective, nonanthropocentric, nonindividualist being of the self would now be approached, that is, in terms of the event that delivers Da-sein to itself as it endures the between of call and belongingness. It is not “I” who is the subject of such appropriating event: on the contrary, it is thrown into it. “When *through* appropriating event, Da-sein—as the open midpoint of the selfhood that grounds truth—is thrown unto *itself* and becomes a self, then Dasein as the sheltered possibility of grounding the essential swaying of be-ing must in return belong to the appropriating event” (GA 65, 408/286–287). One can see to what extent the self no longer means ontical individuality, or *ego*, or self-consciousness, or any form of subjectivity at all. The self, as self-being, now designates the exposure to the event. Indeed, the meaning of the event now appears as “exposure” itself, which will reveal in turn both its groundlessness and its “communicative” dimension, which I will now explore in the next chapter.

7 Event, World, Democracy

The Surprise: of the Event

The eventfulness of being reveals a radical lack of foundation. Not preceded by any principle or ground, and no longer referred to any prior substance, being is nothing but the event of itself. As Jean-Luc Nancy stresses, nothing preexists the event of being: “To be more precise, Being absolutely does not *preexist*; nothing preexists; only what exists exists.”¹ The lecture “On Time and Being” made clear that being should no longer be conceived of as the foundation of beings, but as a happening, a giving, and a letting. That event is no longer anchored in a principle that itself would not be happening. In fact, being happens and can only happen to the extent that nothing founds it or preexists it. This lack of substantiality or essentiality is constitutive of the event. Not prepared by any preceding agency, the event is always the bringing forth of the unprecedented: the event always comes as a surprise.

In fact, far from being an occasional accompaniment of an event, it is almost as if the surprise was a constitutive feature of any event, as Jean-Luc Nancy recognizes in his essay, “The Surprise of the Event”: “What makes the event an event is not only that it happens, but that it surprises” (BSP, 159). An event, Nancy goes so far as stating, is surprising or it is not an event: “the event surprises or else it is not an event” (BSP, 167). Nancy thus proposes that the title of his essay “The Surprise of the Event,” could be rewritten as “The Surprise: Of the Event” (BSP, 159). Instead of the surprise being an attribute of the event, it is the event that becomes a feature of the surprise. The surprise constitutes the event. One is not speaking of the surprise “in the sense of its being and attribute, quality, or property of the event, but the event itself, its being or essence” (BSP, 159). In a sense, the surprise *is* the event. If the surprise is a constitutive feature of any event “worthy of the name,” then its unpredictability goes as far as to include its effects or consequences. “What makes the event an event is not only that it happens, but that it surprises—and maybe even that it surprises itself” (BSP, 159), Nancy writes. In a parenthetical clause, he clarifies the latter expression: the event surprises itself, that is, it diverts from its own (expected) happening or arrival (the French word is *arrivée*, and in French *arriver* means both to happen and to arrive). The event is so surprising that its course cannot be anticipated. It simply cannot unfold

predictably, following an essence, direction, or principle; rather, it surprises itself so that the event can only be “by way of surprise” (BSP, 159).

Thinking the event would amount to thinking the surprise. Now, the very expression “thinking the surprise” immediately turns into: “thinking surprised by the event.” Indeed, unable to seize it or “com-prehend” it in the form of the concept, thinking finds itself surprised or, to follow literally the French *sur-prise*, *over-taken* by the event. Thinking is overtaken, exceeded by the event. In this essay, Nancy begins his reflection by citing a passage from Hegel’s *Science of Logic* in which Hegel writes that “*Philosophy is not meant to be a narration of happenings but a cognition of what is true in them, and further, on the basis of this cognition, to comprehend that which, in the narrative, appears as a mere happening [or pure event] (bloßes Geschehen).*”² Two interpretations of this sentence are possible. On the one hand, a first reading—the most classical one—would claim that “the task of Philosophy is to conceive that of which the event is only the phenomenon” (BSP, 159–160). This reading separates the event from its meaning and, further, rejects the event toward the inessential, the mere appearance of the true. This relation of exteriority between the event and its truth is described by Nancy in this way: “For philosophy, there is first of all the truth that is contained in what happens, and then, in light of this truth, the conception of its very production or effectuation, which appears *from the outside* as an ‘event, pure and simple (*bloss*)’ exactly because it is not conceived” (BSP, 160, emphasis mine). In such a reading, the event is inessential, subjugated to essence and truth. Its eventness or eventfulness is neutralized in a philosophy of essence. Nancy explains: “On this account, the event-ness of the event [*événementialité de l’événement*] (its appearance, its coming to pass, its taking place—*das Geschehen*) is only the external, apparent, and inconsistent side of the effective presentation of truth” (BSP, 160). The event is thus “neutralized” in favor of the advent of truth contained in the concept.

Nonetheless, even as subjugated to essence, as Nancy points out, the event remains a manifestation *of* essence. Hegel writes that the concept reveals that “the appearance [or phenomenon] is not devoid of essential being, but is a manifestation of essence” (cited in BSP, 160). This is why this first reading “cannot hold” (BSP, 160). A second reading, perhaps subtler, complicates matters significantly. Indeed, for Hegel, the concept is not separated from its advent, from the event in its manifestation, but “is that phenomenon which takes hold of itself as truth” (BSP, 160). Otherwise, the concept would be understood as an abstract generality instead of the “identity of the concept and the thing” of which Hegel speaks. This is why the concept is not the opposite of phenomenal truth, but the very phenomenon seizing itself or, as Nancy also describes it, “the nonphenomenal truth *of the phenomenal itself as such*” (BSP, 161). Hence the reversal that Nancy proposes, shifting the emphasis from the concept to the event as such: the *conceived* event turns into the *event* conceived (BSP, 160). This shift in emphasis

leads one to reconsider the expression “mere” (*bloss*) that was used regarding the event. Instead of “mere” or “simple,” and therefore inessential, it could in fact mean “pure” as in “pure eventfulness.”

This, in any case, is the emphasis that Nancy seeks to explore further, first, by asking whether one can distinguish meaning from its eventness, and second, by radicalizing the role and place of the event as such, no longer referred to a substrate that itself is not happening, but seized as a “pure” happening, considered in the “sheer” fact of its givenness. “In other words, the emphasis is not placed on the thing *which* happens (the content or the nonphenomenal substratum), but on *the fact* that it happens, the event-ness of its event (or else, its event rather than its advent)” (BSP, 161). Hence the task of philosophy, which, in addition to that of knowing the truth of that which takes place, would also be of addressing the taking place as such, the taking place of truth. As Nancy puts it, the issue “is to conceive of the truth of the taking place of the true” (BSP, 161). This redoubling of the task of philosophy, this redoubling of truth, or “surplus” of truth, as Nancy writes, that is, the truth of the taking place of the true, is what opens onto a thinking of the event. It is the way in which Hegel “opens up modernity, where the opening of modernity is nothing other than the opening of thinking to the event as such, to the truth of the event beyond every advent of meaning.” This opening, Nancy concludes, is “pointed in the direction of the event *as such*” (BSP, 162).

“In the direction of the event *as such*”: this implies that one focuses on the happening as such rather than on *what* happens. Indeed, if one places a substrate under the event, then it is implied that such *substratum* itself does not happen, and the event is thereby neutralized. Nancy writes: “The task of philosophy is not a matter of substituting for the narrative *Geschehen* some substratum or subject that does not happen or occur” (BSP, 162). As always the risk is to neutralize the event by the positing of a subject, some thing that simply is, or rather has always already been as presupposed (as Nancy puts it, referring to Aristotle, “the ‘being what it was,’ the *to ti ên einai* of Aristotle”). In this neutralization of the event, what is sought is to substitute for the accidental happening of being a reference to a “stable identity of being and the having-always-already-been” (BSP, 162). It is a matter instead of paying attention to the fact that *there is* a happening, and to remain with that phenomenon, so as not to relapse in some metaphysics of meaning, subjectivity, or even truth. What matters is the happening as such: for “beyond the truth of what happens, what is happening, what is in the happening, what has happened, what has always already happened in the happening itself, it is a matter of thinking *that it happens*” (BSP, 162). This also implies that one does not reify the “it” in the expression “it happens,” or even confuse the “itself” in the expression “the happening itself” with some constituted identity, a feature that an event does not have and cannot have insofar as it is in the happening and not

in what has already happened. “It is a matter of the happening or, rather, since the happening ‘it-self,’ where ‘it’ is not the ‘self’ that ‘it was,’ since it has not happened” (BSP, 162).

The stress hence shifts from history as *Geschichte* to history as the happening of a *Geschehen*, which Nancy calls the “active essence of *Geschichte*, the historicity of history” (BSP, 162–163). History designates less the various occurrences of a subject, the “productive succession of the different states of its subject,” less an unfolding, or even a process, than the very happening in its verbal sense: to happen, to come, to take place, a verb that would be nonsubstantive and “non-substantifiable” (BSP, 162). Events are not the superficial episodes (*péripéties*), or mere occurrences (*blosses Geschehen*), of some spirit or meaning. The event is not an episode, not an unfolding. More “withdrawn” and more “decisive” than the notions of transition of “passage-into,” more decisive than becoming itself, the event is what “has to be thought at the very heart of becoming” (BSP, 163), for “in order for the passage to take place, in *step* with the passing (*dans le pas du passer*), there must first be the ‘agitated unrest’ (*haltungslose Unruhe*), which has not yet passed and does not pass as such—but happens” (BSP, 163). Neither the always-already-passed of essence, nor the passing of a transition, the event is the happening as such. It is a matter of remaining with this unrest and agitation, far from any stable essence or substance, as the being of the event requires the deconstruction of the “logic in which essence is understood as substance, subject or ground,” in favor of a logic of the “to happen,” “the whole essence of which is in the state of agitation that consists in not subsisting” (BSP, 163). Stated negatively: the event does not subsist, it does not persist, and it does not remain. Stated positively, the characteristics of the event would rather point to terms such as “racing along,” “leaping,” rushing, “precipitation and suddenness,” terms that are in contrast with the language of “process,” “unfolding,” or the result of what is produced. It is a matter of remaining with the *evenire* and not simply with what results from it, the *eventum*.

Of course, to “remain” with the pure unrest and passing of the happening is impossible. One cannot stay with it, dwell in it, or remain within it as the event is entirely disruptive. It cannot even belong to an order of time, or be contemporaneous with any moment of time, because it produces time and constitutes the before and after of living temporality. The constituted order of time, the sequence past-present-future, refers to an original temporality, that of a disjointed eventfulness (time as “out-of-joint”). In such disjointed temporality lies as well the noncoincidence of the event with itself: it cannot coincide with itself because it is always ahead of itself in its arrival, excessive of the present: it cannot be grasped or seized. This indeed is why it escapes conceptuality: it does not conform to a concept, to a form or an essence, and it does not unfold from a principle; the event is properly speaking *an-archic*. This excess of the event with respect to the

concept, *to its own concept*, is such that it can only happen in and as a *surprise*. The event is an “unexpected arrival” (BSP, 170). Thinking the event, then, can only mean: be surprised by the event, overtaken by it. This is why Nancy writes that “thinking the event in its essence as event surprises Hegelian thought from the inside” (BSP, 164). The event exceeds the discourse that attempts to name it, to seize it conceptually. Thought cannot close upon it; rather, the event breaches thought and leaves it open, open to its coming and going: Hegel “lets the *Geschehen* come and go, happen and leave, *without seizing it*.” Hegel recognizes that the event is what is to be thought, “although it goes beyond his own discourse” (BSP, 164). Certainly, one can thematize the event, name it as such, and attempt to think it as such (this, indeed, is what this work is occupied with). Nancy admits that Hegel does seize the *Geschehen*: he “stops it or inspects it in its coming and going; he fixes its concept (it is *Geschichte*).” But precisely in doing so, what is revealed is that in such conceptual seizing, one misses the event *as such*. How can thought think the event as such if, “as such,” the event exceeds its concept?

What of the “as such” of the event? What is the event *as such*? A first answer would be to state that the “as such” of the event is its *being*. The being of the event is its being-happening, or the being-that-happens, rather than the being of what happens, for that would place the emphasis on *what* is happening, the thing or the subject that is happening. It is not the being of what happens but rather the being of “*that it happens*,” the being of an event. The event as such is not the “there is” but *that there is*, “the *that* without which there would be nothing” (BSP, 164). Speaking of the being of the event does not imply any separation between being and event, or even that being might precede the event, but rather reveals the *taking place of being*, a taking place without which being would not be! Nancy mentions “the event of Being that is necessary in order for Being to be” (BSP, 164). In the expression “there is” (that is its difference with the expression “it is”), the *there* points to the happening of the *is*. The being of the event is the event of being, Nancy also referring such event to the notion of a pure “position” of being (BSP, 168), drawing from Kant’s famous discussion of the “pure position of existence” in the first Critique. Such event is not a substance or a cause, a ground of being. It is the happening of being.

As such, the event is *that it happens*. However, this “as such” cannot be fixated by thought. It is impossible to seize the “as such” of the event because of its essential mode of givenness as a *surprise*, and as a surprise for thought. “Here, thinking is surprised in the strong sense of the word: it is caught in the absence of thinking [*elle est prise en défaut de pensée*].” What does that mean? That the “as such” of the event evades the “as such.” “This is not to say that it [thinking] has not identified its object, but rather that there is no identifiable object if the ‘event’ cannot even be said or seen ‘as such,’ that is, if one cannot even express ‘the event’ without losing its event-ness” (BSP, 165). It as if the “as such” of the

event deconstructed itself: “what is opened with the question of the ‘as such’ of the event is something on the order of a negativity of the ‘as such.’” The question hence becomes: “How is one to think ‘as such’ where the ‘as’ does not refer to any one ‘such’?” (BSP, 164–165). One must then say: there is no event as such. Or: the as such of the event is that there is no event as such. There is no event as such, but there is the event “as it comes about [*é-vient*], as it happens” (BSP, 169). Now what appears here is that the motif of surprise comes to the fore, almost before that of “event,” as if the event was to be thought from the surprise. It is a matter of thinking the surprise of the event to the extent that the eventness of the event lies in the surprise. Nancy’s analysis shifts toward the notion of surprise because, as he puts it, “there is, then, something to be thought—the event—the very nature of which—event-ness—can only be a matter of surprise, can only take thinking by surprise” (BSP, 165). As indicated prior, thinking the surprise means: thinking is surprised by the event. “We need to think about how thought can and must be surprised—and how it may be exactly this that makes it think” (BSP, 165).

When thinking the surprise, one must keep at bay two possibilities: first, the temptation to reject the question of the surprise toward some “unthinkable”; second, the attempt to place the surprise under a concept, which would amount to suppressing it as a surprise. As Nancy puts it, “it is less a matter of the concept of surprise than of a surprise of [*à même*] the concept, essential to the concept” (BSP, 165). The surprise pertains to the concept (this is why it is not unthinkable), but it is not contained within the concept (it happens outside the concept). Recalling the said origin of philosophy in “wonder” in Platonic and Aristotelian thought, Nancy insists that philosophy itself is “surprised thought.” Wonder is “a sort of rapture, an admission of ignorance,” and the impetus of a drive—for knowledge—“on its way toward its own self-appropriation, that is, its self-resorption” (BSP, 165). Thinking is born out of the surprise of wonder. This is why wonder is not some aporia or ignorance to overcome, but the fundamental disposition of philosophical thinking, what brings thinking into its own, what “provides access to that science [philosophy] which is its own end.” Put otherwise, “wonder appears as a disposition towards *sophia* for its own sake.” Which means that “wonder, then, is properly philo-sophical” (BSP, 166). Wonder is the wonder of thought, and thought arises out of such wonder. One can see the intertwining between the surprise and thinking, on which Nancy insists, “wonder is already, by itself, found within the element of *sophia*” and, in a parallel manner, “*sophia* holds within itself the moment of wonder” (BSP, 166). *Philosophy is thinking in wonder*. To that extent, wonder is not suppressed by thinking but *maintained* within thinking as its very possibility so that “the moment of wonder is that of a surprise kept at the very core of *sophia* and constitutive of it” (BSP, 166). *Sophia* belongs to surprise, and surprise is a matter of thought. On such basis, Nancy seeks to establish that the surprise, that is to say, the surprise of the

event, is not some superficial or circumscribed phenomenon, an extreme case that may affect thinking occasionally, but that it is essential to thought, indeed the very essence of thought. "Thus, the surprise of the event would not only be a limit-situation for the knowledge of Being, it would also be its essential form and essential end." The surprise of the event is the horizon of thinking, its interminable vocation: "From the beginning of philosophy to its end, where its beginning is replayed in new terms, this surprise is all that is at stake, a stake that is literally interminable" (BSP 166). In its very essence, in its most proper form, thinking is *surprised thinking*.

If one wanted to "remain" within this element of wonder, "stay" with the surprise, the event of surprise (here speaking more of an event than of an element), the question would return: how does one stay with an event? Is it even possible to remain with what essentially evades seizing or (conceptual) grasping? And how does one stay with the event without turning it into an element or a temporary phenomenon? Nancy asks: "How is one to stay in the event? How is one to hold onto it (is that is even an appropriate expression) without turning it into an 'element' or a 'moment'?" (BSP, 166). And does one think within the surprise, when surprise is what to be thought? Nancy begins by reiterating that the expression "surprise of the event" needs to be heard as a tautology: this supposes that one understands that there is no event without the surprise as the event *is* the surprise itself. As we saw, Nancy claims that "the event surprises or else it is not an event" (BSP, 167). To think the event requires reflecting on the notion of surprise as such and inquiring about "what 'surprise' is." How can one justify this reduction of the event to the surprise, that is to say, to the unexpected? After all, many things do happen that are expected or awaited. Nancy gives the "examples" of birth and death. These do happen, they are events, *and* yet they were expected. This is where Nancy distinguishes once again between *what* happens and *that* it happens. What is expected is *what* happens, the result of the event. What is not expected and cannot be expected is the happening as such, the way it happens as it happens. Nancy writes: "In a birth or in a death—examples which are not examples, but more than examples; they are the thing itself—there is the event, some [thing] awaited, something that might have been able to be. It can also be formulated like this: what is awaited is never the event; it is the advent, the result; it is what happens. At the end of nine months, one expects the birth, but *that it takes place is what is structurally unexpected in this waiting*" (BSP, 167, emphasis mine). The event is then what *remains unexpected in the expectation*, in the waiting. The event, as event, interrupts anticipation, even if *what* happened was waited for. Even when a prediction is "successful," it is not identical and does not merge with the event as it actually happens. The event cannot be reduced to its anticipation, for it always happens in surplus or in excess of the prediction, otherwise than the prediction. What remains unexpected in the awaiting? What

is “unawaitable” in the event, if indeed the unexpected is a “structural” characteristic of the event? The event is not that such or such a thing takes place, if that implies a moment in a process and even less if it refers to a “thing” that happens. Not the fact that this happens, but the “that” as such: the event is “the *that* itself of the ‘that it happens’ or ‘that there is’” (BSP, 167). The event is the sheer happening in the “it happens.” To that extent, it breaks from what precedes it or succeeds it, interrupts any continuum, and it is precisely that interruption that surprises. The event is the pure present, or better, the pure presence of the present (the event is not the present, but “the presence of the present” [BSP, 168]), as it is happening. It is “the ‘it happens’ as distinct from all that precedes it and from everything according to which it is codetermined. The event, occurring in the present alone, never happened before and will never happen again. It is the pure present of the ‘it happens’—and the surprise has to do with the present as such, in the presence of the present insofar as it happens” (BSP, 167). Hence the event is “structurally unawaitable”: it only happens in the moment of its happening and cannot be anticipated beforehand; its happening cannot be anticipated. What is “unawaitable” in the event is its very happening.

One cannot say that the event happens *in* the present, for it cannot be situated in a moment in time. Rather, it constitutes the very happening of the present, according to a temporality that one may call primordial or original and that is neither the change of a substance of Kant’s first analogy nor the succession described in the second analogy. The event does not happen *in* time, but *as* time, an original temporality through which a present is constituted, in a surprise, as the advent of the unprecedented. “The pure occurring (*das blosse Entstehen*)—in other words, the *ex nihilo* and also the *in nihilum*—is nothing for which there is a concept; it is time ‘itself,’ its paradoxical identity and permanence as ‘empty time’” (BSP, 167–168). It is “empty” in the sense that it is “the condition of the formation of every form” and also “the happening or coming of something in general” (BSP, 168). The event is time itself, neither succession nor the permanence of a substance, but pure happening. Now, the happening of the present is itself not present precisely to the extent that it constitutes it. The event, “insofar as it happens,” explains Nancy, is “as a result, non-present.” This does mean, however, “not yet present,” for that once again situates the event within a succession of an established “order of time”: when in fact the event “is, on the contrary, the sort [of thing] that nothing precedes or succeeds” (BSP, 168). Thus the event exceeds the present as such, Nancy speaking of the *sur-venue* of the event (BSP, 168), literally an “over-coming,” or a coming that is as it were in excess of itself. It can only happen in the present, but can also only exceed it. This is why Nancy does not speak of the unrepresentable, but of the “unrepresentable of the present that is right at the present itself” (BSP, 169, trans. modified). This is also why the event cannot be presented in front of the gaze as some “(extant) thing” since it is “the taking

place of something.” The event is rather *creation*, Nancy suggests provocatively³ by referring to a long tradition of ontotheology (I will return to this motif of “creation” in the next section). At this stage, what matters to note is that it is the unrepresentable nature of the event that constitutes the surprise.

As such, as *Geschehen*, *Entschehen*, *Verschwinden*, or as “taking place, appearing, disappearing,” the event “is not presentable” (BSP, 169). This is not because it would constitute some beyond-speech or beyond-knowledge, accessible only to a mystical intuition, and not because it would designate some hidden presence, but rather because as it is the coming into presence of the present, it necessarily exceeds such present—and any presentable form. This is why, Nancy continues, the event “exceeds the resources of any phenomenology,” although he immediately adds intriguingly that “the phenomenological theme in general has never been more magnetized by anything else” (BSP, 169). The first part of that passage testifies to the excess that the event manifests with respect to the horizon of the present and with respect to a certain conception of phenomenology as a phenomenology of the present being. However, the second part of the quote suggests that this excess affects not only the presence of the present, but phenomenology itself as exceeded by what happens, by the event, an excess that therefore concerns phenomenology’s ownmost possibility. In fact, Nancy gestures toward a transformed sense of phenomenology, one that would recognize or accommodate the “unpresentable of the present” that is nonetheless “right at [*à même*] the present itself,” that is, the difference that structures the present while itself not appearing as such in the present. This difference of the present, Nancy recognizes, is not the defeat of thought: the fact that “the difference of the present is not presentable does not mean that it is not thinkable” (BSP, 169, trans. modified). It rather calls for a thought that becomes affected by the event, just as phenomenology, as noted, can also transform itself into a phenomenology of the event and of the excess. Nancy adds that “this could mean that thinking . . . must itself become something other than seeing or knowing; it must make itself the surprise of/in its ‘object.’ In Deleuzian terms, a becoming-surprise of thinking must correspond to the unexpected arrival of the present (of Being)” (BSP, 169).

Due to all these motifs, it appears that there is no event “as such,” identifiable in the present as some extant object. Indeed, an event is not some being that can be presented; it is not what is produced or something that can be shown, such as the newborn baby or the dead man, but rather “it is the event *as* it comes about [*é-vient*], *as* it happens” (BSP, 169). The event *is* not, but *happens*. The “as” has a temporal sense: “as it happened, there was a flash of lightning.” The *as* such of the event is a temporal happening, and the “mode of the event, its ‘as such,’ is time itself as the time of the unexpected arrival” (BSP, 169–170). As for such unexpected arrival, Nancy elaborates its sense further, writing in a very compact and concentrated sentence: “The unexpected arrival: the nothing stretched to the

point of rupture and to the leaping-off point of the arrival, where presence is presented [*pres-ente*]” (BSP, 170). I will “unpack” this passage. The nothing mentioned here corresponds to the emptiness of time already noted, a nothing that also has to do with the coming into presence as such of the event. Not a thing, but a motion that occurs in an event. This nothing points to a “negativity” in which the event is no longer situated within a given succession but rather arises from nothing and falls into the nothing (the *ex nihilo* and the *in nihilum*), grounded in nothing, not the result of a process, as in birth and death. The “stretching” of this nothing refers to the tension and the difference that is always operative in the event, as is visible in the very notion of a *taking place*, which necessarily indicates a certain extension or dimension if not a spacing, an interval (later I will describe how it is this very interval that constitutes the surprise). An event, as a taking place, is the motion of a distance and difference. The event as it were “becomes strained: tension and extension, the only means by which something could appear as ‘passing-through’ and ‘process,’ the nontemporal and nonlocal extension of the *taking place as such*, the spacing through which time appears, the tension of nothing which opens time. As Heidegger put it: *Spanne*” (BSP, 170). This difference and dimension of the taking place echoes what was emphasized prior with respect to difference as “structuring” presence and the present. The event of presence, indeed the pure position of being or existence, is a differential event. With respect to the reference to a “point of rupture” and to a “leaping-off point,” this indicates that the event must be approached, not as some present state or phenomenon, but as a rupture and as a *leap*. This does not contradict the notion of differential happening, for the extension of difference is not progressive. As Nancy puts it pleasantly, “the nothing is not something that can be stretched like a rubber band” (BSP, 171). The tension of the extension “is not itself progressive, but is all in one go, *in a single stroke*, the tension/extension of Being, ‘that there is’” (BSP, 171).

Such suddenness of the event is hence referred to as a rupture or a leap. For instance, Nancy argues that when “the infant is born,” as Hegel showed in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, the event is not the expected birth, which was part of a process, but precisely “the interruption of the process,” that is, the “qualitative leap” of the “firth breath” (BSP, 172). The event is in the leap, it is the leap. But what kind of leap? What rupture? It is not, Nancy clarifies, a rupture that presupposes some preexisting continuum, for the simple reason that such continuum does not exist. In fact, all there is is the leap: there is no reality that is simply “given.” “Only because it [the event] is not given, but instead happens, is there surprise and an unpredictable” (BSP, 175). The leap is not derivative but original, ungrounded, in the mode of the original temporality that Nancy constantly appeals to in these analyses. This is why he refers to the motif of “creation,” which presupposes nothing.

Being or existence “arrives unexpectedly—or again, is ‘created’” (BSP, 171). A creation is by definition *ex nihilo*. “The idea of creation . . . is above all the idea of the *ex nihilo*.”⁴ This explains the “negativity” of such leap: it leaps from nothing into nothing. Nancy writes: “There is a rupture and a leap: rupture, not in the sense of a break with the already presupposed temporal continuum, but rupture as time itself, that is, as that which admits nothing presupposed, not even, or especially not, a presupposition. To do so would be to admit an antecedent of time [in] to itself. The rupture of nothing, the leap of nothing into nothing, is the extension of negativity” (BSP, 171). The leap of the event, of the event of being, means that something exists without any presupposed basis, “with no presupposition other than its own existence, the extension of ‘nothing’ as the tension of its becoming-present, of its event” (BSP, 171). This lack of ground, and leap of existence, is the experience of the surprise of the event, of the “surprised thinking” of the event.

Just as one cannot speak of the event “as such,” one can also not ask: *what* is the surprise? For “the surprise is *not* anything” (BSP, 171). It is not identifiable as some state or present phenomenon. It is not, for instance, the “state” of “newness” that one could contrast with a state of being as already given. Not a present being, but the event of a difference, of an interval, taking place in the leap. This is what Nancy attempts to say when he explains that when there is the event, “it is the ‘already’ that leaps up, along with the ‘not-yet’” (BSP, 171). In other words, the event is the leap of an interval (between the already and the not-yet) that occurs. The leap of the event leaps over the present, over any presentable being: it is the leap, in surprise (the surprise is nothing else than the leap itself), as the “coming, or the pre-sence or *prae-sens* itself without a present” (BSP, 171–172). Who or what is the leap? Nothing and no one. The leap is the impersonal “it leaps.” This is why the surprise does not happen to someone, to a subject: the surprise surprises itself. This is “surprised thought”: it “never stops happening—and surprising” (BSP, 175).

The Event of the World

The world always appears [*surgit*] each time according to a decidedly local turn [of events]. (BSP, 9)

As mentioned prior, the event is not some given presence, but instead happens. Nancy understands this lack of givenness in terms of “creation,” indeed a creation of the world, as the event engages the existence of the world. In *The Creation of the World* or *Globalization*, Nancy approaches the world as a creation, a notion, he recognizes, borrowed from the tradition of monotheism. It is a matter, he explains, of grasping the world “according to one of its constant motifs in the Western tradition—to the extent that it is also the tradition of

monotheism—namely the motif of creation” (CW, 50). This recourse may seem surprising, especially in light of Nancy’s noted volume on the deconstruction of Christianity.⁵ Nonetheless, Nancy insists that creation should be taken in a radically nontheological way. “‘Creation,’” he writes, “is a motif, or a concept that we must grasp outside of its theological context” (CW, 50). Creation is to be heard as a mark of the event of the world. The world is not given, not resting on some prior principle, but exists rigorously as the event of itself, as *creation* of itself. Nancy clarifies that “the world is not given,” that in fact “the world is its own creation” and that “this is what ‘creation’ means” (CW, 109). In order to explore the senses of the event in Nancy’s thinking of the world, it is necessary to explore further the senses of such a non- or atheological creation. At stake in this reappropriation of the motif of creation is the access to the worldhood of the world, its becoming world. Creation is *ex nihilo* and not simply deriving from a transcendent creator: creation is *ex nihilo*, from nothing, an *ex nihilo* that breaks any reliance on a divine author as the world opens in it. This is why this thinking of an atheological creation is intimately connected to the deconstruction of Christianity that Nancy pursues: for it is the case that “it is theology itself that has stripped itself of a God distinct from the world” (CW, 50).

Nancy’s reflection on the world, on “the being-world of the world,” unfolds in a contrast drawn between two French terms apparently synonymous, or used interchangeably, namely *globalisation* and *mondialisation*, which I will render respectively as *globalization* and *world-forming*. Nancy analyzes and exploits this linguistic particularity proper to the French language, which, in effect, possesses two terms for designating the phenomenon known in English simply as *globalization*. Although the two terms seem, at first glance, to be indistinguishable, converging in the designation of the same phenomenon, that is, the unification of all parts of the world, in fact they reveal two quite distinct, if not opposite, senses: the term *globalization*, Nancy notes, has established itself in the areas of the world “that use English for the contemporary information exchange” (CW, 27), whereas *mondialisation* does not allow itself to be translated as easily and would even be, according to Nancy, of the order of the “untranslatable.” In contrast to *mondialisation*, globalization is a process that indicates an “enclosure in the undifferentiated sphere of a unitotality” (CW, 28) that is perfectly accessible and transparent for a mastery without remainder. Therefore, it is not in itself insignificant that the term *mondialisation* maintains a part of untranslatability, of secret, or of non-masterability, while globalization tends to the integral translatability of all meanings and all phenomena. Further, the global or globality is a phenomenon more abstract than the worldly or world-forming. Nancy refers to globality as a “totality grasped as a whole,” an “indistinct totality,” while the world, the worldly, and world-forming call to mind rather a “process in expansion,” in reference to the world of humans, of culture, and of nations in a differentiated set. In

the final analysis, what interests Nancy in this distinction between *globalisation* and *mondialisation* is that the latter maintains a crucial reference to the world's horizon, as a space of human relations, a space of meaning held in common, a space of significations or of possible significance. The global is not the worldly, and in fact is for Nancy the disintegration of the sense of the world: the world no longer makes sense as world.

In *Dis-Enclosure*, Nancy writes that the world “no longer acknowledges itself as holding a world-view, or a sense of the world that might accompany this globalization.” The world is reduced to being a world market, and the sense of the world is reduced to a mere “accumulation and circulation of capitals” (D, 30). This disintegration of sense—of the sense of the world—takes place in the phenomenon of globalization, a phenomenon by which the West has both established dominance and exceeded itself (to the point where the “West can no longer be called the West,” D, 29) to take the form of the global. Nancy's reflection is rooted in an analysis of the present time, in the need to reflect on its provenance and on the historical trajectory of the West that has led to the point where sense itself has become questionable. It is in the context of a disintegration—indeed (self-)deconstruction—of sense that Nancy seeks to engage that history. The West has become globalized and for that reason is no longer possessor of a sense of the world, when sense itself is reduced to the domination of the general equivalence of values and accumulation and circulation of capitals in an indefinite technological growth deprived of recognizable finality always increasing the gap between the powerful and the have-nots. It becomes urgent at such a time, Nancy argues, to reengage the history of the West in which this process of disintegration or decomposition of sense has occurred. “Our time is thus one in which it is urgent that the West—or what remains of it—analyze its own becoming, turn back [*se retourne sur*] to examine its provenance and its trajectory, and question itself concerning the process of decomposition of sense to which it has given rise” (D, 30).

Globalization, far from being a becoming-world or a world-forming, leads to the proliferation of what Nancy calls the un-world (*l'im-monde*). “The world has lost its capacity to ‘form a world’ [*faire monde*]: it seems only to have gained that capacity of proliferating, to the extent of its means, the ‘un-world’” (*im-monde*; CW, 34). Globalization, a uniformity produced by a global economic and technological logic, leads to “a global injustice against the background of general equivalence” (CW, 54). It leads to the opposite of an inhabitable world, an un-world. On the one hand, there is the uniformity produced by a global economic and technological logic. In the chapter “*Urbi et orbi*,” Nancy describes globalization as “the suppression of all world-forming of the world” and as “an unprecedented geopolitical, economic, and ecological catastrophe” (CW, 50). And, on the other hand, there is the possibility of a *world-forming*, that is, a making of the world and of a

making sense that Nancy will call a “creation” of the world (another formulation by Nancy of this alternative reads: “can what is called ‘globalization’ give rise to a world, or to its contrary?” CW, 29). This creation of the world means, as he makes clear, “immediately, without delay, reopening each possible struggle for a world, that is, for what must form the contrary” (CW, 54) of globality. The question, henceforth, becomes the following: “How are we to conceive of, precisely, a world where we only find a globe, an astral universe, or earth without sky . . . ?” (CW, 47). Globality does not open a path, a way, or a direction, a possibility; rather, it furiously turns on itself and on its own absence of perspective and orientation, thereby exacerbating itself as blind technological and economical exploitation. The profound nihilism of the logic of globalization is here revealed for, as Nancy writes, “everything takes place as if the world affected and permeated itself with a death drive that soon would have nothing else to destroy than the world itself” (CW, 34). I note here with respect to this nihilism the crucial place and role of the nothing apparent in the antinomy between the global and the worldly, the role that the nothing plays in the world, in its event as in its destruction or in its destruction as event. In *Dis-Enclosure*, Nancy warns us not to “confuse” this nothing or void with nihilism (D, 8) as he had explained, in *The Creation of the World*, that the nothing in the ex nihilo of creation “fractures the deepest core of nihilism from within” and that the motif of creation (which for Nancy lies in the ex nihilo) “constitutes the exact reverse of nihilism” (CW, 71). Indeed, nihilism is the raising of the nothing as principle whereas the ex nihilo signifies the absence of principle. The ex nihilo means the “undoing of any principle, including that of the nothing” (D, 24–25). It is a matter of having another relation to the nothing, another relation “to the exact place where the void opened” (Nancy adds: “nowhere else but in the very heart of society, or of humanity, or civilization, in the eye of the hurricane of globalization,” D, 3, trans. modified), another relation to “the empty heart of the void itself” opened by the death of God (D, 3, trans. modified). It is a question of bringing forth this “nothing of the world,” for it is in it that the cross destinies of globalization and world-forming are at stake, as well as the question of contemporary nihilism.

