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The Existential Grounding of Death in Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger

by

Sean Moore Ireton

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

1998

Approved by

Helmut Ammerlaan

Chairperson of Supervisory Committee

Program Authorized
To Offer Degree

Germanics

Date

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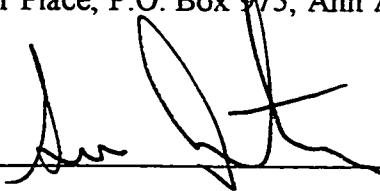
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Abstract

The Existential Grounding of Death in Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger

by Sean Moore Ireton

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The present dissertation examines two of the most important yet overlooked precursors to Martin Heidegger's analytic of death in *Sein und Zeit*: Hölderlin's unfinished drama *Der Tod des Empedokles* and Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. In all three works, death forms an ontological problem; that is, it becomes integrated into being and takes on existential significance. In contrast to the traditional metaphysical view of death as a fixed point in time signaling the cessation of life, the ontological perspective posits finitude as the ultimate horizon of possibility against which one defines and structures existence. This tendency reaches its pinnacle with Heidegger, who regards human reality as an ongoing process of *Sein zum Tode*, in which one's relation to finitude becomes a determining factor of selfhood. In his analysis, Heidegger discusses several aspects of death that would appear to be unprecedented in both conception and formulation. Yet a closer examination of texts by Hölderlin and Nietzsche reveals a probable indebtedness on the part of Heidegger for certain notions expressed in *Sein und Zeit*, particularly with regard to the concepts of *Vorlaufen in den Tod* and *Freiheit zum Tode*.

As Heidegger was influenced by Hölderlin and Nietzsche, Nietzsche was in turn inspired by Hölderlin, attempting to write a tragedy of his own around the Presocratic philosopher Empedocles. While neither dramatic project was carried through to completion, the extant fragments and drafts contain a number of similarities with regard to plot, characterization, and ideas. Although Nietzsche's *Empedokles* drama never progressed beyond a brief series of sketches conceived during the early 1870s, he took up the project under a different guise some ten years later. His famous work *Also sprach*

Zarathustra, written in four parts from 1883-85, can be considered an extension of his initial *Empedokles* project, for it retains and expands upon several of the original themes, especially death. As posthumously published notes reveal, Nietzsche also planned to write parts of *Zarathustra* in dramatic form, which further speaks for a connection to the *Empedokles* project, both his own and that of his predecessor Hölderlin.

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ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS CITED

Works of Heidegger will be cited parenthetically according to *Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe (Ausgabe letzter Hand)*, vols. 1-65. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977-.

Exceptions are abbreviated as follows:

FS *Frühe Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972.

N I, N II *Nietzsche. Zwei Bände*. 5th ed. Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1989.

SZ *Sein und Zeit*. 16th ed. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1986.

VA *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. 7th ed. Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1994.

Works and letters of Hölderlin will be cited according to *Sämtliche Werke (Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe)*, vols. 1-8. Ed. Friedrich Beißner/Adolf Beck. Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta/W. Kohlhammer, 1943-.

Works of Nietzsche, unless otherwise noted, refer to *Kritische Studienausgabe*, 2nd ed. Ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professors Hellmut Ammerlahn, Jane K. Brown, and Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen for their assistance in the preparation of this manuscript. Thanks are also due to William Bossart, who first put me on the path of Heidegger's thought.

DEDICATION

To Aidan: “Statim enim ab utero matris mori incipimus.”

Chapter One

Introduction: Determining the Place of Hölderlin and Nietzsche in Heidegger's Thought

Leben ist Tod, und Tod ist auch ein Leben.
-Hölderlin

Hüten wir uns, zu sagen, dass Tod dem Leben
entgegengesetzt sei.
-Nietzsche

Dasein ist so wesensmäßig sein Tod.
-Heidegger

Heidegger's analytic of death in the second division of *Sein und Zeit* has profoundly influenced both major camps of twentieth-century philosophy, existentialism and neo-Marxism alike. His view of finitude as the ultimate horizon of possibility against which one defines and structures existence in an either authentic or inauthentic mode of being has paved the way for an entire thanatological discourse—one that would in tendency later become directed against Heidegger, its very catalyst. The reader can gain a convenient insight into the reception and critical assessment of Heidegger's initiative in Hans Ebeling's *Der Tod in der Moderne*,¹ a collection of key philosophical texts on death by such figures as Jaspers, Sartre, Adorno, Marcuse, Bloch, et al. With the exception of Jaspers, whose reflections on the matter had for the most part already been articulated when *Sein und Zeit* appeared in 1927, this diverse assemblage of existentialists, Marxists, and cultural critics all remain in one form or another indebted to Heidegger. Be it as an object of criticism, a measuring stick of neutral comparison, or a simple point of departure for the development and formulation of later philosophical

treatises on death, Heidegger's analysis can be said to have established somewhat of a tradition in modernist thought.

Yet it is not the impact of Heidegger's analytic that this dissertation seeks to pursue. The direction to be taken is precisely the opposite, namely to trace the origins that underlie his seminal conception of human finitude. As shall be demonstrated, Heidegger's project of an authenticating free and self-determined death is not so unprecedented as it may seem. Granted, he credits various predecessors for their existential positions on death, at the same time however pointing out the unprofitable limitations of such ontically rooted theories for his own ontological endeavor. In one of the most detailed footnotes of *Sein und Zeit*, a number of authors and their respective works receive mention for their treatment of death: Wilhelm Dilthey's *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung*, Georg Simmel's *Lebensanschauung. Vier metaphysische Kapitel*; Rudolf Unger's *Herder, Novalis und Kleist. Studien über die Entwicklung des Todesproblems im Denken und Dichten von Sturm und Drang zur Romantik*, and Jaspers' *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (see SZ, 249n). Heidegger also remarks that the Christian theological tradition from Paul to Calvin has tended to regard death as a fundamental phenomenon of human existence, a point that has to some extent been pursued in recent scholarship.² A subsequent note, this one brief, refers to Tolstoy's *Der Tod des Iwan Iljitsch* in the context of an inauthentic relation toward finitude (see SZ, 254n). All of these allusions are, as befits the nature of a footnote, both cursory and marginally relevant to the analysis at hand. In the bulk of his effort to ground death in being, Heidegger appears to divorce himself entirely from tradition, as though he were pioneering previously uncovered

ground and his views were without example. The case however proves to be quite the opposite and it may come as no surprise that it is above all Hölderlin and Nietzsche, the two most consistent guiding stimuli in Heidegger's later thought, who have anticipated certain notions central to the analytic of death elaborated in *Sein und Zeit*.

