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Heidegger's Apophaticism: Unsayng the Said and the Silence of the Last God

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“To thinking there remains only the simplest saying of the plainest image in purest reticence.”¹

These words of Heidegger in the *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* ostensibly coincide with a major tenet of the apophaticism that informed the history of philosophy from Late Antiquity. In this essay, I will reflect on the impact of negative theology on Heidegger's later thinking from the specific vantagepoint of the overcoming of onto-theology as preparation for the appearance of the last god.² I will not delineate the textual or historical influences on Heidegger, although, of course, special mention should be made of Meister Eckhart whose mystical thought, including his penchant for the apophatic, surely impressed Heidegger in a significant way, as various scholars have noted.³ For Heidegger, as he enunciates with more clarity after the

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celebrated turn in the 1930s, the age-old philosophical truism—traceable to Parmenides—that language and being stand in proximity to one another means that they are juxtaposed as that which is kept apart. To the extent that Heidegger never abandoned the idea that language is distinctive to the human species, and that without language there is no being and without being there is no language, his thought remains anthropocentric. It must be emphasized, however, that his presumption regarding the belonging together (*Zusammengehörigkeit*) of language and being avoids both the idealist reduction of being to language and the realist reduction of language to being. To apply to language and being an expression that Heidegger used to describe the relationship of the gods and humans, “*out of the strange nobility of their proper essence, they abide in the distance of intimacy.*”⁴

Dasein is accorded the special role of guarding the clearing (*Lichtung*), the primal space of the between, wherein language and being are juxtaposed in the sameness of their difference. The showing-saying of language thus exposes the being that remains hidden precisely as a result of its being exposed as that which is distinct from the plethora of beings that constitute the world. The poet is privileged as the purveyor of the mystery of language that bears witness to the breakaway (*Aufbruch*) through which being originally becomes word.⁵ By saying the unsaid in unsaying the said, the poem mimics the simultaneous disclosure and concealment that is characteristic of the comportment of being. Alternatively expressed, poetic language proffers a context wherein the giving of the nongiven—the withholding bestowal of the nihilating nonground—is dramatized. More than the philosopher and the scientist, therefore, the poet knows that language is disclosive of nothing, which denotes not the negation of something positive but the advent of the retreat of the appropriating event, the nullity (*Nichtiges*) or negativity (*Nichthaftigkeit*) that precedes the fissure into being and nonbeing.⁶

As Heidegger famously expressed it, “in thinking being comes to language. Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell.”⁷ Rather than positing a direct correspondence between words and things à la the classical representationalist epistemology undergirding the Aristotelian definition of the human as the *animal rationale*,

Heidegger insists that “language is the house of being in which the human being ek-sists by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of being, guarding it.”⁸ In the manner that the house provides the framework within which beings are both exposed and sheltered, language is understood as an opening through which being appears to the human in the occlusion of its appearance.⁹ In every word spoken, therefore, we must heed the unspoken. Language exposes the mystery of being it continues to safeguard, concealing the concealment at the heart of the unconcealment, projecting and withholding, not successively but concomitantly. The “essential trait” of the mystery entails that the conferral is itself a withdrawal.¹⁰ Heidegger thus describes the uncanny, the *unheimlich* that is the counterpoint to the *Geheimnis*, “what looms forth in the essence of human being” is “that which presences and at the same time absences [*das Anwesende und zugleich Abwesende*].”¹¹ Just as the presence of being at home is experienced most acutely in the absence of not being at home, so the secret entails the absolute appearance wherein nothing appears, the privation of privation, the lack of image that surpasses in its ontological deficiency even the image of lack. Metaontologically, presence is not the absence of absence nor is absence the absence of presence; the presencing rather is a mode of absencing and the absencing a mode of presencing. Following this line of thinking, the mystery of language, we might say, is the self-withdrawing bestowal of the nonbeing that is the origin of all that comes to be in the intricate interweave of beings that make up the fabric of the world.

Heidegger insists that *Dasein* is uniquely endowed with the language that unveils the nothing that is the veil of being. However, the way that language and being belong together in this unveiling of the veiling is itself veiled, not because the matter is presently concealed and eventually will be revealed, but, in a more enduring sense, because not-showing is intrinsic to the showing of the nothing, which is, as Heidegger argued in *Was ist Metaphysik?* (1929), more originary than the “not” of negation (*das Nichts ist ursprünglicher als das Nicht und die Verneinung*).¹² The fundamental occurrence of *Dasein* is identified as the unveiling of this nothing, which comes about through the fact that beings as a whole “conceal from us the nothing we are seeking.” Hence, the nothing is not placed before us as a consequence of the “complete

negation of the totality of beings,” but rather precisely their disclosure “makes manifest the nothing.”¹³ For Heidegger, we become attuned to nothing by way of anxiety, which is not the fear of any determinate something, but the sense of uncanniness that arises when indeterminateness comes to the fore, that is, when we cannot say what it is before which we feel uncanny. Insofar as we have no hold on things in this state, as if there is a slithering away of beings, anxiety “makes manifest the nothing.”¹⁴ The unsettling experience of anxiety, moreover, “robs us of speech. Because beings as a whole slip away, so that precisely the nothing crowds around, all utterance of the ‘is’ falls silent in the face of the nothing. That in the uncanniness of anxiety we often try to shatter the vacant stillness with compulsive talk only proves the presence of the nothing.”¹⁵ In the postscript to the 1943 edition of this work, Heidegger reiterates this central point of his argument: “One of the essential sites of speechlessness [*Sprachlosigkeit*] is anxiety in the sense of the horror to which the abyss of the nothing [*Abgrund des Nichts*] attunes human beings. The nothing, as other than beings, is the veil of being [*der Schleier des Seins*].”¹⁶ In the 1949 edition, Heidegger glossed the last line: “The nothing: That which annuls [*das Nichtende*], i.e., as difference [*Unterschied*], is as the veil of being, i.e., of being in the sense of the appropriative event of usage [*des Seyns im Sinne der Ereignisses des Brauchs*].”¹⁷

Significantly, Wittgenstein interpreted Heidegger’s notion of anxiety in the face of being as the sense of coming up against the limits of language, expressed most primally in the amazement that one feels that anything at all exists—the ultimate metaphysical query regarding why there is something rather than nothing¹⁸—a bewilderment so elemental that not only is there no satisfactory answer but it cannot even be formulated properly as a question.¹⁹ Elsewhere Wittgenstein delineates this experience of the brute and obstinate facticity of the world as “the mystical” (*das Mystische*),²⁰ the inexpressible (*Unaussprechliches*) that “shows itself” (*zeigt sich*).²¹ The task of the philosophical method is to say nothing except what can be said (*Nichts zu sagen, als was sich sagen lässt*),²² which is to say, to disclose the world as described in the propositional, factual language of the natural sciences but to offer no assurance that the being of the empirical world coincides with the pictures

formed by these statements of fact. On this measure, Wittgenstein's own propositions about the nature of language and reality say nothing at all; that is, they are not scientific descriptions of the world, and thus they should be treated merely as a ladder upon which the reader climbs and then discards. Only when one surmounts (*überwinden*) these propositions does one see the world rightly (*sieht er die Welt richtig*).²³ And this leads Wittgenstein to the seemingly pedestrian but, at the same time, astounding conclusion, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (*Wovon man nicht Sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen*).²⁴