Nancy’s thinking of the world begins with the following fact: the world is destroying itself. This is not a hyperbole, but a fact, indeed *the* fact from which any reflection on the sense of the world must originate. “The fact that the world is destroying itself is not a hypothesis: it is in a sense the fact from which any thinking of the world follows” (CW, 35). The thought of the world is rendered possible, paradoxically, from the fact of its destruction. Nancy notes the correlation of the process of technological and economic planetary domination with the disintegration of the world, that is, the disintegration of the “convergence of knowledge, ethics, and social well-being” (CW, 34). Everything happens as if the access to totality, in the sense of the global and of the planetary, implied the disappearing

of the world, as well as the end of the orientation and of the sense (of the world). In effect, it is paradoxically by virtue of the event of globalization—for Nancy, the suppression of the world—that the world is in the position to appear *as such*. Globalization destroys the world, thereby making possible the emergence of the question relating to its being.

Noting briefly the features of this destruction, Nancy highlights the shift in meaning of the papal formulation “*urbi et orbi*,” which has come to mean, in ordinary language, “everywhere and anywhere.” This “everywhere and anywhere” consecrates the disintegration of the world as it cannot possibly form an orb of the world. The orb of the world dissolves in the nonplace of global multiplicity. This is an extension that leads to the indistinctness of the parts of the world, as, for instance, the urban in relation to the rural. Nancy calls this hyperbolic accumulation “agglomeration” in the sense of the conglomerate, of the piling up, a “bad infinite” (CW, 47) that dismantles the world:

This network cast upon the planet—and already around it, in the orbital band of satellites along with their debris—deforms the *orbis* as much as the *urbs*. The agglomeration invades and erodes what used to be thought of as *globe* and which is nothing more now than its double, *glomus*. In such a *glomus*, we see the conjunction of an indefinite growth of techno-science, of a correlative exponential growth of populations, of a worsening of inequalities of all sorts within these populations—economic, biological, and cultural—and of a dissipation of the certainties, images and identities of what the world was with its parts and humanity with its characteristics. (CW, 33–34)

Nancy adds in a note further into the text that the term *globalization* could just as easily been referred to as an “agglomerization” (CW, 118, n. 5) in reference to the *glomus*. As for the concept “bad infinite,” which Nancy borrows from Hegel, it signifies in this context that the infinite “is indeed the one that cannot be *actual*” (CW, 39), that is, the bad infinite “of a ‘globalization’ in spiral” (CW, 47), which Nancy contrasts with the actual infinite of the finite being (CW, 71). The infinite in action signifies for Nancy the world itself as “absolute value,” that is to say, as the existence of the world put into play as “absolute existence” (CW, 44) so that in the end it is necessary “that the world has absolute value for itself” (CW, 40).

This “putting into play” has no other meaning than the very eventfulness of the world, hence approached as the absolute (unrelated, unbound) existence that it is. This absoluteness of the event of the world is described by Nancy in several ways. First, he insists on the fact that the world is no longer referred to a transcendence, to a beyond, to a god outside the world and distinct from the world: the world no longer refers to another world. “A world is a totality of echoes, but it does not echo [*renvoie*] anything else. The worlds within the world—for example,

the worlds of the polar circles or of classical Indian music, the worlds of Goya or of Wittgenstein, of caterpillars or of transistor radios—form ‘the’ world by echoing and referring among themselves: but ‘the’ world refers to nothing.”⁶ It is a matter of showing how the world happens outside of the theological scenario, for it is no longer possible, in effect, to measure the sense of the world by referring it to an external and transcendent model. “Whoever speaks of ‘the world’ renounces any appeal to ‘another world’ or a ‘beyond-the-world’ [*outré-monde*]” (CW, 37). In fact, there is no model and no principle for the world as the world is properly *an-archic*. Therein lies its eventfulness, which in turn is neutralized when the world is referred to a representation or to a principle, or indeed to God. For God, according to Nancy, amounts to the position of another world next to this world, an other than this world. “For a God distinct from the world would be another world” (CW, 44–45), and: “At the end of monotheism, there is the world without God, *that is to say, without another world*” (CW, 50, emphasis mine). Now, the first proposition of an authentic thought of the world is that the world never refers to another world. The world “never crosses over these edges to occupy a place overlooking itself” (CW, 43). The world does not get crossed over (it does not have an outside); rather, it is traversed: from beginning to end, from one edge to another, but never in order to access an outside or a beyond, site of the divine. And if one “leaves this world,” it is not to attain another world; it is simply no longer being-*in-the-world*, no longer being in a world, no longer having a world. To that extent, “this world” is the only world. To die is to leave the world, *as world*, and no longer to leave this world for another world. To no longer be is to no longer be in the world.

The event of the world is absolute; ab-solute, that is, absolutely freed from any reference to an exterior. The world is ab-solute, detached, without connection. Nancy speaks of “the” world, “absolutely,” this absolutization of the world being one of the senses of what he refers to as “mondialisation”—world-forming. The world is absolute—as it is no longer *relative* to another world—but nonetheless finite since it arises out of nothing in order to return to nothing, itself only a growth of/from nothing. The world is the conjunction of a finitude and of an absolute; it is an absolute finitude.

Without an external principle, the world can only refer to itself, and its *sense* only arises from itself. When Nancy speaks of “sense” (*sens*), he does not intend by this term the same thing as “signification,” that is, an accomplished given meaning, but rather the opening of the possibility of the production of meaning. Meaning is not given, but to be invented, created, out of nothing, ex nihilo. The sense of the world is not attached to another world, but arises out of a making-sense, which *is* the world as such: the world makes sense of itself by itself. Sense is never a reference to an outside world, but a self-reference, the very structure of selfhood for Nancy. This is why the expression “the sense of the

world [*le sens du monde*]” is not an objective genitive, an encompassing view of the world as totality on the basis of an external standpoint (following Wittgenstein’s expression, according to which “the meaning of the world must be situated outside the world”), but, rather, a subjective genitive, produced from the internal references of the world. “One could say that worldhood [*mondialité*] is the *symbolization* of the world, the way in which the world symbolizes in itself with itself, in which it articulates itself by making a circulation of meaning possible without reference to another world” (CW, 53). Sense “circulates,” Nancy states, “between all those who stand in it [*s’y tiennent*], each time singular and singularly sharing a same possibility that none of them, anyplace or any God outside of this world, accomplishes” (CW, 43). It is in this sense that the world does not presuppose itself; it exists as an extension of itself, as a spacing without ground. Nancy clarifies that the world is a dimensionality without origin, founded on nothing, an “archi-spatiality” or a “spaciousness of the opening” (CW, 73). The world is a “spacing of presences” (always plural and singular).

The groundless event of the world implies that the world exceeds its representation. No longer a representation or a vision, a worldview, the world manifests its mode of being as an excess with regard to this vision. The world exceeds its representation; it leaves it, and it appears outside this model, excessive, eccentric, and singular. Excess of a pure event, founded on nothing, outside representation, the world escapes all horizons of calculability (in opposition to the logic of economic and technological globalization). A world in excess has therefore the mode of being of an unpredictable event and for that reason cannot be the matter of a choice between possibilities. It would be, rather, “a violent decision without appeal, for it decides [*tranche*] between all and nothing—or more exactly it makes some thing be *in place of nothing*” (*elle fait être quelque chose au lieu de rien*; CW, 59, emphasis mine). Thus, in such an event it is a question of a decision, “a decision about what is in no way given in advance, but which constitutes the eruption of the new, that is unpredictable because it is without face, and thus the ‘beginning of a series of appearances’ by which Kant defines freedom in its relation to the world” (CW, 59).

To think the world outside representation, that is, outside of ontotheology (“A world without representation is above all a world without a God capable of being the subject of its representation,” CW, 43–44), nothing could be more appropriate, according to Nancy, than to appeal to the motif of creation, that is, a creation *ex nihilo* understood in a nontheological way. Creation is even characterized by Nancy as the nodal point in a deconstruction of Christianity precisely to the extent that it resides in the *ex nihilo*. The creation of the world is *ex nihilo*, letting the world appearing as a nothing-of-given, as “neither reason nor ground sustains the world” (CW, 120, n. 20), a “resonance without reason” (CW, 47), Nancy writes suggestively. That creation is without a creator, without a subject,

for the world does not presuppose itself but is “only coextensive to its extension as world, to the spacing of its places between which its resonances reverberate” (CW, 43). The world, not grounded on any principle, is a *fact*; it is only a fact (even if it is a singular fact, not being itself a fact *within* the world). It is not founded in reason or in God. It is the fact of a “mystery,” the mystery of an accidental, errant, or wandering existence. The world is neither necessary nor contingent, if contingency is defined in relation to necessity. Rather, it would be beyond or before necessity and of contingency, an absolute fact. It is possible to free the facticity of the world from the necessity-contingency conceptual couple by considering this facticity of the world “without referring it to a cause (neither efficient nor final)” (CW, 45). The world is a fact without cause and without reason, it is “a fact without reason or end, and it is our fact” (CW, 45). We are called, in this thought of the event of the world, to take on this facticity without reason of the world, as well as its non-sense, or rather the fact that its sense only lies in such a fact: “To think it, is to think this factuality, which implies not referring it to a meaning capable of appropriating it, but to placing in it, in its truth as a fact, all possible meaning” (CW, 45). The world is a significance without a foundation in reason. The world is without reason and is to itself its entire possible reason.

According to the very structure of the event, the world happens in the incalculable, in the mode of what Derrida refers to as the possibility of the impossible. For Derrida, the impossible, which he writes as “im-possible” to mark the excess with transcendental conditions of possibility, is possible and takes place as im-possible.⁷ In fact, the im-possible is, according to Derrida, which Nancy follows, the very structure of the event. The possibility of the world “must not be the object of a programmatic and certain calculation. . . . It must be the possibility of the impossible (according to a logic used often by Derrida), it must know itself as such, that is to say, know that it happens also in the incalculable and the unassignable” (CW, 49). The impossible, or the im-possible, means: that which *happens*, the event, outside of the conditions of possibility offered in advance by a subject of representation, outside the transcendental conditions of possibility, which, for Nancy, actually render impossible the subject of this experience of the world. The transcendental in fact impossibilizes experience while the im-possible possibilizes it. The world happens as such an im-possible. Derrida often writes that an event or an invention is only possible as im-possible. “If all that arises is what is already possible, and so capable of being anticipated and expected, that is not an event. The event is possible only coming from the impossible. It arises *like* the coming of the impossible.”⁸ This is why Nancy specifies, “Our question thus becomes clearly question of the impossible experience or the experience of the impossible: an experience removed from the conditions of possibility of a finite experience, and which is nevertheless an experience” (CW, 65). This experience is the experience of world as excess with respect to the conditions of anticipating

possibilities. Experience takes place in the excess of the im-possible as the structure of the event.

The world is excessive, exceeding the conditions of possibility of representation and of the transcendental while, nevertheless, establishing a proper stance. The world is without foundation (without representation), but it maintains a *stasis* in this nothing. Neither the representation of a universe (*cosmos*) nor that of a here below (a humiliated world, if not condemned by Christianity), the world is the excess—beyond any representation of an *ethos* or of a *habitus*—of a stance by which it stands by itself, configures itself, and exposes itself in itself, relating to itself without referring to any given principle or determined end. Nancy explains that the world, if it does not want to be a land of exile or a valley of tears, or simply the un-world (*im-monde*) that it is becoming today, must be the place of a possible inhabiting. Above all, the world is a place, the place of a possible taking-place, where there is “a genuine place, one in which things can genuinely *take place* in it (in this world)” (CW, 42). The world is the place of any taking-place, of any possible taking-place, the place where “there is room for everyone [*tout le monde*]” (CW, 42). Nancy insists on this dimensionality of the world: the world “is nowhere”; it is rather “the opening of space-time” (CW, 73), a “spacio-temporal dis-positing dispersion,” where everything can take-place, if it is the case that “what takes place takes place in a world and by way of that world” (CW, 42). The world is the place and the dimension of a possibility to inhabit, to coexist. The world “is only for those who inhabit it” (CW, 42).

This spacing of the world is revealed in Nancy’s understanding of deconstruction, for where does deconstruction lead? What does it give access to? Not to some original givenness of being, as Heidegger may have wished, not to some supraessential being lying beyond our world, but rather to “the dis-jointing and dismantling [*désajointement*] of stones” with the gaze directed “toward the void (toward the *no-thing* [*chose-rien*]), their setting-apart” (D, 11). This is where Nancy marks his difference with Heidegger: it is not for him a question of reappropriating the proper of human existence and original *Das-sein*, it is not a matter of a return to origins (“I don’t want to take out the gesture of ‘returning to the sources’ and of ‘puri-fication’ of the origin,” D, 58), for to deconstruct means instead “to take apart, to disassemble, to loosen the assembled structure in order to give some play to the possibility from which it emerged but which, qua assembled structure, it hides” (D, 148). Nancy certainly shares with Heidegger the conviction that deconstruction (which, Nancy notes, Heidegger explicated as an *abbau*—deconstruction—and not as a *Zerstörung*, or “destruction”) has a positive intent and is neither a destruction in order to rebuild nor a perpetuating. However, for Nancy deconstruction does not give access to an originary proper domain, “being” or *Ereignis* (it is not “a return to the archaic,” D, 44), but rather to a sheer *case vide*, an “empty slot” (D, 149), a

gap or void without any substantiality or integrity of its own. That gap would play the role of a hyphen, a *trait d'union* organizing a distension. The cum- of this com-position is a difference, and any construction, as thus dis-posed and com-posed, harbors or contains “at its center a gap [*un écart*] around which it is organized” (D, 44). The cum-, the *trait d'union* (hyphen, but literally the “mark of union,” connecting mark), Nancy states, “passes over a void that it does not fill” (D, 44): The dis- of dis-position, the cum- of com-position, do not fill the gap but simply organize it as a construction, for the cum- includes “constitutively the voiding of its center or of its heart” (D, 44, trans. modified). This void is not a mere formal “empty slot,” not the *case vide* of the structuralists. The void is an *opening*, which itself is the opening of the event. The *case vide* is the place or space of the event, the atheological event of the world, as well as the opening of sense, a sense empty of all content, all figure, and all determination. “Thus everything brings us back again to opening as the structure of sense itself” (D, 156). The void or nothing is the opening of a dimension, which is properly the opening of the world.

As noted prior, the thinking of the event of the world is coextensive with a renunciation to the motif of the given. The world is not given a priori, and our coexistence in the world is not given either, and it is not able to rely on any substantial basis. Not able to rely on any given, the world can only rely on itself. The withdrawal of the given opens the space of creation. “The withdrawal of any given thus forms the heart of a thinking of creation” (CW, 69). The world is never established as a given, it is never fulfilled or achieved; it is to be made and enacted. The world itself, as it is always “without given,” is to be created, in an original event. What is peculiar to the very notion of a creation of the world for Nancy is precisely that creation is not a production from a given by a transcendent producer. The event has no author, happens of itself. This event without given is a creation of the world *ex nihilo*, by which the creator annihilates itself—deconstructs itself—in its creation. In *Dis-Enclosure*, Nancy explains that the “idea of *creatio ex nihilo*, inasmuch as it is clearly distinguished from any form of production or fabrication, essentially covers the dual motif of an absence of necessity and the existence of a given without reason, having neither foundation nor principle for its gift” (D, 24). The event has neither necessity nor reason. Nothing is given, all is to be invented, to be created, and the world is created from nothing. This does not mean, Nancy is quick to point out, “fabricated with nothing by a particularly ingenious producer. It means instead that it is not fabricated, produced by no producer” (CW, 51). Thus, Nancy expresses that if “creation means anything, it is the exact opposite of any form of production” (CW, 51), which supposes a given, a project, and a producer. This is why in *Dis-Enclosure*, Nancy insists on thinking the eclosure (*éclosion*) of the world in all of its radicality (or rather, since there is no question of roots here, in its *béance*, void and gap): “No longer an eclosure

against the background of a given world, or even against that of a given creator, but the eclosure of eclosure itself" (D, 160).

The motif of creation, Nancy claims, "is one of those that leads directly to the death of God understood as author, first cause, and supreme being" (BSP, 15). An authentic thought of creation, *ex nihilo*, deconstructs ontotheology, deconstructs any reference to a creator. Thus in *Being Singular Plural*, within the context of a discussion of his notion of a "creation of the world," Nancy explains that the concept of creation of the world "represents the origin as originarily shared, spaced between us and between all beings. This, in turn, contributes to rendering the concept of the 'author' of the world untenable" (BSP, 15). What creation reveals is that the so-called creator becomes indistinguishable from its "creation." If creation is *ex nihilo* (and it must be so since it is not a production from a given), then the creator *is* the *nihil*, and this *nihil* is not prior to creation so that "only the *ex* remains" (BSP, 16). That "*ex*" is a distributive, the origin is the dis-position of the appearing, and creation is nothing but the *ex*-position of the event of being as singular plural.

In what sense does the creator as author disappear—annihilate itself—in its creation, that is, in the world? Nancy claims that the world as problem and as the proper site of human existence was covered and obscured by the classical figures of ontotheology and representational thinking, all the while, paradoxically and silently, undermining ontotheology from within. The question of the world has formed "the self-deconstruction that undermines from within onto-theology" (CW, 41). In the classical representation of the world, one finds the supposition of a subject, outside of the world, a vantage point from where the world can be seen and represented. The world supposed an observer of the world, a *cosmotheoros*, that is to say, a subject-of-the-world representing the world in front of itself as an object. A subject keeps the world in its gaze, its sight, in such a way that the world is represented as "a world dependent on the gaze of a subject-of-the-world [*sujet-du-monde*]" (CW, 40). As for this subject, it is, of course, not of this world, not "in" the world in the sense of being-in-the-world: it is simply not worldly. Positioning itself outside the world, it gains, so to speak, a theological status. Ontotheology reveals itself in the positioning of such a subject: "Even without a religious representation, such a subject, implicit or explicit, perpetuates the position of the creating, organizing, and addressing God, (if not the addressee) of the world" (CW, 40). The world emerged as a proper philosophical problem against the background of a self-deconstruction of ontotheology, and its putting into play as absolute existence is correlative to a disappearance of God in the world.

The thinking of the eventfulness of the world amounts to a "detheologization." For Nancy, ontotheology posits another world in addition to this world. Nancy's thought of the world, however, is the thought of an absolute immanence in opposition to the tradition of transcendence.⁹ Nevertheless, Nancy shows that

the world, the question of the being-world of the world, undermines from within ontotheology, which self-deconstructs and confirms the world in its radical immanence. He states it very clearly: in classical ontotheology, in the end it was a matter of nothing else than the world (the only world there is): “there is no need of a prolonged study to notice that, already in the most classical metaphysical representations of that God, nothing else was at stake, in the end, than the world itself, in itself, and for itself” (CW, 41). The classical thoughts of God questioned the being-world of the world, for what, in effect, did the classical transcendences of ontotheology provide an account of, if not the world? They provided its immanent structure, supplied “a reason internal to the general order of things,” and in the end “elaborated nothing else than the immanent relation of the world to itself” (CW, 41). God is effectively the God *of the world*, the subject of the world, of its fabrication, of its maintenance, and of its destination. Of the world, God was the creator, the organizer. Therefore, Nancy identifies a “becoming-world of the world,” as he refers to it, in those classical figures of ontotheology that are Descartes’s “continual creation” (maintenance of the world), Spinoza’s *Deus sive natura* (God as the world), Malebranche’s “vision in God,” and Leibniz’s “monad of monads.” In each instance, it is a question of the world, of its truth, and of its sense. It is to this extent that the question of the world will have formed the self-deconstruction of ontotheology and that the God of metaphysics has merged with the world, indeed has become the world. What is beginning to appear here is the co-belonging of atheism with theism, atheism not being the simple refutation of theism, and theism somehow leading to atheism in an essential way. Nancy explains that Christianity “shelters within itself—better: more intimately within itself than itself, within or without itself—the principle of a world without God” (D, 35).

This is revealed in Nancy’s understanding of atheism, or rather *absentheism*, as he calls it. A classic representation tends to contrast the Christian age with the modern atheistic period, a schema that Nancy rejects. It is a matter of being “done once and for all with the unilateral schema of a certain rationalism, according to which the modern West was formed by wrestling itself away from Christianity and from its own obscurantism” (D, 34). Instead, one needs to understand how monotheism and Christianity in particular have structured the West through and through. In this sense, the “only atheism that can be actual is the one that contemplates the reality of its Christian provenance” (D, 140, trans. modified). This is why Nancy insists: “Let us therefore, very simply but very firmly, posit that any analysis that claims to find a *deviation* of the modern world from Christian reference forgets or denies that the modern world is itself the unfolding of Christianity” (D, 143–144, trans. slightly modified). One finds, for example, in the Kantian corpus both the denial of the Christian reference (modernity itself is built according to Nancy upon such a denial of Christianity

within it) and at the same time the maintaining of Christian motifs (such as the universal, law, human rights, freedom, conscience, the individual, reason itself, etc.). Regarding the persistence of Christian motifs in the modern age, one could also include here the relation to nature and the reference to the intimate certainty of the heart in Rousseau, the dimension of eschatology and the salvation of man in Marx, the call of conscience and original being-guilty in Heidegger, and so forth. Relying on what he calls a “deconstructive” knowledge, Nancy stresses that the most salient features of the modern understanding of the world—“and sometimes its most visibly atheist, atheistic, or atheological traits”—must be approached “in their strictly and fundamentally monotheist provenance” (D, 32). Nancy stresses the secret and intimate affinity between atheism and Christianity. In the chapter “Atheism and Monotheism,” Nancy attempts to show that the opposition between atheism and theism—which is in one sense undeniable by the very fact that a-theism is the negation of theism—nevertheless conceals the profound belonging of atheism to theism. A-theism is the negation of theism, “but we should not overlook to what degree this negation retains the essence of what it negates” (D, 16). This statement needs to be reversed: if atheism harbors a deep dependency with respect to theism, in turn it will be a matter for Nancy of showing how “monotheism is in truth atheism” (D, 35) and deconstructs itself as atheism, a still enigmatic formulation that I will attempt to clarify in terms of a self-annihilating of God in his creation, self-annihilation or absenting that is the secret of the eventfulness of the world.

Creation lies entirely in the *ex nihilo* and not in the position of a theism, against which Nancy proclaims, not simply an a-theism, but an *absenttheism*: a world without God, a world without another world: “At the end of monotheism, there is world without God, that is to say, without another world, but we still need to reflect on what this means, for we know nothing of it, no truth, neither ‘theistic’ nor ‘atheistic’—let us say, provisionally, as an initial attempt, that it is *absenttheistic*” (CW, 50–51). God is *absent* in the creation of the world and disappears in the world, and Nancy clarifies that this “absenttheism” designates “an absent God and an absence in place of God” (CW, 120, n. 23). A creation no longer referred to theology, but to the *ex nihilo*, without a transcendent creator (in which the creator disappears and self-deconstructs in his creation), a creation immanent to itself, a creation of itself and from itself.

Nancy suggests that the God of ontotheology, in a peculiar *kenosis* or self-emptying, was “progressively stripped of the divine attributes of an independent existence and only retained those of the existence of the world considered in its immanence” (CW, 44), which amounts to saying that the subject of the world (God) disappears in order for the world to appear *as subject of itself*. This is what the self-deconstruction of Christianity gives us to think: the self-deconstruction of God in his creation, the absenting of God in the world. The becoming-world of the

world indicates that the world loses its status as object (of vision) in order to reach the status of subject (previously occupied by God as independent existence). Henceforth, there is nothing but the world as subject of itself. The God of religious representation as subject of the world, as self-subsisting and sustaining, substance of the world, will be thought of as emptying itself in the opening of the world. Following this understanding of *kenosis* in divine creation,¹⁰ Nancy explains, “The God of onto-theology has produced itself (or deconstructed itself) as subject of the world, that is, as world-subject. In so doing, it suppressed itself as God-Supreme-Being and transformed itself, losing itself therein, in the existence-for-itself of the world without an outside (neither outside of the world nor a world from the outside)” (CW, 44). God disappears, but *in the world*, which immediately means that one can no longer speak meaningfully in terms of being *within* the world (*dans-le-monde*) in the sense of what is contained within something else, but only in terms of being-*in-the-world* (*au-monde*). The preposition “*au*,” “*in*,” explains Nancy, represents, in French, what now encapsulates the entire problem of the world. This shift from “within” to “in” indicates the radical immanence of the world: everything now takes place in the world, that is to say, right at the world, *à même* the world.

From the theological understanding of creation as the “result of an accomplished divine action,” one moves to an understanding of it as an “unceasing activity and actuality of this world in its singularity (singularity of singularities)” (CW, 65), that is, creation as *mise-en-monde* or *mise-au-monde*, as Nancy writes it, a bringing or coming into the world.¹¹ “Creation,” he states in *Adoration*, “is constantly taking place.”¹² In any case, as Nancy puts it, “one sense of the world (creation as a state of affairs of the given world) yields to another (creation as bringing forth a world—an active sense that is nothing else than the first sense of *creatio*)” (CW, 65). Noting the etymological links between growing (*croissant*), being born (*naître*), to grow (*croître*), *cresco*, and *creo*, Nancy connects creation with growth as movement of the world. “In creation, a growth grows from nothing and this nothing takes care of itself, cultivates its growth” (CW, 51). To that extent, the nothing grows. “If the world is the growth of/from nothing [*croissance de rien*—an expression of a redoubtable ambiguity—it is because it only depends on itself, while this ‘self’ is given from nowhere but from itself” (CW, 51). The world is created from nothing, that is to say, as nothing, not in the sense of nothingness, but in the sense of nothing given and nothing of reason. The world emerges from nothing, is without precondition, without models, without given principle and end. Coming from nothing signifies the presentation of nothing, not in the sense of a phenomenology of the inapparent or of negative theology, but in the sense where “that *nothing* gives *itself* and that *nothing* shows *itself*—and that is what is” (CW, 123, n. 24).

This creation of the world deprived of a subject becomes an unpredictable appearance, an eruption of the new, an absolute beginning, a dis-posing

openness (the *ex* of *ex nihilo* as *différance*). Ultimately, the self-deconstruction of God is the opening of the world, its *éclosion* (*éclosion*): The nothing of creation *ex nihilo* is the one “that opens in God when God withdraws in it (and in sum *from* it) in the act of creating. God annihilates itself [*s’anéantit*] as a ‘self’ or as a distinct being in order to ‘withdraw’ in his act—which makes the opening of the world” (CW, 70). The creator necessarily disappears in its act, “and with this disappearance a decisive episode of the entire movement that I have sometimes named the ‘deconstruction of Christianity’ occurs, a movement that is nothing but the most intrinsic and proper movement of monotheism as the integral absenting of God in the unity that reduces it in and where it dissolves” (CW, 68). The self-deconstruction of God is the opening of the world (“the opening of the world in the world is the result of a destitution or a deconstruction of Christianity,” D, 78) so that the creation of the world occurs as the self-emptying of God, an opening from a void, that is, an *ex-appropriative* opening: “The unique God, whose unicity is the correlate of the creating act, cannot precede its creation, any more that it can subsist above it or apart from it in some way. It merges with it: merging with it, it withdraws in it and withdrawing there it empties itself there, emptying itself it is nothing other than the opening of this void. Only the opening is divine, but the divine is nothing more than the opening” (CW, 70). Such is the mark of the event: the sheer opening of the world, the opening of being.

For Nancy, we are abandoned to and from such opening. The world, not held by an author or subject, is surrendered without origin to itself, an abandonment by and to: the world *is* poor. This poverty is the nothing that the world manifests: emerging from nothing, resting on nothing, going to nothing, the world is, writes Nancy in a striking passage, “the nothing itself, if one can speak in this way, or rather *nothing* growing [*croissant*] as *something*” (CW, 51). In the event of being, we are abandoned to and from such nothing and opening, an abandonment that, as it were, obligates us, revealing the ethicality of the event.

Event and Abandonment

In his early essay, “Abandoned Being” (1981), which was published in a translation in the volume entitled *The Birth to Presence*,¹³ Nancy approaches the event of being in terms of abandonment, itself first considered in terms of our historical situation and, more precisely, as the very site of our historical being. Abandonment designates where we find ourselves, the “condition”—or rather “incondition”—of thought at the end of a certain metaphysical history (Nancy does speak in “Abandoned Being” of a condition, but of a “miserable condition,” a condition of misery, as when he writes that “abandonment does not constitute the being of beings but rather its condition—not in the sense of a ‘condition of possibility’ but in the sense of a ‘miserable condition,’ whose very misery provokes oblivion,” BP, 9).

Abandonment designates such a “condition”: “We do not know it, we cannot really know it, but abandoned being has already begun too constitute an inevitable condition [*condition incontournable*] for our thought, perhaps its only condition” (BP, 36). Abandonment is the sole condition for our thought because at the end of metaphysics the totality of possible metaphysical principles has been exhausted. Nancy defines the condition for the tasks of thought at the end of traditional metaphysics: all objects of thought will have to be determined and engaged from such closure and end of ontotheology, in a state of *abandonment* from its principles. Being, which is said in many ways, now only designates abandonment and the exhaustion of its predicates: “Being is said abandoned by all categories, all transcendentals” (BP, 36, trans. modified). Abandonment designates the end of metaphysics, of ontotheology, and Nancy assumes the Nietzschean era of the “death of God” and twilight of the idols, of the historical site of nihilism, as the exhaustion of all values and significations (thus, for instance in *Dis-Enclosure*, Nancy evokes “the abandonment or dereliction that is nihilism,” D, 23). What is important to note is that abandonment is an exhaustion from which Nancy seeks to reengage the work of thought. The only ontology that remains a task for thought, according to Nancy, is precisely no longer ontotheology, but rather an ontology characterized by the feature of abandonment, abandonment *as the sole predicate of being*: “From now on, the ontology that summons us will be an ontology in which abandonment remains the sole predicate of being” (BP, 36, trans. slightly modified). At the end of the essay, Nancy also writes that “henceforth ontology has no other ‘object’ than the dereliction of being.”¹⁴

This is an ontology deprived and stripped of all metaphysical principles, deprived of ground, of the ruling of the so-called transcendentals: “*Unum, verum, bonum*—all this is abandoned.” In fact, the abandonment of the univocality of being does not even provide access to a “simple plurivocality.” Rather, we are summoned to attend to “an irremediable scattering, a dissemination of ontological specks” (BP, 36 and 39). Nancy insists on this sense of abandonment: “abandoned being,” he tells us, “corresponds to the exhaustion of transcendentals” (BP, 37, trans. slightly modified) and in this way corresponds to a suspension, an interruption of the various discourses of ontotheology and its categories. For instance, abandonment is said to “immobilize” dialectical thought (which Nancy characterizes as “the one that abandons nothing, ever, the one that endlessly joins, resumes, recovers”); abandonment is also said to prevent or leave the determination of being as position (as one finds in Kant) and to prevent the return to itself of an identity (a logic of appropriation or reappropriation that one can follow in the history of thought all the way to Kant, Hegel, and even Heidegger through his privileging of the “proper” in his work). Abandonment also designates “the inability of the subject to procure a ground on which it can support itself,” and “it demands the abandonment of the idea of

subjectivity in favor of the thought of abandonment, of existence, of freedom.”¹⁵ Abandonment in sum represents the loss of all projects of mastery, including when they are disguised in their contrary. To be abandoned “is to be left with nothing to keep hold of and no calculation. Being knows no more safekeeping, not even in a dissolution or a tearing apart, not even in an eclipse or an oblivion,” Nancy writes, which explains why for him Heidegger’s notion of “oblivion of being” remains inadequate to a thinking of abandonment: it is not being that is forgotten (that would safeguard the being of being, withdrawn in its pure, remote presence), but being’s abandonment! Oblivion “is inscribed, prescribed promised in abandonment” (BP, 39). Abandonment names an oblivion without recovery, the end of all projects of appropriation, a loss of ground as well as a loss of self and identity in the very event of existence. It is to contrast abandonment from any project of mastery that Nancy insists that “all our spirituals exercises must be rid of the will” and that we would “have to finally let ourselves be abandoned” (BP, 43, trans. modified).

This exhaustion of transcendentals and principles is at times taken up by Nancy in terms of what he calls the withdrawal of essence. Abandonment is the abandonment of essence, and this abandonment (*abandonner*) is the gift of existence, a gift or giving (*donner*) that must be taken also as a *giving up*!¹⁶ Nancy speaks of “a *pollakos* in which an interminable abandonment of the essence of being interminably exhausts itself” (BP, 42, trans. modified). Abandonment is the withdrawal of essence, and such withdrawal constitutes the event of existence. That existence is understood as an event deprived of essence appears in Nancy’s characterizations of existence as exposure, an exposure that implies a “leaving” or “abandonment” of a prior nonappearing essence. For Nancy, nothing preexists existence, there is no a prior being, no substrate; instead, it is “from an abandonment that being comes forth: we can say no more. There is no going back prior; being conveys nothing older than its abandonment” (BP, 43, trans. modified). And “it is not permitted us to ask by whom”!

Existence, Nancy insists, is without essence, it is the essenceless itself. His thinking of being-in-common designates a “community” that is not a community of essence (the common) through which singularities would be absorbed in an encompassing whole. Rather, it is a matter of thinking our being-in-common as a coexposure of singular *existences*. Existence has no essence: therein lies its eventfulness. This understanding by Nancy of abandonment in terms of an essenceless existence has its roots in a certain interpretation of the relation between essence and existence in the texts of Heidegger and Sartre. It is appropriate to recall such background in order to appraise how Nancy appropriates it. It is well-known that Sartrean existentialism took as its motto the following expression, “existence precedes essence,” which meant to be a quasi-citation of or commentary on Heidegger’s thought of existence, as expressed in paragraph 9

of *Sein und Zeit*: “The ‘essence’ of Dasein lies in its existence [Das ‘Wesen’ des Daseins liegt in seiner Existenz].”¹⁷ The givenness of existence, *as existence*, first requires that its connection with essence and with any “whatness” be shattered. This is of course brilliantly described in *Nausea*, which shows the original givenness of pure presence, of existence without meaning (essence), of presence as a sheer given, as if one realized that existence is not identical to its signification or concept (essence) and that a glass of beer, as Sartre writes, exists first outside the concept of the glass of beer. Things are first given, outside of their concepts, even outside the concept of “existing things,” outside of the very concept of existence. *Existence exceeds its concept* (as Hannah Arendt showed). Originally, the pure fact of a “that” is not covered over, determined, preceded, or justified by a “what.” Things exist first, prior to having a meaning. According to Sartre, what existentialists (including Heidegger) have in common “is that they think that existence precedes essence” or, as he adds significantly, “if you prefer, that subjectivity must be the starting point.”¹⁸ This is clearly a twofold misunderstanding, first because Heidegger does not think that “subjectivity must be the starting point,” but also because Heidegger never wrote that existence precedes essence. Rather, he wrote that “the ‘essence’ of Dasein lies in its existence.” There is no reference in this statement to a priority that Heidegger would reverse between the two. With Heidegger, “essence” (which the German thinker put in quotation marks, indicating clearly that the word is no longer operative and is used only provisionally and ironically) is *identified* with existence. For Sartre, essence is placed *following* existence in a mere *reversal* of the traditional, metaphysical opposition. One knows how for Heidegger reversing a metaphysical proposition remains a metaphysical proposition since, as he puts it in Parmenides, “Everything ‘anti’ thinks in the spirit of that against which it is ‘anti.’”¹⁹ Sartre stressed that atheistic existentialism “states that if God does not exist, there is at least one being whose existence precedes essence” (HE, 35). Sartre did not say that existence has no essence; rather, he claimed that it comes *before* essence while Heidegger immanently dissolved essence into existence. The “whatness” (*essentia*) of the entity that we are (“insofar as one can speak of it at all,” Heidegger added significantly, SZ, 42) must necessarily be conceived of *as* existence. One might then argue that Sartre’s gesture is less radical than Heidegger’s since it maintains the hierarchy between essence and existence, albeit in an inverted way. Further, with Sartre, the traditional senses of existence and essence are maintained, whereas Heidegger deconstructs the *existentia-essentia* distinction altogether and rethinks the meaning of existence in terms of Dasein’s being (distinct from *existentia*, which in fact is identified with *Vorhandenheit*). Sartre’s statement, existence *precedes* essence, is therefore an inaccurate citation of Heidegger’s passage, as when Sartre writes, for instance, “We must say of it [freedom] what Heidegger said of the Dasein in general: ‘In it existence precedes and commands essence.’”²⁰ Sartre attributes to

Heidegger a statement and a thinking that is not his. It also conveys a misinterpretation toward a humanistic subjectivism that Heidegger has always rejected and that Nancy in turn also rejects.