Heidegger has primarily concerned himself with Hölderlin in a strictly poetic framework, a fact that can be accounted for in two ways. First and most basic, the object of his interest as evinced in his lectures on Hölderlin from the 1930s and 1940s³ is poetry and not, for instance, other literary genres such as the drama or the novel. This seems a perfectly legitimate practice in view of the fact that Hölderlin's most enduring body of work consists of verse. His novel *Hyperion* and dramatic fragment *Der Tod des Empedokles* will most likely never be granted equivalent status to his poetry. A further reason why Heidegger focuses solely on Hölderlin's lyric production has to do with his notion of the poet and thinker as collaborating disclosers of being. The exact nature of the poet's role in this process of disclosure remains difficult to define, as it never seems to crystallize into a definitive let alone binding or prescriptive form(ula). Heidegger could in fact never fully resolve the relation between the poet and thinker: "Man kennt wohl manches über das Verhältnis der Philosophie und der Poesie. Wir wissen aber nichts von der Zwiesprache der Dichter und Denker, die 'nahe wohnen auf getrenntesten Bergen'" (GA 9, 309). One thing that remains clear however is that the poet names and thus establishes being by means of the word: "[...] dieses Wesen der Dichtung [...] ist die werthafte Stiftung des Seins" (GA 4, 42). Through the medium of language, understood as "lichtend-verbergende Ankunft des Seins selbst" and metaphorically as

“das Haus des Seins” (GA 9, 324/330), the poet creates an opening or clearing for the manifestation of being in the work of art. Disclosure, truth (both conveyed by the Greek ἀληθεια), clearing, and in effect art all function as corresponding events of being. Yet not every aesthetic work shares an equal status in this momentous event or *Ereignis*. Poetry, mainly because of its extreme dependence on language (meter, rhyme, syntax, etc.), enjoys a privileged and paradigmatic standing among the arts, and indeed would appear to be the only art form that Heidegger seriously reckons with. It is symptomatic of this partiality that Heidegger’s publications on aesthetics revolve almost entirely around poetry and language. Even his broader treatment of art, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, with its inclusion of more graphic media such as painting (van Gogh’s depiction of peasant shoes) and architecture (the example of an ancient Greek temple), clearly affirms the preeminence of poetry. This becomes most evident in the concluding pages, throughout which Heidegger proceeds to qualify his categorical statement: “Gleichwohl hat das Sprachwerk, die Dichtung im engeren Sinne, eine ausgezeichnete Stellung im Ganzen der Künste” (GA 5, 60). Evidently, the dramatist and novelist have no place in the house of being. Although in the course of his lectures Heidegger occasionally refers to *Hyperion*, *Der Tod des Empedokles*, and even Hölderlin’s theoretical writings, he does so more as an aside to his ongoing discussion of the poems and neglects to deal with these works on their own terms. Nevertheless, given the theme and content of *Der Tod des Empedokles*, it seems highly probable that the drama furnished Heidegger, if not with an ideal case of disclosure in the work of art, then at least with concrete material for a phenomenological analysis of death.

Empedokles' determination to die, which Hölderlin attempted to dramatize in three distinct drafts of the play, all of them doomed to remain fragments, demonstrates a near perfect example of an authentic being unto death. Throughout all three versions of the drama, Empedokles displays a resoluteness toward death that approximates Heidegger's notions of *Entschluß* and to a lesser extent *Entschlossenheit*. Empedokles' resolve to end his life in the crater of Mount Etna, a biographical—though possibly apocryphal—aspect that fascinated Hölderlin from early on and that may have provided the main impetus for his entire *Empedokles* project, finds an interesting conceptualization in *Vorlaufen in den Tod*, the basic authentic conduct toward finitude that Heidegger ascertains in his analysis. The implicit trajectory of Empedokles' impending death (due to the fragmentation of all three drafts, his plunge into Etna never actually occurs in the plot of the drama) remains precisely a literal running forward into the volcanic crater that looms on the horizon not only of the Sicilian landscape but of the hero's very existence as well. The destiny of Hölderlin's tragic figure remains caught up in Mount Etna from the beginning of the conceived play, and despite the fact that Empedokles is preempted from taking the final leap into death, he lives in constant anticipation of his end. This attitude suggests another, less literal, meaning of *Vorlaufen* as Dasein's anticipatory self-understanding in the face of finitude. The two existing English translations of *Sein und Zeit* have in fact rendered *Vorlaufen* as "anticipation" and thereby obscured the connotations of forward motion that the German term carries. A Heideggerian reading of *Der Tod des Empedokles* may help correct this problem of translation—and ultimately interpretation.

Another key concept in Heidegger's analysis of death is *Schuld*, or to be more precise, the existential condition of *Schuldigsein*. While he credits certain predecessors with examining the phenomenon of conscience (cf. SZ, 272n), he does not adhere to this scholarly practice in his subsequent and related investigation of guilt, which is revealed precisely through the foregoing call of conscience. Heidegger's ontological understanding of *Schuld* is, if not completely original then highly unorthodox, and it is doubtful that he owes a significant debt to any one source or even handful of sources. Still, it is interesting to note that after death, guilt forms the second major theme of *Der Tod des Empedokles*. Indeed, the hero's state of guilt becomes the principal motivation for his resolve to die. The *Schuld* that weighs upon Empedokles, though it does not entirely correspond to Dasein's *Schuldigsein*, nevertheless remains a fundamental fact of his existence, one that prompts him to make the most crucial choice of life—whether or not to end it. Hence, on a certain, analogously profound level Empedokles' guiltiness resembles Dasein's ontological condition of guilt insofar as they both function as the ground for existential possibilities and decisions.