Wittgenstein and Heidegger agree that philosophy has the task to shed light on the world portrayed in scientific thought but not to provide independent evidence of the facts susceptible to representation. In contrast to Wittgenstein, however, Heidegger does not think it is nonsense to utilize nonscientific language to say the unsayable.²⁵ The unsayable, in other words, is not what is never said but precisely what is left unspoken in what is spoken. Confronting the unsaid of the saying occasions a sense of repulsion, which Heidegger identifies as the "truth of beyng," a disquiet that may be heeded only if one is attuned to the "questioning of nothingness"—the question that cannot be proposed without leading one to question the very question of its questionability²⁶—whence one discerns that nothingness is the "essential trembling of beyng itself [*wesentliche Erzitterung des Seyns selbst*], and therefore *is* more than any being."²⁷ Every act of revealing this being is a concealing, for the truth of nothing is inherently a secret that cannot be revealed unless it is concealed. Uncovering is thus always a cover-up. In Heidegger's own words, "Retaining belongs to concealment. The mystery [of being] is concealment, which is [at the same time] unconcealing itself as such."²⁸ The unconcealment is not a disrobing of truth but the disclosure that lets the mask appear as what masks, an unmasking of the mask. "All revealing," writes Heidegger, "belongs within a harboring and a concealing. But that which frees—the mystery—is concealed and always concealing itself. ... Freedom is that which conceals in a way that opens to light, in whose clearing shimmers the veil that hides the essential occurrence of all truth and lets the veil appear as what veils."²⁹ Lifting the veil—seeing the face

uncovered—amounts to discerning that there is no way to see the face but through the veil. The final veil to lift is the veil that one can see without a veil.³⁰

Expressed hermeneutically, interpretation is a dialogue with a particular work or a saying contained therein, but the dialogue is pointless if it is confined to what is directly said rather than leading the interlocutors to the realm and abode of the unspoken.³¹ Heidegger's perspective is captured adroitly in the following comment of Hannah Arendt in the address she offered to celebrate his eightieth birthday:

Moreover, thinking, as Hegel, in a letter to Zillmann in 1807, remarked about philosophy, is "something solitary," and this not only because I am alone in what Plato speaks of as the "soundless dialogue with myself" (*Sophist* 263e), but because in this dialogue there always reverberates something "unutterable" which cannot be brought fully to sound through language and articulated in speech, and which, therefore, is not communicable, not to others and not to the thinker himself. It is presumably this "unsayable," of which Plato speaks in the Seventh Letter, that makes thinking such a lonely business and yet forms the ever varied fertile soil from which it rises up and constantly renews itself.³²

As she expressed the matter in *The Human Condition*,

only solitude can become an authentic way of life in the figure of the philosopher, whereas the much more general experience of loneliness is so contradictory to the human condition of plurality that it is simply unbearable for any length of time and needs the company of God, the only imaginable witness of good works, if it is not to annihilate human existence altogether.³³

Arendt perceptively notes the link between the essence of thought as what cannot be spoken and the existential solitariness the thinker will endure, but she also correctly understood that ineffability is the quality that inspires new responses: there is no end to speaking the unspeakable. In the domain of philosophy, as opposed to the social arena of theopolitics, the yoke of solitude is the womb that bears the possibility of deep relationality.

In the *Beiträge*, Heidegger noted that the age of machination is characterized by the “complete absence of questioning,” which destroys all solitude. This intolerance of anything questionable can be overcome “only by an *age of that simple solitude* in which a readiness for the truth of being itself is prepared.”³⁴ In an entry from the *Schwarzen Heften* from the years 1938–1939, Heidegger remarked that it is no longer necessary for those who know to present and communicate the “waypoints of research.” In lieu of verbal articulation, the “silent errancy [*schweigende Irre*] alone holds good, until the right to an essential word [*wesentlichen Wort*] has found its ground. The only futural ‘education’ to ‘philosophy’ is in the present age the one aiming at a grounded capacity for silence, a capacity taking its measures from the highest standards.”³⁵ From this text it would seem that the issue of silence is related to the incapacity of people to attend to the essential word whereby the truth of being is concurrently revealed and concealed. Thus, Heidegger elsewhere in the notebooks admonishes himself, and we can assume other relevant readers, that with respect to

the domain of the thinking that is heedful to the history of being, it may be advisable to keep silent about “plight” and “care.” Seen in this regard, *Being and Time* is too immediately hasty ... since the contemporary human being still all too readily “thinks” of everything essential and *abyssal* in terms of something detrimental to his comfortable pleasure and his certainty of success, something casting a shadow over these. In short, he calculates on the basis of *beings* and only with beings—; *of what avail to him then is the excessive demand of being*—and how is he even supposed to surmise that this demand encloses the fullness of the simplicity of everything inceptual?³⁶

The comment attests to the fact that Heidegger saw continuity between *Sein und Zeit* and his thinking after the turn, which is predicated on spotlighting the ontological difference between *Seyn* and *Seiende*, but even more importantly, Heidegger's remark indicates that he thought it best to adopt silence as a temporary measure, given the fact that people in his time were still entrenched in a thinking that calculates being on the basis of beings.

In other contexts, Heidegger suggests that silence and solitude are more permanent conditions of thinking. As he wrote in another passage from the notebooks,

Yet for now all silence is still taken only historiologically as mere reserve, avoidance, seclusion—one continues to measure it up to the public pursuit of publicity and this cannot know the fact that silence has already become the rescue of the sought-for-word, the one naming something simple, and has become the assignment of this word to the grounding of being.³⁷

Along similar lines, Heidegger put it in the first lecture course he gave after a hiatus that extended from 1944 to 1951, the way of thinking (*Denk-Weg*) proceeds by a “thoughtful questioning” (*denkende Fragen*), a movement (*Be-wegung*) that is part of the “precursoriness [*Vor-läufigkeit*] of thinking,” which “in turn depends on an enigmatic solitude [*rätselfollen Einsamkeit*] No thinker ever has entered into another thinker’s solitude. Yet it is only from its solitude that all thinking, in a hidden mode, speaks to the thinking that comes after or went before.”³⁸ The paradox of thinking as a social gesture propagated in isolation is captured brilliantly in this passage: thinking wells forth from a place of solitude so overwhelming that Heidegger insists categorically that no thinker has ever entered into another thinker’s solitude, but it is precisely from that place of ontological aloneness—which is to be distinguished from the ontic feeling of loneliness³⁹—that the individual thinker becomes part of a community that cuts across the divide of time, relating to what has been thought in the past and what will be thought in the future.