In Nancy's ontology, existence is not governed by the human signified. Nancy explains, for instance, in *Being Singular Plural* that in the communication between singularities, no privilege to human Dasein can be granted, indicating (this time against Heidegger) that existence is not a property of Dasein. The human being does not constitute the center of creation. Instead, creation (that is, the way the world emerges and exists, *ex nihilo*) "traverses humanity" so that "in humanity, or rather right at [*à même*] humanity, existence is exposed and exposing." Humanity is not the origin, center, or finality of the world, but a sheer place of exposure, an exposure to the nonhuman. "It is not so much the world of humanity as it is the world of the non-human to which humanity is exposed and which humanity, in turn, exposes. One could try to formulate it in the following way: *humanity is the exposing of the world; it is neither the end nor the ground of the world; the world is the exposure of humanity; it is neither the environment nor the representation of humanity*" (BSP, 17 and 18). Nancy demonstrates Sartre's insufficient deconstruction of the humanistic anthropocentric tradition in his thinking of the event of existence despite Sartre's proclaimed intent to draw all the consequences of the death of God: this should have implied the deconstruction of subjectivity as such since, as Nancy observes, the death of God should lead to the disappearance of the very notion of authorship. The creation of the world, as Nancy understands that expression, supposes a break with any reliance on the semantics of authorship, divine principle, and *causa sui*. Sartre does not undertake a deconstruction of authorship, and on the contrary he brings that tradition of subjectivity to a paroxysm. Nancy reads these propositions from Sartre and Heidegger as indicating that existence has no essence, that it is the essenceless itself. Existence is *abandoned* by this withdrawal of essence, opening it to its own event.

As mentioned prior, Nancy understands the event of an existence without essence in terms of *abandonment*. In *The Experience of Freedom*, he writes: "Once existence is no longer produced or deduced, but simply posited (this simplicity arrests all thought), and once existence is abandoned to this positing at the same time that it is abandoned by it, we must think the freedom of this abandonment."²¹ Against Sartre, Nancy first embraces Heidegger's thought of existence by stating that "existence constitutes essence" and by then citing Heidegger's claim, "The 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence." Yet Nancy goes further and suggests that it is a matter of leaving entirely the essence-existence opposition to the tradition of metaphysics ("these two concepts and their opposition are no longer relevant to anything but the history of metaphysics") and proposes to consider, at the limit of such history (a limit where we are *abandoned*), and as it were

at the intersection of their concepts, another concept, that of freedom, which, he says, “can no longer be either ‘essential’ or ‘existential.’” At this point, we are called to a thought of existence as *abandonment*: “we have to consider what makes existence, which is in its essence abandoned to a freedom, free for this abandonment, offered to it and available in it” (EF, 9).²² Nancy, after Sartre (who recognized a certain facticity of freedom since, as he says, we are “condemned” to be free), breaks with the notion of a transcendental freedom; freedom is a *fact*: it is thrown to its own abandonment. Freedom is no longer *causa sui*, no longer a transcendental freedom but a *thrown freedom*. This is why Nancy marks his distance with Kant, explaining that “it was necessary to engage in a determination of the *fact* of freedom other than the determination to which Kant seemed to deliver us” (EF, 26). And if there is an idea of freedom, to follow Kant, it is in the sense in which the idea of freedom “is the sole Idea that is able to be present in experience.” In other words, as Nancy stresses in his preface to the Italian edition of *L’impératif catégorique*, “the ‘idea’ of freedom is not an ‘idea’ in the sense of a representation, or even of an ideal representation (or of a ‘thought’ or ‘principle’ or any other such thing), but is instead the Idea in the sense of the true Form of an act, such that in this respect it is inseparable from that act.”²³ I note here, in order to return to it later, that abandonment is characterized as an abandonment *to freedom*, which will open the problematic of law and obligation in Nancy’s thought of event and abandonment.

To approach this question, nevertheless, it will suffice at this point to stress that one needs to distinguish between an abandonment to factuality and an abandonment to facticity. As one knows, Heidegger distinguished the existence of things (*existentia* or *Vorhandenheit*) from the existence of Dasein (*Existenz*). Sartre did not distinguish sufficiently between these two senses of existence, which explains why for him the concept of facticity can pertain both to the givenness of things in their materiality and to the givenness of our existence. Further, Heidegger had also distinguished between the facticity (*Faktizität*) of Dasein and the factuality (*Tatsächlichkeit*) of intraworldly entities, which Sartre also does not do explicitly as he tends to conflate facticity with the ontical given. This is crucial to Nancy’s thinking of abandonment: referring to the *fact* of freedom, Nancy clarifies that existence is “neither an essence nor a sheer given.” Facticity will not be for Nancy Sartre’s version of a thrownness into an ontical contingency, but rather a thrownness into a freedom, a responsibility, and, as will be seen, an obligation. This is why Nancy speaks of the factuality of existence as a “being-given-over-to-the-law-of-being-free” (EF, 10 and 27).

In addition to the sense of abandonment as the historical exhaustion of metaphysical and ontotheological principles, in the wake of a certain Nietzschean tradition, one also hears in Nancy’s thought of abandonment the Heideggerian lexicon of “thrownness” and finitude,²⁴ notions that certainly are also to

be understood historically. For instance, Nancy evokes at the end of his essay, "Abandoned Being," what he terms the "dereliction of being [*déréliction de l'être*]" (BP, 47), a term used by Sartre (and in various existentialist receptions) to translate Heidegger's notion of *Geworfenheit*.²⁵ This connection to thrownness also appears in the way in which Nancy associates the motif of birth (which in its existential sense is understood by Heidegger precisely as thrownness) with abandonment: we are, Nancy writes, "born in abandonment," as it were "abandoned *at birth*," that is to say also abandoned *to birth* (in French, *abandonnés à la naissance* can mean both abandoned *at birth* but also abandoned *to birth*). Nancy makes this very clear as he writes: "abandoned at/to birth: that is from the beginning . . . and doomed indefinitely to be born" (BP, 40). The Heideggerian heritage of Nancy's analyses is unmistakable in this essay, where abandonment, dereliction, and thrownness of being-in-the-world are simply identified: "the thinker says, in our time, that abandoned being, being-thrown-to-the-world in dereliction, constitutes a positive possibility of being-in-the-world" (BP, 43). Nancy describes abandonment as a withdrawal of essence and of ground, and Heidegger also characterizes thrownness by a certain absence of ground, existence happening from a certain opaque nonground. For instance, when Heidegger describes thrownness in his section on moods (*Stimmungen*) in *Being and Time*, it is to stress that moods lead Dasein before the pure "that" of its There, which, Heidegger writes, "stares at it [Dasein] with the inexorability of an enigma." With respect to this fact, Heidegger insists, "one does not *know why*" (SZ, 136 and 134), not because of some weakness of our cognitive powers, but because of the peculiar phenomenon of moods as they exhibit the facticity of Dasein: the "that" of our being is given in such a way that "the whence and whither *remain obscure*" (SZ, 134, emphasis mine). Against this darkness, or opacity, any enlightenment, whether theoretical or practical, is powerless. Thrownness reveals the opacity and inappropriability of our origins: that is abandonment. And this inappropriability is for Nancy precisely—and paradoxically—what existence *has* to appropriate: "in existing, existence denies that it has meaning as a property, since it *is* meaning. It therefore has to appropriate the inappropriability of the meaning that it *is*. . . . Existence is the appropriation of the inappropriable."²⁶ For Nancy, abandonment throws us into the obligation of appropriating the inappropriable. In one stroke, the throw of thrownness is also the throw of an obligation, a having-to-be. The pure "that" of existence is at once an "ought-to-be." Dasein has to be its own "that," and abandonment is delivered over to an obligation. This constitutes the key difference, outlined prior, between facticity and factuality: the latter indicates the mere presence of a thing while the former reveal the abandonment to an obligation.

Abandonment must not only be understood as an abandonment by, but also an abandonment *to*, Nancy clarifying in *The Creation of the World* that the being-abandoned must be taken, "in all the complex ambivalence of these two

senses,” as “abandoned *by* and abandoned *to*” (CW, 50). Abandonment is *to a law*, Nancy emphasizing the obligation contained in abandonment, that is, “what makes us obligated beings: a law beyond the law, which is given to us, and to which we are abandoned.” We are abandoned *to a law*, a law that itself needs to be conceived in terms of this thinking-in-abandonment to the extent that no principle, whether ontological or theological, and no ontotheological order or foundation grounds law and its effectuation: neither divine nor natural law could come to account for law itself. As Derrida showed in “Force of Law,” *there is no law of the law*, so that law would have to be approached as well in terms of abandonment. In the introductory comments to his preface to the Italian translation of *L’impératif catégorique*,²⁷ Nancy returns to the sequences of essays he wrote between 1977 and 1982, which were gathered in *L’impératif catégorique* (published in 1983), in order to make the following clarification: the central issue governing all the analyses and texts included in *L’impératif catégorique*, he stresses, was the question of obligation. Not simply a “moral” obligation, but rather an “ontological” being-obligated. “The volume translated here in Italian is composed of essays written between 1977 and 1983, whose themes converge around the motif of an ontological obligation rather than first of all moral.” Questions of obligation, duty, law, the categorical imperative, will not pertain to matters of morality, but are indeed ontological motifs: obligation and law will need to be engaged in their ontological import and scope. One finds here the motif of law intertwined with that of being and abandonment, of “abandoned being.”

The question of obligation finds itself radicalized from the (regional) sphere of morality *per se* to the entirety of the sphere of being itself. Being as being-in-the-world, as existence, understood in its verbal or active and eventful sense, must also be understood as a being-obligated: the event of being will amount to a being-obligated. A certain dignity, or ethicality, is conferred to the event of being, for, as Nancy states, “the fact that being as being in the world and as the finite concreteness of the infinity of ‘being’ itself or of the act of ‘being’ is a being-obligated is not a reduction of its dignity, but on the contrary that which opens for it the possibility of dignity and sense.”²⁸ Obligation frees being for itself, opens it to a relationality, so that being can then be as the event and the openness that it is. In short, “obligation frees [being] for its most proper being.”

The task of understanding obligation and law from the perspective of what is most proper to being—its eventfulness—is delineated clearly. This chapter now examines how Nancy understands being at the closure of metaphysics, no longer as the metaphysical substance of the tradition, retaining none of the substantiality that was attributed to it in the history of philosophy, but precisely as *abandonment*. This “abandonment” of the ontotheological features of substantiality will turn out to be the site for the very possibility of the event of the world, that is, the obligation of creating the world, if it is the case, as Nancy states in that same

preface, that “the destitution of the Supreme Being has the direct and necessary consequence the obligation of creating a world.” In “Abandoned Being,” Nancy begins by emphasizing that abandoned being, being-thrown in the world, dereliction or abandonment, constitutes a “positive possibility of being-in-the-world.” Abandonment is not a mere negativity, for it is a matter of letting ourselves be abandoned. He then asks: “Let ourselves be abandoned to what, if not to what abandonment abandons to?” Now the origin or root of the term *abandonment*, Nancy writes, is “a putting at *bandon*,” *bandon* designating an order or a prescription, a decree, a power. To abandon would mean: to remit to a law, to a sovereign power. Hence, Nancy continues, “One always abandons to a law.” The very nakedness and exposure of abandoned being can only be measured to the “limitless severity of the law to which it finds itself exposed” (BP, 43 and 44). In *The Creation of the World*, Nancy refers to the abandonment of the world and characterizes it as *poverty* (“Poverty, or the being-abandoned,” he writes, CW, 50). This poverty (which is not misery but the being-abandoned as such) includes a kind of command,²⁹ and Nancy describes how a categorical imperative arises out of this poverty and abandonment.

Sartre already made the claim in *Being and Nothingness* that one is always abandoned to a freedom, to the obligation of freedom or to freedom as an obligation, echoing what Heidegger had also posited, namely that thrownness is always thrownness to a having-to-be, to an obligation of being. In *Being and Nothingness*, for example, Sartre evokes the abandonment of the existent. He first states, “I am *abandoned* in the world” (BN, 710), then clarifies: “I am *abandoned* in the world, not in the sense that I might remain abandoned passive in a hostile universe like a board floating on the water, but rather in the sense that I find myself suddenly alone and without help, engaged in a world for which I bear the whole responsibility without being able, whatever I do, to tear myself away from this responsibility for an instant” (BN, 710). Sartre insists that forlornness or abandonment, that is, thrownness, is an abandonment *to freedom* and to an ontological obligation. And that obligation is nothing but to be that very thrownness, that very abandonment.

In the same perspective, Nancy states very clearly that in Heidegger the self is “immediately and only a ‘duty of being-there,’ which is to say immediately the abandonment of existence *to an obligation, and the assignation of the injunction of this obligation into the having-to-exist*” (EF, 26–27, emphasis mine). Dasein itself for Nancy designates such being-obligated: “In other words, Dasein would be *being-obligated*, its *Da* would not be a there, but would be its summon by a command.”³⁰ As noted earlier, for Heidegger Dasein is not thrown only once and for all; thrownness “does not lie behind it as some event which has happened to Dasein, which has factually befallen and fallen loose from Dasein again.” Rather, “as long as Dasein is, Dasein, as care, *is* constantly its ‘that-it-is’” (SZ, 284). I am

thrown into existing, that is, into a possibility to be, a “having-to-be.” Dasein exists only in such a way that it projects itself toward possibilities in which it is thrown. What it has to be, then, what it has to assume and be responsible for, is precisely its being-thrown and abandonment as such.

Obligation arises out of this abandonment and becomes in turn an obligation to this very abandonment. Nancy is very clear on this point, stating that abandoned being “finds itself abandoned to the extent that it is delivered over or entrusted to the law as an absolute solemn order, *which prescribes nothing but abandonment*” (BP, 44, emphasis mine). Being is abandoned to abandonment in such a way that it has to be this very abandonment. Abandonment is as it were called to itself. And to nothing other than itself. Nancy explains: “Being is not entrusted to a cause, to a motor, to a principle; it is not left to its substance, or even to its own subsistence. It is—in abandonment” (BP, 44).

To that extent, abandonment opens the space of obligation: “Being is thus abandoned to the being-there of man, as to a command” (BP, 46, trans. modified). It is, Nancy continues, a *categorical imperative*, which “constitutes the absolute law of being,” an absolute call, an order or command, to be. Being is a being-obligated, and the *there* of Dasein “would only be the *there* of the being summoned-there by the imperative” (RP, 51). As he puts it in *The Creation of the World*, “this is certainly what the proposition, according to which Being is the Being of beings and nothing other, means. Being is: *that* the being exists.” To be is to be-obligated: “The fact of being is identical to the desire for being and to the obligation of being, or being, by being, desires itself and obliges itself” (CW, 71, 72). One notes once again how obligation is approached in ontological terms: it is being itself that must be thought as obligated. Already in the early essay included in *L’Impératif catégorique*, “The *Kategoriein* of Excess,” Nancy stated: “What does it mean to obligated? What does it mean to be enjoined? This question, understood as an ontological question (one that perhaps repeats and displaces the Heideggerian question of the onto-ontological difference and the Derridian question of *différance*) constitutes the horizon of this volume, a horizon that has not been reached, much less surpassed” (FT, 145, trans. slightly modified).

This obligation of being is thus inseparable from the finitude of abandonment. In “The Free Voice of Man,” Nancy explains that “duty belongs essentially to finitude,” that only a finite being can be affected by the structure of obligation. Citing Heidegger’s *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* in reference to the debate with Cassirer in Davos, Nancy recalls that “the concept of the imperative as such shows the inner relation to a finite being. . . . This transcendence [of the law] too still remains within the sphere of finitude” (GA 3, 120/147, translation cited and modified in Nancy, RP, 47). In the end, what does the law say? Nancy answers: “It only utters the question—of finitude” (RP, 64 and 51).

It is from this redefined context that Nancy returned in his preface to the Italian edition of *L'impératif catégorique* to the question of the categorical imperative, a categorical imperative of being, one might say, as Nancy speaks of the ontological order or register of this imperative. It is an imperative that "as it were acquires the consistency of being." I sketch out briefly the main features of this "categorical imperative of being," that is, a veritable categorical imperative of the event, an *ethics of the event*, bearing in mind what Nancy says of it in his introductory remarks, namely that he attempted, on "the basis of the concept provided by Kant at the threshold of modernity," to make explicit and explicate the content of the obligation present in the categorical imperative.

Nancy begins by offering two formal characteristics of the categorical imperative; the first concerns its unconditional character: it commands without conditions. This implies that a categorical imperative does not depend on some external conditions, which indeed would make it a hypothetical imperative. The second aspect is that this command does not depend on an external end, for the end of the imperative is "intrinsic" to this imperative. In other words, "what is commanded and the fact of the command are one and the same thing." The end includes within itself the will to that end. These formal aspects will allow Nancy to understand the categorical imperative as an originary phenomenon, as opposed to being derivative from and dependent upon an external principle, and will not be foreign to how he will attempt to integrally dissolve being into an obligation of being, as will be seen.

Nancy underlines the historical scope of the notion of categorical imperative, elaborated as such by Kant, who according to Nancy "inaugurates, in a peremptory and no doubt irreversible manner, the contemporary age of ethics." In what sense? In the sense in which, with the categorical imperative, "it is no longer a question of responding to a given order, neither in the world nor outside the world in the representation of another world." The categorical imperative is not assigned to a world beyond this world, but instead pertains to the event of *this* world, the world to which we are abandoned, which indicates that for Nancy it is a matter of the *world* in such an imperative: it is a world that must be! "The categorical imperative signifies that the concept of a world is inseparable from that of an imperative—a world must be—and that the concept of a pure imperative (not relative to a given end) is inseparable from the concept of world."

Indeed, for Nancy, the world is not simply given, available. Rather, a world is what must be brought forth (*mis-en-oeuvre*), created. "The world is not given," he writes, "the world is its own creation . . . this is what 'creation' means" (CW, 109). The world itself is always not given. What is not given must be prescribed; as lacking a ground, reason becomes self-prescriptive: "Far from being self-grounding, or more exactly, at the very place of its self-grounding, reason is self-prescriptive."

The categorical imperative is not assigned to any given order, not to a given world beyond this world, but rather it commands a world to come forth when there was nothing (*given*) but “only a confused aggregate.” Nancy follows Kant’s description of the categorical imperative as the imperative of the category itself, of the concept or the Idea, the imperative of *pure* reason, and which as such is intuition-less, that is, *without given*. In a hypothetical imperative, the hypothesis (if I want this or that end) refers “to some empirical intuition (for instance the attraction or advantage provided by health and thus the desire to be healthy rather than the opposite).” On the contrary, “the pure, intuition-less category by itself includes as well the command to will its end, or to will the end that it itself is.” The event in this categorical imperative is the pure event, that is, the very eventfulness of the event. Similarly, in his early text on the categorical imperative, “The *Kategoriein* of Excess,” Nancy had stressed that the “imperative wouldn’t be able to prescribe if the legislation were given” (FT, 139, emphasis mine). It is at the place of this lack of givenness that reason becomes prescriptive and self-prescriptive. Reason itself is not given, but “it presents itself to itself as the command to *make itself*.” As Nancy puts it, “the human in it is not given, but self-prescribed,” to the extent that the concept of reason “gives itself as concept the command to realize itself—if we understand that what is to be realized is not given (cannot be intuited).” Thus, when Nancy speaks of “sense” (*sens*), he does not intend by this term “signification” in the sense of a *given* meaning, but rather the opening of the possibility of a production of significance. Sense is not given, but to be invented, to be created, *ex nihilo*. In other words, the world has the structure of a categorical imperative: it must be, unconditionally.

Another feature of this ontological categorical imperative is that it emerges out of the self-deconstruction of God, as if obligation arose from the withdrawal of ontotheology. Reason, Nancy tells us, “commands itself to be what it ought to be, a freedom creating a world. It commands itself, as it were, to be the equivalent or substitute of the creating God.” As noted prior, the destitution of the supreme being “has the direct and necessary consequence the obligation of creating a world.” Indeed, as Nancy explains in *The Creation of the World*, “By destituting the creating God and the *ens summum*—sufficient reason of the world—Kant also makes clear that the reason of the world pertains to a productive causality. He opens implicitly and outside of theology a new question of ‘creation’” (CW, 66). However, this does not mean that we would come to occupy the place of God as transcendent author. First, because, as noted, the deconstruction of ontotheology immediately implies the deconstruction of authorship, but also because there is nothing higher than the command of the categorical imperative of being; there is a “being-commanded,” but not a “commanding.” We are not “the subject as master, but the subject as subjected to the receptivity of that command.” We are not placed as the “creators” of the world if that means the position of a

transcendent unconditional will. "It is not a question (and this is what the subject must understand) of coming to occupy the place of the demiurgic being, since it is precisely that place that has just been emptied." Rather, the subject, that is the subjected one, "receives the command—it receives itself as command—of making a world."

Abandoned being entirely "consists" in the obligation to make a world. Abandonment can be heard in the command of the categorical imperative of being, as if being now had entirely passed into the ought-to-be, and to such an extent that Nancy is able to state that "in the end the categorical here produces the ontological." To be is an ought, an obligation of being. Nancy cites Beethoven, who wrote beneath the title of the last movement of his Quartet, op. 135: "*Muss es sein? Es muss sein.* [Must it (be)? It must (be).]" (BSP, 176). The "ought" becomes the subject, engaging a relation-to-self that is not based on a transcendent creator. The supreme being disappears in the supreme character of the ontological imperative. Nothing preexists, there is no a prior being, no substrate; instead, it is "from an abandonment that being comes forth"; one might add here that being *must* come forth. In a certain sense, obligation and being-abandoned are one and the same phenomenon. Abandonment is enacted in this categorical imperative of the event of being.

Now such event is always—each time—the event of a coexistence, as it now means nothing but sheer exposure. As such, exposure opens relationality, which explains why for Nancy being rigorously means being-with. Nancy approaches such being-with as an event, in his rethinking of democracy, of what one may call the inappropriable *event* of democracy.

The Event of Democracy

Jean-Luc Nancy's rethinking of democracy as an event unfolds from a twofold conviction: first, from the recognition that the term itself has become somewhat of a commonplace to such an extent that it has effectively dissolved any problematic character and possibility of an authentic questioning as to its senses. "When it is taken for granted in every discourse that 'democracy' is the only kind of political regime deemed acceptable by a humanity that has come of age, that has been emancipated, and that has no other end than itself then the very idea of democracy loses its luster, becomes murky, and leaves us perplexed."³¹ In fact, as Nancy reminds us, the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century have come out of such democracy, and one should therefore not ignore the "traps" or "monsters" that lurk behind this murkiness. It remains that democracy has lost most of its power of signification. With respect to this "nonsignifying word *democracy*," one is placed in an aporetic position, a position that Nancy describes in this way: "Is it at all meaningful to call oneself a 'democrat'? Manifestly, one

may and should answer both ‘no, it’s quite meaningless, since it is no longer possible to call oneself anything else,’ and ‘yes, of course, given that equality, justice, and liberty are under threat from plutocracies, technocracies, and mafiocracies wherever we look.’ *Democracy* has become an exemplary case of the loss of the power to signify.” Incapable of “generating any problematic or serving any heuristic purpose,” democracy then “means everything—politics, ethics, law, civilization—and nothing.”³² This loss of significance gives a task for thought, namely, “to stop letting common sense pullulate with free-floating incoherencies the way it does now and force democratic nonsignificance to stand trial in the court of reason” (FID, 59). It becomes a matter of rethinking the senses of democracy and of reengaging what is at stake with this term.

The second conviction pursued by Nancy is that it is not a matter of simply understanding democracy, in its traditional exhausted sense, as a political regime among others, but first and foremost as an ontological fact, that is, as will be seen, as an event. Nancy insists principally on this point: democracy is not, first and foremost, a political form. It must rather be approached in its ontological scope (Nancy at times uses the term *metaphysical*). As he states in *The Truth of Democracy*: “Democracy is first of all a metaphysics and only afterwards a politics” (TD, 34). Therein lies no doubt the significance of the expression chosen by Nancy, the “truth of democracy”: “The truth of democracy is the following: it is not, as it was for the ancients, one political form among others. It is not a political form at all, or else, at the very least, it is not *first of all* a political form” (TD, 32). I follow this twisting free of democracy from the political and the opening of the possibility of grasping it as an event.

In addition to the fact that this twisting free would also require us to reengage the senses of the political (*le politique*) as such (which designates coexistence as such while “politics” [*la politique*] refers to the forms of the state), it also indicates from the outset that democracy, as Nancy put it in a recent interview, “is at once political and more than political, or better beyond-the-political [*outre-politique*].”³³ Democracy exceeds politics. Everything may go through politics but does not originate or end there. The expression “everything is political,” with its implicit reference to totality, is for Nancy a fascistic or totalitarian formulation. The “with” of democracy cannot be enframed within a politics. What Nancy gestures toward here—in addition to a delimitation of the political through which, precisely, “not everything is political” (TD, 50)—is what he attempts to develop in *The Truth of Democracy*, namely approaching democracy, not as a political form or regime, but as an *event*. Indeed, democracy is characterized as a power of imagining, of invention, without subject, mastery, or even identity in a given form, which allows Nancy to draw a contrast between democracy and the political (TD, 29–30). Democracy represents “a sort of principal going beyond of the political” (TD, 29), even though this going beyond can only

occur by starting from the *polis* and its institutions. In turn, the political can then be reengaged for itself from this excess so that “politics as a whole must be remobilized from elsewhere” (TD, 29).

Now, democracy is not only in excess of the political, it is also in excess of *itself*, that is, of its own idea, form, or concept, precisely to the extent that it is first of all an event, which can only exceed its own definition. As with Hannah Arendt, an event always exceeds its concept. This is why democracy is not a political form: as an event, it necessarily exceeds any established form or figure. Therein lies what Nancy calls the “inadequacy” of democracy, an inadequacy with respect to itself apparent in the disappointment expressed in May 1968 about the shortcomings of democracy: May 1968 revealed such ontological inadequacy or incompleteness, the fact that democracy always falls short of itself and of its possibilities, nonetheless opening the space and perspective of a perfectibility. In a 2007 interview, Nancy referred to Derrida’s “democracy to come” in a perspective that combines the eventful character of democracy with its incompleteness and perfectibility: “In Derrida the to come, the *à venir*, is always strictly opposed to the future, to *l’avenir*, that is, to the present-future that is projected, represented, given in advance as an aim and as a possible occurrence.”³⁴ The “to come” or *à venir* designates what “is essentially and always in the coming, of what has never come or come about, come down and made itself available” (PC, 431). Therefore, if democracy is already given, “made, confected [*faite*], established, then one will no longer be able to say that democracy is to be improved; but if one says that it has not been perfected [*parfaite*], then it must be understood that its essence perhaps eludes all representable, anticipatable, and realizable perfection—not because it would be a utopia but because its essence is the very tension of an exigency that is not related to a realization. And yet it is not a question here of renouncing real struggles or actual transformations, far from it!” (PC, 431). Derrida had indeed stressed in *Rogues* that democracy is “a concept that is inadequate to itself.”³⁵ He even added in *Paper Machine* that “any democracy is always influenced by the recognition of not being adequate to its model” (PM, 139). This inadequacy is the indication of the “to come” of democracy, what Derrida calls its messianic structure. In *Specters of Marx*, he writes that “this failure and this gap [between fact and ideal essence] also characterize, *a priori* and by definition, all democracies, including the oldest and most stable of so-called Western democracies. At stake here is the very concept of democracy as concept of a promise that can only arise in such a *diastema* (failure, inadequation, disjunction, disadjustment, being ‘out of joint’). That is why I always propose to speak of a democracy *to come*, not of a *future* democracy in the future present, not even of a regulating idea, in the Kantian sense, or of a utopia—at least to the extent that their inaccessibility would still retain the temporal form of a *future present*, of a future modality of the *living present*” (SM, 81). He then elaborates the notion of a messianism without religion

and without messiah, “without content and without identifiable messiah” (SM, 33), echoing what Heidegger said of an essential “waiting” that has no object,³⁶ as pure opening of the space of the to come and the opening to the to come.³⁷ Waiting is not the awaiting for something, but the opening of the open. That is the sense of such messianism without content, the sheer opening of the to come. The to come of democracy and of the event is always in excess of the actuality of forms: “To this extent, the effectivity or actuality of the democratic promise, like that of the communist promise, will always keep within it, and it must do so, this absolutely undetermined messianic hope at its heart, this eschatological relation to the to-come of an event *and* of a singularity, of an alterity that cannot be anticipated” (SM, 81). Messianicity, or the messianic (as Derrida explains, “We prefer to say *messianic* rather than *messianism*, so as to designate a structure of experience rather than a religion,” SM, 210–211), designates the pure structure of the event to come as absolute alterity. The messianic designates the structure of the event; it “trembles on the edge of this event” (SM, 213). The fact that democracy is inadequate to its concept, that it is irreducible to a conceptual form, indeed *to its own idea*, that it is as it were spaced from itself, not only opens the space of what Derrida calls an “infinite (and essentially aporetic) perfectibility” (PM, 139), but it also is referred by Derrida to a self-*différance* at play. In *Rogues* he states: “Democracy is what it is only in the *différance* by which it defers itself and differs from itself. It is what it is only by spacing itself beyond being and even beyond ontological difference; it is (without being) equal and proper to itself only insofar as it is inadequate and improper, at the same time behind and ahead of itself, behind and ahead of the Sameness and Oneness of itself” (R, 38). Derrida continues this passage by pointing out that democracy “is thus interminable in its incompleteness beyond all determinate forms of incompleteness” (R, 38). I argue that such incompleteness or inadequation—indeed *différance*—must be thought from the eventful character of democracy: democracy is inadequate to itself because, in its very happening, in its very coming, it is always other than itself: democracy is always incomplete and inadequate to itself in the sense of the incalculability of the event. Incalculable in its happening, democracy “cannot be, by essence, determined or defined” (TD, 16). In fact, the form itself always presupposes the event of its *formation* (and deformation) as the form “only draws its force and its form to the dynamics of formation-deformation that always include the risks of monstrosities, of translations.”³⁸

Of what is democracy the event? Democracy, taken as power and as sovereignty of the *demos*, must in fact be rethought *in its truth* from the ontological condition of being-with and in terms of it: as noted prior, Nancy seeks to understand democracy first as an ontological fact. This is why, as he explains in “Être-avec et Démocratie,” “in order to truly understand the nature of this power and therefore of the political nature of democracy, it is necessary first to consider

its existential or ontological stakes.” And what are those ontological stakes? Democracy corresponds to an “anthropological and metaphysical mutation: it promotes the ‘with,’ which is not a simple equality but the sharing out of sense.”³⁹ If the “people,” the *demos*, is sovereign, it is in the sense that it shares out sense and that there is no principle above or outside of this “with.” To that extent, the power of the people becomes rethought as sharing out of being, as dis-position of singular beings. “Democracy as power of the people signifies the power of all insofar as they are together, that is to say, with one another (*les uns avec les autres*). It is not the power of all as power of anyone or of the whole mass over a simple juxtaposition of dispersed individuals. It is a power that presupposes, not a dispersion held under the authority of a principle or of a gathering force, but the dis-position of juxta-position. That means both a disposition that does not include any hierarchy or subordination and a juxtaposition in an existential sense as a sharing of the sense of being” (EAD). Democracy is hence ultimately the sharing of sense, or the event of coexistence, an existence that is not ruled from above by some transcendent principle. Democracy expresses the immanence of sense to itself: it “names a regime of immanence of sense—immanence to the people, immanence to the totality of beings, immanence to the world” (EAD). Modern democracy is much more than just another political regime; it is an anthropological and metaphysical mutation and a genuine revolution in the being of humanity. “We are talking here about a mutation of culture and civilization so profound that it attains the same anthropological proportions as the technological and economic mutations that have come along with it. That’s why Rousseau’s contract doesn’t just institute a body politic, it produces mankind *itself*, the humanity of mankind” (FID, 60). Democracy engages not only the human being as a political figure, as a “citizen,” but as such and as a whole: “modern democracy does engage, absolutely and ontologically the human being and not just the ‘citizen’” (FID, 60). It is to that extent democracy is not simply a political *form*, but rather an *event*, the event of coexistence.

Never has this irreducibility of what Nancy calls the “*spirit* of democracy” (“‘democracy’ is *spirit* before being a political and social form, institution, or regime,” TD, 15) to any order, form, or political regime, indeed any political party or ideology, been as manifest as during the events of May 1968, the celebration of which was the occasion for Nancy’s short but dense essay *The Truth of Democracy*. It is significant that it was a reflection on such events—indeed on their very eventfulness—that gave Nancy the occasion to develop an original analysis of democracy, of what democracy means, and of what remains to be thought with that term. Nancy situates his reflection in the context of the 2008 celebration in France of the fortieth anniversary of the events of May 1968. More precisely, his essay arose out of a polemic with an (in)famous statement by then newly elected French president Nicolas Sarkozy, who had declared that one should “liquidate”

the heritage of May 1968, to be done with May 1968 and bury it along with other misfortunes of history. Against such a declared intent, Nancy on the contrary sought to understand May 1968 as that moment when the very essence—*truth*—of democracy came to light and began to be articulated. As he writes in his introductory comments, in the movement of May 1968, it “was a questioning of the very truth of democracy that was ventured” (TD, preface). Nancy describes the ambition of his book as an attempt to “clarify and help develop that first venture” (TD, preface). Instead of a “liquidation” of the legacy of May 1968 (perhaps the effort to close what was opened there), I here attempt to approach this event as still to come, a democracy to come in excess of its traditional forms, and perhaps as the very incalculable event of the future, that is, the “to come.”

As suggested prior, the very title, the *truth* of democracy, already indicates that democracy is to be thought away from received representations and, indeed, away from the very regime of representation. Democracy instead designates an event exceeding norms, laws, and established or given forms. In its truth, democracy cannot be enframed within the horizon of the possibilities that remain “linked to an organized if not organic action, to a planning process or prospective” (TD, 5–6) characteristic of the very form of the state. Democracy exceeds the representations of the predictions of an organized world precisely to the extent that it is “to come,” in excess of representation. Indeed, “the future is precisely what exceeds representation” (CW, 50). It is such an excess of the “to come” of the future that manifested itself in May 1968, revealing that democracy, in an essential way, is not a present state but demands to be *invented*. “Sixty-eight was the first irruption of the demand for such a reinvention” (TD, 8). This eventfulness is further described in terms of Nietzsche’s transvaluation of all values, for what is at stake in this rethinking of democracy as invention is an exit out of nihilism. For Nancy, overcoming nihilism is tantamount to overcoming the regime of representation, of “world-views” or “word pictures” and of the “theoretical paradigm” that implies the closure of a horizon. As we begin to “clear a path for the way out of nihilism,” we are also exiting the regime of representation: “In truth, we were in the process of displacing the entire regime of thought that allowed for the confrontation of opinions. For we were exiting not only the time of ‘conceptions,’ ‘visions,’ or ‘images’ of the world [*Weltbilder*] but the general regime in which a vision understood as a theoretical paradigm implied the sketching out of certain horizons, the determination of goals [*visées*] and an operative fore-sight [*pré-vision*]” (TD, 9). The event of democracy will always escape and exceed anticipation and foresight, any horizon of expectation.