Heidegger's preoccupation with Nietzsche is manifested in university lectures from the 1930s and '40s.⁴ Here Heidegger explicates, reconciles, and generally rethinks five fundamental principles that dominate Nietzsche's philosophy: *der Wille zur Macht*, *die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen*, *der Nihilismus*, *der Übermensch*, *die Gerechtigkeit*. Heidegger interprets these "basic thoughts" (*Grundgedanken*) as the culmination of Western metaphysics within the larger context of the history of being. Nietzsche thus becomes the last great metaphysician in a long line beginning with Plato, whose

transcendent world of ideal truth Nietzsche claimed to have reversed and reevaluated. Yet according to Heidegger, Nietzsche's famed *Umkehrung/Umwertung* is but a reversal from within the Platonic tradition and hence remains trapped inside the same speculative confines that it professes to surmount. Nietzsche, that is, fails to take into account the ontological difference between *Sein* and *Seiendes*, thereby ignoring the greater presence of being that haunts reality, particularly human existence. In an essay entitled "Überwindung der Metaphysik", Heidegger summarizes Nietzsche's unwitting entanglement in Platonism as follows:

Die Umkehrung des Platonismus, dergemäß dann für Nietzsche das Sinnliche zur wahren Welt und das Übersinnliche zur unwahren wird, verharret durchaus innerhalb der Metaphysik. Diese Art der Überwindung der Metaphysik, die Nietzsche im Auge hat und dies im Sinne des Positivismus des 19. Jahrhunderts, ist, wenngleich in einer höheren Verwandlung, nur die endgültige Verstrickung in die Metaphysik. Zwar hat es den Anschein, als sei das "Meta", die Transzendenz ins Übersinnliche, zugunsten des Beharrens im Elementaren der Sinnlichkeit beseitigt, während doch nur die Seinsvergessenheit vollendet und das Übersinnliche als der Wille zur Macht losgelassen und betrieben wird. (VA, 75)

This understanding of Nietzsche is rooted in the long-term project that Heidegger announced in the Introduction to *Sein und Zeit*: a destruction of the history of ontology as a concealment of being. Parallel to his pursuit of what he calls *die Seinsfrage*, Heidegger strives to carry out this project of destruction by reinterpreting the entire Western philosophical tradition in the countless lectures and essays conceived during his lifetime. His critical evaluation of such figures as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant,

Hegel, Schelling, and lastly Nietzsche is not a self-serving attempt to prove his predecessors wrong in terms of their systematized views. Heidegger seeks rather to uncover the hidden presence of being that these and other Western philosophers have obscured through metaphysical thinking, a thinking that confuses being with its individual appearances or manifestations. Metaphysics may attempt to grasp whatever transcendence lies behind our physical world, but it tends to use some sort of particular being as its model rather than pursuing being itself. The Cartesian *cogito*, Kant's transcendental apperception, Hegel's absolute knowledge, Nietzsche's will to power—all these remain in essence metaphysical interpretations of reality. Heidegger's radical task of destroying the history of ontology as metaphysics does not entail an act of "destruction" in the narrow sense of the word. His intention is a positive or productive one, and he deliberately employs the Latinate *Destruktion* rather than, say, the Germanic *Zerstörung*, thereby capitalizing on the etymological implication (*de-struere*) that this metaphysical tradition is to be stripped of the many layers that have settled upon its foundations over the last two thousand years.⁵ The history of Western philosophy thus resembles a kind of intellectual stratification in which being becomes increasingly covered up and forgotten (hence the term *Seinsvergessenheit*). Whereas the Presocratics had a relatively clear insight into being and Plato still questioned the term *seiend*,⁶ modern philosophers fail even to broach *die Seinsfrage*.

Such is the role that Nietzsche tends to play in Heidegger's thought, and the greater part of both German and Anglo-American scholarship consequently focuses on diverse aspects of this connection between the last metaphysician and the self-proclaimed

thinker of being. Yet remarkably little attention has been paid to the impact of Nietzsche on Heidegger's earlier thought, specifically on *Sein und Zeit*, the work in which he first declared his intention to destroy the history of ontology.⁷ Although Nietzsche is not mentioned in this context of destruction his name later appears a total of three times. The most detailed and seemingly important reference is to the second *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung, Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* (see SZ, 396f). Here Heidegger applies Nietzsche's three types of historical study—monumental, antiquarian, and critical—to his own posited structures of authentic temporality. Monumental history thus becomes linked with *zukünftiges Dasein*, antiquarian with *gewesenes*, and critical with *entgegenwärtigendes*.⁸ As far as the other two references are concerned, Heidegger fails to provide any bibliographical detail beyond Nietzsche's name. One such allusion occurs as a footnote in the ontological interpretation of conscience (see SZ, 272), presumably in connection with the second treatise of *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, which bears the heading "'Schuld', 'schlechtes Gewissen', Verwandtes". The other is even more vague with regard to source; Heidegger merely writes the following in summing up authentic Dasein's forward-running conduct toward death:

Das Dasein behütet sich, vorlaufend, davor, hinter sich selbst und das verstandene Seinkönnen zurückzufallen und "für seine Siege zu alt zu werden" (Nietzsche). (SZ, 264)

By all appearances, these few quoted words of Nietzsche shed little light on Heidegger's ontological analytic of death. The reader familiar with Nietzsche's work will however note a paraphrase of Zarathustra's discourse "Vom freien Tode", and here

the association becomes all the more apparent, for this speech from the first part of *Also sprach Zarathustra* clearly anticipates Heidegger's project on an authenticating free and self-determined death. The ideas raised in Zarathustra's pronouncements even correspond in detail to several important aspects of Heidegger's analysis. Yet the cursory reference, both parenthetical and paraphrastic, would seem to belie the actual impact of Nietzsche's prefigured free death (*freier Tod*) on Heidegger's own postulation of freedom unto death (*Freiheit zum Tode*). As I will demonstrate in the course of this dissertation, Heidegger remains far more indebted to Nietzsche than it appears on the surface, a fact that would in turn imply an earlier relation than has commonly been acknowledged by scholars.

Given the surge in readership of both Hölderlin and Nietzsche in the early part of this century, it seems unlikely that Heidegger was not marked by their influence. Nearly every major German intellectual of the era became in some way affected—in certain cases infected—by Hölderlin and Nietzsche, or at least by one of the two. Dilthey, Rilke, the George circle, and Hermann Hesse all drew, in varying degrees, inspiration from the life and work of both figures, while writers and philosophers such as Thomas Mann, Benn, Musil, Jaspers, Klages, Simmel, and Spengler were less moved by Hölderlin but all the more so by Nietzsche. The intellectual climate of Heidegger's day was in other words permeated with the presence of Hölderlin and Nietzsche, both of whom had achieved a posthumous and near epidemic popularity in the first decades of the twentieth century.