Already in a section from *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger avers that to keep silent is an “essential possibility of discourse.” Understanding is not facilitated by speaking excessively, speaking minimally, or by keeping silent, but only by genuine discourse that comes about through authentic silence. “In order to be silent, Dasein must have something to say, that is, must be in command of an authentic and rich disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*] of itself. ... As a mode of discourse, reticence [*Verschwiegenheit*] articulates the intelligibility of Dasein so

primordially that it gives rise to a genuine potentiality for hearing and to a being-with-one-another that is transparent.”⁴⁰ In *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik* (1929–1930), Heidegger extends the argument by noting that philosophizing can be considered as “something living only where it comes to language and expresses itself, although this does not necessarily imply ‘communicating itself to others.’” Quite to the contrary, “once philosophizing is expressed, then it is exposed to misinterpretation, and not merely that misinterpretation which lies in the relative ambiguity and unreliability of all terminology; rather it is exposed to that essential *substantive misinterpretation* for which *ordinary understanding* inevitably falls.”⁴¹ The philosopher is encumbered by the inevitability of misinterpretation but it is also a badge of honor that every philosophical saying contains what is unsaid. Heidegger thus began “Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit,” a text composed in 1940 on the basis of the notes for the lectures on the essence of truth offered in the winter semester of 1931–1932, by contrasting scientific knowledge (*Erkenntnisse der Wissenschaften*) as that which is “expressed in propositions and is laid before us in the form of conclusions that we can grasp and put to use,” and the doctrine of a thinker (*Denker*) as “that which, within what is said, remains unsaid [*Ungesagte*], that to which we are exposed so that we might expend ourselves on it.”⁴² Of course, as Heidegger immediately adds, to experience and to know what a thinker left unsaid demands that we have to consider what has been said. Nevertheless, the mandate is not to attend exclusively to the said, which is hard enough, but to the unsaid in the said, the silence at the heart of all that is spoken. In *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (1933–1934), Heidegger writes, “*The ability to keep silent is therefore the origin and ground of language* [Das Schweigenkönnen ist also der Ursprung und Grund der Sprache]. All speaking is a breach [*Unterbrechung*] of keeping silent, a breach that does not have to be understood negatively.”⁴³ The reasoning behind such a claim is inherently paradoxical or, in Heidegger’s idiom, circular:

This circularity makes itself known now in that we are supposed to speak about keeping silent—and this is highly problematic. For whoever discourses about keeping silent is in danger of proving in the most immediate way that he neither knows nor understands keeping silent.⁴⁴

The seemingly intractable snare of the apophatic need to speak about not speaking is exemplified in poetic language. “If we consider such language,” writes Heidegger, “in terms of its capacity for expression, then it is here precisely not supposed to express anything, but to leave the unsayable unsaid [*das Unsagbare ungesagt*], and to do so in and through its saying.”⁴⁵ Again, we note that with respect to poetizing and, by extension, language more generally, there is a commingling of the apophatic and the kataphatic: precisely through the act of saying the poet leaves the unsayable unsaid, not by not speaking but by speaking-not, that is, saying the unsayable in the unsaying of the sayable. Heidegger relates this to another central motif on the path of thinking concerning the concealment and veiling that are proper to the manifestness of beings that is the essence of truth as unconcealment (*alētheia*):

The mystery is not a barrier that lies on the other side of truth, but is itself the highest figure [*höchste Gestalt*] of truth; for in order to let the mystery truly be what it is—concealing preservation of authentic being [*verbergende Bewahrung des eigentlichen Seyns*—the mystery must be manifest as such. A mystery that is not known in its power of veiling is no mystery. The higher our knowing concerning the veiling and the more genuine the saying of it as such, the more untouched its concealing power remains. Poetic saying of the mystery is *denial* [*Verleugnung*].⁴⁶

To speak of mystery (*Geheimnis*) as the highest configuration of truth means that every act of unconcealing is at the same time an act of concealing: what is exposed is the hiddenness of the exposure. The mystery is thus defined as the *concealing preservation of authentic being*, that is, the withholding of being that is proper to the bestowal of being. For this mystery to be revealed as mystery, it must be revealed in its veiling power (*verhüllenden Macht*). Translated into the linguistic register, to speak of the mystery presumes the concealing power (*verbergende Macht*) that precludes the mystery from being spoken. The disclosive utterance is itself a veiling (*Verhüllung*), and in that sense, the poetic saying necessarily is a repudiation of what is said.

The essential origin of language is the ability to keep silent. Consider this striking meditation in the *Beiträge* on restraint (*Verhaltenheit*), silence (*Schweigen*), and language (*Sprache*):

Words fail us; they do so originally and not merely occasionally, whereby some discourse or assertion could indeed be carried out but is left unuttered, i.e., where the saying of something sayable or the re-saying of something already said is simply not carried through. Words do not yet come to speech at all, but it is precisely in failing us that they arrive at the first leap. This failing is the event as intimation and incursion of *beyng*. This failing us is the inceptual condition for the self-unfolding possibility of an original (poetic) naming of *beyng*.⁴⁷

Heidegger's notion of ineffability does not entail the saying of the unsayable if the latter is understood as something potentially sayable that is presently not spoken. What he proposed rather is the unsaying of the sayable, which is to say, the belief that every utterance falls short of articulating the words that have yet to assume the character of speech, but this failure is precisely what makes possible the poetic naming of the namelessness of being. Insofar as the naming cannot be severed from the nameless that defies naming, the mystery to which language can only allude, the apophatic and the kataphatic are inextricably conjoined in what Heidegger refers to as the possibility of language to express itself as the "telling silence,"⁴⁸ or literally, the "saying not-saying" (*sagenden Nichtsagen*).⁴⁹ Thus, in a second passage from the *Beiträge*, Heidegger expounded the theme of "Beyng and its bearing silence" (*Das Seyn und seine Erschweigung*), which he calls "sigetics" (*die Sigetik*):

Bearing silence is the prudent lawfulness of the silence-bearing activity Bearing silence is the "logic" of philosophy inasmuch as philosophy asks the basic question out of the other beginning. Philosophy seeks the truth of the essential occurrence of *beyng*, and this truth is the intimating-resonating concealment (the mystery) of the event (the hesitant withholding). ... Bearing silence arises out of the essentially occurring origin of language itself.⁵⁰

In yet another passage from the *Beiträge*, Heidegger explains that every language of *Dasein* is in essence silence inasmuch as it originates in the turning (*Kehre*), or the counter-turning (*Wider-kehre*), of the event that occurs "in between the call (to the one that belongs) and the belonging

(of the one that is called) ... *The call* to the leap into the appropriation of the great stillness of the most concealed self-knowledge."⁵¹

Inceptual thinking is sigetic due to its "bearing silence in the most explicit meditation [*Besinnung*]" as the way to let "beyng protrude into beings out of the silence-bearing utterance of the grasping word [*erschweigenden Sagen des begreifenden Wortes*]."⁵² In *Besinnung*, which was written shortly after the completion of the *Beiträge*, futural thinking—the "enthinking [*Er-denken*] of the preparedness for the history of the crossing (the overcoming of metaphysics)"—is described as "the en-owned saying in imageless word [*das er-eignete Sagen im bildlosen Wort*]."⁵³ But what can be communicated in a saying so described? What does it mean to utter words without images? Heidegger, it seems, anticipated Derrida's idea of *dénégation*, a mode of speaking-not, which is to be distinguished from not-speaking, that is, the gesture of speaking not to speak rather than not speaking to speak.⁵⁴ To speak of nothing is not the same as to say nothing unless to say nothing is to speak of the nothing of which there is nothing to say. The former is a verbal gesticulation that entails a mode of erasure that erases any and every trace, including especially the trace of its own erasure, constituting thereby the erasure of the trace. We attend to this erasure of erasure by hearing as profoundly as is possible the silence that is the language beyond language, to be muted in the muteness of mystical vision wherein the voice of the soundless resounds in the vocalization of the nameless name, the name of the nameless. By venturing deeper into this vision of infinite listening, one is lead to speak what needs to be unspoken.