To the paradigm of the establishment of pregiven forms (such as the motifs of progress, rights, reason, etc.), one is led to the notion of an exposure to an incalculable, that of the event. All these notions, “man,” “humanism,” but also “community,” “communism,” “sense,” and so on, must be exposed to the “going

beyond” of an excess: exposed “to a going beyond in principle: to that which no prediction or foresight [*prévision*] is able to exhaust insofar as it engages an infinity in actuality” (TD, 11). This is of course what May 1968 revealed: the subversive character of the event with respect to any posited forms of the state or even ideologies or political organizations. May 1968, “instead of developing and advancing visions and previsions, predictions and forecasts, models and forms,” was “given to greeting the present of an irruption or disruption that introduced no new figure, no agency, or authority” (TD, 14). Indeed, democracy as exposure and event supposes as well that there is no subject that masters such a process. One cannot “presuppose . . . a subject that is master of its representations, volitions, and decisions” (TD, 11). The event exceeds the mastery of the subject, which finds itself, as subject, “already overwhelmed by events [*dépassé par les événements*]” (TD, 11, trans. modified). This is the sense of Nancy’s often-repeated references to Pascal’s saying, “Man infinitely transcends man” (*l’homme passe infiniment l’homme*). The figure of the human is not given and cannot be encapsulated in a form. The subject, instead of being assured of itself in a self-enclosure, is instead open to that excess . . . of itself.

Democracy, understood as the coexistence or the being-in-common of singular existences, cannot be grounded in the form of a pregiven subjectivity. In fact, democracy cannot be grounded: it manifests a radical lack of foundation. The ontological *fact* of democracy (and the truth of democracy is, first, precisely, that democracy is a *fact*) is without foundation or substrate. This must be understood from the perspective of Nancy’s understanding of being: being is a pure fact, that is, not derived from any prior principle or substance. It is important, Nancy argues, to approach this “fact-ness” of being without referring it to any founding cause. The fact of existence is without ground, without reason.⁴⁰ The existence of the world as shared must be distinguished from the motif of representation and instead approached as an excess. An absence of principle affects the event of existence. Hence the notion of an “an-archic” democracy: there is no model and no principle for it as it is no longer reduced to or adjusted to a representation or to a principle. The very word *democracy* seems to represent an internal barrier to the possibility of a foundational principle. “Indeed, I would go so far as to say that democracy essentially implies an element of *anarchy*. . . . There is no ‘demarchy,’ no principle of foundation in ‘the people,’ only the oxymoron or paradox of a principle lacking a principate. That is why the *right* or *law* the democratic institution generates has no real existence other than its own unceasing and active relationship to its own lack of foundation” (FID, 65–66). One must speak then of the “without-reason” or groundlessness of democratic existence. Without reason, or including entirely its own reason within itself, away from any request from a principle of sufficient reason, democratic existence is utterly groundless and to that extent sovereign.

This is precisely how Nancy understands Plato's alleged mistrust of democracy, in other words, as a critique of its groundlessness: "Plato blames democracy for not being grounded in truth and therefore illegitimate from the very beginning" (FID, 63). This opens the following alternative: either one seeks to establish democracy on a foundation or else assume its groundlessness as such: "From then on, our history has two alternatives: either politics (with law) is ungrounded and should stay that way or else it seeks to endow itself with a ground or foundation, a 'sufficient reason' à la Leibniz" (FID, 63). For Nancy, the latter option can only lead to violence and oppression and "unfailing turns the shared heavenly assumption it proclaims into domination and oppression" (FID, 63). What grounds democracy is an absence, and this absence of ground also implies the lack of a human nature. "Democracy, as a species to the genus politics, is incapable of being grounded in a transcendent principle. So the only thing that grounds or founds democracy is an absence: the absence of any human nature" (FID, 66). In fact, one should speak here of a *denaturation*: "There is something we really should get straight once and for all, since its theoretical basis and consequences are well known: not only is there no such thing as 'human nature,' but 'humankind' [*l'homme*] is virtually incommensurable with anything you could call a 'nature' (an autonomous and self-finalized order), because the only characteristics it has are those of a subject without a 'nature' or one that far outstrips anything we could call 'natural'—in a certain sense (either pernicious or felicitous depending on one's point of view) the subject of a *denaturation*" (FID, 66). There is no reason, no substrate, and no subject subtending democracy as the event of coexistence.

Paradoxically, as just alluded to, the sovereignty of democracy lies in the very absence of a masterful subject directing its process. Indeed, Nancy wants to think a sovereignty that is essentially distinct from mastery or power. The sovereignty that Nancy speaks about is not another form of domination by which a masterful subject posits its law, not a self-founding sovereignty, "since it is no longer a matter of founding," but rather "the only form of possible 'auto'-nomy which precisely no longer has recourse to any heretofore possible forms of a politics" (CW, 93). The "power" of the people arises not out of mastery and agency, but out of a singular withdrawal of essence and principle. In other words, "The same condition that insures that sovereignty receive its concept also deprives it of its power: that is, the absence of superior or foundational authority. For the sovereign authority must be essentially occupied with founding itself or with overcoming itself in order to legislate prior to or in excess of any law" (CW, 103).

What does sovereignty mean? "Sovereignty designates, first, the summit" (CW, 99). As summit, it is also "the most high": "As summit (*summus*, *supremus*), the sovereign is not only elevated: it is the highest. Its name is a *superlative*: literally what raises itself above from below, and what is no longer comparable

or relative. It is no longer in relation, it is *absolutum*" (CW, 97). This implies that nothing, no authority or instituting force, is above it: "nothing either precedes it or supersedes it," so henceforth "sovereignty is the end of any political theology" (CW, 99) and instead is "the creation of an atheological assumption" (CW, 106). Sovereignty, Nancy explains, is grounded "neither in *logos* nor in *mythos*. From birth, democracy, Rousseau's democracy, knew itself to be without foundation" (FID, 62). Sovereignty is never founded. "It would rather be defined by the absence of foundation or presupposition" (CW, 103).

Sovereignty is groundless, subjectless, unsubstantial, a sort of "negative" or antisovereignty, as it were, even a "sovereignty without sovereignty" (CW, 107), outlined "around a hollow." One recalls here Claude Lefort's analyses of democratic power as organized around a central void—a *lieu vide* or empty place—a site of power that no one can claim to embody and that remains empty. "Power" is assigned to a void.⁴¹ Marked by the nothing from which, *ex nihilo*, it creates itself, sovereignty must institute itself. "If sovereignty is not a substance that is given, it is because it is the *reality* that the people must give themselves, insofar as it is not, itself, a substance or a given subject" (CW, 104). Recalling Derrida's analyses in "Force of Law" on the groundless performativity of the law, on the necessity for the law to posit itself insofar as it itself has no law, Nancy stresses that "on that basis, if the sovereign exercises its power, it is entirely on the condition of the 'state of exception' where laws are suspended. The fundamental illegitimacy that is in this case the condition of legitimacy must legitimize itself" (CW, 103). Sovereignty has no foundation and must exercise itself from such groundlessness.

The *exercise* or performativity of sovereignty is not ruled from above or founded in principle. This is the radical sense of "auto-nomy" of democracy: sovereignty is rigorously identical to its exercise for it "has no outside to precede, found, or duplicate" (CW, 99). The sovereignty of democracy is the relation to itself of the sovereign, that is, the people: "the self of a relation to self cannot be given prior to this relation itself, since it is the relation that makes the self (*self* means *to self* and there is no case in which there is a subject of *self*). The sovereign does not find a sovereignty that is given: he must constitute it and thus constitute himself as sovereign" (CW, 99–100). The sovereignty of democracy is subjectless precisely to the extent that the people is the subject of itself, a sheer relation-to-itself, and—therein lies its eventfulness—an invention of itself: "A people are always their own invention. But it can also invent itself by giving itself a sovereign and by giving itself *to* a sovereign or even by giving the sovereignty to itself. In each case the people determine themselves differently, and determine the very sense of the word *people* differently: assembled people, subjected people, insurgent people—or rather: people as a body, people as a group, people in secession. Constituting sovereignty, alienating sovereignty, revolutionary sovereignty" (CW, 104).

Ultimately, sovereignty points to a “nothing.” “Sovereignty turns out strictly to be that *nothing* itself” (CW, 102), writes Nancy (referring to Bataille’s expression that “sovereignty is NOTHING”), indicating that sovereignty is nothing but its very exercise. It is also the condition of its self-relation. The sovereign is the existent who depends on nothing, neither on a finality nor on a subjection. “Dependent on nothing, it is entirely delivered over to itself, insofar as precisely, the ‘itself’ neither precedes nor founds it, but is the *nothing*, the very thing from which it is suspended” (CW, 103). Democracy is assigned to an atheological nothing and “requires . . . that the *nothing*—since there is no other world—be taken absolutely seriously” (TD, 55, n. 10). That nothing is what we have in common, a nothing that it is a matter of sharing in democratic existence. This is why Nancy explains that if the people are sovereign, it is in the sense of taking responsibility for that nothing and lack of foundation. “The democratic *kratein*, the power of the people, is first of all the power to foil the *archē* and then to take responsibility, all together and each individually, for the infinite opening that is thereby brought to light” (TD, 31). Such sovereignty marks the absence of any transcendent author or subject in coexistence, the withdrawal of all idols. Democracy is “an-archy itself”: “Sovereignty is not located in any person; it has no figure, no contour; it cannot be erected into any monument. It is simply the supreme. With nothing above. Neither God nor master. In this sense, democracy equals anarchy” (TD, 31). The power of the people becomes the nothing shared by all (and each). “What then is the all-powerfulness of the people? This is the question. And perhaps it is absolutely necessary for democracy to be able to envisage this question while maintaining the principle of the *nothing* of sovereignty. Being nothing, or being founded on nothing, does not mean being powerless [*ne rien pouvoir*]: it means to found and measure power by that *nothing* which is the *very thing of the reality* of the people: its nature as non-foundational, non-transcendent (at least in the usual sense), non-sacred, non-natural etc. *Res publica, summa res—nihil*” (CW, 104).

The ungrounded event of democracy unfolds in a specific modality of temporalization. Nancy describes it as a “disjunction rather than continuity, as secession rather than succession” (TD, 13), a time that is less *chronos* than *kairos*, “less duration and succession than opportunity and encounter, an adventing without advent” (TD, 16). Derrida had connected the event as such with the revolutionary,⁴² and Nancy assumes the Derridean understanding of the event as break, rupture, disruption, and the interruption of an absolute unpredictable arrival.⁴³ The event, and the event of democracy, breaks the very thread of the possible, the continuous fabric of time itself, by interrupting linear time and succession (the *order* of time) in an accidental arrival, a hiatus from which, in turn, another time happens. The time of democracy, and of the event, is the revolutionary moment itself as interruption/production of temporality. In fact, the very groundlessness of democracy calls for revolution, a “permanent revolution,” as it were, Nancy

engaging democracy in terms of what he calls a “politics without foundation” or even a “politics in a State of permanent revolution” (FID, 64): “Democracy comes right out and demands a *revolution*: a shift in the very basis of politics, frank acceptance of the absence of foundation” (FID, 63). At the same time, it suspends revolution in an oscillation between the insurrectional moment and “the hardening into place of the revolutionary State.” (The word *state*, Nancy reminds us, literally means that which is established, guaranteed, and thus supposedly grounded in truth). Democracy reveals the excess of a pure event, founded on nothing, outside representation, escaping all horizons of calculability (in opposition to the logic of economic and technological globalization).

The spirit or truth of democracy is the presence of the incalculable preventing the closure of a project of mastery—which Nancy calls the Capital—interrupting the demands for a full and complete technological exploitation of all resources. Giving thought to this unpredictable arrival, Nancy speaks of a moment of “messianic inspiration” (rather than messianism, even without a messiah) in the events of May 1968, in the sense in which, instead of proposing new visions, directions, and objectives, it welcomed the irruption of the new, still without a figure. Indeed, as Nancy stresses, “democracy has no figure. Better, it is by essence not figural” (TD, 27, modified). No (given) figure—that is, also, with no identity—but the opening of a proliferation of figures, “figures affirmed, invented, created, imagined, and so on” (TD, 26); in short, the renouncing of identification for the sake of a multiplicity of identities: a proliferation of identities shared out in the world. No figure, but the task of sketching a configuration of a common space. Leaving the singular identity for the singular plurality of identities. The renunciation of the One opens the plurality of singularities: “The renunciation of every principal form of identification—whether it be borne by the image of a King, a Father, a God, a Nation, a republic, a People, a Man, or a Humanity, or even a Democracy—does not contradict, indeed quite the contrary, the exigency of identification in the sense of the possibility for each and every one to identify him or herself (or as people like to say today ‘to take up a subject position’) as having a place, a role, and a value—and inestimable value—in being together” (TD, 27). To that extent, what is called “the good life” consists precisely in not being determined “in any way by any figure or under any concept,” not even by the concept of the *polis*, but in a certain exposed and nonfigural being-with.

Indeed, what democracy manifests, beyond any figures, is the exposure to the incalculable event of our being-in-common. In its truth or spirit (“spirit” in the literal sense of a breath and an inspiration), democracy is not a form or a regime but an exposure, a shared exposure: “Democracy means that neither death nor life has any value in and of itself, but that value comes only from shared existence insofar as it exposes itself to its absence of ultimate of sense as its true—and infinite—sense of being” (TD, 31). In chapter 7 of *The Truth of Democracy*, titled

"The Sharing (Out) of the Incalculable," democracy is described as the very opening of our being-in-common, that is, once again, not an established political form ("the share of the sharing (out) of the incalculable . . . exceeds politics," TD, 17), but as an event and also as the very condition of our existence-in-common. This is why, as Nancy reminds us, it was no accident that in May 1968 the desire for democracy took the form of a call to community, to being-together, indeed to communism, if it is the case that communism means we are in common. What was at stake was the "true possibility of being *all together, all and each one of among all*" (TD, 14). This is why Nancy insists: "It has to be repeated yet again: it is not by chance that the words *communism* and *socialism* came to bear, after undergoing all kinds of distortions, the exigency and fervor that the word *democracy* itself was unable or was no longer able to nourish" (TD, 14). Indeed, in "Finite and Infinite Democracy," Nancy goes as far as to state that the deepest desire of democracy is communism, a word that significantly first appeared at the end of the eighteenth century⁴⁴ and was contemporary with Rousseau's work: "In this sense, the true name that democracy desires, the one it has in fact engendered and borne as its horizon for some one hundred and fifty years, is the name communism" (FID, 87). For Nancy, communism carries the desire for community, against the state (the very term *soviet*—council—implied a contestation of the state), and it is the "expression of society's drive to be more than a society—to be a *community* with a symbolic truth of its own. That was the idea behind the word, if you can even call it an idea; it certainly wasn't a concept in the strict sense, more of an urge or impulse of thought impelling democracy to interrogate its own essence and ultimate purpose" (FID, 68).

This being-together cannot, however, be taken as commonality under some regime of equivalence. Democracy is not tantamount to a principle of equality (or it is an equality but in the sense of an equality of singularities, the equality of the "each" in their exposure to one another: each one unique, each one equally in his or her absolute singular exception, each one incommensurable so that "strict equality is the regime where these incommensurables are shared out," TD, 25), but rather must be determined in terms of a sharing, which means a sharing of plurality and differences. It is matter of thinking the common and coexistence while giving its rights to the singular event of difference, that is, to *non-equivalence* (which is not the same as inequality!⁴⁵) "The sphere of the common is not unique: it comprises multiple approaches to the order of meaning—each of them itself multiple, as in the diversity of the arts, thought, desire, the affects, and so on. What 'democracy' signifies here is the admission—without any heavenly assumption—of all these diversities to a 'community' which does not unify them, but, on the contrary, deploys their multiplicity, and with it the infinite of which they constitute the numberless and unfinalizable forms" (FID, 72). The space of sharing is never for Nancy equivalent to the common or the identical,

but rather is the coexposure of singularities. It is the space of singularities and differences. In an important gesture, Nancy breaks with this understanding of democracy in terms of what Marx called “general equivalence.” Democracy itself can even become, Nancy warns, “the name of an equivalence even more general than the one Marx spoke of,” namely a regime in which “ends, means, values, senses, actions, works, persons” (TD, 24) are all interchangeable. This is why Nancy, against such a regime of “general equivalence,” proposes a democracy of nonequivalence. In fact, democracy must be associated with “what must remain diverse, indeed divergent, multiple, even heterogeneous” (TD, 21). Against a democratism of indistinction, where “everything and everyone would be on the same footing and at the same level,” Nancy proclaims that “the democratic exigency confronts us with the task of distinction” (TD, 22). This is what would constitute a way out of nihilism if it is the case that nihilism represents a “nullification of distinctions, that is, the nullification of senses or values.” In fact, sense is constituted from distinctions, from the distinction of one sense from the other, so that “one value is essentially non-equivalent to any other.”

General equivalence is the symptom of a globalized and hence unified complex in which no local events can avoid being propagated to the rest of the world. This globalized complexity, writes Nancy in *After Fukushima*, is such that (the very distinction between nature and technics is no longer operative here) “natural catastrophes are no longer separable from their technological, economic and political implications or repercussions.”⁴⁶ For Nancy, this interconnection of phenomena is governed by a logic of economic profit, that is, by *money*. “Money,” he writes, “is what Marx called ‘general equivalence’” (AF, 16), and this system of equivalence—with its convergence of global capitalism and technological development—absorbs all domains of existence and practices: “the value of any value is equivalence” (AF, 16). In the end, it is that very equivalence “which is catastrophic” (AF, 17). To that extent, it is our own human existence, ruled by this principle, that becomes catastrophic, that is, from its Greek etymology of *katastrophē*—from *kata* (“down”) and *strephein* (“turn”)—marked by overturning, reversal, and collapse. Far from any possibility of otherworldly salvation, we are, in Nancy’s words, abandoned or “exposed to a catastrophe of sense” (AF, 20). It is a matter of thinking this exposure and what happens to us from it or “after” it. To escape this destruction, one should not project another future, but rather should remain with and attend to a *present*. This is not the present of immediacy, but the present of an approach, of a coming into presence, and in this sense the *exact opposite*, Nancy insists (AF, 64), of general equivalence. It would be a present that welcomes and makes room for the nonequivalence of all singularities.

It is a matter of an attention and respect for singularity as such, an esteem that would be the contrary of an “estimation,” an esteem that would go toward the priceless, the *inestimable*. “Thus we propose a hypothesis with respect to an

internal displacement of technology and capital that would make an inversion of signs possible: the insignificant equivalence reversed into an egalitarian, singular and common significance. The ‘production of value’ becomes the ‘creation of meaning’” (CW, 49). Such a democracy of the “singular plural,” echoing Nancy’s previous work on *Being Singular Plural*, would allow for an overcoming of nihilism, which is always a negation of differences, values, and sense. This is why Nancy, admitting the oxymoronic nature of the expression, calls for a Nietzschean democracy (TD, 22, and on page 33, where Nancy suggests another oxymoron, that of “egalitarian aristocracy”), that is, a democracy wed to difference and singularity and not to the reign of the common and the indistinct. Another Nietzschean resonance in this thinking of democracy lies in how Nancy understands democracy as a space devoid of any reference to a suprasensible or supra-historical authority: “Democracy means the conditions under which government and organization are de facto possible in the absence of any transcendent regulating principle,” he writes in “Finite and Infinite Democracy” (FID, 59). In *The Truth of Democracy*, Nancy reiterates that democracy stands for “the name of a regime of sense whose truth cannot be subsumed under any ordering agency, whether religious, political, scientific, or aesthetic” (TD, 33). An “an-archic” democracy, as it were, which Nancy again refers to Nietzsche, insofar as democracy is “that which wholly engages ‘man’ at the risk and chance of ‘himself,’ as ‘dancer over the abyss,’ to put it in a paradoxically and deliberately Nietzschean way” (TD, 33).

As noted, Nancy insists that democracy is not first and foremost a political form, but rather an ontological and anthropological fact. That is because the *demos* of democracy, the people, is precisely not first a political notion, but an ontological reality. As he explains in “Être-avec et Démocratie,” “The people is thus not first a political entity. It is an anthropological (or ontological) reality that answers to the demand of giving meaning to areas of formation and circulation (what we call ‘languages,’ ‘cultures,’ all these forms of sharing of that insensible infinite which we give ourselves to feel).” What kind of reality is the people? Nancy clearly seeks to separate the term *the people* from any reference to a unity, a unified totality. At the beginning of *The Confronted Community*, Nancy recalled how in 1983, Jean-Christophe Bailly had suggested “Community, number” as a title for an issue of a forthcoming journal. Nancy described how struck he was by the elliptic elegance, precision, and aptness of such title and how the very notion of “number” opened the reflection onto the thematics of plurality and consequently onto another understanding of the people. “Number,” he explained, “served as a sudden reminder of the obviousness not only of the substantial multiplication of the world’s population, but, along with that plain fact—as its effect or as its qualitative corollary—of the obviousness of a *multiplicity escaping unitary assumptions*, of a multiplicity multiplying its differences, dispersing itself in small groups, indeed in individuals, in multitudes or in populations.”⁴⁷ *People* would no longer point to the group, or the whole, but

to an irreducible plurality. *Number* here transforms and displaces the traditional references to *crowds*, *masses*, and *people*. Away from the totalitarian appeals to such crowds or classes, Bailly's formulation allowed one to grasp the problem of the people no longer as a question of good governance, no longer as a political issue, but as an ontological question bearing on the sense of community and being-with: "what, then, is community if number becomes the unique phenomenon by which it is known—even the thing in itself—and if there remains no 'communism' or 'socialism' of any kind, either national or international, underpinning the least figure of community nor even the least form, the slightest identifiable schema of community?" (CC, 28). Ultimately, *number* shifts the emphasis from the common or the One to the plural, and *people(s)* now designate an irreducible plurality rather than one unified entity. "And what, then, is number if its multiplicity no longer counts as a mass awaiting its *mise en forme* (formation, conformation, information), but rather counts, all in all, for its own sake, within a dispersal we wouldn't know whether to name dissemination (seminal exuberance) or crumbling (sterile pulverisation)?" (CC, 28). Between the motifs of the common, the together, and the numerous, Nancy seeks to reveal a sense of the people that preserves a certain plurality, and therefore also singularity as well (since singularities are what is plural), which implies that it preserves a certain resistance of singularity to plurality and of plurality to singularity: "neither communion nor atomisation, just the sharing and sharing out of a space, at most a contact: a being-together without assemblage" (CC, 32).

Such being-together without assemblage can best be expressed by the French plural *les gens* rather than by the singular *le peuple*. One sense of *the people* gives way to another, one that retains the plurality of singular beings. In *Being Singular Plural*, Nancy refers to the expression "*les gens sont bizarres*" ("people are strange") to convey the singularities of *les gens* rather than the anonymity of a unified group, *le peuple*. This is why Nancy takes issue with Heidegger's description of *das Man*, "the They" or "the One," for such a conception of being-with misses the singularity of peoples. "The people is not the Heideggerian 'One.' The word 'people' does not say exactly the same thing as the Heideggerian 'One,' even if it is partly a mode of it," he explains (BSP, 6). Indeed, the "one" designates an anonymity, in which there is no distinction. Certainly, for Heidegger, the "one" responds to the question who, but it is not clear precisely "who" gives this response and who in that way distinguishes him- or herself from the One: "Heidegger understood that 'one' would only be said as a response to the question 'who?' put to the subject of *Dasein*, but he does not pose the other inevitable question that must be asked in order to discover *who* gives this response and who, in responding like this, removes himself or has a tendency to remove himself. As a result, he risks neglecting the fact that there is no pure and simple 'one,' no 'one' in which 'properly existing' existence [*l'existant* 'proprement existant'] is, from the start, purely and simply immersed" (BSP, 7).

For Nancy there is never a pure and simple “one,” and *people* “clearly designates the mode of ‘one’ by which ‘I’ remove myself, to the point of appearing to forget or neglect the fact that I myself am part of ‘people.’” Yet, Nancy insists, “this setting apart [*mise à l’écart*] does not occur without the recognition of identity” (BSP, 7). *People* designates an existence that is only as numerous, dispersed, and as disseminated singularities: it is always *these peoples*, *this particular person*, and so on. *Peoples* are always singular, never an anonymous indistinction: “‘People’ clearly states that we are all precisely *people*, that is, indistinctly persons, humans, all of a common ‘kind,’ but of a kind that has its existence only as numerous, dispersed, and indeterminate in its generality. This existence can only be grasped in the paradoxical simultaneity of togetherness (anonymous, confused, and indeed massive) and disseminated singularity (these or those ‘people(s),’ or ‘a guy,’ ‘a girl,’ ‘a kid’)” (BSP, 7). In other words, peoples are “silhouettes,” always singularized, “outlines of voices, patterns of comportment, sketches of affects, not the anonymous chatter of the ‘public domain’” (BSP, 7). Typical or general types, such as ethnic, cultural, social, generational, and others, “do not abolish singular differences; instead, they bring them into relief” (BSP, 8). Further, at the level of singular differences, they are, Nancy writes, not only individual but infraindividual, for it is “never the case that I have met Pierre or Marie per se, but I have met him or her in such and such a ‘form,’ in such and such a ‘state,’ in such and such a ‘mood,’ and so on” (BSP, 8, slightly modified). Existence is always singular and never happens generally.

The expression “people are strange” reveals this singularity of existence. To be a self, to be oneself, is to be a singularity. “From faces to voices, gestures, attitudes, dress, and conduct, whatever the ‘typical’ traits are, everyone distinguishes himself by a sort of sudden and headlong precipitation where the strangeness of a singularity is concentrated. Without this precipitation there would be, quite simply, no ‘someone’” (BSP, 8). Such singularity is by itself plural: *someone* designates the singularity of the person, that is, his or her difference with everybody else. This is why Nancy also takes issue with Heidegger’s negative characterization of the everyday and the conflation of the everyday with the “One.” Nancy explains that Hegel was the first to have seen that thinking must attend to the “grayness of the world.” And the Heideggerian “one” still “assumes an absent, lost, or far away ‘grandeur’” (BSP, 10). However, truth cannot be the truth of some other-worldly domain, but “can be nothing if not the truth of being in totality, that is, the totality of its ‘ordinariness,’ just as meaning can only be right at [*à même*] existence and nowhere else.” This is why, as Nancy concludes, “the ‘ordinary’ is always exceptional,” not because it is other than ordinary, but because, in its very ordinariness, it remains *singular* and thus exceptional so that, therefore, the exception is the rule: “What we receive most communally as ‘strange’ is that the ordinary itself is originary. With existence laid open in this way and the meaning of the world being what it is, the exception is the rule” (BSP, 10). This is what the

themes of “wonder” of being reveal: not some extraordinary state of existence, but the world itself in its singular plurality. “Themes of ‘wonder’ and the ‘marvel of Being’ are suspect if they refer to an ecstatic mysticism that pretends to escape the world. The theme of scientific curiosity is no less suspect if it boils down to a collector’s preoccupation with rarities. In both cases, desire for the exception presupposes disdain for the ordinary” (BSP, 10).

If the world “always appears [*surgit*] each time according to a decidedly local turn [of events],” if its “unity, its uniqueness, and its totality consist in a combination of this reticulated multiplicity” (BSP, 9), then the everyday must be heard literally as every day, each singular day. Now “Heidegger confuses the everyday with the undifferentiated, the anonymous, and the statistical.” These exist only in reference to differentiated singularity, the singularity “that the everyday already is by itself: each day, each time, day to day.” The everyday manifests a generalized differentiation, a “constantly renewed rupture,” with its “intimate discord, its polymorphy and its polyphony, its relief and its variety” (BSP, 9). Even the repetitiveness of the everyday can only take place because there is first the each day and thus difference as such. Similarly, continues Nancy, peoples (more than “the people”) can be merged only on the basis of a prior distinction and difference: “Likewise ‘people,’ or rather ‘peoples,’ given the irreducible strangeness that constitutes them as such, are themselves primarily the exposing of the singularity according to which existence exists, irreducibly and primarily—and an exposition of singularity” (BSP, 9).

I stress that this exposition of singularities is such that it cannot be enframed in a merely “human” world. The world is not anthropocentric. Nature, Nancy writes, is also strange: “we exist in it in the mode of a constantly renewed singularity, whether the singularity of the diversity and disparity of our senses or that of the disconcerting profusion of nature’s species or its various metamorphoses into ‘technology.’ Then again, we say ‘strange,’ ‘odd,’ ‘curious,’ ‘disconcerting’ *about* all of being” (BSP, 10). Peoples testify to this plurality of singularities, not to a unified human whole, not to a given signified, but consist in a being of exposure.

As noted, Nancy claims that democracy is not a political regime among others and that therefore its “exact” or “correct” form cannot be determined or even achieved: democracy is an openness, always inadequate to its concept or to any form, as it happens, outside conceptuality, and thus remains to be *invented* in an originary praxis. Each time, we must reinvent it, reenter the scene anew. It is thus not insignificant that Nancy defines democracy, in “Finite and Infinite Democracy,” as the “conditions of possible *practices* of government and organization [*les conditions des pratiques possibles de gouvernement et d’organisation*], in the absence of any transcendent regulating principle” (FID, 59, trans. modified, emphasis mine). Because of its radical lack of foundation, democracy can only become an event to be engaged in a praxis.⁴⁸ As Jacques Rancière emphasized in *Hatred of Democracy*, democracy only consists of its practice, what Nancy calls

its exercise: "Democracy is as bare in its relation to the power of wealth as it is to the power of kinship that today comes to assist and to rival it. It is not based on any nature of things nor guaranteed by any institutional form. It is not borne along by any historical necessity and does not bear any. It is only entrusted to the constancy of its specific acts."⁴⁹ Democracy is a taking responsibility for that very lack of foundation and a *decision* for being-in-common. "That is why the *right* or *law* the democratic institution generates has no real existence other than its own unceasing and active relationship to its own lack of foundation" (FID, 66). In fact, democracy names our condition as that of an existence without basis or subject that must take upon itself its own lack of basis, a sovereignty without support, resting on nothing, "a dance over the abyss." There lies its eventful character. Democracy is not given a priori, but is a matter of invention and decision. Democratic sovereignty rests on nothing (given), and as such is an exercise of itself, in an original *praxis* of meaning: "meaning is always in *praxis*," writes Nancy (CW, 54). To that extent, democracy is the name for this invention of itself, against the background of an absence of foundation and principle, an atheological existence: "Prior to anything else, democracy is theocracy's 'other.' That makes it the 'other' of law dispensed from on high as well. Law is something it has to invent. It has to invent itself" (FID, 61, trans. modified). Never established—never fulfilled, achieved, or adequate to itself—democracy is to be made and enacted.

Nancy attempts to rethink democracy in terms of our being-in-common, rather than from some pregiven and inadequate theoretical models; no longer a particular political system, but an event, the event of being-with and sharing. This element of sharing is never for Nancy the space of the common or the identical, but rather the intertwining of our singularities and differences. Nancy often stresses that what we share is what we do not share, in other words, our singularities. Ultimately democracy is the sharing of the incalculable event that we are and names the event of a humanity whose being lies only in its exposure, without given ends or principles. "*Democracy* is then the appellation, the utterly inadequate appellation of a humanity that finds itself exposed to the absence of any given end—a heaven, a future—but not less exposed to the infinite for that. Exposed, existing" (FID, 74–75). Exposed, and yet inappropriable, unrepresentable. The *with* as such is not presentable; not "unrepresentable" like some remote or withdrawn presence, but as the inappropriable event of our existences. Not appropriable, but engaging us completely, the event of existence becomes that for which we are, in an absolute sense, engaged. It is this very inappropriability of the event—what he also calls the secret of the event—that Derrida addresses and to which the next chapter will be devoted.

8 The Secret of the Event

AS HAS BECOME apparent in the course of this work, the event has proven to be the distinctive form of experience, the main feature of being. The event permeates every instance of being and existence to the extent that to be means: to happen. And yet, it cannot be appropriated, both resistant to anticipation and even to comprehension, evading the grasp of an understanding. As Derrida writes, the event “belongs to an atemporal temporality, to a duration that cannot be grasped: something one can neither stabilize, establish, *grasp* [*prendre*], *apprehend*, or *comprehend*. Understanding, common sense, and reason cannot seize [*begreifen*], conceive, understand, or mediate it.”¹ The event defies reason and understanding. In fact, Derrida also states provocatively, “The event is what comes and, in coming, comes to surprise me, to surprise and to suspend understanding: the event is first of all *that which* I do not first of all understand. Better, the event is first of all *that* I do not understand. The fact that I do not understand: my incomprehension.”² The event remains inappropriable as it frustrates any attempt to stabilize or crystalize it into some present being, some established identity: an event is never anything that could be presented, never identical to itself. It only *happens*, in the flash of a disjointed, anachronic temporality preventing any identification in a present. The event always manifests an alterity, never coinciding with itself, always introducing a break, a before and after, a temporal hiatus. It has, as it were, the structure of the trace as Derrida describes it: “The trace is not a substance, a present existing thing, but a process that is changing all the time. It can only reinterpret itself and always, finally, it is carried away.”³ The event is both an “arrival” and a “leaving,” a coming into presence and a leaving into absence, always carrying within it the mark of death. The event marks the absence or lack of any substantiality and exposes the inappropriability of existence.

Derrida always insists on this inappropriable character of the event, claiming, for instance, that “the undergoing [*l'épreuve*] of the event, that which in the undergoing or in the ordeal *at once opens itself up to and resists experience*, is, it seems to me, a certain inappropriability of what comes or happens [*ce qui arrive*]” (PTT, 90, trans. slightly modified). That presence of an inappropriable in experience—which Derrida calls a “secret”—is discussed in his essay “Passions,” following the thread of the leitmotif iteration of the expression “*il y a là un secret*” (literally, there is there a secret) or “*il y a là du secret*,” “there is there something secret.” With this expression, Derrida seeks to emphasize that it is a matter of

stressing not “what” the secret would be, but rather *that there is* a secret at all, as if, through this shift of emphasis from the “what” to the “that,” it was a matter of removing from its necessary oblivion the presence of a secret in experience and in the experience of the event. *Il y a* a secret, there is a secret, and its being a secret precisely means we do not know and cannot know *what* it is. If we could, it would no longer be a secret, but a temporarily withdrawn presence or content that in right could always become disclosed. It is a matter, then, of affirming the irreducible existence of a secret, the fact that the secret, precisely in order to be a secret, must remain secret, leaving it, as it were, to its secrecy, to its eventfulness as a secret: “We testify to a secret *that is without content*, without a content separable from its performative experience, from its performative tracing.”⁴ A secret is without content, cannot be known. Derrida stresses that a secret cannot be some knowledge, talent, or expertise available to someone in particular to the exclusion of others. The event, which “is always secret,” exceeds knowledge: “Whenever the event resists being turned into information or into a theoretical utterance, resists being known and made known, the secret is on the scene. An event is always secret, for the reasons that I’ve said; like giving or forgiving it must remain a secret.”⁵ To that extent, the secret is not some unconscious representation that could eventually be brought to light thanks to a psychoanalytical work. The secret is not synonymous with what is private, with the interiority of a self that in certain circumstances (such as confession) could possibly be disclosed publicly: “It is not a deprived interiority that one would have to reveal, confess, announce, that is, to which one would have to respond by accounting for it and thematizing it in broad daylight” (P, 25).