This popularity may provide an explanation for Heidegger's reticence in matters concerning Hölderlin and Nietzsche at this point in his career. For a better illustration of this matter one might consider the analogous case of Heidegger's equivocal Kierkegaard reception. As with his threefold invocation of Nietzsche, Heidegger footnotes Kierkegaard an equal number of times in the course of *Sein und Zeit* (cf. SZ, 190, 235, 338) yet fails to concede any assumption of ideas. Indeed, the latter two footnotes have a rather critical edge insofar as Heidegger underscores the *existenziell* limitations of Kierkegaard's concepts—that is, concepts that seek to interpret human existence but that ignore the more fundamental importance of being. There can however be no doubt that many of Heidegger's conceptions and even some of his terminology have been shaped by Kierkegaard's writings, which appeared in German translation from 1909 to 1922.⁹ Just as the works of Hölderlin and Nietzsche experienced a revival around this time, there was a concurrent resurgence of interest in Kierkegaard, at least within philosophic circles. Jaspers reports that both he and Heidegger “shared a passion for Kierkegaard” during the 1920s.¹⁰ Yet unlike Jaspers, who often referred to Kierkegaard (and Nietzsche) in his works, Heidegger proves to be far more reserved in acknowledging any debt to the founder of existentialism. He first admits to the impulses (*Stöße/Anstöße*) he received from Kierkegaard in a lecture course from the summer semester of 1923.¹¹ As one scholar speculates in this matter, Heidegger “is apparently still wary of the modishness of ‘Kierkegaardism’ at this time.”¹² This factor of intellectual fashion might help explain his reluctance to mention the Danish philosopher by name despite the obvious connection in their thought. Perhaps not surprisingly, a similar theory has been suggested with

regard to Heidegger's understated Nietzsche reception during the 1920s. David Ferrell Krell speculates that, after some initial contact with Nietzsche in his student and early professor years, Heidegger "[...] apparently wished to distance himself from the Nietzsche adopted by *Lebensphilosophie* and by the philosophies of culture, worldview, and value."¹³ Heidegger most likely considered these fashionable movements of the early twentieth century inconsequential to the philosophical tradition that he was tapping in his lectures on Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Husserl, and others. Perhaps he already counted Nietzsche among this tradition but had yet to study the latter's writings to the extent that he had those of other philosophers. Yet any such claim must ultimately remain within the realm of conjecture; one will probably never arrive at a satisfactory answer as to why many of Heidegger's notions bear a striking resemblance to those of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Hölderlin. Beyond hypothesizing one can only try to unearth the few documented facts that attest to his preoccupation with their work.

According to his own testimony, Heidegger read Nietzsche as well as Hölderlin and Kierkegaard in his youth. In a speech delivered to the Heidelberg *Akademie der Wissenschaften* in 1957, he recalls the most formative experiences of his education:

Im Jahre 1908 fand ich durch ein heute noch erhaltenes Reclambändchen seiner Gedichte zu Hölderlin.

[...]

Was die erregenden Jahre zwischen 1910 und 1914 brachten, läßt sich gebührend nicht sagen, sondern nur durch eine wenigstens auswählende Aufzählung andeuten: Die zweite um das doppelte vermehrte Ausgabe von Nietzsches 'Willen zur Macht', die Übersetzung der Werke Kierkegaards [...]¹⁴
(FS, X)

Further proof of Heidegger's familiarity with these three can be found in writings and lectures from Freiburg and Marburg. It has already been noted that Kierkegaard is credited three times in the 1923 lecture *Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität)*, the last course that Heidegger held during the first of his two appointments at Freiburg. References to Nietzsche occur even earlier. In his habilitation thesis from 1915-16, *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus*, Heidegger briefly discusses Nietzsche's notion that philosophy is not an objective science but an expression of the author's living personality. His description of Nietzsche seems inclusive and accurate enough to imply more than a narrow, casual acquaintance: "Dieses Bestimmtsein aller Philosophie vom Subjekt her hat Nietzsche in seiner unerbittlich herben Denkart und plastischen Darstellungsfähigkeit auf die bekannte Formel gebracht vom 'Trieb, der philosophiert'" (FS, 138f.). In an essay from the same period, entitled "Der Zeitbegriff in der Geschichtswissenschaft", he alludes to "den Willen der Philosophie zur Macht", here however without citing Nietzsche by name (see FS 357). In the winter semester of 1923, Nietzsche's words "Jedes Wort ist ein Vorurteil" from *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* are quoted (GA 17, 36), while in the lecture course from the summer of 1925, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, considered to be a proto-version of *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger invokes Nietzsche in a half-anonymous, half-deferential manner:

Philosophische Forschung ist und bleibt Atheismus, deshalb kann sie sich die "Anmaßung des Denkens" leisten, nicht nur wird sie sich sie leisten, sondern sie ist die innere Notwendigkeit der Philosophie und die eigentliche Kraft, und

gerade in diesem Atheismus wird sie zu dem, was ein Großer einmal sagte, zur
 “Fröhlichen Wissenschaft” (GA 20, 109f.)

Hölderlin, on the other hand, receives no direct notice in these early lectures but appears only marginally in a course held in 1919 called *Die Idee der Philosophie und das Weltanschauungsproblem*. While demonstrating the structure of experience inherent in the notion of *Ereignis*, Heidegger relies on a passage from *Antigone*, quoting the original Greek as well as Hölderlin’s German translation (see GA 56/57, 74). It is worth pointing out that the standard Hölderlin edition to which Heidegger refers contains both the Sophocles translations and *Empedokles* fragments in the same volume.¹⁵ Physically or optically at least, Heidegger thus had to be confronted with Hölderlin’s drama long before he began to formulate his thoughts on death and guilt in *Sein und Zeit*. It is also curious that Heidegger would draw on such an “unacademic” translation of Sophocles in his university lecture. Hölderlin’s translations are notorious for their eccentricities, inexactitudes, and outright grammatical-syntactical errors, though many people of course level the same criticism at Heidegger’s own idiosyncratic renderings from the Greek. This similarity creates perhaps all the more potential kinship between the two figures at this point, long before they would take on the roles of kindred thinker and poet of being.

Heidegger’s silence regarding any such intellectual kinship with Hölderlin and Nietzsche—or for that matter Kierkegaard—has elicited a variety of reactions among his readers, ranging from puzzlement to irritation, and in some cases trenchant criticism. The explanation of his reticence suggested above, namely that he was mistrustful of literary and philosophical fashions, is a rather benevolent one. Some readers are less inclined to

give Heidegger the benefit of the doubt when it comes to the issue of properly acknowledging sources. Still, most scholars merely point to the problem rather than seek to pass judgement on it. Some representative voices of these scholarly tendencies merit attention if only because they may illuminate further aspects of Heidegger's relationship to Hölderlin and Nietzsche.