To keep silent, therefore, is not related to the muteness (*Stummheit*) of the animal or to the absence of language (*Sprachlosigkeit*),⁵⁵ but rather to what Heidegger still considered to be the linguistic capacity unique to the human being; indeed, the "saying that bears silence is what grounds."⁵⁶ Interpreting the parable of Jesus that invokes the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (Matthew 6:26–28; Luke 12:24–27), Kierkegaard similarly observed: "For surely it is speech that places the human being above the animal, and if you like, far above the lily. But because the ability to speak is an advantage, it does not follow that there is no art in the ability to keep silent, or that it would be an inferior art. On the contrary, precisely because a human being has

the ability to speak, for this very reason the ability to keep silent is an art; and precisely because this advantage of his tempts him so easily, to keep silent is a great art."⁵⁷ Heidegger would not have tempered his anthropocentric bias on the basis of the parabolic invocation of the bird and the lily as the "silent teachers," who can instruct us about silence, nor would he have welcomed the theological belief that being silent and becoming nothing are the beginning of seeking God's kingdom.⁵⁸ In the main, however, Heidegger's insistence that diffidence is a mode of the ability to talk and not merely the negation (*Negativum*) of not talking (*Nichtreden*) or saying nothing is in accord with Kierkegaard. Silence is, more precisely, the "not-talking of someone who can talk," which is to say, a deliberate act of "being unwilling to talk." Hence, "by keeping silent we are often able to say something much more definite than by the most longwinded talking."⁵⁹

For Heidegger, the truism that "every truth has its *time*" implies that "it is a sign of education to withhold certain truths from knowledge and to keep silent about them. Truth and truth is not simply the same [*Wahrheit und Wahrheit ist nicht einfach dasselbe*]."⁶⁰ Following in the footsteps of thinkers who embraced the apophatic denial of the ability to communicate or to conceptualize truth, Heidegger states that the knowledge of being "can never be communicated and distributed in the manner of cognitions of objectively present things."⁶¹ The task of the poet, and by extension all who wish to poeticize being, is to uphold the *fundamental mood of reticence* (*Grundstimmung der Verschwiegenheit*) and thereby express the *nonessence of language* (*Unwesen der Sprache*),⁶² the letting go of representational thinking and the adoption of an imageless saying of nothing responding to the silent call of being.⁶³ This silence is equivalent to what Heidegger elicits from the lines in George's poem *Das Wort*, "So I renounced and sadly see: / Where word breaks off no thing may be" (*So lernt ich traurig den verzicht: / Kein ding sei wo das wort gebricht*). The nondenial of self (*Sich-nicht-versagen*)—or the nonself denial—that instigates the poet's owning of self (*Sich-verdanken*) is expressed in the saying (*Sagen*) of thanking (*Dank*), which is the gesture of renunciation (*Verzicht*), as opposed to a refusal (*Absage*), indebted to the original utterance of the mystery of the word (*Geheimnis des Wortes*).⁶⁴

Support for this conjecture may be elicited from the following passage in the 1943 postscript to *Was ist Metaphysik?*

Thinking, obedient to the voice of being, seeks from being the word through which the truth of being comes to language. Only when the language of historical human beings springs from the word does it ring true. Yet if it does ring true, then it is beckoned by the testimony granted it from the silent voice of hidden sources. ...The saying of the thinker comes from a long-protected speechlessness and from the careful clarifying of the realm thus cleared.⁶⁵

An echo of the Parmenidean correlation of being and thought is discernible here but with the emphasis placed squarely on speech as the medium through which the truth of being is manifest. However, this truth rings true only when the language of Dasein's historicity springs from that voice of being, and this, in turn, is imparted by the guarded speechlessness whence the utterance of the thinker arises. Returning to this theme in "Die Sprache" (1950), Heidegger notes that the human being can be said to speak insofar as his speech corresponds to language (*Der Mensch spricht, insofern er der Sprache entspricht*), but that correspondence must be in the form of listening (*Das Entsprechen ist Hören*), and there is no listening unless it "belongs to the behest of silence" (*dem Geheiß der Stille gehört*).⁶⁶

The matter is repeated apodictically in a lecture delivered during the summer semester of 1952 at the University of Freiburg and eventually included in *Was Heißt Denken?* "Every primal and proper identification states something unspoken, and states it so that it remains unspoken."⁶⁷ In *Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache*, written in 1953–1954 on the occasion of a visit by Tomio Tezuka (1903–1983) of the Imperial University of Tokyo,⁶⁸ the Japanese interlocutor asserts that dialogue should have "a character all its own, with more silence than talk," to which the Inquirer (an obvious literary cipher for Heidegger) responds, "Above all, silence about silence," which is marked as the "authentic saying" (*eigentliche Sagen*) and the "constant prologue to the authentic dialogue of language" (*stete Vorspiel zum eigentlichen Gespräch von der Sprache*).⁶⁹ In the words of Hölderlin cited by Heidegger in *Das Wesen*

der Sprache (1957–1958), “This is a law of fate, that each shall know all others, / That when the silence returns there shall be language too” (*Schicksaalgesetz ist diß, daß Alle sich erfahren, / Daß, wenn die Stille kehrt, auch eine Sprache sei*).⁷⁰ Perhaps even more relevant is the articulation of this theme in the 1959 lecture “Der Weg zur Sprache,” arranged by the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts and the Academy of Arts in Berlin:

To say [*Sagen*] and to speak [*Sprechen*] are not identical. A man may speak, speak endlessly, and all the time say nothing [*nichtssagend*]. Another man may remain silent, not speak at all, and yet, without speaking [*Nichtsprechen*], say a great deal [*viel sagen*]. ... Language first of all and inherently obeys the essential nature of speaking: it says [*das Sagen*]. Language speaks by saying [*Die Sprache spricht, indem sie sagt*], that is, by showing [*zeigt*]. What it says wells up from the formerly spoken [*gesprochenen*] and so far still unspoken Saying [*ungesprochenen Sage*] which pervades the design of language. ... In our speaking [*Sprechen*], as a listening [*Hören*] to language, we say again the Saying we have heard. We let its soundless voice [*lautlose Stimme*] come to us, and then demand, reach out, and call for the sound that is already kept in store for us.⁷¹

Just as in the case of language, the saying, which involves a “listening to the unspoken,” corresponds to what is said, so too, silence, which is regarded as the “source of speaking,” corresponds to the “soundless tolling of the stillness of appropriating-showing Saying [*lautlosen Geläut der Stille der ereignend-zeigenden Sage*].”⁷² On the one hand, the saying cannot be captured in any verbal statement (*Aussage*); it demands that “we achieve by silence the appropriating, initiating movement [*ereignende Be-wägung*] within the being of language [*Sprachwesen*]—and do so without talking about silence.”⁷³ On the other hand, the renunciation (*Verzicht*) of speech— typified by the poet’s relinquishing having words under control—is not just a “rejection of Saying” (*Absage an das Sagen*), or a lapse into “mere silence” (*bloßes Verstummen*), for as self-denial (*Sichversagen*), the renunciation remains a Saying (*Sagen*) and thus “preserves the relation to the word” (*Verhältnis zum Wort*).⁷⁴ Elucidating the line from Hölderlin’s elegy *Heimkunft*, “Often we must be silent; holy names are lacking” (*Schweigen müssen wir oft; es*

fehlen heilige Nahmen), Heidegger offers a distilled summary of his own thinking about speech, speechlessness, and the unspoken:

Silence [*Schweigen*]⁷⁵—does this merely mean: to say nothing [*nichts sagen*], to remain speechless [*stumm*]? Or can only he who has something to say be truly silent? If this were the case, then he would be capable of letting the unsaid [*das Ungesagte*] appear in his speech, of letting it appear as unsaid, would, precisely through this alone, be capable of silence in the highest degree.⁷⁵