The secret has no content and does not belong to a private subjectivity: it is not what “is always *for me alone*” (GD, 91), as I too am cut off from it. “Let us say, therefore: *There is there something secret* [*il y a là du secret*]. It would not be a matter of an artistic or technical secret reserved for someone—or for several, such as style, ruse, the signature of talent or the mark of a genius, the know-how that is thought to be incommunicable, untransmittable, unteachable, inimitable” (P, 24, modified). The Latin root of the term, *secretum* (from *secernere*, separate, distinct, discerned), designates what is cut off, isolated, withdrawn. The *secretum* designates a separation (*se-cernere*). The secret is not kept by myself, but rather introduces a *separation*, an otherness, within the self. This is why the secret cannot be “some thing, a content that would have to be hidden or kept within oneself,” writes Derrida in *Paper Machine* (PM, 162). The secret does not belong to someone, as one does not own a secret. What sense is there to speak of “my” secret, asks Derrida, of “my” secret self, if I cannot see it, if it is accessible “only to the other, to the wholly other, to God if you wish” (GD, 92)? If, in other words, it is a secret “that I will never reflect on, that I will never know or experience or possess as my own”? One can ask: what sense is there in saying “that a secret *belongs*, that it is proper to or belongs to some ‘one,’ or to some *other* who remains

someone" (GD, 92)? It should perhaps be said that a secret does not belong to anyone, that it simply does not *belong*. This is where Derrida names the "secret of the secret," namely, that the secret has no content and belongs to no one: "It is perhaps there that we find the secret of secrecy, namely, that it is not a matter of knowing and that it is there for no-one" (GA, 92). To say that the secret does not belong means it has no proper place ("A secret doesn't belong, it can never be said to be at home or in its place [*chez soi*]"), Derrida speaking of the "*Unheimlichkeit* of the *Geheimnis*," the uncanniness or not-at-home of the secret, destabilizing the at-home of the *ego cogito*, whether as consciousness or representative intentionality, of the proper self, of the "I," making the "I" *tremble*. "The question of the self: 'who am I?' not in the sense of 'who am I' but 'who is this 'I' that can say 'who'? What is the 'I,' and what becomes of responsibility once the identity of the 'I' trembles *in secret*?" (GD, 92).

The secret does not belong to a self, but it makes the "I" tremble. A secret "always *makes* you tremble. Not simply quiver or shiver, which also happens sometimes, but tremble" (GD, 53). The secret makes the self "tremble," *the whole self*, as "when one trembles all over . . . unsettling everything," as in the case of a *tremblement de terre* (earthquake; literally, earth *trembling*), adds Derrida. The self trembles before the secret event of itself as before "a future that cannot be anticipated; anticipated but unpredictable; *apprehended*, but, and this is why there is a future, apprehended precisely *as* unforeseeable, unpredictable; approached *as* unapproachable" (GD, 54). The self trembles before the im-possible happening of the future: "Even if one thinks one knows what is going to happen, the new instant of that happening remains untouched, still inaccessible, in fact unlivable" (GD, 54, slightly modified). We tremble from being exposed to the shock of the event, to what we can neither see nor foresee, from *not knowing*: the secret "undoes" seeing, foreseeing, and knowing (*voir, prévoir, savoir*). "In the repetition of what still remains unpredictable, we tremble first of all because we don't know from which direction the shock came, whence it was given (whether a good surprise or a bad shock, sometimes a surprise received as a shock); and we tremble from not knowing, in the form of a double secret, whether it is going to continue, start again, insist, be repeated: whether it will, how it will, where, when; and why *this* shock. Hence I tremble because I am still afraid of what already makes me afraid, of what I can neither see nor foresee" (GD, 54). One doesn't know *why* one trembles, writes Derrida, a symptomatology, he adds, which is "*as enigmatic as tears*" (GD, 54) and rebellious to causes.

We tremble before the secret, before the secret of the event, always beyond knowledge. "Most often we neither know what is coming upon us nor see its origin; it therefore remains a secret" (GD, 54). The secret is what exceeds knowing, understanding, an excess within the self that is felt by the self in trembling: I tremble "at what exceeds my seeing and my knowing [*mon voir et mon savoir*] although it concerns the innermost parts of me, right down to my soul, down

to my bone, as we say" (GD, 54). The secret is within me but without me; it is in me but I have no access to it, I am separated from it. It is, Derrida continues, "a secret that I carry, if one can say, *in* me but which is not me, which is thus greater than I and to which I have no access myself." The secret designates a separation, a spacing, that is, an otherness. The secret is an alterity within myself, "*within myself other than myself [en moi autre que moi]*" (GD, 49). Derrida describes this otherness of the self to itself toward the end of *The Gift of Death* as having within myself "a witness that others cannot see, and who is therefore *at the same time other than me and more intimate with me than myself*" (GD, 109). This secret of the self is not *my* secret (for the secret belongs to no one). The secret belongs to no one, but one belongs to the secret, in the sense in which, as one says in French, one would be *au secret*: separated, locked away, locked out if not locked up (as one of the senses of *au secret* is to be imprisoned in solitary confinement without possibility of communication with others), kept apart. There is a secret of the self because the self is *au secret*, separated and locked out from itself, other than itself. "Others are secret because they are other. I am secret, I am *in secret [au secret]*, like any other. A singularity is of its nature in secret" (PM, 162). One belongs to oneself as one belongs to a secret: the self is constituted from the secret. Derrida explains how Patocka was right in speaking of a "mystery or secrecy in the constitution of a *psyche* or of an individual and responsible self." The self is constituted (and divided) in the relationship to an absolute secret and invisibility: "For it is thus that the soul separates itself in recalling itself to itself, and so it becomes individualized, interiorized, becomes its very invisibility" (GD, 15).

The invisibility of the secret, of the event, cannot be an "invisible visible," as when something now invisible is visible in another aspect or can become visible at any instant. The invisible is not "a visible that conceals itself, for example, my hand under the table—my hand is visible as such but I can render it invisible" (GD, 89). The invisibility of the secret is not derivative of the visible, but it is *absolute*: "the absolute sense of invisibility resides rather in the idea of that which has no structure of visibility," writes Derrida (GD, 89). One can distinguish two different senses of the invisible: there is, on the one hand, the "in-visible," the "visible in-visible," that is, the invisible as a visible that I can "keep in secret by keeping it out of sight"; in this sense, the invisible is a visible kept hidden. It is therefore not truly invisible but remains of the order of the visible: "whatever one conceals in this way becomes invisible but remains within the order of visibility; it remains constitutively visible" (GD, 90). For instance, the organs in my body may be invisible, but they clearly are of the order of visibility; their invisibility is only provisional. All these examples belong to the class of phenomena that, although invisible, can become visible: "All that is of the order of the visible in-visible" (GD, 90). On the other hand, there is another invisibility, an "absolute

invisibility" (GD, 90), an absolutely nonvisible, not the invisible as concealed visible, but the invisible as "that which is other than visible," which is not of the order of the visible, that "falls outside of the register of sight." That is the absolute invisibility of the secret, the absolute secret. The respect for the secret, for that invisibility, must also be unconditional and absolute.

For Derrida, the secret is cryptic, but not mystical, not to be revealed by a religion, not a mystery, the content of an esoteric doctrine. The secret does not "conceal itself." The secret is not the hidden and therefore cannot be unveiled. It is not the opposite of manifest presence or its negative counterpart: it simply does not belong to a logic of presence, it is *unpresentable*. This is why it is also radically heterogeneous to the obscure, the nocturnal, "to what can be dissimulated and indeed to what is nonmanifest in general, it cannot be unveiled. It remains inviolable even when one thinks one has revealed it" (P, 26). The secret is heterogeneous to presence as such, as well as to the dialectic of presence-absence. It "exceeds the play of veiling/unveiling, dissimulation/revelation, night/day, forgetting/anamnesis, earth/heaven, etc." (P, 26). Its nonphenomenality is without relation to phenomenality, irreducible to it. It is even irreducible to the names that attempt to designate it: "Certainly, one could speak this secret in other names, whether one finds them or gives them to it. Moreover, this happens at every instant. It remains secret under all names and it is its irreducibility to the very name which makes it secret, even when one *reveals the truth* about it [*fait la vérité à son sujet*] as Augustine put it so originally" (P, 26, modified). No matter how much one can speak of the secret, it will remain "secret, mute, impassive," foreign to any narrative, to any historizing or dialectical appropriation. It is not even "foreign" to speech; rather, it does not answer to speech, it is an absolute nonresponse: "It is no more in speech than foreign to speech. It does not answer to speech, it does not say 'I, the secret,' it does not correspond, it does not answer [*répondre*]: either for itself or to anyone else, before anyone or anything whatsoever" (P, 27). The secret cannot be incorporated into any process, it remains "intractable" (*intraitable*): whether one respects it or not, the secret remains there impassively, at a distance, out of reach: "one cannot not respect it [*on ne peut pas ne pas le respecter*], whether one likes it or not, whether one knows it or not" (P, 27). It is a matter of keeping the secret, of respecting the secret in the sense of holding it in respect, keeping it at a distance, separated, without knowing its ultimate rhyme or reason.

Inappropriate Event

Irreducible, the secret cannot be known or thematized. However, as noted prior, Derrida speaks significantly of its performativity, that is, of its eventfulness. The secret *happens*. And the event, in turn, always harbors a secret, happening

in an expropriative motion. In *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, precisely seeking to radicalize this inappropriability of the event, Derrida explains that the Heideggerian thought of being as event, as *Ereignis*, as “appropriative event,” involves a certain *expropriation*. Going against the grain, one must admit, of many of his own previous interpretations, in which he tended to stress a privilege of the proper in Heidegger’s work, in *Aporias* on the contrary Derrida claims that “the thought of *Ereignis* in Heidegger would be turned not only toward the *appropriation* of the proper [*eigen*] but toward a certain expropriation that Heidegger himself names [*Enteignis*]” (PTT, 90), which recalls here Heidegger’s own words in *Das Ereignis*: “The expropriation points towards what is most proper to the event.”⁶ Derrida posits that an *Enteignis* “always inhabited *Eigentlichkeit*,”⁷ an expropriation that resists either theoretical or practical appropriation. Even if Derrida recognizes that any event necessarily calls for a certain appropriative reception, in all of its various modes, he insists on the fact that “there is no event worthy of its name except insofar as this appropriation falters [*échoue*; literally, fails, runs aground] at some border or frontier” (PTT, 90). In fact, one finds the presence of such an inappropriable in the event of being in all stages of Heidegger’s thought: in the “ruinane” of factual life in the early writings and lecture courses; in the *Uneigentlichkeit* of existence and the *Schuldigsein* of conscience in *Being and Time*; in the thrownness and facticity felt in moods; in the weight of a responsibility assigned to an inappropriable finitude; in an untruth coprimordial with truth; in the concealment that not only accompanies but is indeed harbored in unconcealment; in the withdrawal in the epochal sendings of being; and finally in the irreducible presence of *Enteignis* within *Ereignis* in the later writings and seminars. The appropriative event that *Ereignis* is said to designate includes eminently the expropriation of an *Enteignis*. As Heidegger explains in *On Time and Being*: “Appropriating makes manifest what is proper to it, that Appropriation withdraws what is most fully its own from boundless unconcealment. Thought in terms of Appropriating, this means: in that sense it expropriates itself of itself. Expropriation [*Enteignis*] belongs to Appropriation [*Ereignis*] as such. By this expropriation, Appropriation does not abandon itself—rather it preserves what is its own” (TB, 22–23, trans. slightly modified). Heidegger shows that *Das-ein*’s belongingness to being, to *Ereignis*, happens from a certain expropriative motion, which he calls *Enteignis*. This is what Jean-Luc Nancy notes, writing that “we are coming close to something that Heidegger wanted to name with the triplet, *Er-eignis*, *Ent-eignis*, *Zu-eignis*. That is to say, the appropriating event, which is the deappropriating event, which is also—we might say—the *deviant* or *deliquating* event.”⁸ The proper is no simple possessive appropriation of otherness in an absolute “at-home,” since one’s ownmost is to stand in the uncanniness of be-ing, as Heidegger stresses the irreducible disowning at the

heart of *Ereignis*. Corresponding to the event of *Ereignis* is hence an exposure to the inappropriable that is its “heart” (*Innigkeit*).

There is something inappropriable in the event of being, something than thought cannot grasp: unforeseeable, unpredictable, without horizon and incalculable, the event exceeds thinking. Certainly, one could object that it is possible to “predict” future events and even be at times “successful,” but nonetheless even in the case of successful predictions, the event remains *heterogeneous* to them and never happens following a prediction: it happens *from* itself, unpredictably. This heterogeneity of the event to thought is what accounts for its inappropriability. As if thinking the event could only mean failing to think the event or thinking that failure. But if there is failure, it would be in the sense in which one speaks of words “failing us” in our attempt to say or think what is to be said. Recall Heidegger’s statement in the introduction of *Being and Time* regarding the difficulty of bringing to language the event of being: “With regard to the awkwardness and ‘inelegance’ of expression in the analyses to come, we may remark that it is one thing to give a report in which we tell about *entities*, but another to grasp entities in their *being*. For the latter task we lack not only the words but, above all, the ‘grammar.’”⁹ According to Heidegger, this peculiar “failure” of thought is what accounts for the “interruption” of *Being and Time*, as he explains in the “Letter on Humanism”: “The division in question [the third division of Part One of *Being and Time*] was held back [*zurückgehalten*] because thinking failed in the adequate saying of this turning [*Kehre*] [*weil das Denken im zureichenden Sagen dieser Kehre versagte*] and did not succeed with the help of the language of metaphysics.”¹⁰ Thought fails in saying the event in its inappropriability. As Heidegger put it in *What Is Called Thinking?* “Most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking.”¹¹ We are still not thinking because what must be thought about (*Das zu-Denkende*) turns away from the human being and “withdraws from him.” In fact, being happens by and in withdrawing. Being is the withdrawal, being withdraws (*Entzieht sich*; GA 8, 10/WCT, 8), and from such a withdrawal it calls us . . . to think: “Whatever withdraws, refuses arrival. But withdrawing is not nothing. Withdrawal is an event. In fact, what withdraws may even concern and claim man more essentially than anything present that strikes and touches him [*Was sich entzieht, versagt die Ankunft. Allein—das Sichentziehen ist nicht nichts. Entzug ist Ereignis. Was sich entzieht, kann sogar den Menschen wesentlicher angehen und in den Anspruch nehmen als alles Anwesende, das ihn trifft und betrifft*]” (GA 8, 10/WCT, 9). Heidegger speaks of the event of withdrawal (*Das Ereignis des Entzugs*) as that which is closest to us: “The event of withdrawal could be what is most present in all our present, and so infinitely exceed the actuality of everything actual” (GA 8, 11/WCT, 9). What must be thought about withdraws from us, and yet the event of withdrawal is what makes us think: “What withdraws from us, draws us along

by its very withdrawal, whether or not we become aware of it immediately, or at all" (GA 8, 11/WCT, 9).

It is as if the task and work of thinking could only unfold from a radical incomprehensibility, as if the task of hermeneutics, of interpretation, could only take place against the background of an absolute inappropriability of sense in the happening of the event. This is why Derrida emphasizes that the event, as unpredictable and incalculable coming of the other, always frustrates the demands of sufficient reason. "The coming of the other, the arriving of the arriving one [*l'arrivée de l'arrivant*], is (what) *who arrives* as an unpredictable event," irreducible to the demands of the principle of reason "insofar as it is limited to a 'rendering of reasons' (*reddere rationem*, 'logon didonai')." It is not a matter of complying with the demands of such reason rendering, but instead of "not simply denying or ignoring this unforeseeable and incalculable coming of the other."¹² This is why Derrida rethinks responsibility, no longer as the giving of accounts and reasons, under the authority of the principle of sufficient reason, but as responsiveness to the incalculable arrival of the event. In *For Strasbourg*, Derrida begins by underlining the paradox of being responsible for or of taking responsibility for that which (the event) always happens in excess of our subjectivity: "can one make oneself responsible for something happening, which, as such, as the happening of something (what is commonly called the event), must be unforeseeable, exceed the program, and naturally take by surprise not only the addressee but also the subject to whom or by whom it is supposed to happen? Can one make oneself responsible without neutralizing the eventness [*événementialité*] of the event? Isn't to be responsible for an event to neutralize precisely its irruption as event?"¹³ Does the event, in its unpredictable irruption, not render any sense of responsibility moot? In particular, does it not prevent any establishment of a ground in the form of a justification of an act or decision? Does its very singularity not incapacitate the taking on of a responsibility? As Derrida explains: "another way of putting the same question would be: isn't a decision always unjustifiable? Can one be or not be responsible for an event? And for a singularity, for the singularity of an event?" (FS, 60). The paradox, if not aporia, seems unavoidable: an event is an unpredictable phenomenon, and responsibility seems to imply a reference to authorship, to the ownership of an action: "If I say: okay, I can be responsible for this, I can sign this, that means that I can produce it, that I am capable of producing it, that this event is within my power. It thus does not affect me as an event that would be truly irruptive, unforeseeable, singular, and so on. In other words, between the concept of responsibility and the concept of event, is there not, let's say, a sort of aporia?" (FS, 60).

There is, on the one hand, responsibility in its classical, traditional sense, which designates authorship, decision, freedom, intentionality, and consciousness, and, on the other hand, there is responsibility as responsiveness, as belonging

to the semantics of response and answer. In fact, Derrida considers that any sense of responsibility must be *rooted* in the experience of responding and belong to the domain of responsiveness.¹⁴ Responsibility is first and foremost a response, as its etymological origin, traceable to the Latin *respondere*, betrays. In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida distinguishes three types of responsiveness: there is “to answer for” (*répondre de*); “to respond to” (*répondre à*); and “to answer before” (*répondre devant*). What is significant in this passage is how Derrida gives a priority to the “responding to” as it mobilizes the inscription of an other to whom or to what I have to respond. “One *answers for*, for self or for something (for someone, for an action, a thought, a discourse), *before*—before an other, a community of others, an institution, a court, a law). And always one *answers for* (for self or for its intention, its action or discourse), *before*, by first responding to: *this last modality thus appearing more originary, more fundamental and hence unconditional*.”¹⁵ Responsibility becomes the response to the absolute arrival of the event. The event “is an *arrivance* that would surprise me absolutely and to whom or for whom, to which or for which I could not, and may no longer, *not respond*—in a way that is as responsible as possible” (FWT, 52). Hence, responsibility is no longer placed under the request or demand for a ground or justification, characteristic of metaphysical rational thought, but an openness to the incalculable coming of the other: responsibility as a responding to who or what happens/arrives, to the event as unpredictable. Responsibility is a response to the event of the other, an event that is always unpredictable and incalculable and thereby always breaks the demand for sufficient reason, always exceeds the enframing of the principle of sufficient reason. The event is the coming of the other, the advent of an alterity. Derrida will speak of the “to come” of the other, the arriving of the *arrivant*.

No longer placed under the authority of the principle of sufficient reason, the event must be rethought as the incalculable and unpredictable arrival of what will always remain other—and thus inappropriate—for the one to whom it happens. In that sense, the event comes as an excess in relation to the subject, always surprising such subject. Not preceded by any substance, not reflecting a prior model, the event surprises, a surprise that leaves us powerless. This is why in the end an event is not synonymous for Derrida with the notion of the performative, which still mobilizes the power of a subject. In contrast with the so-called constative or theoretical mode of speech (with which Derrida breaks in his thinking of the event: “The event defeats both the constative and the performative, the ‘I know’ and the ‘I think,’” CIP, 456), one often associates the performative with the enacting of an event. “We traditionally say that the performative produces events—I do what I say, I open the session if I am presiding over it, I produce the event of which I speak. In general, we relate the possibility of the event that is produced to a performative initiative and thus to a performative responsibility.”¹⁶ The performative is the sign of the exercise of a power, of an “I can.” In such a

performative *power*, and because it mobilizes the power of a subject, the event is in fact neutralized: “the event in question is neutralized, immediately annulled.” Even the performative misses the eventful in the event. “Now, just like the constative, it seems to me, the performative cannot avoid neutralizing, indeed annulling, the eventfulness of the event it is supposed to produce.”¹⁷ Why? Because the performative still relies on the power of a subjectivity to produce an effect: “A performative produces an event only by securing for itself, in the first-person singular or plural, in the present, and with the guarantee offered by conventions or legitimated fictions, the power that an ipseity gives itself to produce the event of which it speaks—the event that it neutralizes forthwith insofar as it appropriates for itself a calculable mastery over it” (R, 152). The performative still relies on the motif of power, which is antinomic to the event. The event is not synonymous with the performative, which mobilizes the power of a subject. The event, “if there is any, defined in a rigorous and exacting way, must exceed all power, including all performative power.” Certainly, Derrida concedes, something does happen with the performative, but what is eventful exceeds it: “I am not saying that nothing then happens, but what happens is programmable, foreseeable, controlled, conditioned by conventions.” Therefore, “it can thus be said, I would dare say, that an event worthy of its name is an event that derails all performativity” (*For Strasbourg*, 67). Derrida seeks to think the event outside of problematics of power, “beyond all performative mastery, beyond all power” (PM, 94), and outside of the performative. “Because I’d say that what I cannot, and hence the impossible that exceeds my ability and my power, is precisely what I cannot *want*. Unless we are going to transform the traditional concept of will. I am keeping here to the moment when the experience of the event defeats my will” (CIP, 454). An event is not a power, but what Derrida calls a “weak” or “vulnerable” force. One must “think at once the unforeseeability of an event that is necessarily without horizon, the singular coming of the other, and, as a result, a *weak force*. This vulnerable force, this force without power, opens up unconditionally to what or who *comes* and comes to affect it. The coming of this event exceeds the condition of mastery and the conventionally accepted authority of what is called the ‘performative’” (R, xiv). The event is the failure of mastery, the sign of a radical passivity, vulnerability. “If an event worthy of this name is to arrive or happen, it must, beyond all mastery, affect a passivity. It must touch an exposed vulnerability, one without absolute immunity, without indemnity; it must touch this vulnerability in its finitude and in a nonhorizontal fashion, there where it is not yet or is already no longer possible to face or face up to the unforeseeability of the other” (R, 152). An event denotes an inappropriability, not a power.

Ultimately, the event pertains neither to the constative nor to the performative, but to what Derrida proposes to call a symptomatology: “the saying is no longer constative, theoretical, descriptive, or performative: it is symptomatic.

I propose the word symptom as another term, beyond the telling of the truth or the performativity that produces the event" (CIP, 456). The symptom takes us beyond the constative and the performativity of a subject: "Beyond all forms of verification, beyond discourses of truth or knowledge, the symptom is a signification of the event over which nobody has control, that no consciousness, that no conscious subject can appropriate or control, neither in the form of a theoretical or judicative statement, nor in the form of a performative production" (CIP, 457). The symptomatic refers to the *secret* of the event. The symptom (and its interpretations) testifies to such secret: "There is symptom in what's happening here, for instance: each of us is interpreting, foreseeing, anticipating, and feeling overwhelmed and surprised by what can be called events. Beyond the meaning that each of us can read into these events, if not enunciate, there is the symptom." In short, Derrida concludes, "There is, in every event, secrecy and symptomatology" (CIP, 457).

The Im-possible

The event of being is inappropriable, an inappropriability that Derrida locates under the name of the im-possible. "Existence," "is," "Being," Derrida writes, "*are all names of the impossible and of self-incompatibility.*"¹⁸ In order to enter further into that thought of the impossible, it is necessary to return to the way in which deconstruction has unfolded in the work of Jacques Derrida, precisely as a thinking of the impossible—as "aporetic thinking." The thinking of the impossible is by no means a late development in Derrida's work; it already determined the early writings. Derrida refers to "all the aporias or the 'im-possibles' with which deconstruction is concerned" [*toutes les apories ou les 'im-possibles' qui occupent la 'déconstruction'*].¹⁹ Deconstruction, as Derrida conceived of it and practiced it, has indeed consisted in revealing the aporias inherent in philosophical systems and ultimately in experience itself. In response to those who claim to see in his late work an "ethical turn," Derrida explains the following: "what I am putting forward here is not the outline of some 'ethical turn,' as it has been described, any more than the previous allusions to responsibility, hospitality, the gift, forgiveness, witnessing, etc. I am simply trying to pursue with some consistency a thinking that has been engaged around the same aporias for a long time" (PM, 89).

In *Aporias*, Derrida reconstitutes the long history of the aporetic in his work, marking its enduring and increasing presence: "I recalled that, for many years now, the old, worn out Greek term *aporia*, this tired word of philosophy and of logic, has often imposed itself upon me, and recently it has done so even more often" (A, 12–13). Derrida then provides a long list of the "numerous instances" where the motif of the aporetic has recurred in his work, starting with *ousia* and

grammē and the aporetics of time, the margins of undecidability, the “so-called undecidable quasi-concepts that are so many aporetic places of dislocation,” the double-binds of *Glas*, the work of impossible mourning, the invention of the other as impossible, the gift as impossible, and all those phenomena that involve the impossible, such as ethics, decision, hospitality, forgiveness, responsibility, and the event. As early as *Positions*, Derrida already stressed that deconstruction consists in accompanying “the internal, regulated play of philosophemes or epistememes by making them slide—without mistreating them—to the point of their nonpertinence, their exhaustion, their closure,”²⁰ leading them, as it were, to the aporetic places where they *no longer work*. It is as if, with deconstruction, it is matter of showing that “the system *does not work*.”²¹ Deconstruction manifests “a force of dislocation, a limit in the totalization, a limit in the movement of syllogistic synthesis,” indicative of a “certain dysfunction or ‘disadjustment,’ a certain incapacity to close the system . . . Basically, deconstruction as I see it is an attempt to train the beam of analysis onto this disjoining link.” In this sense, deconstruction is tied to the impossible. Derrida clarifies that “deconstruction, without being anti-systematic, is on the contrary, and nevertheless, not only a search for, but itself a consequence of, the fact that the system *is impossible*” (TS, 4).

For Derrida, the encounter with the aporia is never the sterile paralysis before an impasse but an experience of an impossible that needs to be endured. This is why it is neither a matter of stopping at the impossible nor attempting to overcome it, but rather, as Derrida writes suggestively, of “thinking according to the aporia” (A, 13). Far from indicating a closure, an aporia instead represents a limit through which something announces itself in an affirmative fashion. Hence the “affirmative” sense of deconstruction (and not simply “positive”²²), which Derrida determines as openness toward what comes. However, this affirmative sense of deconstruction must always be associated, as he puts it, with “the privilege I constantly grant aporetic thought” (R, 174, n. 3). It is as if the openness to what comes was made possible from the encounter with the limit of an impossible, deconstruction revealing the intertwining between what happens, the event, and the impossible: “As it happens, I also say that deconstruction is “‘what happens’ or ‘what arrives’ [*ce qui arrive*], *what happens as the im-possible*” (FWT, 36, emphasis mine). In fact, Derrida states that deconstruction must be taken as an experience of the impossible: “I did propose this once: deconstruction might perhaps be ‘the experience of the impossible’” (PM, 81), and he refers to a passage from his earlier *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* in which he stated that deconstruction is tied to the impossible, a deconstruction already described as an “experience of the impossible”: “The most rigorous deconstruction has never claimed to be foreign to literature, nor above all to be *possible*. . . . Deconstruction loses nothing from admitting that it is impossible; and those who would rush to delight in that admission lose nothing from having to wait. For a deconstructive operation

possibility would rather be the danger, the danger of becoming an available set of rule-governed procedures, methods, accessible approaches. The interest of deconstruction, of such force and desire as it may have, is a certain experience of the impossible” (cited in PM, 194, n. 10). Deconstruction is tied to the impossible, “on the side” of the impossible, as this striking formulation expresses: “From the very heart of the im-possible, one would thus hear the impulse or pulse of a ‘deconstruction’” (PM, 91). In what was to be his last appearance on television, in June 2004 with France 3, answering the question of the journalist who had asked him what deconstruction is, Derrida replied: “deconstruction, for me, means what happens [*ce qui arrive*], that is to say, the impossible,” an impossible, Derrida adds, that in the end is “the only thing that happens [*la seule chose qui arrive*].” This echoes what he also said of deconstruction in “Others Are Secret Because They Are Other,” namely that it is “neither a philosophy, nor a science, nor a method, nor a doctrine, but, as I often say, *the impossible*, and the impossible as *that which happens* [arrives]” (PM, 137, modified). As aporetic thinking, deconstruction teaches that it is only by dwelling in the impossible that an event becomes possible, that is: im-possibly. The event is intertwined with the impossible, indeed happening *as* the impossible itself.

This is why the event deconstructs the transcendental, the transcendental conditions of possibility, the “power” of the possible. In *Paper Machine*, Derrida resituates his relation to the motif of the transcendental and to the expression of “quasi-transcendental,” discussed by Rodolphe Gasché: “it is definitely not by chance that the modality of *quasi* (or the logical-rhetorical fiction of *as if*) has so often imposed itself on me to make a word into a phrase, and first of all, especially—it has often been noted and commented on—around the word *transcendental*” (PM, 83). At stake is a questioning of the tradition of the transcendental, of the very motif of the conditions of possibility. “A question of problematic context and strategies, presumably: one must *in this place* relentlessly reaffirm questions of the transcendental type; and *in that place*, almost simultaneously, also ask questions about the history and the limits of what is called ‘transcendental’” (PM, 83). Derrida does not simply want to do away with transcendental strategies (he is quite clear on this point), he instead seeks to question the transcendental and reorient it toward the “quasi,” the “impossible,” and the event: “For nothing can discredit the right to the transcendental or ontological question. This is the only force that resists empiricism and relativism. Despite appearances to which philosophers in a hurry often rush, nothing is less empiricist or relativist than a certain attention to the multiplicity of contexts and the discursive strategies they govern; than a certain insistence on the fact that a context is always open and nonsaturable; or than taking into account the *perhaps* and the *quasi* in thinking about the event” (PM, 92). Mentioning the transcendental “condition of possibility” “in all its forms: medieval onto-theology,

criticism, or phenomenology” (PM, 92), Derrida shows that at issue is the traditional demand for conditions of possibility, that is, *for a ground*. In question is “the philosophical inheritance, namely the demand for the condition of possibility (the a priori, the originary, or ground, all different forms of the same radical demand and of any philosophical ‘question’)” (PM, 84). The critique of the notion of conditions of possibility includes a critique, *in fine*, of the motif of ground and foundation, Derrida explaining, “What is thus said of the condition of possibility also goes, by analogy, for the ‘ground,’ the ‘origin,’ the ‘root’ of ‘radicality,’ and so on” (PM, 84).

The absence of ground, as noted prior, reveals the site of the event, which is now also tied to the impossible, which Derrida writes as *im-possible*: im-possible, “that is, when it is not programmed by a structure of expectation and anticipation that annuls it by making it possible and thus foreseeable” (R, 128). Derrida writes *impossible* as *im-possible* in order to stress that the impossible is not what simply cannot be and thus null and void but rather the very opening of the event, which happens in excess with respect to the horizon of the conditions of possibility. Therein lies Derrida’s thought of the impossible, which designates that which *happens* outside of the anticipating conditions of *possibility* of the egological subject, outside of the horizons of expectation proposed by the subject, outside of transcendental horizons of calculability. The issue is to free “the pure eventfulness of the event” (PTT, 134) by breaking the power of the ego and its attempts to neutralize it. To the power of the subject as neutralization of the event, Derrida will oppose “the im-possible” as paradoxical possibility of the event. To the whole machination of the subject, to the establishment of the power of someone, some “I can,” “to all this,” he writes, “I would oppose, in the first place, everything I placed earlier under the title of the im-possible, of what must remain (in a non-negative fashion) *foreign to the order of my possibilities*, to the order of the ‘I can,’” (PTT, 134). Derrida engages a deconstruction of this tradition, reversing the conditions of possibility into conditions of impossibility! It is indeed a matter of converting the possible into the impossible and recognizing that what happens arises out of the impossible. It is when “the impossible *makes* itself possible” that “the event takes place” as the possibility of the impossible (PM, 90). It is the impossible that is possible, that happens. The impossible—“*there is the impossible*,” Derrida states (PTT, 120)—marks the possibility of the event, according to the logic of the possibility of the impossible just alluded to. For Derrida, for an event to be possible, it must arise from the im-possible (it must happen as the im-possible), and not be made possible by prior conditions. In fact, it can only be an event by breaking the possible. “That, indisputably, is the paradoxical form of the event: if an event is only possible, in the classic sense of this word, if it fits in with conditions of possibility, if it only makes explicit, unveils, reveals, or accomplishes that which was already possible, then it is no longer an event. For an event

to take place, for it to be possible, it has to be, as event, as invention, the coming of the impossible" (PM, 90). Indeed, to make an event possible in advance is to render it impossible as an event, if it is the case that an event interrupts horizons of possibilities. It is paradoxically the condition of possibility that impossibilizes the experience of which it claims to be the condition; it is on the contrary the im-possible, as leap outside of the horizon of expectations, which possibilizes the event, the eventfulness of the event, what Derrida calls the happening/arrival of the *arrivant* (*l'arrivée de l'arrivant*). Everything takes place as if the impossible is what truly enabled or possibilized the possible and as if the possible could only be possible *as impossible*. The possible "'is' the impossible" (PM, 79), and in turn, the impossible is the true condition of possibility, Derrida going so far in *Rogues* as writing of the impossible "as the only possibility and as the condition of possibility" (R, 47). The old expression of "condition of possibility" should be understood as "condition of impossibility," undecidably possible and impossible, possible as impossible, Derrida often combining the two in one segment, as in "conditions of possibility or/and impossibility" (for instance: R, 49). He explains in *Paper Machine*: "As I try to show elsewhere more concretely, less formally but with more logical sequence, that requires us to think the *possible . . . as the impossible*." Now, if "the *possible 'is' the im-possible here*," then Derrida continues, "the 'condition of possibility' is a 'condition of impossibility'" (PM, 79). That thought of the event as happening from the impossible, he concludes, "has always guided me, between the possible and the impossible. This is what has so often prompted me to speak of a *condition of impossibility*" (PM, 90).

Derrida renews the understanding of the relation between the possible and the impossible, taking issue with an entire tradition with respect to the concept of possibility. It is a question of "another thought of the possible (of power, of the masterly and sovereign 'I can,' of ipseity itself) and of an im-possible that would not be simply negative" (R, 143). It is a matter of being "engaged, without dissimulating the difficulty, in the task of thinking again about what is meant by the 'possible,' and the 'impossible,' and to do it around the so-called condition of possibility, often demonstrated as being a 'condition of impossibility'" (PM, 84). In other words, at issue "is thus nothing less than the powerful concept of the *possible* that runs through Western thought, from Aristotle to Kant and Husserl (then differently to Heidegger), with all its meanings, virtual or potential: being-in-potential, in fact; *dynamis*, virtuality (in its classic and modern forms, pretechnological and technological), but also power, capacity, everything that renders skilled, or able, or that formally enables, and so on" (PM, 90). In "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event," Derrida challenges the traditional opposition between the possible and the impossible and attempts to grasp the impossible no longer as the opposite of the possible but in a sense as the same. "I'll say, I'll try to show in what way the impossibility, a certain impossibility of

saying the event or a certain impossible possibility of saying the event, forces us to rethink . . . what *possible* means in the history of philosophy. . . . I will try to explain how I understand the word ‘possible’ in this sentence in a way that this ‘possible’ is not simply ‘different from’ or ‘the opposite of’ impossible, and why, in this case, ‘possible’ and ‘impossible’ *say the same thing*” (CIP, 452.)