In his voluminous and detailed study, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King*, John van Buren discusses this problem of acknowledgement in light of Heidegger's own notion that *Denken* is at bottom a form of *Danken*. As van Buren suggests, Heidegger the thinker does not live up to this etymological equation in terms of his profitable reading background:

Though maintaining that "thinking" is really "thanking", the later Heidegger was, as has been well documented, often puzzlingly reluctant to acknowledge his profound indebtedness to those philosophical traditions that originally helped to put him on the way of the being-question in his early Freiburg period, such as the young Luther, Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Aristotle's practical writings, Husserl's Sixth Investigation, and Dilthey.¹⁶

Heidegger's negligence in giving adequate credit to the deeper influences behind his thought seems especially striking in the case of *Sein und Zeit*, a work that gestated over a period of several years, evolving from university lectures on such diverse topics as mysticism, phenomenology, ontology, theology, temporality, Aristotle, etc. In his exhaustive book, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, Theodore Kisiel has delineated three distinct drafts of *Sein und Zeit* based on lecture transcripts, noting that only in the final published version does Heidegger display the tendency to obscure the

philosophical tradition upon which much of his thought draws. Like van Buren, Kisiel, too, remains puzzled by this fact: “For whatever reasons, some perhaps unconscious or simply inadvertent, Heidegger in his final draft, contrary to the previous draft, is subtly downplaying, disguising, or otherwise distorting some of the deepest roots of his thought.”¹⁷

Neither van Buren nor Kisiel specifically points to Nietzsche as one such root in Heidegger’s development. Another scholar, Jacques Taminiaux, does however count Nietzsche among the ranks of Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, and Descartes as covert contributors to ideas of *Sein und Zeit*. Taminiaux justifies his collection of essays featured in *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology* by citing Heidegger’s motto from a 1924 course on the Platonic dialogue *Sophistes*: “It is in any case a dubious thing to rely on what an author himself has brought to the forefront. The important thing is rather to give attention to those things he left shrouded in silence.”¹⁸ Taminiaux himself reflects on this matter of silence as follows :

Indeed, it very quickly appeared to me that while he made abundant references to his readings, Heidegger continued to maintain, or only partly discarded, the original reticence of *Sein und Zeit*, especially when discussing the most burning issues, such as the question of his methodology and the articulation of his fundamental ontology. As for the reason for this reticence [...], I have no answer. Is it the pride of the pathfinder? Is it the fear of being misunderstood or lumped and leveled with all-too-common theses? Perhaps both.

I realized also—and this remark is in keeping with the above assessment—that the thinkers he mentioned least often in his publications and in his lecture

courses, Nietzsche in particular, may well have been those he had most in mind.¹⁹

Though Taminiaux also includes in his collection an essay entitled “The First Reading of Hölderlin”, he maintains that this did not occur until immediately before Heidegger’s lecture courses on “Germanien” and “Der Rhein” in 1934-35. Still, Taminiaux’s recognition of Nietzsche at least offsets his failure to discern the equal importance of Hölderlin, who for some reason seems to be overlooked by all interpreters of *Sein und Zeit*.

Karl Jaspers has deeper reservations about Heidegger’s silence. According to Jaspers, Heidegger is remiss in citing the critical forerunners to his thought and instead makes a habit of crediting minor figures, in the case of *Sein und Zeit* his former professors: “Heidegger zitiert meist, was auf ihn garnicht [*sic*] gerichtet wird, faktisch Beiläufiges, in *Sein und Zeit* Professoren—als ob sein Instinkt ablenken wollte von den wirklich ihn Bestimmenden, z.B. Kierkegaard, Schelling [...]”²⁰ Jaspers also notes the unacknowledged theological roots underlying Heidegger’s thought: “Er gibt die Herkunft oder Anregung seiner Gedanken nicht kund: / Kierkegaard, Schelling, / Luther, Augustin / Scholastik [...]”²¹ Despite his irritation at Heidegger’s practice of obfuscation, Jaspers still had enough respect for his one-time friend and colleague to marvel at the overall originality of his thought.

The same can not be said of Walther Kaufmann, who despite his existentialist tendencies remains a vehement critic of Heidegger. In his series *Discovering the Mind*, Kaufmann finds few if any original ideas in Heidegger’s entire philosophy and charges

him with obscurantism, dogmatism, and even authoritarianism.²² A scholar, translator, and promoter of Nietzsche in North America, he finds especial fault with—the later—Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche in the two-volume work published in 1961. And like most others, Kaufmann dismisses any notable impact of Nietzsche on *Sein und Zeit*, asserting that “What is astonishing is that, unlike so many others in his generation, Heidegger seems to have had scarcely any notion at that time of *Nietzsche’s* thought.”²³ Nevertheless, he does discuss the relevance of the Christian theological tradition, especially that of Kierkegaard. The sixth and final thesis of his critique in fact reads: “*Heidegger secularized Christian preaching about guilt, dread, and death but claimed to break with two thousand years of Western thought.*”²⁴ Kaufmann’s brief examination of such themes as guilt, dread, and death reveals that Heidegger produced no major new insights but rather authoritatively appropriated ideas and passed them off as his own.

Heidegger himself had his own particular notion of what constitutes “influence”, which may aid in further explaining his apparent lack of avowed indebtedness to his predecessors. For Heidegger, the important thinkers of history do not depend upon one another in the sense that they take over and pass on ideas, thereby creating a chain of individually determinable influences. This is the perspective adopted by the positive sciences which reduce all phenomena to convenient, present-at-hand objects of study and can therefore better posit ontic details and connections. Philosophy however is one of the few disciplines that persists in thinking a single thought: “What is being?” At worst, it poses the metaphysical fore-question: “What are particulars beings?” Regardless whether philosophy follows an ontological or ontic course it still looks beyond such

immaterial issues as authorship, intellectual dependency, inheritance of ideas, etc. As early as his 1915 habilitation on Duns Scotus, Heidegger expressed this view in a quote from Hegel, which he made the motto of his thesis: “[...] in Rücksicht aufs innere Wesen der Philosophie gibt es weder Vorgänger noch Nachgänger” (FS, 135). In his later thinking, Heidegger finds himself further along the path to being to which he attributes the ultimate source of dependency among the great philosophers. A remark from his 1951-52 lecture *Was heißt Denken?* illustrates this point:

Ein Denker hängt nicht von einem Denker ab, sondern er hängt, wenn er denkt, dem zu-Denkenden, dem Sein, an. Und nur insoweit er dem Sein anhängt, kann er für das Einfließen des schon Gedachten der Denker offen sein. Es bleibt darum das ausschließliche Vorrecht der größten Denker, sich be-einflussen zu lassen. Die Kleinen dagegen leiden lediglich an ihrer verhinderten Originalität und verschließen sich deshalb dem weither kommenden Ein-Fluß.²⁵

The influx of being and of the thought that springs from it thus remains the true force linking Heidegger with the essential thinkers of history. According to this corrective definition of influence, Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and others cannot be said to have inspired Heidegger in the manner commonly conceived and pursued in source studies. That they are, chronologically speaking, “precursors” is an ontic-positivistic fact that has no bearing on their status within the history of being. From an ontological standpoint, the individual authors Herr Hölderlin and Herr Nietzsche had no ascertainable effect upon the singular thinker Herrn Heidegger. What is essential remains rather the thought of all three within the greater context of the *Seinsfrage*.