As the “intrusion of beyng,” for Heidegger, “always comes out of the *persistent* remaining absent of beyng,”⁷⁶ so the arrival of the gods is at the same time the fleeing of the gods. Presence is the absence of the presence of absence, a reversal of the metaphysical understanding of absence as the presence of the absence of presence. “The refusal,” writes Heidegger, “is the highest nobility of bestowal and is the basic trait of the self-concealment *whose* manifestness constitutes the ordinary essence of the truth of beyng. Only in this way does beyng become estrangement itself [*die Befremdung selbst*], the stillness of the passing by of the last god.”⁷⁷ The bestowal itself is a refusal, insofar as what is bequeathed must be held in reserve to be bequeathed—the concealment of the concealment cannot be revealed unless it is revealed as that which is concealed. Heidegger’s insistence that “as refusal, beyng is not mere withholding and seclusion,” and hence the “refusal is the intimacy of an allocation,”⁷⁸ well expresses the fundamental paradox of the apophaticism that he embraces: the stillness of the passing of the last god—the semiotic marker of that which is always subject to being surpassed and therefore can never be last chronologically and, as such, is “the inceptual one in the essencing of beyng” (*der anfängliche in der Wesung des Seyns*)⁷⁹—is the ultimate articulation of the saying not-saying that comprises the silence that is the deepest resonance of speech. This, I suggest, is what Heidegger intends by the last god, the transition from the end of metaphysics to the other beginning through the twofold movement of being’s bestowing withdrawal, the *self-concealment that is the unconcealment of the refusal*.⁸⁰

Heidegger states explicitly that the last god is “wholly other than past ones and especially other than the Christian one.”⁸¹ Responding to the question whether speaking of the last god is not a degradation of God or even blasphemy, Heidegger writes that the “last god must be so named, because the decision about the gods ultimately leads under and among them and so raises to the highest the essence of the uniqueness of the divine being [*das Wesen der Einzigkeit des Gottwesens*].”⁸² What is implied by the term *Gottwesen*? A clue is offered by Heidegger’s insistence that the notion of last should not be understood as “sheer stoppage and ending,” but rather in the “sense of the most extreme and most compendious decision about what is highest;” that is, the connotation of the term “last” is ultimate, the highest aspect that is impossible to comprehend. Thinking about *Gottwesen*, literally, the being or essencing of the divine, is not a “matter of calculation,” but “an attempt at meditation [*umzubesinnen*] on the danger of something strange and incalculable.”⁸³ But what is the strange and incalculable something? In response to this inquiry, we can begin by noting that it should not be construed onto-theologically as if Heidegger was reverting to the apophatic source of the kataphatic God of Christian faith, a God beyond God à la Eckhart, the Godhead (*Gotttheit*) through which the divinizing of gods is accomplished,⁸⁴ the primal experience of *theos* that precedes translation into the theological criteria of specific religiosities.⁸⁵ Nor, in my judgment, is there justification to implant in Heidegger “the seeds for a postmodern theology which can restore a sense of the divine mystery, or reaffirm the religious experience of the ‘wholly other.’” By taking Heidegger’s lead, we can determine that there is more than a superficial resemblance between the thought of being and the mystery of God. Indeed, *his thought enables us to address what is distinctive of the divinities as much through the modality of their absence as through their presence.*⁸⁶

I concur with the final sentence, but I would argue that the modality of absence to which Heidegger alludes is not akin to a mystery of God linked to an inscrutable transcendence, whether understood ontologically as the transcendental or theologically as the transcendent.⁸⁷ Since the thinking of being transcends all particular beings, including the transcendence of the divine being understood as the ultimate

reality or supernatural agent, the primal thinking is emphatically, as Hans Jonas put it, a “thinking away from God” or at the very least a “thinking beyond God,”⁸⁸ expressions that should not be misconstrued as articulations of an apophatic theology that posits a being that transcends predication except for the predicate of being beyond predication, which implicates one in a form of metaphysical speculation envisioning the impersonal ground of being as the personal being that exercises purposeful and providential agency in the world. Here it is worth recalling Heidegger’s statement concerning the god of philosophy understood as the generative ground of being or as the *causa sui*:

Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god. The god-less thinking [*gott-lose Denken*] which must abandon the god of philosophy, god as *causa sui*, is thus perhaps closer to the divine God [*göttlichen Gott*]. Here this means only: god-less thinking is more open to Him than onto-theo-logic would like to admit.⁸⁹

The passage reads like an Eckhartian interpretation of Nietzsche’s statement regarding the death of the God of Western metaphysics; that is to say, the atheistic thinking of Nietzsche’s madman, predicated on denying the ontotheological conception of the deity, affords one an opportunity to be in more intimate connection with the divine God.⁹⁰ The import of this oddly redundant locution may be gleaned from what Heidegger writes elsewhere, “All metaphysics ... poeticized and thought gods as beings, at most as being itself. However, those who prepare must first come—those who, after all, are capable of thinking be-ing and this alone as the distressing need of the godhood of gods. How undisturbed and owned will be then the path of the futural man to the last god; how completely devoid of all detours into the escape routes of the transformation of the hitherto will this path be, and how unconfined will it be by the prospects of the calculated?”⁹¹

The path of the futural thinking leads to the last god but this can be attained only when one is liberated from the misery of the godhood of the gods (*die Not der Gottschaft der Götter*), the distressing need that prevailed in traditional Western metaphysical speculation. This path is

not restricted by previous diverting paths of transformation (*Seitenwege zur flüchtenden Anverwandlung*) or by the prospects of what can be calculated (*Aussichten auf das Gerechnete*). On the contrary, one is nearer to the “en-opening of the most remote” (*Eröffnung des Fernsten*) in the “hardly revealed ‘time-space’ [*Zeit-Raum*] of the truth of be-ing,” that is, the last god, when the “gods will be more difficult and more rare, but therein more in sway, and yet thereby nearer in their swaying remoteness [*Wesensferne*]. ... The last god is inflamed [*entbrennt*] to the highest distress [*höchsten Not*] by be-ing as the abysmal ‘in-between’ [*abgründige Inzwischen*] of beings.”⁹² If we attend carefully to these words, we can discern with clarity that Heidegger’s last god is no god at all in a theological sense—not even in a post-theological sense—but the abyss (*Abgrund*) that is the between, the clearing or the opening, the being that is the empty nothing that bestows and withholds all beings, “the ‘unblendedness’ [*Schlichte*] and the ‘stillness’ [*Stille*] out of which all things proceed together [*zusammengehen*] in their most intimate self-belonging [*innigstes Sichgehören*].”⁹³

Heidegger on occasion uses language that could easily mislead one into thinking that he was advocating for something akin to a postmetaphysical theology. One of the more striking examples is the following passage from the *Beiträge*: “A people is a people only if it receives its history as allotted to it through finding its god, the god that compels this people beyond itself and thus places the people back amid beings. Only then does a people escape the danger of circling around itself and of idolizing, as its *unconditioned*, what are merely conditions of its subsistence. ... The essence of a people is grounded in the historicity of those who belong *themselves through* their belonging to the god.”⁹⁴ The nature of Dasein is linked to the essence of a people, which is determined by the god allocated to that people. Only by finding that god can a people escape the danger of a solipsistic self-encircling and the consequent idolization of the conditional as unconditioned. Heidegger’s elitism comes to the fore when he asserts that a people finds its god through the few seekers, the future ones of the last god (*der Zukünftigen des letzten Gottes*), “who in reticence seek on behalf of this people and who ... must apparently even stand *against* a ‘people’ that is *not yet* properly a people.”⁹⁵ It would take us too far afield to unpack this

statement and to delve into Heidegger's discussion of the strife that is essential to the future ones in particular and to the people guided by them more generally. What is of most concern for our immediate discussion is the comment posed as a question, "Will the time of the gods then be *over and done* and a relapse into the mere life of *world-poor* creatures commence, ones for whom the earth has always remained only something to be exploited? Restraint and reticence will be the most intimate celebration of the last god and will attain for themselves the proper mode of confidence in the simplicity of things and the proper stream of the intimacy of the captivating transport of their works. Furthermore, the sheltering of truth will leave concealed what is most concealed and will thus lend it a unique presence."⁹⁶