Derrida recognizes the paradoxical character of this thinking. He writes: “But how is it possible, it will then be asked, that what renders possible renders impossible the very thing that it renders possible, and introduces; but as its chance, a chance that is not negative, a principle of ruin in the very thing that it is promising or promoting?” (PM, 90). The answer is that the impossible, rewritten as *im-possible*, is not to be taken negatively; rather, “The *im-* of the im-possible is surely radical, implacable, undeniable. But it is not only negative or simply dialectical: it *introduces* into the possible, it is *its usher today*” (PM, 90). The impossible is not the opposite of the possible but what “haunts the possible,” what possibilizes the possible. This is why Derrida’s aporetic thinking is not so much about the impossible per se as about the *possibility* of the impossible. “We should speak here of . . . an im-possible that is not merely impossible, that is not merely the opposite of possible, that is also the condition or chance of the possible. An im-possible that is the very experience of the possible” (CIP, 454). The impossible becomes the secret resource of the possible. The event happens as such an im-possible. The event exceeds the possible, touches on the impossible. Certainly, and here lies the paradox, an event, in order to happen, must be possible. Nonetheless, there also “has to be an interruption that is exceptional, absolutely singular, in the regime of possibility; it must not be reducible to explication, unfolding, or the putting into action of a possibility. The event, if there is such a thing, is not the actualization of a possibility, a straightforward putting into action, a realization, an effectuation, the teleological accomplishment of a capacity, the process of a dynamic dependent on ‘conditions of possibility’” (PM, 91). Unpredictable, an event “worthy of this name” must announce itself as im-possible. This is also why an event is not a process, the development of history, for it breaks the historical course. “The event has nothing to do with history, if what we understand by history is teleological process. It must in a certain way break off that type of history” (PM, 91).

Not a process, not a regulative idea, the im-possible event does not await at the horizon, but pierces it in the urgency of its arrival. Just as the event has no conditions of possibility, it also has no horizon. In fact, Derrida states that the absence of horizon is the condition of the event, that “there is no horizon for the other, any more than there is for death” (FWT, 52). The absence of horizon may be frightening, but it is the condition for something unprecedented to happen. That thing can be death, as always. This is why an event is unpredictable: it breaks the horizon of anticipation. A predictable event is no longer an event. Derrida

writes: "What interests me in the event is its singularity. It happens once, each time once [*chaque fois une fois*]. An event is thus unique, and unpredictable, that is to say, without horizon." He also speaks of the event of "the occasion, chance, the aleatory" (TS, 63), of the value of "unforeseeable im-possibility" of the event that he associates with that of its "*incalculable and exceptional singularity*" (R, 148). This absence of horizon is the reason why the im-possible is not a regulative Idea in the Kantian sense; its "arrival" or "to-come" takes place in absolute urgency. It is not an idea but the most real. Derrida is quite clear on this point: "This im-possible is not privative. It is not the inaccessible, and it is not what I can indefinitely defer: it is announced to me, sweeps down upon me, precedes me, and seizes me *here now*, in a nonvirtualizable way, in actuality and not potentiality. . . . This im-possible is not a regulative *idea* or *ideal*. It is what is most undeniably real. Like the other. Like the irreducible and nonappropriable difference of the other" (PTT, 134). The im-possible is not beyond as it constitutes a here and now, a here that is marked by the trauma and difference of an event.

In a sense, it is not simply the event that would be in excess of the possible, but the possible itself. The possible, to be possible, must exceed itself, it must not be already the possible that it is but in fact reach out to what lies outside of it, reaching to the im-possible. An event is possible by breaking the possible, by happening outside of the horizon of conditions of possibility. Derrida makes that point clearly in *The Politics of Friendship*. On the one hand, it seems obvious that any event must be possible, structured in the possibility of a perhaps ("There is no event, to be sure, that is not preceded and followed by its own perhaps," PF, 68). As he puts it, the *perhaps* or the *maybe* of the event is the primary and irreducible form of experience. Further, this maybe of the event, which is tied to the secret ("in other words, this category of 'maybe,' between the possible and the impossible, belongs to the same configuration as that of the symptom or the secret," CIP, 457), represents the most authentic form of openness to the coming of the other ("the thought of the 'perhaps' perhaps engages the only possible thought of the event," PF, 29). On the other hand, a possible that would be merely possible can only be a neutralization of the irruptive nature of the event. "For a possible that would only be possible (non-impossible), a possible surely and certainly possible, accessible in advance, would be a poor possible, a futureless possible, a possible already set aside, so to speak, life-assured" (PF, 29). Such a possible would not be eventful, but the predetermined realization of a prior plan or program. "This would be a programme or a causality, a development, a process without an event" (PF, 29). If an event follows a program of prior possibilities, it is not an event. Thus, if the possible as perhaps must be seen as the primary and irreducible form of experience, it must also exceed itself and touch on the impossible in order to be the possible that it is. What does that mean? It means that the possible must be understood as the impossible! Indeed,

if the possible is only possible, it is not an event. “If all that arises is what is already possible, and so capable of being anticipated and expected, that is not an event. The event is possible only coming from the impossible” (PM, 74). This is why Derrida says in *Paper Machine* that “this experience of the ‘perhaps’ would be that of *both* the possible *and* the impossible, of the possible *as* impossible” (PM, 74), Derrida speaking of the “strange entanglement” (PM, 90) between the possible and the impossible or, in *The Politics of Friendship*, of a “possibilization of the impossible possible” (PF, 29). The perhaps becomes rethought as the “disarticulated joining of the possible and the impossible,” as “the possible *as* im-possible” (PM, 74). This “impossible possible” or “possible impossible” (as noted prior, Derrida speaks of being “between the possible and the impossible,” PM, 90) is the true form of the perhaps: the event “arises *like* the coming of the impossible, at the point where a *perhaps* deprives us of all certainty and leaves the future to the future” (PM, 72). This is the sense in which Derrida says that *only the im-possible happens*. He explains: “Madness. I am tempted to say of this utterance, itself impossible, that it touches on the very condition of thinking the event. There where the possible is all that happens, nothing happens, nothing that is not the impoverished unfurling or the predictable predicate of what finds itself already there, potentially, and thus produces nothing new, not even accidents worthy of the name ‘event’” (OT, 57).

It is thus a question of another thinking of the event, another “way of thinking the event, the ‘taking place’: only the im-possible takes place; and the deployment of a potentiality or possibility that is already there will never make an event or an invention” (PM, 87). An invention always bears the mark of the impossible that inhabited it. “Even when something comes to pass as possible, when an event occurs as possible, the fact that it will have been impossible, that the possible invention will have been impossible, this impossibility continues to haunt the possibility” (CIP, 452). Derrida often writes (for instance in R, 144) that an event or an invention are only possible as im-possible. Indeed, if an invention was in conformity with what is already possible, with its concept, it would invent nothing. An invention necessarily exceeds its concept: therein lies its eventfulness. An invention is each time an invention of the other, assigned to alterity, letting an other come. An invention, Derrida writes in *Psyche*,²³ “comes from the other” (“to get ready for this coming of the other is what can be called deconstruction”). And the other, Derrida writes, “is not the possible” (PS, 44). Thus, the only possible invention is the invention of the impossible: “an invention has to declare itself to be the invention of that which did not appear to be possible; otherwise, it only makes explicit a program of possibilities within the economy of the same” (cited in PM, 88). Further in the text, Derrida insists that an event would not be “worthy of its name” and “would not make anything happen” if it was merely the application of some rule.

This appears in the question of law and ethical decision, each time an invention and never the application of a rule. When Derrida engages the question of law, whether ethical, juridical, or political, it is always in order to mark its eventful character. In "Force of Law," Derrida explains that it is characteristic of the law to be radically without ground, in the last analysis without foundation or justification; the law itself is without law. There is no law of the law, which explains why the *coup de force*, what the English language calls the "enforceability" of the law, is for Derrida inherent in the law itself. There is no law without such force, a force that is not external to the law, but rather the *coup de force* of the law, the self-institution of a law without foundation (and therefore deconstructible). Hence the law's originary performativity—eventfulness—and violence. "Since the origin of authority, the foundation or ground, the position of the law can't by definition rest on anything but themselves, they are themselves a violence without ground."²⁴ The act of positing the law, of *faire la loi* (literally, "to make law" as the establishing of a power), is a "law-making violence" (*die rechtsetzende Gewalt*) and an act of originary, ungrounded, and unjustifiable violence. Nothing is able to justify the justice and legality of this law, for at the moment of its foundation such a law is neither just nor unjust, neither legal nor illegal. There is no foundation of this performative foundation, which rests on nothing. No justifying discourse can play the role of a metalanguage in relation to the performativity of the instituting language. The justification of a decision is hence *impossible* and, a priori and for structural reasons, a decision can never absolutely answer for itself. There lies the radical, and irreducible, groundlessness of the law, as well as its eventfulness. This is what Derrida understands as the mystical foundation of authority, a mystical element that he describes in the following terms: "Here a silence is walled up in the violent structure of the founding act" (FL, 14).

To the extent that the law rests upon a groundless event, it can never be simply a rule. In fact, the "ought" of ethics cannot and "must not even take the form of a rule" (P, 8). Ethics can never be the conformity to a duty, an established given norm. This absence of rule determines the eventful character of ethical decision. A decision must decide without rules to follow, to apply, to conform to, and this is why it is each time (the singularity of an each time) a decision *as an event*. A decision occurs as an event without rules, each time "the event of a decision without rules and without will in the course of a new experience of the undecidable" (P, 17, trans. modified). Ethical decision is a matter of *invention*, not the application of a rule. It would be a question of moving beyond the very language of duty precisely out of faithfulness to the ethical command, a command that paradoxically always occurs beyond the rule. "In a word, ethics must be sacrificed in the name of duty. It is a duty not to respect, out of duty, ethical duty" (GD, 67). More precisely, the aporia of the rule is that the rule is both known and ignored or overcome. The aporia of the rule lies in the fact that "as in all

normative concepts . . . it involves both rules and invention without rules” (Derrida giving the example of politeness, P, 9). In other words, in ethical decision “one knows the rule but is never bound by it” (P, 9). Ethical responsibility would here be a duty beyond duty, and Derrida breaks at this point with the Kantian formulation of duty: “Would there thus be a duty not to act *according to duty*: neither *in conformity to duty*, as Kant would say (*pflichtmässig*), nor even *out of duty* (*aus Pflicht*)?” (P, 7). As he puts it in *For Strasbourg*, “the ethical event, if there is any, must lead beyond duty and debt” (*For Strasbourg*, 65), connecting this excess with respect to the law with the motif of abandonment—a counterduty, or rather a duty beyond duty, a hyperbolic duty, a hyperduty: here again is the Levinassian motif of an ethics beyond ethics, beyond the language of debt or duty. However, with Derrida, it is clearer how this hyperbolic ethics arises out of the aporetic structure of the law. It is because the ethical decision must judge without rules (a decision “that *cuts*, that divides,” FL, 24) that it infinitely exceeds duty and norm and is infinitized, that is, opened onto the incalculable. Ethical decision is an openness to the incalculable through the aporia of its lack of foundation. A decision is a leap, happening outside of prior conditions of possibility (an event that Derrida has called, as discussed prior, im-possible), an absolute risk that can rely on nothing but its own absence of foundation: “There is no ‘politics,’ right, ethics, without the responsibility of a decision which, to be just, must not be content with simply applying existing norms or rules but take the absolute risk, in each singular situation, to justify itself again, alone, as if for the first time, even if it is inscribed in a tradition” (PM, 358). The event of ethical decision is an experience of the undecidable. For Derrida, undecidable does not mean the impossibility of decision, for on the contrary the undecidable is the condition for decision in the sense that for him there is no decision without the confrontation with the aporia or undecidability—that is to say, with the impossible.

A decision made does not suppress the undecidable. The undecidable as impossible haunts any decision. Including when a decision is made, it remains confronted with the undecidable that makes it possible *as decision*. Derrida is quite clear on this point: “The aporia I say so much about is not, despite its borrowed name, simply a momentary paralysis in the face of an impasse. It is the testing out of the undecidable; only in this testing can a decision come about” (PM, 154). *But a decision does not end the aporetic phase*. The impossible keeps haunting the decision. The undecidable is not an objection to decision but its condition, indeed the condition of the event of decision, as Derrida writes that “for me the undecidable is the condition of decision, of the event.”²⁵ The undecidable designates the event character of decision. The event of decision marks a break with rationality and knowledge and happens in a leap beyond knowledge. The moment of decision supposes a rupture with the order of knowledge, with calculative rationality, as “a decision always takes place beyond calculation” (GD, 95).

Indeed, ethical decision is marked by a not-knowing—a *secret*: “If I know what I must do, I do not take a decision, I apply a knowledge, I unfold a program. *For there to be a decision, I must not know what to do.* . . . The moment of decision, the ethical moment, if you will, is independent from knowledge. It is when ‘I do not know the right rule’ that the ethical question arises.”²⁶ Of course, Derrida recognizes that “it is necessary to know as much and as well as possible before deciding” (FWT, 53), but there will always remain a gap between decision and knowledge. To that extent, there is what Derrida calls a “madness of the impossible”²⁷ as opening to the incalculable: “the moment of decision, and thus the moment of responsibility, supposes a rupture with knowledge, and therefore an opening to the incalculable” (TS, 61). Derrida speaks of the event of a decision outside knowledge, a responsible decision that is taken *without knowing*, to the extent that he will even speak of an “unconscious decision” in *Politics of Friendship*: “*In sum, a decision is unconscious*—insane as that may seem, it involves the unconscious and nevertheless remains responsible” (PF, 69). It is a matter of deciding without knowing, without seeing (*voir*) or foreseeing (*prévoir*), from a certain invisible or unforeseeable (a *secret*), without being able to calculate all the consequences of the decision, by entering into “the night of the unintelligible” (CF, 49). He will also refer to such decision, now tied and assigned to a “secret,” as a decision “of the other” because it exceeds the egological enclosure. It is a decision of the other in me that nonetheless does not absolve me from my responsibility. It is my responsibility, but “not in the sense of a (Kantian) autonomy by means of which I see myself acting in total liberty or according to a law that I make for myself, rather in the heteronomy . . . [of] whatever is commanding me to make decisions, decisions that will nevertheless be mine and which I alone will have to answer for” (GD, 91).

The undecidable of decision is the locus of the event and indeed of freedom (a notion that Derrida does not engage frequently): “Where I still have a space for choice, I am in the antinomy, the contradiction, and each time I want to keep the greatest possible freedom to negotiate between the two” (SP, 48). There is freedom when there is the incalculable, that is to say, the event. “We can call it freedom, but only beginning at the moment when there is something incalculable” (FWT, 49). I am free “to the extent that I cannot foresee, predetermine, prognosticate” (FWT, 53). The event always happens in the aporia and in an experience of an impossible. When Derrida evokes the question of freedom, and the necessity to articulate a “post-deconstructive account of freedom,” it is in order to associate its senses with those of the unpredictable coming of the other and the undecidable. Freedom would belong to such a semantic sphere, with the following list: “the ‘free,’ the incalculable, the unforeseeable, the undecidable, the event, the arrival, the other” (FWT, 51), all terms he uses when evoking the event in its incalculable happening: “The coming of the other, *l’arrivance de l’arrivant*—the

‘arriving-ness’ of the arrival—this is *what happens*, this is the one *who or which arrives* [C’est (ce) *qui arrive*] as an unforeseeable event” (FWT, 49–50).

An event as what or who arrives/happens can never be included in a horizon of expectation as I cannot see it come: an event never arrives “horizontally,” it does not appear or *present itself* on the horizon from where I may be able to “fore-see it,” anticipate it: rather, an event falls upon me, comes from above, vertically, from a (nontheological) height and is an absolute surprise. “As the *arrivant*, the event is something that vertically befalls me when I didn’t see it coming. The event can only seem to me to be impossible before it happens [*arriver*]” (CIP, 451, modified). The event falls upon me from up high (in French: *me tombe dessus*, even at times: *me tombe sur la tête*):

In the arrival of the *arrivant*, it is the absolute other who falls on me. I insist on the verticality of this coming, because surprise can only come from on high. When Levinas or Blanchot speak of the “*Très Haut*,” the Most High, it is not simply religious terminology. It means that the event as event, as absolute surprise, must fall on me. Why? Because if it doesn’t fall on me, it means that I see it coming, that there’s an horizon of expectation. Horizontally, I see it coming, I fore-see it, I fore-say it, and the event is that which can be said [*dit*] but never predicted [*prédit*]. A predicted event is not an event. The event falls on me because I don’t see it coming. (CIP, 451)

Verticality is not some theological beyond but the excess with respect to the horizon of conditions of possibility and predictability: “By verticality, what I meant was that the foreigner, what is irreducibly *arrivant* in the other—who is not simply a worker, or a citizen, or someone easily identifiable—is that which in the other gives me no advance warning and which exceeds precisely the horizontality of expectation” (CIP, 461). I cannot see an event come “horizontally, like an object or a subject that can be anticipated against the background of a horizon or a foreseeable future,” as the event happens *vertically*: if not from “the Most High,” at least from “very high,” if not from below! The event “can fall upon me, vertically (not from the Most High, and yet from so high!) or surprise me by coming at my back, from behind or from below, from the underground of my past, and in such a way that I don’t see it coming, or even such that I never see it, having to content myself with feeling or hearing it. But barely” (FWT, 52). The event is an absolute *arrivance*, and such an *arrivance* mobilizes a hospitality, a genuine ethics of the event. I will conclude on this ethics of the event, on this unconditional hospitality to the event.

Conclusion: The Ethics of the Event

IN CLOSING, I focus on this original ethics of the event. Derrida recognized in a 2004 interview with *L'Humanité* the growing importance that the thinking of the event has taken for him, significantly insisting on its ethical scope: "what you say about a privileged attention to the event is correct. It has become more and more insistent. The event, as that which happens [*arrive*] unpredictably, singularly. Not only what happens, but also who happens/arrives, the *arrivant*. The question 'what is to be done with what/who arrives?' commands a thinking of hospitality, of the gift, of forgiveness, of the secret, of witnessing."¹ Here appear the thematics of a hospitality to the event, of an ethical welcome of the event. Throughout this work, it has been an issue of freeing, as Derrida puts it, the "pure eventfulness of the event"² from the traditional attempts to neutralize it, whether through the demands of a principle of reason or through the position of a willful ego.³ As also stressed, the event is an absolute *arrivance* ("what is true for the *arrivant* is equally true for the event," CIP, 453), which as such mobilizes a welcoming gesture. The happening of the event is the coming of an *arrivant*, an arrival that is welcomed by an original hospitality. Indeed, the ethics of the event, as I approach it here, is to be taken as an ethics of hospitality, a welcome of the event in its irruptive coming. I noted the coming to the fore of the motif of "letting" in the happening of the event. This letting also affects the welcome of the event. To the letting of being (subjective genitive) corresponds the fundamental disposition of thinking as *Gelassenheit*, as letting-be. Ethics here designates such letting, a genuine *Gelassenheit* with respect to the event. This arrival is welcomed in an original hospitality, a welcome of the other in the subjective genitive.

This chapter begins again from the motif of the secret of the event. As seen in the preceding chapter, there may not be a knowledge of the secret, but there is, one might say, an *ethics* of the secret, a respect and a responsibility for the secret. I noted throughout this work how the event happens outside knowledge, in excess of knowledge, thereby making room for another type of engagement with the event, in other words, an ethical engagement. Whereas knowledge, as Levinas claims, is a violence, ethics understood as unconditional hospitality lets the event be. Derrida insists that the demand for the revealing of a secret, the demand that the other confesses, that he or she explains him/herself and reveals his or her secret, may be the greatest violence. "Is there any worse violence than that which consists in calling for the response, demanding that one *give an account of* everything,

and preferably *thematically*?”⁴ One must respect the secret, not do violence to its withdrawal, its nonappearing. Not locatable, not presentable, not knowable, the secret is the object of *respect*: “Nowadays, there is perhaps an ethical and political duty to respect the secret, a certain kind of right to a certain kind of secret,” writes Derrida.⁵ The quest for total transparency is a lack of respect for the secret, the sign of any totalitarianism, although the latter can also use and instrumentalize the secret: “The totalitarian vocation is manifested as soon as this respect is lost. All the same—and this is where the difficulty comes in—there are also forms of abuse in relation to the secret, political exploitations of the ‘state secret,’ like the exploitations of ‘reasons of state,’ and police or other archives” (PM, 162). The respect for the secret cannot simply be conditional (a secret that can be shared, always capable of being disclosed, “undone or opened”⁶) as if it were conditionally—and provisionally—allowed under the dictatorship of transparency and demand for transparency. Established institutional authorities allow for some secrets, but only *conditionally*: “No doubt they allow sometimes that there are conditional secrets (the secret of confession, the professional secret, the military secret, the manufacturing secret, the state secret). But the *right to secrets* is in all these cases a conditional right” (P, 25). To that extent, it is not a secret, that is, not a secret “worthy of the name,” but a knowledge that is provisionally withheld. On the other hand, to share a secret, *as secret*, precisely does not mean to reveal its content in the light of day: “To share a secret is not to know or to reveal the secret, it is to share we know not what: nothing that can be determined” (GD, 78). Sharing the secret thus means sharing a not-knowing, a sharing in which the secret *remains a secret*. There is a respect and a responsibility due to the secret, to the preservation of the secret as a secret, that is, to an alterity to which we are exposed.

With respect to this ethical responsibility toward the event, and its inappropriability, I briefly mention here Heidegger’s understanding of ethics as an ethics of the event and of the secret. Heidegger speaks indeed of a “claim of the event” upon the human being, opening onto a responsibility that is not to be taken in a moral sense “but, rather, with respect to the event and as related to the response” (*Die “Verantwortung” ist hier nicht “moralisch” gemeint, sondern ereignishaft und bezogen auf die Antwort*).⁷ As I have tried to show elsewhere,⁸ Heidegger’s thought entails a major thought of responsibility: being is an event for which each Dasein is responsible, responding and corresponding to its call. The human being belongs to the event of being, that is, *Ereignis*, by responding and corresponding to its call. Yet such belonging is affected by a certain *expropriation* as the correspondence to the event of being always implies withdrawal and expropriation. I stress that for Heidegger being *is* the withdrawal and conceals itself in the givenness of beings. This accounts for the crucial notion of a phenomenology of the inapparent on which this book insisted and for the “openness to the mystery” (*die Offenheit für das Geheimnis*) that Heidegger evokes in *Gelassenheit*.⁹

In its very eventfulness, being withdraws, is the mystery: such a withdrawal, Heidegger stresses, *calls us*. Indeed, as stated in *What Is Called Thinking?* it is from a certain withdrawal that Dasein finds itself called. As cited prior, Heidegger states that “what withdraws from us, draws us along by its very withdrawal, whether or not we become aware of it immediately, or at all.”¹⁰ Responsibility to being would then be a responsibility to a secret and an inappropriable. What must be stressed is that the response to the call, whether the call of conscience in *Being and Time* or the address of being in the later writings, is always a response to what remains *inappropriable* in such calls. For instance, when discussing moods (*Stimmungen*) in *Being and Time*, Heidegger begins by emphasizing the element of opacity and withdrawal entailed in them. Having a mood brings Dasein to its “there,” before the pure “that” of its There, which, as such, “stares directly at it with the inexorability of an enigma.”¹¹ In being-in-a-mood, the being of the there “becomes manifest as a burden [*Last*],” Heidegger then adding, “One does not *know* why.” In fact, Dasein “cannot know why” (SZ, 134), not because of some weakness of our cognitive powers, but because the “that” of our being is given in such a way that “the whence and whither remain obscure” (SZ, 134). In the phenomenon of moods, there is a “remaining obscure” that is irreducible. In a 1928–1929 course, *Introduction to Philosophy* (*Einleitung in die Philosophie*), Heidegger also evokes this “darkness of Dasein’s origins,” contrasting it with the “relative brightness of its potentiality-for Being.” He then states the following: “Dasein exists always in an essential exposure to the darkness and impotence of its origin, even if only in the prevailing form of a habitual deep forgetting in the face of this essential determination of its facticity.”¹² This darkness is irreducible. And yet, it is at this juncture, at this very *aporetic* moment, that Heidegger paradoxically situates the responsibility of Dasein. As noted prior, Heidegger speaks of the “burden” of the There felt in a mood. Interestingly, the very concept of weight and burden reintroduces, as it were, the problematic of responsibility. In a marginal note added to this passage, Heidegger later clarified: “Burden’: what weighs [*das Zu-tragende*]; human being is charged with the responsibility [*überantwortet*] of Dasein, appropriated by it [*übereignet*]. To bear [*tragen*]: to take over something from out of belonging to being itself” (SZ, 134, trans. slightly modified). The burden is “what weighs,” what has to be carried. In the course *Introduction to Philosophy*, Heidegger explained that it is precisely that over which Dasein is not master that must be worked through and survived: “[What] . . . does not arise of one’s own express decision, as most things for Dasein, must be in such or such a way retrievably appropriated, even if only in the modes of putting up with or shirking something; that which for us is entirely not under the control of freedom in the narrow sense . . . is something that is in such or such a manner taken up or rejected in the How of Dasein” (GA 27, 337). Ethics is hence the “carrying” of the inappropriability—or secret—of the event of being.

The ethics of the event, of the secret of the event, crystalizes in an ethics of hospitality. Derrida argues in *Adieu* that hospitality is not a mere region of ethics but “ethicity itself, the whole and the principle of ethics.”¹³ Hospitality is not a “regional” question, such as a political or juridical issue, but instead defines ethics itself. Hospitality designates what is in question here, a motif that Derrida identifies as “the ethics of ethics,” that is, the *ethicality* of the ethical, or, in a formulation found in this work, as an “ethics beyond ethics.” Levinas himself referred to such “ethics beyond ethics” as “Holiness” or “The Holy” (*sainteté*). At the beginning of *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, Derrida relates that Levinas had confided in him one day during a walk through the streets of Paris that what interested him most was not ethics—that is, not a prescriptive system of rules—but “the holy, the holiness of the holy.” Hospitality designates such holiness and provides access to ethics in its very possibility, an ethics of hospitality or ethics *as* hospitality, an *absolute* hospitality, as any hospitality “worthy of the name” must be, “the welcome or welcoming of absolute, absolutely originary, or even pre-originary hospitality, nothing less than the pre-ethical origin of ethics (*Adieu*, 44).

At the beginning of *Adieu*, Derrida attempts to measure or appraise the revolutionary nature of Levinas’s thought, its relation to ethics, the way in which one finds in his thought the elaboration of “another thought of ethics, responsibility, justice, the State, etc., . . . another thought of the other” (*Adieu*, 4). But if one had to single out one of the most determinative questions in Levinas’s thinking, it would have to be, at least according to Derrida, the rethinking of ethics as hospitality. Indeed, Derrida claims that Levinas’s thought *as a whole* should be approached from the motif of hospitality. Although, as Derrida admits, the word does not occur frequently and is not emphasized, *Totality and Infinity* is an immense treatise on hospitality. “Has anyone ever noticed? Although the word is neither frequently used nor emphasized within it, *Totality and Infinity* bequeaths to us an immense treatise of hospitality” (*Adieu*, 21). Furthermore, Derrida insists that “all of Levinas’s thought is, wants to be, and presents itself as a teaching . . . a teaching on the subject of what ‘to welcome’ or ‘to receive’ *should* mean” (*Adieu*, 85). Behind this question, there is of course an entire contemporary political and social context, an urgency that demands a response. Derrida refers specifically to the problems of immigration, to the precarious status of illegal immigrants, but also to all the populations in transit, displaced people, migrant workers, exiles, and those who are “without a home.” Derrida speaks of the “persecution of all these hostages—the foreigner, the immigrant (with or without papers), the exile, the refugee, those without a country, or a State, the displaced person or population” (*Adieu*, 64). How does this situation alter our understanding of “hospitality,” of “being at-home,” of “identity” and of being one’s own, of what a “nation” is, of our obligations and responsibilities? For Derrida, this situation calls for no less than “a change in the socio- and geo-political space—a juridico-political

mutation, though, before this, assuming that this limit still has any pertinence, an ethical conversion" (*Adieu*, 71). All these tasks have been reopened by a rethinking of hospitality, a hospitality to the event, a duty or hyperduty to who or what happens or arrives with the event.

What does "to welcome" or "to receive" mean? The answer to this question provides access to the very meaning of an ethics of the event. Derrida begins by determining the scope of this question. Levinas understands and defines the subject as a *welcome* of the other. When Levinas defines the subject as *hôte* (a term that, in French, means both host and guest, a situation that will prove crucial to Derrida's interpretation), that is, as a welcome of the other, this does not mean the subject would have, among other faculties or attributes, the ability to welcome the other. It means the subject, *as such*, is a welcome and hospitality, before any self-positing identity. There is not, first, the subject as a pregiven substantial identity that would then constitute the basis for a capacity to welcome. The welcome of the other defines the subject. As such, the subject *is* that very welcome, that very openness to the coming of the other. Its identity is fractured and opened by the irruption or invasion of the other. The first *revolution* brought about by the thought of hospitality, then, concerns the concept of subjectivity. The subject is no longer a self-identity, an ego, a consciousness, even an intentional consciousness. The subject is an openness to the other, insofar as it is a welcome of the other, and defined as host/guest. Four features can be distinguished regarding the senses of this welcome.

The welcome is a welcome of an infinite. The subject welcomes or receives *beyond its own finite capacities of welcoming*. The welcoming of the event, understood as a receiving, exceeds or overflows the capacity to receive. What is welcomed exceeds the capacity to welcome. The "faculty" of welcoming is exceeded by what it welcomes (a saturated phenomenon, as Marion would say). The welcome is a welcome of an infinite. The subject here designates the hospitality of a "finite threshold that opens itself to infinity" (*Adieu*, 46). The unconditional character of hospitality is connected to the infinity of an other happening to me. Hospitality is "the welcoming of the idea of infinity, and thus of the unconditional" (*Adieu*, 48). The subject is exhausted in the welcome of the other. This is why the subject must be conceived of as the welcome of the other, that is to say, the welcome of an infinite. In hospitality, I welcome an otherness greater than I, which can disrupt my "being-at-home."

To that extent, second, the welcome *of* the other, in the *objective* genitive sense, should be understood as being first a welcome of the other in the *subjective* genitive sense (the other's welcome). The welcome *of* the other in the objective genitive sense is already an answer to a more prior welcome, that *of* the other in the subjective genitive sense. As Derrida stresses, the yes *to* the other is a response to the yes *of* the other. "The welcoming of the other (objective genitive)

is already a response: the yes to the other is a responding to the welcoming of the other (subjective genitive), to the yes of the other. This response is called for as soon as the infinite—always of the other—is welcomed.” *One must begin by responding*. Welcomed “in anarchy,” the event of the other precedes the welcome. “This responsible response is surely a yes, but a yes to preceded by the yes of the other” (*Adieu*, 23). Derrida cites this sentence from Levinas: “It is not I, it is the other that can say yes” (*Adieu*, 23). Derrida underlines the consequences of this situation with respect to the concepts of decision and responsibility, traditionally attributed to the egological subject. For taking seriously the priority of the yes of the other over the yes to the other would lead to an entirely different approach to the question of decision, which would no longer be the “development of an egological immanence” (*Adieu*, 24). In fact, as Derrida stresses, a theory of the subject is incapable of accounting for any decision, just as hospitality, it could be said, could not be accounted for from the position of an egological pole, of a subject self-assured in its home. Hospitality must be “of the other,” one might say. Derrida questions the egological closure of hospitality: “Do we have the right to give the name ‘decision’ to a purely autonomous movement, even if it is one of welcoming or hospitality, that would proceed only from me, by me, and would simply deploy the possibilities of a subjectivity that is mine?” (*Adieu*, 23–24). The experience of hospitality points toward an outside to the subject, where ethics begins. As Levinas puts it, “We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics.”¹⁴ Hospitality, concludes Derrida on this point, represents an interruption of subjectivity by an event that happens outside of it. “Is not hospitality an interruption of the self?” he asks (*Adieu*, 51).

Third, to the extent that, as Derrida explains, the welcome “receives only to the extent, an extent beyond all measure, that it receives beyond the capacity of the I” (*Adieu*, 26) because, in other words, of this constitutive “dissymmetrical disproportion,” the welcome (*accueil*) cannot be understood as a gathering (*recueil*). The welcome (*accueil*) is not a gathering (*recueil*, which is also French rendering of Heidegger’s *Versammlung*). Derrida emphasises the contrast between Heidegger and Levinas, arguing that Levinas’s usage of “welcome” is in fact in opposition to Heidegger’s interpretations of *Versammlung* or *colligere*. He writes: “This thought of welcoming thus also initiates a discreet but clear and firm contestation of Heidegger, indeed of the central motif of gathering oneself, of recollection [*recueillement*], or of gathering together (*Versammlung*), of the collecting (*colligere*) that would be accomplished in recollection” (*Adieu*, 28). Here the gathering of the at-home already supposes the welcome, although Derrida concedes that this statement defies both chronology and logic. The welcome is on the side of dispersion, of dissemination, and not of gathering. In its otherness, in its *disruptiveness*, the event must be thought as a force of dispersion, explosion, disruption. In a 2000 interview with Dominique Janicaud, Derrida remarked:

In what I say of the event, there is something that cannot be easily rendered in Heideggerian terms. I am on the side of dislocation, of dispersion, of dissemination. It would be unfair and a simplification to say that Heidegger negates difference, dislocation, or dissemination: one could have a reading of Heidegger that would show that he does think dislocation. But there is a force that draws him toward gathering, toward being near oneself. The difficulty is one of knowing whether one can think *Versammlung* while including in it, integrating and assimilating into it, the play of difference, of dislocation, of dissociation, or whether it is only to the extent that there is an irreducible risk of dispersion, of singularity, of dissemination, that *Versammlung* can emerge.¹⁵

The event is on the side of errancy (irreducible to any reappropriation in some gathering), of “nondestination,” what Derrida famously called “destinerrance.” There, “the stress is instead on the side of alterity, of dissociation, of infinite distance, of dispersion, of the incommensurable, of the impossible, and of ‘destinerrance.’” The event cannot be gathered, something that is not lamented but understood as the proper chance of the event. With respect to the thought of gathering, Derrida states: “I resist it in the name of what no longer allows itself to be gathered—alas! Alas and no, in fact, because the fact of resisting the gathering might be felt as a distress, a sadness, a loss—dislocation, dissemination, the not being at home, etc.—but it is also an opportunity. It is the opportunity of an encounter, of justice, of a relation to absolute alterity” (HF, 358). The logic of gathering represses the event, represents “a certain blindness to the other, a certain cancellation of the event, a certain pure noneventfulness,” and can become complicitous with the “worst” in terms of political expression whereas “the side of dissociation” is “the best opportunity.”