In partial recognition of this view, the present study seeks to posit more than a nexus of connections between the specific figures Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Taking a cue from the latter, one must go beyond a mere uncovering of influences if any essential questions are to be raised let alone resolved: “Mit dieser historischen Detektiv-Wissenschaft im Aufspüren von Abhängigkeiten kommen wir nicht von der Stelle, d.h. niemals in das Wesentliche, sondern verstricken uns nur in äußerliche Anklänge und Beziehungen” (N I, 507). My own opinion, independent of Heidegger’s, is that influence studies tend to be unsatisfying if that is all they remain, namely an ascertainment of potential sources that a particular author may have drawn upon for his work. Far more interesting and certainly more important is the broader question that emerges from such fact-finding: What significance do these interdependencies have within the framework of intellectual history? Put more crudely, Heidegger may well have taken over certain ideas from Hölderlin and Nietzsche, but so what? A small circle of scholars will perhaps welcome a contribution of this sort to the field of Heidegger studies and this may be all that a dissertation can hope to accomplish. Yet ultimately such literary detective work—in this case the detection of similarities, continuities, parallelisms—can only be the foreground to an exploration of more fundamental and comprehensive issues, issues that are not only relevant to a select group of authors but that have their own history and undergo their own patterns of development. What Heidegger regards as the history of being may seem a dubious enough notion to some, and it is difficult to say what precise role death plays within this large-scale conception. However, the tradition of Western thought from the Greeks to Postmodernism remains an established domain of study in

which the place of Heidegger, Nietzsche, Hölderlin, and their respective views on death can be readily situated and assessed. It is this framework of intellectual history, *Geistesgeschichte* rather than *Seinsgeschichte*, that the conclusion of this dissertation seeks to sketch out.

My concluding remarks will focus on three principal aspects of this greater tradition. First I will discuss the religious sources that underlie Heidegger's existential grounding of death, namely the theological tradition known as *Urchristentum*. This primal strand of Christianity includes such figures as Paul, Augustine, Luther, Pascal, and Kierkegaard, all of whom might be considered Christian existentialists insofar as they examine in their writings the question of a personal religious existence that is defined by such phenomena as anxiety, guilt, conscience, and of course death. Secondly, I will comment briefly on other authors not affiliated with this primal Christian tradition but that nevertheless influenced Heidegger's analytic. These include Rilke and Jaspers, who, for obvious reasons of length, cannot receive their own chapters within the dissertation itself. For the present, I can only hint at their importance in the conclusion, which in this respect does not properly conclude my findings so much as point beyond them. The final question that I wish to pursue in the conclusion is somewhat more theoretical in nature—theoretical in the double sense that I am venturing my own theory and at the same time relying on certain theoreticians to lend support to my view. Here I seek an explanation for the ontological grounding of death in the modern age. Beyond the legacy of primal Christianity, there seem to be other cultural factors at work that fostered the thanatological views expounded by Hölderlin, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Jaspers, all of whom

owe little if any debt to the theological tradition out of which Kierkegaard and Heidegger emerged.²⁶

As for as the remaining structure of the dissertation, I will begin my analysis with Heidegger. Although not chronological, this approach makes sense in that it initially establishes the field of influence in question so that one can more effectively trace the essential themes back to Hölderlin and Nietzsche. My discussion of Heidegger is for the most part a straightforward exegesis of his analytic of death in *Sein und Zeit*. Here I rely only occasionally on outside sources and scholarly opinions, preferring instead to give a more immanent, self-contained interpretation. There is naturally no lack of commentaries on *Sein und Zeit*, but these have the tendency to replace thorough reading and subsequent re-readings of the original text with convenient synopses. Furthermore, I do not believe that *Sein und Zeit* remains impossible to understand on its own terms provided that one is willing to listen and adjust to the language that it speaks. Heidegger's style is not as profound nor his terminology as recondite as they appear at first glance. In the main, he uses everyday German words to describe everyday phenomena, but he divests these words of their commonplace meaning and imbues them with a more originary, etymological signification. Even his neologisms are typically based on quotidian vocabulary and are somehow recognizable despite their often odd lexical appearance. In the course of my investigation I will mostly retain the German term that Heidegger employs but will also not hesitate to utilize an acceptable English equivalent when one is available and makes for better fluency and style. Anglo-American scholars of Heidegger have both agreed and disagreed on whether and how to

translate a number of his terms—not so much for petty reasons of philological accuracy and fidelity but because all translation ultimately remains interpretation. Though I generally agree with—and cannot but admire—most translations and interpretations of Heidegger’s work, I depart from the scholarly convention on a couple of important counts, a practice that warrants some justification.

Heidegger’s major concept *Sein* has been rendered by most interpreters and translators as “Being”. While this seems a perfectly natural and legitimate way of transferring the German word into English, it leads to certain problems. *Das Sein* is of course an articular infinitive that, by the rules governing English grammar, must be translated as a gerund. Yet this translational necessity already constitutes one step toward abstraction, for out of the infinitive “to be” results the substantive “being”. Thus Heidegger’s reawakening of *die Seinsfrage* and his ceaseless interrogation of *das Sein* are understood by English readers as “a questioning of being” rather than as “a questioning of what it means to be”. The crucial difference lies in the fact that “being” takes on the property of an object or state to which the self relates as opposed to the more existential notion of the self’s potentiality “to be”. The English sentence “I seek to understand my being” erects a barrier of sorts between myself as subject and my being as object, which is precisely the Cartesian dichotomy that Heidegger strives to avoid. If on the other hand we say something more along the lines of “I seek to understand what it means to be”, we are essentially speaking Heidegger’s language.