Through the contestation (*Bestreitung*) that arises from the strife, the future ones become cognizant of the "most diffident and most distant intimation [*Wink*] of the last god" by means of which they have access to the incursion of the event of being wherein truth assumes presence in its remaining concealed. This mindfulness creates the unrest (*Unruhe*) that is "the restful enduring of the fissure" (*das ruhige Beständnis der Zerklüftung*).⁹⁷ The last god signifies this fissure of being—the space of oscillation (*Schwingungsraum*)—that opens and closes itself in relation to those who practice restraint. Most notably, the epoch of the last god signifies the time when *the gods will be over and done*, which does not, however, justify the exploitation of the earth, since the primary characteristics of this last god and its seekers are restraint and reticence. Heidegger's last god is his response to Nietzsche's death of god, that is, it is the god after there are no more gods, the god depleted of godhood.

The atheological implications of the last god are further clarified by this description: "A god who would like to raise himself beyond being, or indeed is thus raised and made into the source (cause) of being (not simply of beings) 'is' no god and can be no god [*ist kein Gott und kann kein Gott sein*]. More inceptual than *every* god is beyng [*Anfänglicher denn jeder Gott ist das Seyn*]."⁹⁸ The last god is so called because it is no god at all; it names the being that is beyond being, the source or cause of being that is more inceptual than any god. *Seyn*, therefore, is no longer thinkable as the otherwise than being either as the transcendental or as the transcendent. The import of *Gottwesen* is

precisely to subvert the positing of an alterity understood in this manner. What Heidegger intends is something far more radical and paradoxical: the absence of the gods is not to be interpreted either as the absence of presence or as the presence of absence. The absence, in other words, does not mean that the once visible gods are now hidden and therefore invisible; it implies rather that the unconcealment of the concealment is itself concealed. There is no reality beneath the veneer of appearance; being is nothing but the appearance behind which there is nothing but the appearance of being. This is the import of Heidegger's insistence on the identification of saying (*Sagen*) and showing (*Zeigen*); that is, with respect to the appearing of being implied in the *es gibt*, nothing is seen but through the cloak of the name by which the namelessness of being is denuded.

Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), §32, p. 58; *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* [GA 65] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), p. 72.
2. For an extensive analysis of this motif, especially as it relates to Heidegger's notion of timespace, see Paola-Ludovica Coriando, *Der letzte Gott als Anfang: Zur ab-gründigen Zeit-Räumlichkeit des Übergangs in Heideggers „Beiträgen zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)“* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1998). See also the analysis of the "last god's beginning" in Frank Schallow, *Heidegger and the Quest for the Sacred: From Thought to the Sanctuary of Faith* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), pp. 131–162, and compare Ben Vedder, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Religion: From God to the Gods* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2007), pp. 157–187.
3. John D. Caputo, "Meister Eckhart and the Later Heidegger: The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought: Part One," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 12 (1974): 479–494; idem, "Meister Eckhart and the Later Heidegger: The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought: Part Two," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 13 (1975): 61–80;

- idem, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (Athens, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1978), pp. 140–217; Holger Helting, *Heidegger und Meister Eckehart: Vorbereitende Überlegungen zu ihrem Gottesdenken* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1997); Sonya Sikka, *Forms of Transcendence: Heidegger and Medieval Mystical Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 109–186; Barbara Dalle Pezze, *Martin Heidegger and Meister Eckhart: A Path Towards Gelassenheit*, with a foreword by Timothy O'Leary (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); Bradley B. Onishi, "The Birth of World: The Spark of Eckhart in Heidegger and Bataille," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2014.
4. Martin Heidegger, *Ponderings VII–XI: Black Notebooks 1938–1939*, translated by Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017), p. 195; *Überlegungen VII–XI (Schwarze Hefie 1938/39)* [GA 95] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014), p. 252.
 5. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 182–183; *Einführung in die Metaphysik* [GA 40] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), p. 180.
 6. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 129, pp. 193–194; *Beiträge*, p. 246.
 7. Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 239; *Wegmarken* [GA 9] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996), p. 312.
 8. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 254; *Wegmarken*, p. 333.
 9. For a more detailed discussion of this theme, see Elliot R. Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift: Apophasis and Overcoming Theomania* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2014), pp. 94–102.
 10. Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund, with an introduction by John M. Anderson (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 55; *Gelassenheit* (Stuttgart: Neske, 1959), p. 24.
 11. Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, trans. William McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 72; *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister"* [GA 53] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), p. 89.
 12. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 86; *Wegmarken*, p. 108.
 13. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, pp. 86–88; *Wegmarken*, pp. 109–111.

14. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 88; *Wegmarken*, pp. 111–112. See Robert Bernasconi, *The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of Being* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1985), pp. 54–57.
15. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 89; *Wegmarken*, p. 112.
16. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 238; *Wegmarken*, p. 312.
17. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 238 n. a; *Wegmarken*, p. 312 n. a.
18. For analysis of the Leibnizian formulation of this principle, see Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 114–115; *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz* [GA 26] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), pp. 141–142.
19. *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations Recorded by Friedrich Waismann*, ed. Brian McGuinness, trans. Joachim Schulte and Brian McGuinness (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, 1979), p. 68: “To be sure, I can imagine what Heidegger means by being and anxiety. Man feels the urge to run up against the limits of language. Think for example of the astonishment that anything at all exists. This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question, and there is also no answer whatsoever. Anything we might say is a priori bound to be mere nonsense. Nevertheless we do run up against the limits of language.” Wittgenstein adds a note here: “Feeling the world as a limited whole—it is this that is mystical. ‘Nothing can happen to me,’ that is, whatever may happen, for me it is without significance.” The first proposition corresponds to Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. Charles K. Ogden, with introduction by Bertrand Russell (London: Routledge, 1995), 6.45, pp. 186–187: “The contemplation [*Anschauung*] of the world sub specie aeterni is its contemplation as a limited whole [*begrenzt—Ganzes*]. The feeling [*Gefühl*] of the world as a limited whole is the mystical feeling.” Notably, in the continuation of the passage from his conversation with Waismann, Wittgenstein adds the example of Kierkegaard and the paradox, and then identifies the running up against the limits of language as ethics (*Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p. 68). On the affinity between Wittgenstein’s anguish of being and Heidegger’s analysis of *Sorge*, see George Steiner, *Grammars of Creation: Originating in the Gifford Lectures for 1990* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 272.

20. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.44, pp. 186–187: “Not how the world is, is the mystical, but that it is” (*Nicht wie die Welt ist, ist das Mystische, sondern dass sie ist*).
21. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.522, pp. 186–187: “There is indeed the inexpressible. This shows itself; it is the mystical” (*Es gibt allerdings Unausprechliches. Dies zeigt sich, es ist das Mystische*). For a comparison of Wittgenstein and James on the demarcation of the mystical as that which can be shown as opposed to conceptual-linguistic facts, see Russell B. Goodman, *Wittgenstein and William James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 43–50.
22. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.53, pp. 188–189.
23. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.54, pp. 188–189.
24. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 7, pp. 188–189. For an analysis on the connection between grammar and reality in Wittgenstein against the backdrop of semantic ineffability, see Felicity McCutcheon, *Religion Within the Limits of Language Alone: Wittgenstein on Philosophy and Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 97–107, esp. 99–101.
25. My analysis has benefited from Taylor Carman, “What Science Leaves Unsaid,” in *Wittgenstein and Heidegger*, eds. David Egan, Stephen Reynolds, and Aaron James Wendland (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), pp. 133–145.
26. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 85; *Wegmarken*, p. 108.
27. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 145, p. 209 (emphasis in original); *Beiträge*, p. 266.
28. Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols—Conversations—Letters*, ed. Medard Boss, trans. Franz Mayr and Richard Askay (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), p. 171.
29. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, revised and expanded edition, ed. David Farrell Krell, foreword by Taylor Carman (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), p. 330; *Vorträge und Aufsätze* [GA 7] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), p. 26.
30. This has been a central theme of my thinking. See, for instance, Elliot R. Wolfson, *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menahem Mendel Schneerson* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 25–27, 52, 64, 96, 99–100, 113, 114–129, 212, 245, 341 n. 166.
31. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Fred W. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray, with an Introduction by J. Glenn Gray (New York, NY:

- Harper & Row, 1968), p. 178; *Was Heißt Denken?* [GA 8] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002), p. 182. See Michael Roth, *The Poetics of Resistance: Heidegger's Line* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), pp. 63, 70–71, 75–77, 81–83.
32. Hannah Arendt, "Martin Heidegger at Eighty," in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy: Critical Essays*, ed. Michael Murray (New Haven, IL: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 298–299.
 33. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, introduction by Margaret Canovan, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 76.
 34. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 51, p. 87 (emphasis in original); *Beiträge*, p. 109. On the juxtaposition of simplicity (*Einfache*) and solitude (*Einsamkeit*), see Heidegger, *Ponderings VII–XI*, p. 29; *Überlegungen VII–XI*, pp. 37–38.
 35. Heidegger, *Ponderings VII–XI*, p. 177; *Überlegungen VII–XI*, p. 228.
 36. Heidegger, *Ponderings VII–XI*, p. 195 (emphasis in original); *Überlegungen VII–XI*, p. 252.
 37. Heidegger, *Ponderings VII–XI*, p. 342; *Überlegungen VII–XI*, p. 439.
 38. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 169; *Was Heißt Denken?* p. 174.
 39. Compare Martin Heidegger, "Why Do I Stay in the Provinces?" (1934), in *Heidegger: The Man and The Thinker*, ed. Thomas Sheehan (Chicago, IL: Precedent Publishing, Inc., 1981), p. 28: "People in the city often wonder whether one gets lonely up in the mountains among the peasants for such long and monotonous periods of time. But it isn't loneliness, it is solitude. In large cities one can easily be as lonely as almost nowhere else. But one can never be in solitude there. Solitude has the peculiar and original power not of isolating us but of projecting our whole existence out into the vast nearness of the presence [*Wesen*] of all things."
 40. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, revised and with a forward by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), § 34, p. 159; *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993), p. 165.
 41. Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 291–292 (emphasis in original); *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik:*

- Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit* [GA 29/30] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), p. 422.
42. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 155; *Wegmarken*, p. 203.
 43. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 84 (emphasis in original); *Sein und Wahrheit* [GA 36/37] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2001), p. 107. On Heidegger's view that silence is the basis of language, see Richard Polt, "The Secret Homeland of Speech: Heidegger on Language, 1933–1934," in *Heidegger and Language*, ed. Jeffrey Powell (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 63–85, esp. 65–70. It is of interest to recall in this context Heidegger's coinage of *Entgegenschweigen*, "remaining silent," in his last letter to Celan. See Steiner, *Grammars of Creation*, p. 203.
 44. Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, p. 85; *Sein und Wahrheit*, p. 107.
 45. Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine"*, trans. William McNeill and Julia Ireland (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), p. 108; *Hölderlin's Hymnen »Germanien« und »Der Rhein«* [GA 39] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1999), pp. 119–120.
 46. Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns*, p. 108; *Hölderlin's Hymnen*, p. 119.
 47. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 13, p. 30; *Beiträge*, p. 36.
 48. Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 73.
 49. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 142. The translation appears in Bernasconi, *The Question of Language*, p. 77, and see Wolfson, *Giving*, pp. 13, 283 n. 99.
 50. Heidegger, *Contributions*, §§ 37–38, pp. 62–63 (emphasis in original); *Beiträge*, pp. 78–79. See Emilio Brito, *Heidegger et l'hymne du sacré* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), pp. 103–113; David R. Law, "Negative Theology in Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie*," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 48 (2000): 139–156, esp. 145–146; Jean-François Ænishanslin, "La logique, la pensée, le silence. Un style en transition," in *Heideggers Beiträge zur Philosophie: Internationales Kolloquium vom 20.-22. Mai 2004 an der Universität Lausanne (Schweiz)*, eds. Emmanuel Mejía und Ingeborg Schüssler (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009), pp. 359–366, esp. 364–365; Krzysztof Ziarek, *Language After*

Heidegger (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 142–174, esp. 149–150.

51. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 255, p. 323; *Beiträge*, pp. 407–408.
52. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 23, p. 47; *Beiträge*, p. 58.
53. Martin Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, translated by Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 11; *Besinnung* [GA 66] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), p. 15.
54. Wolfson, *Giving*, pp. 171–172, 178, 192, 208–209.
55. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 19.
56. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 38, p. 64; *Beiträge*, p. 80.
57. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air: Three Godly Discourses*, trans. Bruce H. Kirmmse (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 16.
58. Kierkegaard, *The Lily of the Field*, p. 17: “You shall in the deepest sense make yourself nothing, become nothing before God, learn to keep silent. In this silence is the beginning, which is *first* to seek God’s kingdom. ... The beginning is not that with which one begins but is that to which one comes, and one comes to it backward. Beginning is this art of *becoming* silent, for there is no art in keeping silent as nature is” (emphasis in original). Heidegger similarly conceives of the beginning as that which lays ahead and not behind, that is, the future to which one returns, but of course he would have removed from this conception the theological elements that were central to Kierkegaard.
59. Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, pp. 85–86; *Sein und Wahrheit*, pp. 107–109.
60. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: on Plato’s Cave Allegory and Theaetetus*, translated by Ted Sadler (New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 25 (emphasis in original); *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet* [GA 34] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988), p. 32.
61. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 259, p. 342; *Beiträge*, p. 434.
62. Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, p. 88; *Sein und Wahrheit*, p. 111.
63. Daniela Vallega-Neu, “Heidegger’s Reticence: From *Contributions* to *Das Ereignis* and toward *Gelassenheit*,” *Research in Phenomenology* 45 (2015): 1–32.
64. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 152; *Unterwegs zur Sprache* [GA