Finally, this rethinking of hospitality involves a paradoxical situation with respect to the status of the subject of the event, a peculiar reversal of the meaning of the host. For if the subject is from the outset a host, a hospitality in an originary or preoriginary way, if it is not prior to this opening to the other, then there is no longer an “at-home” (*chez-soi*) or an ownership on the basis of which one would welcome. The subject becomes expropriated by the event, the power of the *ipse* undone. For the welcome is not a capacity or a power, hospitality is not a *puissance invitante*, a welcoming power. If indeed the welcome of the other is a subjective genitive, then the subject, as host (*hôte*), immediately turns into a subject as guest (*hôte*). Indeed, in French the term *hôte* designates both host and guest, and Derrida makes ample use of this semantic resource: here, *the host is first and foremost a guest*, for there is no “at-home” from which the subject is able to receive or welcome if one understands that as a power. Derrida contests this “authoritarian” or paternalistic conception of hospitality, one that follows a quasi-conjugal, paternal, and phallogocentric model establishing the domain of a despot, father, husband, or master, suggesting that “one is at home here, that

one knows what it means to be at home, and that at home one receives, invites, or offers hospitality, thus appropriating for oneself a place to *welcome* [*accueillir*] the other, or, worse, *welcoming* the other in order to appropriate for oneself a place" (*Adieu*, 15). How can one not be struck here by the contradiction, indeed the aporia, of a "welcome" that proves to be a violence, the violence of a hospitality that is identified with the power of the master of the house? Derrida evokes in *Hostipitality* the violence of a subject certain of its identity at-home (the host who is "master in his house, who is *what he is* in his house")¹⁶ at the very moment that he/she is welcoming the other; a violence of the welcoming host who as it were "subjects" the other to his/her power, "folding the foreign other into the internal law of the host" (*Hostipitality*, 7). There is welcome, but:

On the condition that the host, the *Wirt*, the one who receives, lodges or *gives asylum* remains the *patron*, the master of the household, on the condition that he maintains his own authority *in his own home*, that he looks after himself and sees to and considers all that concerns him [*qu'il se garde et garde et regarde ce qui le regarde*] and thereby affirms the law of hospitality as the law of the household, *oikonomia*, the law of his household, the law of a place (house, hotel, hospital, hospice, family, city, nation, language, etc.), the law of identity which de-limits the *very* place of proffered hospitality and maintains authority over it. (*Hostipitality*, 4)

In such a conception, hospitality is in advance regulated on the being-at-home of the host.

Against this conception of hospitality as a capacity or power of the subject on the basis of a self-assured proper place, Derrida emphasizes, on the contrary, the originality of unconditional hospitality. Since the gathering (*recueil*) of the at-home already supposes the welcome (*accueil*) of the other in the subjective genitive sense, then the host, as a master in one's own home, becomes the guest as a stranger in one's own home. Derrida explains, "If the at home with oneself of the dwelling is an 'at home with oneself as in a land of asylum or refuge,' this would mean that the inhabitant also dwells there as a refugee or an exile, a guest and not a proprietor" (*Adieu*, 37). On the basis of all these motifs, Derrida is able to identify what he calls "the law of hospitality," a law that marks or indicates the radical expropriation the subject undergoes in its being exposed to the coming of the event, of the *arrivant*. Derrida describes in the following terms such an "implacable law of hospitality": "the *hôte* who receives (the host), the one who welcomes the invited or received *hôte* (the guest), the welcoming *hôte* who considers himself the owner of the place, is in truth a *hôte* received in his own home. He receives the hospitality that he offers *in* his own home; he receives it *from* his own home—which, in the end, does not belong to him. The *hôte* as host is a guest" (*Adieu*, 41). The inhabitant is a refugee, an exile, or a guest, not an owner.

The home is a “land of asylum,” and hospitality designates “this originary dispossession, this withdrawal by which the ‘owner’ is expropriated from what is most his own, the *ipse* from its ipseity, making of one’s home a place or location one is simply passing through” (*Adieu*, 42). The “at-home” becomes henceforth “but a response to a wandering, to the phenomenon of wandering it brings to a halt” (*Adieu*, 92). In an extraordinary formulation, the meaning of which remains undecidable, Derrida writes: the subject of the welcome is *chez lui chez l’autre*, that is, “*is in his own home in the home of the other*” (*Adieu*, 99), a sentence that can mean simultaneously: the subject is at home in the other and, at home, the subject is in the other.¹⁷

The ethics of the event reveals the “pre-originary ex-propriety or ex-appropriation that makes of the subject a guest [*hôte*] and a hostage, someone who is, *before* every invitation, elected, invited, *and* visited in his home as in the home of the other, who is *in his own home in the home of the other* (*chez lui chez l’autre*)” (*Adieu*, 99, trans. slightly modified). The inappropriable that is revealed by the inscription of the other in the I in fact manifests that the I comes to itself in the place of the other: *chez lui chez l’autre*. Derrida traces and follows this radical expropriation of the self by the event of the other in Levinas’s most extreme, paroxistic formulations. The subject as host/guest is further characterized as *hostage*, hostage of the other. Such would be, according to Derrida, the two figures of the Levinasian ethics: “hospitality without propriety” and the “persecuting obsession” of the hostage. Derrida plays on the proximity between “host” and “hostage” and undertakes to reflect on the passage between these two definitions of the subject, the subject as host and the subject as hostage. The persecution, the substitution, the accusation, the putting in question of the subject still designate the situation of the subject as host/guest, but now understood as “persecuted, in the very place where he takes place, where, as emigrant, exile, stranger, a guest [*hôte*] from the very beginning, he finds himself elected to or taken up by a residence [*élu à domicile*] before himself electing or taking one up [*élire domicile*]” (*Adieu*, 56). The host becomes the hostage, and Derrida suggests yet a third possible figure of the subjectivity of the host—perhaps a necessary logical implication of the definitions of the subject of the welcome—that of the “(g)host,” place of a “visitation of a face.” Indeed, as he remarks: “Does not hospitality follow, even if just by a second of secondariness, the unforeseeable and irresistible irruption of a visitation?” (*Adieu*, 63).

Indeed, if it is true that “the one who welcomes is first welcomed in his own home” and that “the one who invites is invited by the one whom he invites” (*Adieu*, 42), then the invitation can only turn into a visitation. Any hospitality—if it is the welcome of an other in the subjective genitive—must already presuppose the traumatic invasion of an other. This is why the visitation of the other “is not a response to an invitation; it exceeds every dialogical relation between host and

guest. It must, from all time, have exceeded them. Its traumatizing effraction must have preceded what is so easily called hospitality” (*Adieu*, 63). Hospitality is not on the side of the host and hence is not an invitation. It is on the side of the *arrivant*, who comes whenever it comes. Derrida explains: “I try to dissociate the concept of this pure hospitality from the concept of ‘invitation.’” Invitation is the expecting of some guest, without surprise. But hospitality requires “absolute surprise”: “I must be unprepared, or prepared to be unprepared, for the unexpected arrival of any other,” and he adds: “The other, like the Messiah, must arrive whenever he nor she wants.”¹⁸ This, indeed, is the very definition of the event, which Derrida captures in its most limpid simplicity in this passage: “Whatever happens, happens, whoever comes, comes [*ce qui arrive arrive*], and that, in the end, is the only event worthy of this name” (PTT, 129). Invitation is the expecting of some guest, without surprise. This is why, unlike visitation, which is an unconditional hospitality, invitation is a conditional hospitality: I invite someone under certain conditions, and in particular the condition of my being-at-home, since I invite the other in my home: “I think that precisely the invitation defines conditional hospitality. When I invite someone to come into my home, it is on condition that I receive him. Everything is conditioned by the fact that I remain at home and foresee his coming” (*Hostipitality*, 17, n. 17).

Hospitality, then, is a receiving or welcoming that has no power over its own welcoming; it is an opening without horizon, without horizon of expectation. The event is an unforeseeable happening, affecting a vulnerable subjectivity. “If an event worthy of this name is to arrive or happen, it must, beyond all mastery, affect a passivity. It must touch an exposed vulnerability, one without absolute immunity, without indemnity; it must touch this vulnerability in its finitude and in a nonhorizontal fashion, there where it is not yet or is already no longer possible to face or face up to the unforeseeability of the other.”¹⁹ It is to this extent that Derrida understands hospitality in its full sense as unconditional. It is unconditional because it arises out of the event of the other and not from some *conditions* layed out by a subject-host. The subject is powerless before the coming of the event as *arrivant*. “The visitor is someone who could come at any moment, without any horizon of expectation, who could like the Messiah come by surprise. Anyone could come at any moment” (*Hostipitality*, 17, n. 17). Hospitality is the unconditional welcoming of the *arrivant*. “The absolute guest [*hôte*] is this *arrivant* for whom there is not even a horizon of expectation, who bursts onto my horizon of expectations when I am not even prepared to receive the one who I’ll be receiving. That’s hospitality” (CIP, 451). The arrival of the *arrivant* will constitute an event, says Derrida, “only if I’m not capable of receiving him or her” (CIP, 451). Unconditional hospitality is the welcoming of such event.

With respect to the hospitality to the event, there is a conditional hospitality, one that remains regulated by the preexisting conditions of a welcoming

power—and that is in fact no hospitality—and then there is hospitality *itself*, which is unconditional.²⁰ In fact, for Derrida true hospitality can only be unconditional: “hospitality is infinite or it is not at all; it is granted upon the welcoming of the idea of infinity, and thus of the unconditional” (*Adieu*, 48). The event mobilizes an *unconditional* hospitality. As the event happens unconditionally, hospitality is as well to be taken as unconditional. “This implies another thinking of the event (unique, unforeseeable, without horizon, un-masterable by any ipseity or any conventional and thus consensual performativity), which is marked in a ‘to-come’ that, beyond the future . . . names the coming of *who* comes or of *what* comes to pass, namely, the newly arrived, whose irruption should not and cannot be limited by any conditional hospitality on the borders of a policed nation-state” (R, 87). To be such, hospitality must not “choose” the guest. One must radicalize hospitality to the point of a genuine welcome of the *arrivant*, in the subjective genitive. As noted, the welcome of the other—of the *arrivant*—is not on the side of the host as master of the house, but on the side of the arriving guest. *Hospitality is on the side of the arrivant*, of who or what arrives. An event is a visitation (coming from the other), not an invitation (offered by the host). For there to be hospitality, there must be the event of the arrival of the other. This arrival happens outside the subject, hospitality registering such an arrival. In contrast to conditional hospitality—no hospitality but exercise of power by the host over the arriving other—Derrida proposes the notion of an unconditional, absolute, or pure hospitality, that is, a hospitality not relative to the a priori conditions of the subject, and therefore “absolute” in this precise sense: “pure and unconditional hospitality, hospitality itself, opens or is in advance open to someone who is neither expected nor invited, to whomever arrives as an absolutely foreign *visitor*, as a new *arrival*, nonidentifiable and unforeseeable, in short wholly other” (PTT, 129). Derrida speaks at times of the “absolute” other, or of the “absolute arrivant.”²¹ The term *absolute* is the term for the *tout autre*, the “wholly other.” “The absolute *arrivant* must not be merely an invited guest, someone I’m prepared to welcome, whom I have the ability to welcome. It must be someone whose unexpected, unforeseeable arrival, whose *visitation*—and here I’m opposing visitation to invitation—is such an irruption that I’m not prepared to receive the person. I must not even be prepared to receive the person, for there to be genuine hospitality” (CIP, 451).

This absolute *arrivant* does not designate some theological beyond, it does not await on the horizon but rather “pierces it” in the urgency of its arrival at the heart of the self. The event happens here and now, or rather, it dislocates the here and the now as it impacts them. This urgency invades the space of the self, of the at-home: “The stranger, here the awaited guest, is not only someone to whom you say ‘come,’ but ‘enter,’ enter without waiting, make a pause in our home without waiting, hurry up and come in, ‘come inside,’ ‘come within me,’ not only towards

me, but within me: occupy me, take place in me, which means, by the same token, also take my place. . . . Crossing the threshold is entering and not only approaching or coming” (*Of Hospitality*, 123). The event happens to a hospitality without reservations, calculation, or conditions. To welcome what comes, as it comes, such would be the original ethics of the event, a welcome that expropriates the host as master of his own home. “In hospitality I welcome an other greater than myself who can consequently overwhelm the space of my house” (*Hostipitality*, 17, n. 20). In such an expropriation, the event dislodges the self from its home. Nonetheless, this expropriation turns out to be an ex-appropriation, to use Derrida’s neologism, for in order to constitute a habitable house and a home, “you also need an opening, a door and windows, you have to offer a passage to the stranger [*l’étranger*]” (*Of Hospitality*, 61, trans. modified). There is no home without an other who enters. That is even its condition: “The monad of home has to be hospitable in order to be *ipse*, itself at home, habitable at-home in the relation of self to itself” (*Of Hospitality*, 61). In this way, there is a being-at-home that is not necessarily exclusive of the event of the *arrivant*, for the host, the master of the house, “is at home, but nonetheless he comes to enter his home through the guest—who comes from outside,” Derrida adding this extraordinary formulation: “The master enters from the inside *as if* he came from the outside. He enters his home thanks to the visitor, by the grace of the visitor” (*Of Hospitality*, 125). He is home thanks to the other. The self displays an “absolute porosity” (*Of Hospitality*, 65), a self of exposition to the happening of the event.

As stated already in chapter 7, Derrida delineates this ethics of the event as a “messianic opening to what comes” (a “messianism without religion”²²) in *Specters of Marx*:

Awaiting without horizon of the wait, awaiting what one does not expect yet or any longer, hospitality without reserve, welcoming salutation accorded in advance to the absolute surprise of the *arrivant* from whom or from which one will not ask anything in return and who or which will not be asked to commit to the domestic contracts of any welcoming power (family, state, nation, territory, native soil or blood, language, culture in general, even humanity), just opening which renounces any right to property, any right in general, messianic opening to what is coming, that is, to the event that cannot be awaited as such, or recognized in advance therefore, to the event as the foreigner itself, to her or to him for whom one must leave an empty place, always, in memory of the hope—and this is the very place of spectrality. (SM, 81)

This is why, as such, I am, before the event, caught by surprise and without resources. In *A Taste for the Secret*, Derrida speaks of the absolute weakness and disarmament that allows the incalculable to happen. There is in the event “a moment of absolute weakness and disarmament, and what we said earlier about the occasion, chance, the aleatory, ultimately means exposing ourselves to what

we cannot appropriate" (TS, 63; emphasis mine). In fact, an event exposes the utter vulnerability of the one who is exposed to it, the powerlessness and radical passivity of the one to whom it happens. The event "is there, before us, without us—*there* is someone, something, that happens, that happens to us, and that has no need of us to happen (to us). And this relation to the event or alterity, as well as to chance or the occasion, leaves us completely disarmed; and one has to be disarmed. The 'has to' says yes to the event: it is stronger than I am" (TS, 63). The ethics of the event would designate this vulnerability, this unconditional openness to the other.

Derrida stresses in the passage just cited that with the event we are exposed to a phenomenon that "we cannot appropriate." We are thus led back to the motif of the inappropriable, veritable mark of the event. As seen throughout this work, to "think the event" does not mean to appropriate it under the authority of reason and its demands. Thinking here is not appropriative, not appropriation, not inscription, but, as Nancy puts it, *ex-scription*. What thought thinks remains outside of thought, is exscribed in it. With Nancy, Derrida writes on the *weight* of thinking, a weight that according to him indicates the impossibility of appropriation, and the primacy of expropriation. In *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, Derrida discusses the motif of weight while discussing several texts from Jean-Luc Nancy and cites a passage from *The Gravity of Thought*, where Nancy wrote that existence "*is* the appropriation of the inappropriable."²³ Derrida reads that expression by insisting on the "ex-scription" revealed in it, that is, on what remains inappropriable in the appropriation ("it thus inscribes the uninscribable in inscription itself, it *exscribes*," OT, 298). Derrida reverses Heidegger's "appropriation of the inappropriable" into an "expropriation of the proper," which he also calls "ex-appropriation," a "paradoxical ex-appropriation" that he describes in "Politics and Friendship" as "that movement of the proper expropriating itself through the very process of appropriation."²⁴ Ex-appropriation refers to that "interminable appropriation of an irreducible nonproper" that limits "every and any appropriation process at the same time" (OT, 181–182). Such is, precisely, "the weight of a thought": "*The weight of a thought* is quite exactly the inappropriability of appropriation, or the impropriety of the proper (proper to the proper, absolutely)" (cited in OT, 299). Thus, the most proper sense of the event is such "on the condition of remaining inappropriable, and of remaining inappropriable in its appropriation." On the condition, then, as Nancy put it, of existence "*having weight [faire poids]* at the heart of thought and in spite of thought."²⁵ This "in spite of thought" and this thinking of weight as mark of the inappropriable indicate the *outside* to which thought is assigned. One can understand better in what sense the event weighs on thought from the outside, and how thought is nothing but the thinking of this event, in wonder before it, even if it means never being able to appropriate it.

Notes

Introduction

1. G. W. Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, *Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2000), 7.
2. Leibniz and Clarke, *Correspondence*, 39.
3. Cited in Martin Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund*, ed. by Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), GA 10, 32. Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 21. Hereafter cited as PR.
4. Cited in François Zourabichvili, *Gilles Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event*, ed. Gregg Lambert and Daniel W. Smith, trans. Kieran Aarons (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 57. Hereafter cited as POE.
5. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, trans. Michael Naas and Pascale-Anne Brault (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 122. Hereafter cited as R.
6. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 160. Hereafter cited as BG.
7. Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow . . . : A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 50.
8. Jacques Derrida, *For Strasbourg*, ed. and trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 60.
9. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Gravity of Thought*, trans. François Raffoul and Gregory Recco (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997), 79.
10. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 49. Hereafter cited as CW.
11. Jean-Luc Marion, *Negative Certainties*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 182. Hereafter cited as NC.
12. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A 445, B 473, 485. Hereafter cited as CPR, followed by the A and B editions pages and the page number of the translation.
13. Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit. Einleitung in die Philosophie*, ed. Hartmut Tietjen (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982), GA 31, 300. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002), 203, trans. slightly modified.
14. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), 709. Hereafter cited as BN.
15. Jean-Luc Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn,"* ed. Dominique Janicaud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 204, trans. slightly modified.
16. Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*, ed. Hermann Mörchen (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997),

GA 34, 144. The English translation has: “the concept of being loses its primordial innermost meaning, i.e., presence; the *temporal* moment is completely shaken off.” Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato’s Cave Allegory and “Theaetetus,”* trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002), 104.

17. Hannah Arendt, “What Is Existential Philosophy?,” in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1994). Hereafter cited as WEP.

18. Jacques Derrida, “Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides” and “Deconstructing Terrorism,” in Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 96. Hereafter cited as PTT.

19. On the derivation of a thinking of the event from an ontology of contingency, see Gert-Jan van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology. Plurality, Event, and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy* (Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2014).

20. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London and New York: Verso, 1997, 2005), 17.

21. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Richard Polt (Indianapolis: Hackett Classics, Hackett Publishing, 1997), 32. Hereafter cited as TI.

22. Claude Romano, *Event and World*, trans. Shane Mackinlay (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 41. Hereafter cited as EW.

23. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Random House, 1968), 295.

24. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Vintage, 1967), 45. Hereafter cited as GM.

25. Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007). GA 14, 22. Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 16.

26. Jacques Derrida, *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 94.

27. Jacques Derrida, “A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event,” *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 454. Hereafter cited as CIP.

28. Martin Heidegger, *Das Ereignis*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009). GA 71, 150. Martin Heidegger, *The Event*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 129, modified.

29. Martin Heidegger, *Feldweg-Gespräche* (1944/45), ed. Ingrid Schüssler (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995). GA 77, 109. Martin Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, trans. Bret W. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 71.

30. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert Richardson and Anne O’Byrne (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 169. Hereafter cited as BSP.

31. Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), GA 5, 30. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, rev. and exp. ed., ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 170, modified.

32. Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000). GA 7, 175. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 171–172. Hereafter cited as PLT.

33. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953), 37. I draw from both extant English translations: *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), and *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010). Hereafter cited as SZ, followed by the German pagination.
34. Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 122.
35. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 445, my emphasis.
36. Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 2005), 68. Hereafter cited as PF.
37. For Derrida Nancy's use of this term is clearly a "provocation," a provocation toward the entire theological tradition that supports it: "obviously, as you well know, your use of the word creation is a provocation." Derrida, *For Strasbourg*, p. 75.
38. Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizzary (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 57. Hereafter cited as OT.
39. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 43, trans. modified. Hereafter cited as BP.
40. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Truth of Democracy*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 34.
41. Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 65. Hereafter cited as GD.
42. Jacques Derrida, PTT, 90.
43. Mira Arts & Pictures, "Régis Debray & Jacques Derrida (Médiologie et déconstruction sur le fil du temps)," YouTube video, 1:22:59, posted October 7, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLQT5rl9Cwg>.
44. Jacques Derrida, *A Taste for the Secret*, with Maurizio Ferraris, trans. Giacomo Donis (Malden, MA: Polity, 2001), 63.

1. The Event outside of Thought

1. Hannah Arendt, "What Is Existential Philosophy?," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1994). Hereafter cited as WEP.
2. Georg W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, rev. ed., ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press: October 25, 1991), 20, modified.
3. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A 445, B 473, 485. Hereafter cited as CPR, followed by the A and B editions pages and the page number of the translation.
4. Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit. Einleitung in die Philosophie*, ed. Hartmut Tietjen (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982), GA 31, 300. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002), 203, trans. slightly modified.
5. Jean-Luc Marion, *Negative Certainties*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 181. Hereafter cited as NC.

6. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 161. Hereafter cited as BG.

7. G. W. Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, *Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2000), 7.

8. Leibniz and Clarke, *Correspondence*, 65.

9. Leibniz and Clarke, *Correspondence*, 39.

10. Cited in Martin Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), GA 10, 32–33. See also Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 21. Hereafter cited as PR.

11. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), 709. Hereafter cited as BN.

12. Jean-Paul Sartre, “Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl’s Phenomenology,” trans. Joseph P. Fell, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 1, no. 2 (1970): 4.

13. Cited in François Zourabichvili, *Gilles Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event*, ed. Gregg Lambert and Daniel W. Smith, trans. Kieran Aarons (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 56. Hereafter cited as POE. Deleuze also writes in *Proust and Signs*, “There is always the violence of a sign that forces us into the search. . . . Truth is never the product of a predisposed good will but the result of a violence in thought. . . . Truth depends on an encounter with something that forces us to think and to seek the truth. . . . It is the accident of the encounter that guarantees the necessity of what is thought.” Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, trans. R. Howard (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2000), 15–16.

14. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Gravity of Thought*, trans. François Raffoul and Gregory Recco (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997), 79.

15. On the derivation of a thinking of the event from an ontology of contingency, see Gert-Jan van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology: Plurality, Event, and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2014).

16. Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958), 139.

17. Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 37. Hereafter cited as IE.

18. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (New York: Verso, 1997).

19. POE, 51. And: “Philosophy fails in its search for a first concept, because beginning does not depend on it” POE, 56.

20. Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 13.

21. Martin Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* (1951–52), ed. Paola-Ludovika Coriando (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002), GA 8, 7. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 5–6.

22. Martin Heidegger, “Kants These über das Sein,” in *Wegmarken*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), GA 9, 451. Martin Heidegger, “Kant’s Thesis about Being,” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 341.

23. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 177–178. Hereafter cited as HC.

24. On the limits of situating the question of freedom in the context of causality, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, trans. Bridget McDonald (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 25–26.

25. On this outsideness of the world that is part of the constitution of the world (of its event), see Jean-Luc Nancy's comments in *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 52 (hereafter cited as CW), and in particular this passage: "By writing that 'the sense of the world must lie outside the world' [Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (New York: Routledge, 2001) 6.41, 86], Wittgenstein simultaneously stated two things: that the world in itself does not constitute an immanence of meaning, but that, since there is no other world, the 'outside' of the world must be open 'within it'—but open in a way that no other world could be posited there."

26. As Jean-Luc Nancy comments in his own thinking of free decision, it is a question of a decision for "what is in no way given in advance, but which constitutes the irruption of the new, unpredictable because without face, and thus the 'beginning of a series of phenomena' by which the Kantian freedom is defined in its relation to the world" (CW, 59).

27. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 20. Hereafter cited as OR.

28. Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 57.

2. The Event without Reason

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1968), 148. Hereafter cited as WP.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Richard Polt (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 1997), 21. Hereafter cited as TI.

3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, ed. Richard Schacht and trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 16. Hereafter cited as HH.

4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, trans. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1979), 81. Hereafter cited as OTL.

5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 326.

6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 169. Hereafter cited as GS.

7. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 29. Hereafter cited as BGE.

8. Claude Romano, *Event and World*, trans. Shane Mackinlay (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 41. Hereafter cited as EW.

9. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A 444/B 472, 484. Hereafter cited as CPR, followed by the A and B editions pages and the page number of the translation.

10. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 167. Hereafter cited as BG.

11. Jean-Luc Marion, “The Saturated Phenomenon,” in *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 204, trans. slightly modified.
12. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 45. Hereafter cited as GM.
13. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. Rüdiger Bittner, trans. Kate Sturge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 75–76.
14. Martin Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), GA 10, 171. Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 117. Hereafter cited as PR.
15. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, trans. Michael Naas and Pascale-Anne Brault (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 122. Hereafter cited as R.
16. François Zourabichvili, *Gilles Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event*, ed. Gregg Lambert and Daniel W. Smith, trans. Kieran Aarons (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 57.
17. Martin Heidegger, *Seminare*, ed. Curd Ochswadt (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1981), GA 15, 399. Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 80. Hereafter cited as FS.
18. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 45. Hereafter cited as CW.
19. One thinks here of a passage from *Nausea* where Sartre, after having established the utter lack of reason of existence, its sheer contingency, nonetheless discovers a meaning as it were immanent to existence, coming out of existence, by way of the enigmatic “smile” of the trees: “I got up and went out of the park. Once at the gate, I turned around. Then the garden smiled at me. I leaned against the gate and watched for a long time. The smile of the trees, of the clump of laurel, meant something; that was the real secret of existence.” Things exude what Sartre calls a “complicit air” (*un air complice*), giving a sort of “look” (*un regard*), conveying an “odd little meaning” (*un drôle de petit sens*): “That little meaning annoyed me: I could not understand it, even if I had stayed leaning against the gate for a century; I had learned all I could know about existence.” Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, ed. and introduced by Robert Denoon Cumming (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 68.
20. On the relation between *wesen* and *währen* (*Wesen heißt Währen*), on the necessity to hear *währen* as *Anwähren* and as *Weilen* and *Verweilen*, see Heidegger’s remarks in “On Time and Being.” Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007), GA 14, 16. Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 12. Hereafter cited as TB.
21. One finds a reference to this citation (and to the lecture course as such) on the “Summary of a lecture on ‘Time and Being’”: “For Heidegger, on the other hand, one cannot speak of a ‘why.’ Only the ‘that’—that the history of Being is in such a way—can be said. Thus in the lecture ‘The Principle of Sufficient Reason’ the saying of Goethe is cited: ‘How? When? and Where?—The gods remain silent! Then stick to *Because*, and ask not about *Why*?’” The “because” is then characterized in this way: “The ‘because’ in the lecture is what endures [*das Währen*], what maintains itself as destiny.” GA 14, 62/TB, 52.

22. Martin Heidegger, *Das Ereignis*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009), GA 71, 121. Martin Heidegger, *The Event*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 103.

3. Event and Phenomenology

1. Martin Heidegger, *Feldweg-Gespräche*, ed. Ingrid Schüssler (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), GA 77, 109. Martin Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, trans. Bret W. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 71.

2. Françoise Dastur, “Phenomenology of the Event: Waiting and Surprise,” in *Hypatia* 15, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 187. Hereafter cited as PE.

3. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953), 31. I draw from both extant English translations: *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), and *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010). Hereafter cited as SZ, followed by the German pagination.

4. On this etymological analysis of the term *phenomenon*, see also Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), GA 17, 5–8. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 4–5.

5. Martin Heidegger, *Seminare*, ed. Curd Ochswadt (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1981), GA 15, 397, 399. Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 79–80. Hereafter cited as FS.

6. On this issue, see my “The Secret and the Invisible: Of a Phenomenology of the Inapparent,” in a special issue on phenomenology for *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 11, no. 3 (2016): 395–414.

7. In *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger explained that *Ereignis* was the least apparent of such inapparent: “Das Ereignis ist das Unscheinbarste des Unscheinbaren—the least apparent of the unapparent.” Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), GA 12, 247. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 128.

8. Martin Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes*, ed. Ingeborg Schüßler (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), GA 19, 52. Martin Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Andre Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 36–37.

9. As Gert-Jan van der Heiden writes, “‘the event’ is the name for this being of appearing and coming—that is, the name for that which makes the appearance of the phenomenon possible.” Gert-Jan van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology. Plurality, Event, and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy* (Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2014), 157.

10. Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), GA 24, 27. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. A. Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 20. Hereafter cited as GA 24, followed by German pagination first.

11. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 8, emphasis mine. Hereafter cited as BG.

12. Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1962), GA 14, 54. Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 44. Hereafter cited as TB.

13. Martin Heidegger, *Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs. Prolegomena zur Phänomenologie von Geschichte und Natur*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), GA 20, 150. Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 109. Hereafter cited as GA 20, followed by German pagination first.

14. GA 20, 147/107. Nearly forty years later, in 1964, returning to the question of the subjectivism of Husserlian phenomenology, Heidegger reiterated the same criticism: “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.” And 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.” “*Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens*,” in GA 14, 78–79/TB, 63.

15. For example: SZ, 11, 16–17. Also, in the 1925 course, the term *construction* is applied to concepts separated from their ontological ground. GA 20, 104/76.

16. Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2010), GA 3, 233. Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 163.

17. The protocol of the Thor seminar (September 4, 1969) reads: “He [Heidegger] begins by naming the authentic name of the method followed: “destruction”—this must be understood in the strong sense as *de-struere*, “dis-mantling” [*Ab-bauen*], and not as devastation. But what is dismantled? Answer: that which covers over the meaning of being, the structures amassed upon one another that make the meaning of being unrecognizable. Further, destruction strives to free the original meaning of being. This original meaning is presence.” GA 15, 337/FS, 42.

18. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), lxx.

19. Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung*, ed. Walter Bröcker and Käte Bröcker-Oltmanns (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), GA 61, 99. Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 74.

20. For instance: GA 10, 80/53.

21. Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Le Je-ne-sais-quoi et le-presque-rien*, vol. 3, *La volonté de vouloir* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986), 76. Cited in Claude Romano, *Event and World*, trans. Shane Mackinlay (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 1.

22. Jean-Luc Marion, *Negative Certainties*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 184. Hereafter cited as NC. This passing of the event is

in contrast with objects, which “remain (*objectum*), stable, determined and thus invariable enough, at least for a period of time, so as to offer the conditions for a knowledge that is certain.” NC, 155–156.

23. This is, for instance, the premise of the volume *Being Shaken: Ontology and the Event*, ed. Michael Marder and Santiago Zabala (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

24. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert Richardson and Anne O’Byrne (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 169. Hereafter cited as BSP.

25.

But neither does time exist without change; for when the state of our own minds does not change at all, or we have not noticed its changing, we do not realize that time has elapsed, any more than those who are fabled to sleep among the heroes in Sardinia do when they are awakened; for they connect the earlier “now” with the later and make them one, cutting out the interval because of their failure to notice it. So, just as, if the “now” were not different but one and the same, there would not have been time, so too when its difference escapes our notice the interval does not seem to be time. If, then, the non-realization of the existence of time happens to us when we do not distinguish any change, but the soul seems to stay in one indivisible state, and when we perceive and distinguish we say time has elapsed, evidently time is not independent of movement and change. (Aristotle, *Physics IV*, chap. 11, 218b, 21–33, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon [New York: Random House, 1941].)

26. See Martin Heidegger, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” GA 14, 81/TB, 65–66, trans. modified: “Goethe notes (*Maxims and Reflections*, n. 993): ‘Look for nothing behind phenomena: they themselves are the doctrine itself.’ This means the phenomenon itself, in the present case the opening, sets us the task of learning from it while questioning it, that is, of letting it say something to us.” The issue is to gain access to the phenomena themselves, because they are in themselves the doctrine.

27. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 151. Hereafter cited as VI.

28. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A 33/B 50, 163. Hereafter cited as CPR, followed by the A and B editions pages and the page number of the translation.

29. Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2000), GA 7, 256. *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David F. Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 96.

30. Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), GA 5, 337. *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 253, 254.

31. The term *dehiscence*, from the Latin *dehiscencia* (*dehiscens*-, *dehiscens*, present participle of *dehiscere*), designates an openness (in particular in the medical vocabulary as well as in the anatomic and botanic domains).

32. Françoise Dastur, “Autour de la Phénoménologie,” seminar from April 14–15, 2007. <http://www.artefilosofia.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/04/phenomenologie.pdf>.

33. Mira Arts & Pictures, “Régis Debray & Jacques Derrida (Médiologie et déconstruction sur le fil du temps),” YouTube video, 1:22:59, posted October 7, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLQT5rl9Cwg>.

34. Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002). Hereafter cited as IE.

35. Baudelaire, “A une passante,” *Les Fleurs du Mal*, LXVII, in *Oeuvres complètes*, Tome 1, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1975), 88. English translation: Baudelaire, *Flowers of Evil*, trans. James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 189, trans. modified. In Richard Howard’s translation (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982): “In Passing”:

The traffic roared around me, deafening!
Tall, slender, in mourning—noble grief—
a woman passed . . .

36. “The Phenomenology of Givenness,” interview in *Quiet Powers of the Possible*, ed. Tarek R. Dika and W. Chris Hackett (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 54.

37. Cited in BG, 190.

4. Things as Events

1. Martin Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund*, ed. by Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), GA 10, 81. Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 54. Hereafter cited as PR.

2. Jean-Luc Marion, *Negative Certainties* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 170. Hereafter cited as NC.

3. Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), GA 65, 13. Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 10. Hereafter cited as GA 65, followed by German pagination first.

4. Martin Heidegger, *Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs. Prolegomena zur Phänomenologie von Geschichte und Natur*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), GA 20. Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). Hereafter cited as GA 20, followed by German pagination first.

5. Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975), GA 24, 27. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 20. Hereafter cited as GA 24, followed by German pagination first.

6. Claude Romano, *Event and World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 14.

7. As Andrew Mitchell stresses in his recent book on the Fourfold in Heidegger’s late work, “To begin with, the things in question are nothing so fixed or self-contained. What appears in this world does so in conjunction with everything around it. There is nothing that does not exist in this relational way. To appear is to be exposed and to be exposed is to be opened to a beyond, even to welcome that beyond (to invite it). This is what we might term the ‘hospitality’ of things. From this perspective, then, things are already beyond themselves and do not stand outside the relation as poles isolated from each other.” Andrew J. Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 5.

8. Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), GA 5, 30. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*,

rev. and exp. ed., ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1993), 170, modified. Hereafter cited as BW.

9. Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. I. Görland (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), GA 25, 43. Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 30, modified.

10. Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1936–53), ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (2000), GA 7, 155–156. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 151. Hereafter cited as PLT.

11. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953), 67. I draw from both extant English translations: *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), and *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010). Hereafter cited as SZ, followed by the German pagination.

12. GA 24, 88/63. Heidegger already stated in his 1925 course that “even sense perception is a theoretical apprehension of the thing.” GA 20, 246/182.

13. Claude Romano, *There Is: The Event and the Finitude of Appearing*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 223.

14. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 134. Hereafter cited as VI.

15. Martin Heidegger, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. I. Görland (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), GA 32, 199. Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 138.

16. SZ, 136, emphasis mine, trans. modified. Also in the 1924 lecture *The Concept of Time*, Heidegger explained that in Dasein's everydayness “there lies no reflection upon the ego or the self,” but that instead Dasein “finds itself disposed alongside itself (*Es befindet sich bei sich selbst*).” He concluded by saying that Dasein “comes across itself there in whatever it is generally dealing with.” Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 9E.

17. “What Rilke reads here in his sentences from the exposed wall is not imagined into the wall, but, quite to the contrary, the description is possible *only as an interpretation* (*Auslegung*) and *elucidation* (*Erleuchtung*) of what is ‘actually’ in this wall, which leaps forth from it in our natural comportmental relationship to it.” GA 24, 246/173, emphasis mine.