An additional problem arises with the term *Seiendes*. Heidegger has actually expressed his satisfaction with the English rendering “beings” as it conveys the plurality

of the Greek *τα οντα*, of which *Seiendes* itself is meant to be a translation. But with respect to *Sein/being*, the German participial ending *-end[-]* creates difficulties for a sensible English rendition. If *Sein* translates as “being”, should *Seiendes* then receive a second gerundial ending as in the insufferable “beingings”? To overcome this obstacle most scholars in their discussions of Heidegger have capitalized “being” as “Being” (*Sein*), thereby distinguishing it even more from the standard translation of *Seiendes* as the plural “beings”. Yet this practice tends to make *Sein*, which as a noun must of course be capitalized in German, into a supreme and almost God-like Thing when it is, according to Heidegger, anything but such a divine or transcendent entity. Being remains rather the fundamental ground of the self, the basis upon which one comes to understand his mode of existence in the world. I will therefore opt for the unimposing, non-capitalized “being” when talking about *Sein* though the reader should keep in the back of his mind the more accurate but untranslatable sense of the infinitive “to be”. This, too, remains the choice of the latest translator of *Sein und Zeit*, whose preface, though brief, offers some good insights on dealing with Heideggerian terminology.²⁷ The expression *Seiendes* I will render not as “beings”, “be-ings”, “entities”, or “essents”, all of which are in currency, but as “particular beings” following the example of the professor who introduced me to Heidegger and whose choice probably cannot be improved upon.²⁸ Like most commentators, I will leave *Dasein* in German, unitalicized, and let it gradually acquire the special meaning that Heidegger ascribes to it.

The real source of frustration lies in discussing the terms *existenzial* and *existenziell*. Here I have, as far as I can tell, taken a previously untraveled course,

however only out of sheer necessity. The standard translation, or better Anglicization, of these concepts as “existential” and “existentiell” is generally unobjectionable but leads to problems when dealing with Heidegger in conjunction with other existentialist or pre-existentialist figures. In German, there is little source of confusion between the various branches of existentialist thinking and their respective terminology, for one has at his disposal the three expressions *existenzial*, *existentiell*, and *existential*. The latter variant has come into use through the advent and popularity of French existentialism, which is usually written as *Existentialismus* as opposed to the more German movement of *Existenzphilosophie*. Jaspers, the main proponent of this latter direction, was careful to differentiate the two terms, *Existenzialismus* and *Existenzphilosophie*, as he, like Heidegger, had a rather low opinion of Sartre’s existentialism. And again like Heidegger, whose expression *Dasein* is basically untranslatable, Jasper’s notion of human existence as *Existenz* is unique enough that English translators have wisely left it alone, thereby not only doing justice to the conception but also not complicating issues of orthography.²⁹ Yet such orthographic problems inevitably arise in English discussions of existentialist thought, whether of the French or German variety. This is perhaps partly due to the fact that the Anglo-American tradition remains remarkably devoid of original existentialists and is hence unequipped to deal with the specific terminology. The more apparent cause lies however in the divergent and indeed conflicting philosophies of people like Heidegger, Jaspers, and Sartre.

Of the three, Heidegger is the only one to adopt two distinct terms for “existential” concepts. In describing *Dasein*’s *Existenz*, he uses *existenzial* to designate

the ontological inquiry into the structure of Dasein's being, while he reserves *existenziell* for the ontical inquiry into Dasein's factual or concrete possibilities in a given situation. *Existenzial* can be both an adjective and a noun, and when it takes on the latter function it indicates a certain class of phenomena through which Dasein can best begin to comprehend its being. In contrast to a *Kategorie*, under which ontical things with a static mode of being (e.g. everyday implements, scientific objects) are subsumed, an *Existenzial* takes Dasein's dynamic nature into account and does not so much rigidly classify as lend a structure of understanding to Dasein's distinctive mode of being, namely *Existenz*. An *Existenzial* is for instance *Befindlichkeit* or Dasein's state of attunement in the world. Death is another *Existenzial*, as is anxiety (*Angst*), understanding (*Verstehen*), etc. In the plural, these structuring experiences are called *Existenzialien*. Again, almost all interpreters of Heidegger render *existenzial* and its substantive form *Existenzial* as "existential" (the plural *Existenzialien* as "existentials"), while *existenziell* becomes the odd-looking "existentiell". For the reader's convenience I include here the following chart from Michael Gelven's commentary on *Sein und Zeit*³⁰ with the original German terms added for the sake of comparison:

Object of inquiry	Being/ <i>Sein</i>	Entity/ <i>das Seiende</i>
Type of inquiry	ontological/ <i>ontologisch</i>	ontic(al)/ <i>ontisch</i>
Terms of inquiry	existentials/ <i>Existenzialien</i>	categories/ <i>Kategorien</i>
Status of occurrence in inquiry	factual/ <i>faktisch</i>	factual/ <i>tatsächlich</i>
Type of self-awareness in inquiry	existential/ <i>existenzial</i>	existentiell/ <i>existenziell</i>

So long as this nomenclature, especially the terms *existenzial* and *existenziell*, remains fixed within a Heideggerian context, it poses no insurmountable difficulties for comprehension. As with all specialized jargon, the reader eventually adapts to the terminology and, though he may personally find it burdensome, he nevertheless grasps its usage. The problem with adhering to this practice in the present dissertation is that Heidegger's notion of "existential" (*existenzial*) does not correspond to the existential—here taken in its normal English sense—nature of much of Nietzsche's and even Hölderlin's thought. The ordinary English adjective "existential" can be applied to Hölderlin, Nietzsche or nearly anybody who focuses on his individual existence as opposed to, say, nature, God, or other absolutes. In such cases, it has no necessary connection with Heidegger's special use of the words *existenzial* and *existenziell*.³¹ In order to keep these three notions apart, I will abandon all translational attempts and simply transfer Heidegger's original expressions "existenzial" and "existenziell" into English, employing them as both adjectives and adverbs. Again, I note that this remains more an act of desperation than of innovation. The term "existential" then retains its normal English meaning with no regard to Heidegger's special distinction.

Following my treatment of Heidegger, which will stumble over no further blocks of terminology, I will examine death in the work of first Hölderlin and then Nietzsche. This sequential approach is valuable not only for reasons of chronology but because it also serves to bring out, in a more genetic fashion, the numerous connections between

Hölderlin's *Der Tod des Empedokles* and Nietzsche's own *Empedokles/Zarathustra* project.