- 12] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), p. 221. See the analysis of Bernasconi, "The Question of Language," pp. 49–64.
65. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 237; *Wegmarken*, p. 309.
66. Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p. 30. For an alternative translation, see Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 207.
67. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 196; *Was Heißt Denken?* p. 199.
68. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 199. See Lin Ma, *Heidegger on East–West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), pp. 19–23, and the text of Tomio Tezuka, "Eine Stunde mit Heidegger," in *Japan und Heidegger: Gedenkschrift der Stadt Meßkirch zum hundertsten Geburtstag Martin Heideggers*, ed. Hartmut Buchner (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1989), pp. 173–180; English version in Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on His Work*, trans. Graham Parkes (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 59–64. Also pertinent is the study by Tetsuaki Kotoh, "Language and Silence: Self-Inquiry in Heidegger and Zen," in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), pp. 201–211, and the imaginary dialogue between Heidegger and a Buddhist printed as the epilogue in Joan Stambaugh, *The Finitude of Being* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 171–183.
69. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, pp. 52–53; *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p. 144.
70. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 78; *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p. 172.
71. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, pp. 122, 124; *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, pp. 241, 243–244. For a theological casting of this aspect of Heidegger's thinking, see Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, trans. Anne A. Davenport (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2004), pp. 27–30. *Inter alia*, Chrétien notes the affinity between Heidegger's notion of speech as a response or correspondence to the word that has been spoken and Levinas's notion of epiphany as the Saying that one receives. For a similar attempt to decrease the divide between Heidegger and Levinas on this point, see Wolfson, *Giving*, pp. 123–135.
72. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 131; *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p. 251.
73. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, pp. 134–135; *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p. 255.

74. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 147; *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p. 216.
75. Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller (Amherst, MA: Humanity Books, 2000), p. 216; *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* [GA 4] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996), p. 189.
76. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 120, p. 186; *Beiträge* p. 236.
77. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 254 (emphasis in original), p. 321; *Beiträge* p. 406.
78. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 123, p. 189; *Beiträge* p. 240.
79. Martin Heidegger, *The History of Beyng*, trans. William McNeill and Jeffrey Powell (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), p. 114; *Die Geschichte des Seyns* [GA 69] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998), p. 132.
80. Schallow, *Heidegger*, pp. 106–109.
81. The passage occurs as the epigraph to the seventh section of the *Beiträge* on *Der Letzte Gott*. See Heidegger, *Contributions*, p. 319; *Beiträge* p. 403.
82. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 254, p. 322; *Beiträge* p. 406. Rojcewicz and Vallega-Neu render *Gottwesen* as “Godhead,” but in order to avoid the risk of lapsing into an ontotheology, I have followed the more literal translation as “divine being” in Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), § 254, p. 286. This is the only section in the *Beiträge* where the expression appears.
83. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 254, p. 322; *Beiträge* pp. 406–407.
84. Paul Murphy Higgins, “Speaking and Thinking about God in Rosenzweig and Heidegger,” Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 2013, p. 93. But see p. 95, where the author proposes that the last god in Heidegger’s thought “is an expression of the divinity, as such, of any manifestation of divinity. ... The last god is the ultimate, highest aspect (as it were) of divinity. It is the element in which God can be God, analogous to what Eckhart describes as Godhead.” Stambaugh, *The Finitude of Being*, p. 91, also assumes that the meaning of “godhead” in Heidegger is identical to the use of the term in Eckhart “to designate the transpersonal ultimacy of the divine.” One of the passages to which she refers in support of her contention is from Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 150 (*Vorträge und Aufsätze*,

p. 151): “The divinities [*Göttlichen*] are the beckoning messengers of the godhead [*Gotttheit*]. Out of the holy sway of the godhead, the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment.” Stambaugh also refers to a second, almost identical passage, in Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 178 (*Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 180): “The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead. Out of the hidden sway of the divinities the god emerges as what he is, which removes him from comparison with beings that are present.” In both contexts, Heidegger is explaining the nature of divinity, which together with sky, earth, and mortals, constitutes his notion of the fourfold. It is not clear to me what the precise meaning of *Gotttheit* is for him beyond its being the source whence the divinities emerge. In my judgment, the import of *Gottwesen* is to subvert the positing of an element of divinity understood theistically; the force of the last god as ultimate intimates a surpassing of the ontotheological by affirming beingness separate from any being. Mention here should be made of the innovative analysis of Christos Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite*, ed. Andrew Louth, trans. Haralambos Ventis (London: T and T Clark International, 2005). The author accepts Heidegger’s criticism of Western metaphysics, but turns to apophatic theology, especially culled from the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, to elicit an alternative explanation such that nothingness is not construed, in the wake of Nietzsche, as the absence of God conceived ontotheologically as the supreme being—a position that leads to nihilism—but as the unknowable God to whom neither being nor nonbeing can be applied, and not merely, as Derrida famously argued, as the hyperessential being that is the being beyond being. See the summary of the argument in Yannaras, *On the Absence*, p. 22: “We speak then of an *apophaticism* destructive of idols, which under the guise of nihilism is manifest as the ‘inner crisis’ of western metaphysics. And we are indebted to Heidegger for seeing in this crisis the starting point for its historical understanding. ... God is either identified with the conceptual notion of an impersonal and abstract ‘first cause’ of the universe (*causa prima*), or of an absolute ‘authority’ in ethics (*principium auctoritatis*). In both cases the existence of God is a conceptual necessity, secured by demonstrative argument, but unrelated to historical experience and the existential condition of human beings. Precisely

because it offers an absolutized rational affirmation of God, European metaphysics prepares for the possibility of its own rational refutation. The 'death of God' is but the end-result of the historical unfolding of this absolutized and double-edged rationalism, which took place in the nations of Western Europe over the span of approximately a millennium." See Yannaras, *On the Absence*, p. 44: "The western apophatic tradition, from the neo-Platonist Eriugena to Anselm, Abelard and Thomas Aquinas—the attempt to reconcile affirmations and negations, the advocacy of knowing and of unknowing—bears out this discovery. Natural theology is revealed as the logic of affirmative statements, apophatic theology as the logic of negations." The trajectory of Western metaphysics leads to the *apophaticism of essence*, the positing of an uncreated and transcendent existence whose essence is unknown, whereas the Christian thought of the Greek East leads to an *apophaticism of the person*, the encountering of God as a person (hypostasis) in the immediacy of a relationship with the other that cannot be exhausted cognitively or conceptually (Yannaras, *On the Absence*, p. 29).

85. Higgins, "Speaking and Thinking about God," p. 112.
86. Schallow, *Heidegger*, p. 131 (emphasis in original).
87. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume IV: Nihilism*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 211; *Nietzsche: Zweiter Band* [GA 6.2] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), p. 349.
88. Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," *The Review of Metaphysics* 18 (1964): 221; idem, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*, with a foreword by Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), p. 250.
89. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 72; German text: pp. 140–141.
90. Yannaras, *On the Absence*, p. 51.
91. Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, p. 225; *Besinnung*, pp. 255–256.
92. Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, p. 225; *Besinnung*, p. 256. I have slightly modified the translation.
93. Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, p. 225; *Besinnung*, p. 256.
94. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 251, p. 316 (emphasis in original); *Beiträge*, p. 398.
95. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 251, p. 316 (emphasis in original); *Beiträge*, pp. 398–399.

96. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 252, p. 317 (emphasis in original); *Beiträge*, pp. 399–400.
97. Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 252, p. 317; *Beiträge*, p. 400.
98. Heidegger, *The History of Beyng*, p. 114 (emphasis in original); *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, p. 132.