18. Françoise Dastur, *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), 26.

19. Martin Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding. Zu Kants Lehre von den transzendentalen Grundsätzen*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1984), GA 41, 5. Martin Heidegger, *What Is a Thing?*, trans. W. B. Barton and Vera Deutsch (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1967), 5.

20. Martin Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, ed. P. Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), GA 79, 12–13. Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures. Insight into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, trans. Andrew J. Mitchell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 12. Hereafter cited as BL.

21. On this question, see my “The Event of Space,” *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 1 (2012).

22. Martin Heidegger, “Die Kunst und der Raum” (1969), in *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens, 1910–1976*, ed. Hermann Heidegger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), GA 13, 208. Translated by Charles H. Seibert as “Art and Space,” *Man and World*, 6 (1973): 3–8, and reprinted with the same title in *The Heidegger Reader*, ed. Günter Figal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 308. Hereafter cited as AS, followed by page numbers of *The Heidegger Reader*.

23. Heidegger also writes that space “is something that has been spaced or made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek *peras*,” referring to the essential role of the limit and concluding that space essentially includes the *horismos*, the horizon, the boundary, that “space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds.” GA 7, 156/PLT, 152, emphasis mine.

24. In his introduction to Heidegger’s *Bremen Lectures*, Andrew Mitchell rightly notes this connection between *Ereignis* and space or spacing: not only is space to be approached from *Ereignis*, but indeed *Ereignis* itself retains an original spatial sense: “The event (*das Ereignis*) takes place (*ereignet sich*). The translation ‘to take place’ draws attention to the spacing of the event of appropriation itself. What takes place is the thinging of the thing and the worlding of the world. What takes place is the belonging together of the human and being. Appropriation takes place. . . . The event of appropriation is a spacing of things. If things themselves can be considered places, then in the taking place of the thinging of the thing, there is an emergence of place.” Translator’s foreword, BL, xii–xiv.

25. Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007), GA 14, 28–29. Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 23, lightly modified. Hereafter cited as TB.

26. Martin Heidegger, *Bemerkungen zu Kunst—Plastik—Raum*, ed. Hermann Heidegger (St. Gallen, Switzerland: Erker Verlag, 1996), 14. Hereafter cited as KPR. I have generally followed Andrew Mitchell’s translation of this text, with some occasional modifications, as well as consulted another version by Jedidiah Mohring from Southern Connecticut State University and Marquette University.

27. Martin Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare*, ed. Medard Boss (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann 2006), GA 89, 113. *Zollikon Seminars*, ed. Medard Boss, trans. Franz K. Mayr and Richard R. Askay (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001, 86, trans. modified. Hereafter cited as Z.

28. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 41.

29. In fact, as written in *Country Path Conversations*, “the nothingness of the jug is really what the jug is.” Martin Heidegger, *Feldweg-Gespräche*, ed. Ingrid Schüssler (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), GA 77, 130. Martin Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, trans. Bret W. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 85. Let me note here the striking etymological connection in French between *rien* (nothing) and *res* (thing), a proximity Jean-Luc Nancy underlies in this way:

Nothing [*rien*] is the thing itself, *res*: the first sense of “nothing” is “some thing” (for example, we still say today: “it is not possible to think nothing about something we know nothing about,” where we clearly hear “something”). If *nothing* has slid, through

the negation “no . . . thing” [*ne . . . rien*] to a privative sense, it is by keeping the sense of “the thing”: “one must think nothing” signifies “one must think no thing,” thus, “not a thing, not a single thing.” *Nothing* is the thing tending toward its pure and simple being of a thing, consequently also toward the most common being of *something* and thus toward the vanishing, momentary quality of the smallest amount of being-ness [*étantité*]. *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 102–103).

30. Mitchell, *The Fourfold*, 300.

5. Historical Happening and the Motion of Life

1. A “bethinking” that Richard Polt characterizes as “*the event of thinking the event*,” in *The Emergency of Being: On Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 109.

2. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953), 6, slightly modified. I draw from both extant English translations: *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), and *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010). Hereafter cited as SZ, followed by the German pagination.

3. As Heidegger said famously in section 12 of *Being and Time*, where he explains that “even entities which are not worldless—Dasein itself, for example—are present-at-hand ‘in’ the world, or, more exactly, *can* with some right and within certain limits be *taken* as merely present-at-hand” (SZ, 55). In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger also states that “we ourselves are also present-at-hand in a certain way,” without, however, going so far as to collapse the ontological difference or demarcation between existence and presence-at-hand. Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975), GA 24, 217. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 153, trans. slightly modified. Hereafter cited as GA 24, followed by German pagination first.

4. Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), GA 9, 324. *Basic Writings*, ed. David F. Krell. 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 207. Hereafter cited as BW.

5. “To avoid getting bewildered, we shall always use the Interpretative expression ‘*presence-at-hand*’ for the term ‘*existentia*,’ while the term ‘*existence*,’ as a designation of Being, will be allotted solely to Dasein” (SZ, 42).

6. Miguel de Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis: Philosophy as Differential Ontology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 110–111.

7. SZ, 65. In “*On the Essence of Ground*,” Heidegger explains, “Beings, such as nature in the broadest sense, could in no way become manifest unless they found *occasion* to enter into a world.” Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), GA 9, 59. Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 123. Hereafter cited as PA.

8. Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007), GA 14, 55. Martin Heidegger,

On Time and Being (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 45–46, emphasis mine. Hereafter cited as TB.

9. Martin Heidegger, *Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs. Prolegomena zur Phänomenologie von Geschichte und Natur*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), GA 20, 232. Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 172. Hereafter cited as GA 20, followed by the German pagination first.

10. René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, I § 51, cited by Heidegger, SZ, 92.

11. In August of 1641, Descartes wrote the following: “This does not mean that they [created things] should not be called substances, because when we call a created substance self-subsistent we do not rule out the divine concurrence which it needs in order to subsist. We mean only that it is the kind of thing that can exist without any other created thing.” Letter to Hyperaspistes, August 1641, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 3, *The Correspondence*, ed. John Cottingham (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 193.

12. Descartes writes in the second part of the *Principia*:

For I freely acknowledge that I recognize no matter in corporeal things apart from that which the geometers call quantity, and take as the object of their demonstrations, i.e. that to which every kind of division, shape, and motion is applicable. Moreover, my consideration of such matter involves absolutely nothing apart from these divisions shapes and motions; and even with regard to these, I will admit as true only what has been deduced from indubitable common notions so evidently that it is fit to be considered as a mathematical demonstration. And since all natural phenomena can be explained in this way, as will become clear in what follows, I do not think that any other principles are either admissible or desirable in physics. (*Principia* II, § 64, cited by Heidegger, GA 20, 244–245/181)

13. Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit. Einleitung in die Philosophie*, ed. H. Tietjen (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), GA 31, 50. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002), 35.

14. The following pages draw in part from my article “The Aporia of History,” *POLIGRAFI* 16, no. 61–62 (2011), special issue on the theme of “Natural History,” ed. David Kleinberg-Levin.

15. Martin Heidegger, “The Concept of Time in the Science of History,” trans. Thomas Sheehan, in *Becoming Heidegger*, ed. Theodore Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 207), 60–72. Essays from this volume will hereafter be cited as BH.

16. It is striking in this respect that in a later critique of historical science, Heidegger makes the point that such a discipline takes as its model natural sciences and its objectifications. For example: “In the historical human sciences ‘source criticism’ corresponds to the experiment of physical research. . . . As in the natural sciences, method in the historical sciences is aimed at presenting the constant and at making history an object.” Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*, edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), GA 5, 82. Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 62.

17. One could claim that this early essay anticipates several key aspects of *Being and Time*, Theodore Kisiel stressing that the essay represents “the proto-development of the distinction between the originary time of the unique self and the derivative time of science and the clock” (BH, Editor’s introduction, xviii).

18. Françoise Dastur, *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 2, trans. modified. Hereafter cited as HQT.

19. Servanne Jollivet, *Heidegger, Sens et Histoire (1912–1927)* (Paris: PUF, 2015), 26.

20. Martin Heidegger, *Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache*, ed. G. Seubold (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998), GA 38, 87. Martin Heidegger, *Logic as the Question Concerning the Essence of Language* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 74.

21. Martin Heidegger, *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, ed. Bern Heimbüchel (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1987), GA 56/57, 59. Martin Heidegger, *Toward the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002), 50.

22. Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles: Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung*, ed. Walter Bröcker and Käte Bröcker-Oltmanns (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), 81. Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 62. Hereafter cited as PIA.

23. Martin Heidegger, “Wilhelm Dilthey’s Research and the Current Struggle for a Historical Worldview,” in BH, 238–274.

24. Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, ed. Matthias Jung, Thomas Regehly, and Claudius Strube (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), GA 60, 32. Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Frisch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 23. It is interesting to note here that indeed Heidegger had used the terms—in particular the adjectives *geschichtlich* and *historisch*—interchangeably in earlier courses and lectures, for instance in the 1919/1921 “Comments on Karl Jaspers’s *Psychology of Worldviews*,” trans. John van Buren in *Pathmarks*, pp. 1–38; see his note 2, p. 365 of PA for clarifications. Heidegger wrote of “life as History (*Geschichte*)” but also of “*historisches Leben*” or of life as being historical (*historisch*) in GA 56/57, 21/18.

25. Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), GA 40, 47. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 46.

26. A similar expression can be found in *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*: “History hits us [*Die Geschichte trifft uns*], and we are history itself” (GA 60, 173/124).

27. Heidegger refers to Nietzsche’s essay on the “advantages and disadvantages of historiography for life” and connects the three senses of historiography that Nietzsche retains—the monumental, the antiquarian, and the critical—to the historicity of *Da-sein* (“*The threefold character of historiography is prefigured in the historicity of Da-sein*,” SZ, 396).

28. Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth,” GA 9, 190/PA, 146.

29. Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), GA 40, 47. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to*

Metaphysics, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 47. Hereafter cited as IM.

30. Martin Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare*, ed. Medard Boss (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), GA 89, 275. *Zollikon Seminars*, ed. Medard Boss, trans. Franz K. Mayr and Richard R. Askay (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 220. Hereafter cited as Z.

31. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), lxx.

32. Dominique Janicaud, *Heidegger in France*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 40.

33. Martin Heidegger, *Ontologie. Hermeneutik der Faktizität*, ed. K. Bröcker-Oltmanns (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988), GA 63, 15. Martin Heidegger, *Ontology. The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. John van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 12.

34. Martin Heidegger, “Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation,” in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to “Being and Time” and Beyond*, ed. John Van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 113. Hereafter cited as S.

35. Martin Heidegger, *Seminare*, ed. Curd Ochwad (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1981), GA 15, 287. Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 11. Hereafter cited as FS.

6. The Event of Being

1. Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 122.

2. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953), 6. I draw from both extant English translations: *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), and *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010). Hereafter cited as SZ, followed by the German pagination.

3. Claude Romano, *Event and World*, trans. Shane Mackinlay (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 20. Hereafter cited as EW.

4. Jean Grondin, “Critical Remarks on the Recent Fascination with the Notion of Event,” in *Being Shaken: Ontology and the Event*, ed. Michael Marder and Santiago Zabala (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 67.

5. Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). Hereafter cited as CT.

6. Martin Heidegger, *Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs. Prolegomena zur Phänomenologie von Geschichte und Natur*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), GA 20, 206. Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 153. Hereafter cited as GA 20, followed by German pagination first.

7. Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit. Einleitung in die Philosophie*, ed. Hartmut Tietjen (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann,

1982), GA 31, 14. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002), 10. Hereafter cited as GA 31, followed by German pagination first. A few pages later (GA 31, 32/24), Heidegger explains that the question on the totality of beings is a “going-to-the-root,” which in turn “must take aim at us” and represents a challenge to us.

8. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, trans. Michael Naas and Pascale-Anne Brault (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 135. Hereafter cited as R.

9. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert Richardson and Anne O’Byrne (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 33, modified. Hereafter cited as BSP.

10. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 445, emphasis mine.

11. Martin Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare*, ed. Medard Boss (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann 2006), GA 89, 220. *Zollikon Seminars*, ed. Medard Boss, trans. Franz K. Mayr and Richard R. Askay (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001, 175. Hereafter cited as Z.

12. Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 22 E. Hereafter cited as CT.

13. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, trans. Bridget McDonald (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 67. Hereafter cited as EF.

14. I will return to this question in chapter 8.

15. Françoise Dastur, “Phenomenology of the Event: Waiting and Surprise,” *Hypatia* 15, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 83.

16. Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 68. Hereafter cited as PF.

17. Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 20.

18. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Banality of Heidegger*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 5. Hereafter cited as TBH.

19. Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), GA 7, 26. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, rev. and exp. ed., ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1993), 330.

20. One thinks here of Derrida’s rethinking of freedom away from the subjectivity of the willful subject: “What must be thought here, then, is this inconceivable and unknowable thing, a freedom that would no longer be the power of a subject, a freedom without autonomy, a heteronomy without servitude, in short, something like a passive decision” (R, 152).

21. Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), GA 29/30, 28. Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 19. Hereafter cited as GA 29/30, followed by German pagination first.

22. Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), GA 65, 87. Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 60. Hereafter cited as GA 65, followed by German pagination first.

23. Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*, ed. Hermann Mörchen (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988), GA 34, 144. The English translation has: “the concept of being loses its primordial innermost meaning, i.e., presence; the temporal moment is completely shaken off.” Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato’s Cave Allegory and “Theaetetus,”* trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002), 104.

24. Françoise Dastur, “Présent, présence et événement chez Heidegger,” in *Heidegger. Le danger et la promesse*, ed. Gérard Bensussan and Joseph Cohen (Paris: Kimé, 2006), 121.

25. Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007), GA 14, 5. Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 2.

26. “All appearances are in time, in which, as substratum (as persistent form of inner intuition), both **simultaneity** as well as **succession** can alone be represented. The time, therefore, in which all change of appearances is to be thought, lasts and does not change.” Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A 182/B 225, 300, emphasis in the original.

27. Martin Heidegger, *Seminare*, ed. Curd Ochwadt (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1981), GA 15, 364. Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 59. Hereafter cited as FS.

28. Martin Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken? (1951–52)*, ed. Paola-Ludovika Coriando (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002), GA 8, 191. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 188.

29. Jacques Derrida, *For Strasbourg: Conversations of Friendship and Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 92.

30. Translator’s foreword to *Country Path Conversations*, trans. Bret W. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), xiii.

31. Recall here as we indicated above that Heidegger explained in *On the Way to Language* that *Ereignis* was the least apparent of the inapparent. Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), GA 12, 247. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 128. Hereafter cited as OWL.

32. *Ereignis*, as Heidegger indeed stated in a marginal note to “Letter on Humanism,” “has been the guiding word of my thinking since 1936 [Denn ‘Ereignis’ seit 1936 das Leitwort meines Denkens].” *Wegmarken*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), GA 9, 316. Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 241. Hereafter cited as PA.

33. Richard Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2010), 22.

34. For instance, see the recent translation of volume 71 of Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe*, *Das Ereignis* as *The Event*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

35. Heidegger explains: “This word is here claimed as a *singular tantum*. It names something singular, that wherein all things and beings extend to one another [zu-gereicht], reach over [überreicht], and thus reach [erreichen] one another, and redound [gereichen] to

the benefit and detriment of each other, fulfill [*ausreichen*] and satisfy one another” (GA 79, 168/BL, 158).

36. Françoise Dastur, *Penser ce qui advient* (Paris: Les petits Platon, 2014), 107.

37. Levinas saw this. Speaking of *Ereignis* in Heidegger’s thought, he writes: “Being is that which becomes my-own, and it is for this that a man is necessary to being. It is through man that being is ‘properly.’ These are the most profound things in Heidegger.” *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 92.

38. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche II*, ed. Brigitte Schillbach (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), GA 6.2, 194, emphasis mine. *Nietzsche III: The Will to Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics*, ed. David F. Krell, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 141. Hereafter cited as GA 6.2 and Nietzsche III. On this interruption, see my “The Incompletion of *Being and Time* and the Question of Subjectivity,” in *Division III of “Being and Time”: Heidegger’s Unanswered Question of Being*, ed. Lee Braver (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

39. Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), GA 40, 118. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 116. Hereafter cited as IM.

40. In the 1929/1930 course, Heidegger defined fundamental metaphysical concepts as “comprehensive concepts [*In-begriffe*]” (GA 29/30, 13/9). They embrace the whole, and, in a different but connected way, they embrace the human being.

41. Martin Heidegger, “Letter to Father Richardson,” in *The Heidegger Reader*, ed. Günter Figal, trans. Jerome Veith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 302. Hereafter cited as HR.

42. Dastur, *Penser ce qui advient*, 107, emphasis mine.

43. On this point, see Richard Polt, “From the Understanding of Being to the Happening of Being,” in *Division III of “Being and Time”: Heidegger’s Unanswered Question of Being*, ed. Lee Braver (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

44. On this necessity, see my “The Incompletion of *Being and Time* and the Question of Subjectivity,” in *Division III of “Being and Time”: Heidegger’s Unanswered Question of Being*, ed. Lee Braver (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

45. For a careful analysis of the various senses of such grounding, see John Sallis’s essay, “Grounders of the Abyss,” in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. Charles E. Scott, Susan Schoenbohm, Daniela Vallega-Neu, and Alejandro Vallega (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 181–197.

46. “Because humanity is itself as historical, the question about its own Being must change from the form ‘What is humanity?’ into the form ‘Who is humanity?’” (GA 40, 152/IM, 153).

47. Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymnen “Germanien” und “Der Rhein,”* ed. Susanne Ziegler (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980), GA 39, 48–49. Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymns “Germania” and “The Rhine,”* trans. William McNeill and Julia Ireland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 47.

48. As well as all modes of reflection onto self: “The retro-relation [*Rückbezug*] that is named in the ‘itself,’ to ‘itself,’ with ‘itself,’ for ‘itself,’ has what is most proper in the owning [*Eignung*]” (GA 65, 320/225).

49. Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 92.

50. In paragraphs 134 and 135, Heidegger addresses the “relation” of Da-sein to be-ing and notes that “strictly speaking, talk of a relation of Da-sein to be-ing is misleading, insofar as this suggests that be-ing holds sway ‘for itself’ and that Da-sein takes up the relating to be-ing.” GA 65, 254/179.

7. Event, World, Democracy

1. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert Richardson and Anne O’Byrne (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 29. Hereafter cited as BSP.

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969), 260. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989), 588. Cited in BSP, 159.

3. For Derrida, Nancy’s use of this term is clearly a “provocation,” a provocation toward the entire tradition that supports it: “obviously, as you well know, your use of the word creation is a provocation.” Jacques Derrida, *For Strasbourg: Conversations of Friendship and Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 75.

4. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 51. Hereafter cited as CW.

5. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, trans. Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant, and Michael B. Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008). Hereafter cited as D. I have occasionally modified the translation, and I indicate it as appropriate.

6. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity II* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 3.

7. On this, see my “Derrida and the Ethics of the Im-possible,” *Research in Phenomenology*, 38 (2008). I will return to this in the next chapter.

8. Jacques Derrida, *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 74. Hereafter cited as PM.

9. As he also put it in *The Sense of the World*, “there is no God because there is the world.” Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey Librett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 156.

10. An analysis pursued in a discussion of Gérard Granel’s text, “Essay on the Ontological Kenosis of Thought since Kant,” in the chapter “A Faith That Is Nothing at All,” in D, 63–74.

11. In French, *mettre au monde* has the colloquial sense of giving birth. Nonetheless, Nancy clarifies: “‘Coming to the world’ means birth and death, emerging from nothing and going to nothing.” CW, 74.

12. Nancy, *Adoration*, 8.

13. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 36–47. Hereafter cited as BP.

14. BP, 47, trans. modified. The translator strangely has: “Ontology will be, from now on, an anthropology that has no other ‘object’ but the dereliction of being.” Yet there is no trace of *anthropologie* in the French original.

15. Peter Fenves, foreword to EF, xxiv.

16. In a discussion with Wolfgang Schirmacher in 2001 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfEwSrU84rY>), Nancy evokes the sense of *to love* as a giving of what is behind or beyond any subject, any self. “It is precisely a giving of nothing, a giving of the fact that I cannot possess myself. This is *to abandon*, because in that case I would say that *to give* is the same as *to abandon*. In French I would say *donner* is the same as *abandonner*. Because *to give* in French is *donner*.” After his interlocutor suggests, “To give up,” Nancy replies, “Ah, that is wonderful. To give is to give up.”

17. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953), 37. I draw from both extant English translations: *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), and *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 42. Hereafter cited as SZ, followed by the German pagination.

18. Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Humanism of Existentialism,” in *Essays in Existentialism* (New York: Citadel Press, 1995), 34. Hereafter cited as HE.

19. Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, ed. Manfred S. Frings (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982), GA 54, 77. Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. Andre Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 52–53. Incidentally, this is the basis of Heidegger’s critique of Nietzsche as “anti-Platonism.” “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God Is Dead’” states the following: “Metaphysics, which for Nietzsche is Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end. Nietzsche understands his own philosophy as the countermovement against metaphysics, i.e., for him, against Platonism. . . . As a mere countermovement, however, it necessarily remains trapped, like everything anti-, in the essence of what it is challenging. Since all it does is turn metaphysics upside down, Nietzsche’s countermovement against metaphysics remains embroiled in it and has no way out.” Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), GA 5, 217. Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 162. Indecently and apparently without shame, François Fédier uses this motif to argue that Heidegger could not have been an anti-Semite! (in a lecture given at a conference on “*Heidegger et les Juifs*”: La Règle du jeu, “Colloque «Heidegger et ‘les juifs’»—François Fédier,” YouTube video, 1:27:22, posted March 19, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tjim4TK8esA>).

20. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993), 565. Hereafter cited as BN.

21. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, trans. Bridget McDonald (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 9. Hereafter cited as EF.

22. This discussion on essence and existence could be complicated by adding to it what Derrida wrote on this matter in *Specters of Marx*. Derrida introduced there the notion of a *hauntology*, of the spectral, which, he tells us, “is neither substance, nor essence, nor existence” and which “*is never present as such*.” Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), xvii. Hereafter cited as SM.

23. In *Jean-Luc Nancy: Justice, Legality and World*, ed. Benjamin Hutchens (London: Continuum Press, 2012). On freedom as fact, see Benjamin C. Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2015), in particular 69–72 and 75.

24. If it is the case, as Nancy states in *A Finite Thinking*, that abandonment “is presented to beings as their very finitude.” *A Finite Thinking*, ed. Simon Sparks (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 20. Hereafter cited as FT.

25. Note here that *abandon*, and its associated term *déréliction*, is probably more a translation of and commentary on Heidegger’s *Geworfenheit* (and Sartre’s appropriation of it) than to be associated with the later notion of “abandonment of being” or *Seinsverlassenheit* that one finds in Heidegger’s *Beiträge*, as Benjamin Pryor suggests in his article “Law in Abandon: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Critical Study of Law,” *Law and Critique*, 15 (2004): 262, n. 8, and 272. In this respect, the *Beiträge* was first published in German in 1989 while Nancy’s essay on “Abandoned Being” dates from 1981.

26. Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Weight of a Thought,” in *The Gravity of Thought*, trans. François Raffoul and Gregory Recco (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1997), 80.

27. Jean-Luc Nancy, “Préface à l’édition italienne de *L’Impératif catégorique*,” in *Le Portique, revue semestrielle de philosophie et sciences humaines* 18 (2006), <http://leportique.revues.org/index831.html>.

28. Nancy, preface to *L’impératif catégorique*.

29. As Levinas has shown with respect to the poverty and naked abandon of the face. The face commands, Levinas argues, out of its very abandonment and the height of obligation—this categorical imperative that is the face, this vertical command—emanates from someone who is poor and destitute: “it is the poor for whom I can do all and to whom I owe all.” Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 89.

30. Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Free Voice of Man,” in *Retreating the Political*, ed. Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 1997), 51. Hereafter cited as RP.

31. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Truth of Democracy*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 37. Hereafter cited as TD.

32. Jean-Luc Nancy, “Finite and Infinite Democracy,” in *Democracy in What State?*, trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 58. Hereafter cited as FID.

33. Peter Gratton and Marie-Eve Morin, eds., *Jean-Luc Nancy and Plural Thinking* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 236, trans. modified.

34. “Philosophy as Chance: An Interview with Jean-Luc Nancy,” with Lorenzo Fabbri, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, *Critical Inquiry* (Winter 2007): 431. Hereafter cited as PC.

35. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 72. Hereafter cited as R.

36. In contrast with awaiting (*Erwarten*), waiting (*Warten*) “has, properly speaking, no object.” Martin Heidegger, *Feldweg-Gespräche*, ed. Ingrid Schüssler (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), GA 77, 115. Martin Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, trans. Bret W. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 75. Hereafter cited as GA 77, followed by German pagination first.

37. “In waiting we leave open that upon which we wait.” GA 77, 116/75.

38. Martine Meskel-Cresta, “(Les) dehors (de) la démocratie?” in *Figures du dehors: Autour de Jean-Luc Nancy*, ed. Gisèle Berkman and Danielle Cohen-Levinas (Paris: Cécile Default, 2012), 138–139.

39. Jean-Luc Nancy, “*Etre-avec et Démocratie*,” *Strass of Philosophy*, February 9, 2013, <http://strassdelaphilosophie.blogspot.fr/2013/02/etre-avec-et-democratie-jean-luc-nancy.html>. Hereafter cited as EAD.

40. However, this without-reason is not tantamount to the nondifferentiation of capitalistic exchange: “This does not at all mean that anything makes sense in just any way; that would be precisely the capitalist version of the without-reason, which establishes the general equivalence of all forms of meaning in an infinite uniformity” (CW, 52). I will return to this nonequivalence later.

41. Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, ed. John B. Thomson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 199, 279, 285, 303.

42. Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco. *For What Tomorrow . . . A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 83.

43. Marie-Eve Morin rightly notes that “For Nancy, May ’68 was an event in the strong sense: a ‘break’ with ‘History,’ a breach or opening in the thought of time as succession and progression where potentialities were encountered outside of or beyond the question of feasibility and realization.” Marie-Eve Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 114.

44. Although Nancy traces its first appearance to the fourteenth century, “with the meaning of ‘people having in common a property belonging to the category of ‘main morte’—that is, not being submitted to the law of heritage.” It then appeared in a significant way in the eighteenth century “in a text written by Victor d’Hupay de Fuveau in 1785—four years before the French revolution. It designates the project or the dream to found a community of life—which precisely is supposed to replace that of the Monks.” See Jean-Luc Nancy, “On Communism,” *Critical Legal Thoughts* (July 26, 2009).

45. As Nancy clarifies, “the challenge is thus to introduce a new nonequivalence that would have nothing to do, of course, with the nonequivalence of economic domination” (TD, 24).

46. Jean-Luc Nancy, *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 4. Hereafter cited as AF.

47. Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Confronted Community,” trans. Amanda Macdonald, *Postcolonial Studies*, 6, no. 1 (2003): 28, emphasis mine. Hereafter cited as CC.

48. On this original praxis of democracy, one that might engage a “dislodging of the very foundation of general equivalence,” see TD, 31.

49. Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. Steve Corcoran (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2006), 97.

8. The Secret of the Event

1. Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 65. Hereafter cited as GD.

2. Jacques Derrida, “Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides,” in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, ed. Giovanna Borradori (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 90. Hereafter cited as PTT.

3. Jacques Derrida, *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 159. Hereafter cited as PM.

4. Jacques Derrida, “Passions,” in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 24, emphasis mine. Hereafter cited as P.

5. Jacques Derrida, “A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event,” *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 456. Hereafter cited as CIP.

6. Martin Heidegger, *Das Ereignis*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009), GA 71, 150. Martin Heidegger, *The Event*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 29.

7. Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 77. Hereafter cited as A.

8. Jacques Derrida, *For Strasbourg: Conversations of Friendship and Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 44.

9. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953), 39. I draw from both extant English translations: *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), and *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).

10. Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), GA 9, 328. Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 250.

11. Martin Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?*, ed. Paola-Ludovika Coriando (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann 2002), GA 8, 7. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 6.

12. Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow . . . : A Dialogue*, trans. by Jeff Fort (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 50. Hereafter cited as FWT. *L'arrivant* is the present participle of the verb *arriver*, which means both to happen and to arrive. The translator explains: “‘C’est (ce) qui arrive’: the verb *arriver* can mean both ‘to arrive’ and ‘to happen.’ *Arrivance*, as with *différer/différance*, Derrida has forged a substantive from *arriver* by way of its present participle *arrivant* (‘arriving’ but also, as the noun *l’arrivant*, ‘the one arriving’ or ‘the arrival’); hence the very approximate rendering as ‘arriving-ness,’ with the implication also of something like ‘happen-ing-ness.’” Derrida and Roudinesco, FW, 207, n. 4.

13. Jacques Derrida, *For Strasbourg: Conversations of Friendship and Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 60. Hereafter cited as FS.

14. See, for instance, Derrida, “Passions,” 15, where Derrida uses the term *responsiveness* in English in the original. Also see Derrida, GD, 3.

15. Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (New York: Verso, 2005), 250, emphasis mine. Hereafter cited as PF.

16. Derrida, FS, 67.

17. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, trans. Michael Naas and Pascale-Anne Brault (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 152. Hereafter cited as R.

18. Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizzary (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 299. Hereafter cited as OT.

19. Derrida and Roudinesco, FWT, 48, modified.

20. Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1981), 6.

21. Jacques Derrida, *A Taste for the Secret*, with Maurizio Ferraris, trans. Giacomo Donis (Malden, MA: Polity, 2001), 4, emphasis mine. Hereafter cited as TS.

22. As Derrida clarifies in *Paper Machine* (154): “From the outset it was clearly stated that deconstruction is not a process or project marked by negativity, or even, essentially, by

‘critique’ (a value that has a history, like that of the ‘question’—a history that it is appropriate to keep alive, but which does have its limits). Deconstruction is above all the reaffirmation of an originary ‘yes.’ *Affirmative* doesn’t mean *positive*. I point this out schematically, because some people think that affirmation is reducible to the position of the positive, and thus that deconstruction’s mission is to reconstruct after a phase of demolition. No, there is no demolition any more than there is positive reconstruction, and there is no ‘phase.’”

23. Jacques Derrida, *Psyche. Inventions of the Other*, vol. 1, ed. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 39. Hereafter cited as PS.

24. Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority,’” in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. D. G. Carlson, D. Cornell, and M. Rosenfeld (New York: Routledge, 1992), 14. Hereafter cited as FL.

25. Jacques Derrida, *Sur Parole* (Paris: Editions de l’Aube, 1999), 52, translation mine. Hereafter cited as SP. The undecidable is also the condition of the future, and of desire, Derrida continues in this passage.

26. “Jacques Derrida, penseur de l’événement,” interview with daily newspaper *L’Humanité* (January 28, 2004), translation and emphasis mine.

27. Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 39, 45. Hereafter cited as CF.

Conclusion: The Ethics of the Event

1. “Jacques Derrida, penseur de l’événement,” interview with *L’Humanité* (January 28, 2004), translation mine.

2. Jacques Derrida, “Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides” and “Deconstructing Terrorism,” in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, ed. Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 134. Hereafter cited as PTT.

3. Although, as Derrida notes, there is always an aporetic element to this question as the event becomes each time neutralized by its reception. If on the one hand, the saying of the event “remains or should remain disarmed, utterly disarmed by . . . the always unique, exceptional, and unpredictable arrival of the other, of the event as other,” yet “this disarmament, this vulnerability, and this exposure are never pure or absolute. I was saying before that the saying of the event presupposed some sort of inevitable neutralization of the event by its iterability, that saying always harbors the possibility of resaying.” Jacques Derrida, “A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event,” *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 452. Hereafter cited as CIP.

4. Jacques Derrida, “Passions,” in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 25. Hereafter cited as P.

5. Jacques Derrida, *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 162. Hereafter cited as PM.

6. Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 88. Hereafter cited as GD.

7. Martin Heidegger, *Das Ereignis*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009), GA 71, 155. Martin Heidegger, *The Event*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 134.

8. See my *The Origins of Responsibility* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

9. Martin Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges*, ed. Hermann Heidegger (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), GA 16, 528–529. Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 55–56.

10. Martin Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?*, ed. Paola-Ludovika Coriando (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann 2002), GA 8, 11. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 9.

11. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953), 136. I draw from both extant English translations: *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), and *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010). Hereafter cited as SZ, followed by the German pagination.

12. Martin Heidegger, *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (1928–1929), ed. Otto Saame and Ina Saame-Speidel (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996), GA 27, 340.

13. Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 50. Hereafter cited as *Adieu*.

14. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979), 43.

15. Dominique Janicaud, *Heidegger in France*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 356. Hereafter cited as HF. On this emphasis on the “near,” and on proximity of a gathering, one also recalls here a passage from “*Ousia and Gramme*” where Derrida makes the claim that for Heidegger, “the Primordial, the authentic are determined as the *proper* (*eigentlich*), that is, as the *near* (proper, *proprius*), the present in the proximity of self-presence.” Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 64n39. Hereafter cited as *Margins*. Arguing that the value of proximity and properness were established at the very beginning of *Being and Time*, namely “in the decision to ask the question of the meaning of Being on the basis of an existential analytic of Dasein” (*Margins*, 64n39), that privilege given to the properness and proximity of self-presence “can propagate its movement to include all the concepts implying the value of the ‘proper.’” Derrida then adds in parenthesis a list (not included in the English translation): “(*Eigen, eigens, ereignen, Ereignis, eigentümlich, Eignen*, etc.)” (*Margins*, 64n39). With respect to the complicity between proximity to self and value of the proper, one also recalls here that passage from “The Ends of Man” in which Derrida posited the dominance of the motif of the proper in Heidegger’s thinking of the relation between being and human Dasein (the very core of his thought), associating the motifs of “the proper” (*le propre*) with that of “the near” (*le proche*). Starting from the circle that he identifies in Heidegger’s work between the human being as the proper of Being and Being as the proper of man (“one must be able to say that Being is *what is near* to man, and that man is *what is near* Being”), Derrida then writes: “The near is the proper; the proper is the nearest (*prope, proprius*). Man is the proper of Being, which right near to him whispers in his ear; Being is the proper of man, such is the truth that speaks, such is the proposition which gives the *there* of the truth of Being and the truth of man” (*Margins*, 133). All these motifs participate to a logic of gathering.

16. Jacques Derrida, “*Hostipitality*,” in *Angelaki, Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 5, no. 3, (December 2000): 8.

17. On this expression, *chez lui chez l'autre*, see my article “*Chez lui chez l'autre*,” in Jacques Derrida: *L'événement Déconstruction, Les Temps Modernes* (Juillet-Octobre 2012): 669–670.

18. Jacques Derrida, *Questioning Ethics*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 70.

19. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, trans. Michael Naas and Pascale-Anne Brault (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 152. Hereafter cited as R.

20. Tolerance, for instance, in other words, hospitality *up to a point*, is no hospitality, but in fact the “contrary” of hospitality, for the other is then “welcomed” on the basis of conditions laid out by the host, that is, by a welcoming *power*. On Derrida’s reservations with respect to the notion of tolerance, its dogmatism and relativism, see Jacques Derrida, *A Taste for the Secret*, with Maurizio Ferraris, trans. Giacomo Donis (Malden, MA: Polity, 2001), 62–64. Hereafter cited as TS.

21. Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, with Anne Dufourmantelle, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 25, 35.

22. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 74. Hereafter cited as SM.

23. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Gravity of Thought*, trans. François Raffoul and Gregory Recco (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997), cited in Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizzary (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 299. Hereafter cited as OT.

24. In Jacques Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971–2001*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 171.

25. Cited in Derrida, OT, 299.

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