With regard to Hölderlin, I will preface my analysis of *Empedokles* with an examination of thanatological themes and motifs in his novel *Hyperion*. Several critics, the most notable being Dilthey and Wolfgang Schadewaldt, have noted the immanent relationship between the two works: while the former speaks of "das innere Verhältnis zwischen den beiden Werken", the latter regards *Empedokles* "als die Tragödie eines gesteigerten *Hyperion*."³² Given the numerous invocations of death in Hölderlin's epistolary novel, it only makes sense to look into the matter more closely in anticipation of what transpires in his subsequently composed drama. Since death also exhibits a strong presence in Hölderlin's letters, I will discuss them in light of both his biography and literary production. Indeed, to the extent that they address the notions of death and guilt, other genres such as poetry, translation, and the essay will enter the discussion as well. Such an examination of Hölderlin's entire generic range of work seems inevitable in view of its extreme organic quality, for it is oftentimes as difficult to segregate his works from one another as it is to isolate individual threads of his thought. His view of an all-encompassing divine nature that instantiates every aspect of existence more or less precludes an overly specified or specialized consideration of his oeuvre and the ideas contained therein. Moreover, one runs the risk of becoming precisely the compartmentalized *Fachmensch* that Hölderlin denounces in the penultimate letter of *Hyperion*. My focus on death and guilt in Hölderlin's *Empedokles* will thus necessarily be amplified to include other works and even other themes. This procedure should be

understood as an amplification of, rather than as a deviation from, the immediate subject matter and central literary text, namely death and guilt in *Der Tod des Empedokles*.

For different reasons than those above, my Nietzsche chapter also considers a number of works beyond the principal text *Also sprach Zarathustra*. First of all, Nietzsche expressed his views on death in rather sporadic or piecemeal fashion throughout his writings, which is largely due the fact that he preferred the aphoristic form over the more traditional philosophical treatise. Hence, while Zarathustra's speech "Vom freien Tode" contains Nietzsche's most distilled thoughts with regard to finitude, one cannot dismiss the various other observations strewn throughout his works, especially as they, too, prefigure much of what Heidegger affirms in *Sein und Zeit*. Another reason for the inclusion of additional texts has to do with the fact that Nietzsche intended to write his own *Empedokles* drama in the spirit of Hölderlin's. Dramatic sketches to this plan can be found in posthumously published notebooks from his days as professor of classical philology in Basel, when he was in fact also lecturing on the Presocratics. One can thus identify a dual approach that Nietzsche took toward his subject. On the one hand, he struggled to depict, in the capacity of a dramatist, the character and fate of *Empedokles* after the example of his boyhood idol Hölderlin; on the other, he attempted to pursue the historical Empedocles, whom he considered a philosopher of tragic existence, within a strictly academic framework. In the end, both efforts to capture the two models failed, for Nietzsche's dramatic plans never came to fruition and he soon became frustrated with the scholarly profession. Nevertheless, an important work emerged from each experience. As an aspiring tragedian, Nietzsche laid aside his

Empedokles project only to recast it some ten years later into *Also sprach Zarathustra*, whose titular hero acquires many of the traits of his two predecessors (the Empedokles of Hölderlin and of Nietzsche himself) including above all a fascination with death. In his position as a distinguished scholar of classics, Nietzsche reflected on the nature of tragedy and its origins in Greek culture, reckoning, among others, Empedocles to this tradition. His notes and lectures on Empedocles reveal, however, little insight into the latter's role in Greek tragedy, whereas his highly nonacademic publication, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, has all the more to say about the meaning of tragedy in antiquity as well as the modern age. And although this unconventional treatise, which severely damaged Nietzsche's credibility as a scholar, makes no actual mention of the Presocratic, it nevertheless contains important meditations that have a direct bearing on the scholar/dramatist's conception of Empedocles, the tragic philosopher, and Empedokles, the equally tragic hero who was to become part of another, more literary project. In sum, my discussion of Nietzsche, like that of Hölderlin, will entail a number of texts, a fact necessitated by the critical function of Empedocles/Empedokles within the scope of Nietzsche's writings, whether published or posthumous.

Finally, a word remains to be said about the title of the dissertation. My original choice and long-time working title, *The Ontological Grounding of Death in Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger*, was meant to convey two points. First, it was an attempt to render the untranslatable German expression "Die Ontologisierung des Todes", which is precisely the emerging conception of death in the modern age: death has become so to speak "ontologized"—that is, grounded in being. And this ties in with the second point.

Cultural historians generally distinguish a traditional metaphysical from a modern ontological view of human finitude. Whereas the former perspective separates the two phenomena and posits death as a reality somehow “beyond” life, the latter integrates death into the core of being. Yet Heidegger of course objects to the common understanding of being and hence would not agree that modern thanatology is ontological in tendency. He would instead insist that all previous interpretations of death are ontically rooted and therefore only scratch the surface of the problem. His persistent and methodical effort to analyze death on a purely ontological basis is caught up in his project to reroute the direction of Western ontology, which has strayed from its original path of being. Assuming that Heidegger were willing to acknowledge the opinions of Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and others on death, he would certainly not consider them to be ontologically grounded. They would remain rather ontic-existenziell approximations of his corrective endeavor.

Another problem with the notion of an “ontological grounding of death” has to do with the fact that in the end Heidegger grounds finitude not ontologically but ontically. As will be seen in the next two chapters, his ontological analysis of death remains only a sketch and as such an empty ideal. While Heidegger finds it necessary to determine the structure of death as a phenomenon of being, this only creates a blueprint lacking a concrete foundation. Heidegger must therefore look for ontic-existenziell testimony to his existenzial-ontological inquest. Death then ultimately finds its ground in ontic soil, and ontology paradoxically becomes the foreground to the final attestation of an authentic being-unto-death. To avoid entanglement in what Theodore Kiesiel has called

Heidegger's "ontic-ontological bind"³³, I have opted for the less imposing but more accurate title: *The Existential Grounding of Death in Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger*. One thing that remains certain amid terminological disputes is that all three figures seek to ground death in existence, whether in the ordinary sense of the word or in the factual *Existenz* of Dasein. Strictly speaking, death thus functions as a phenomenon of existence rather than of being, since Hölderlin and Nietzsche, at least according to Heidegger, have a limited insight into the latter. For this reason Heidegger never ceases to underscore the ontological importance of death and it is with this emphasis in mind that the dissertation begins.

Notes to Chapter One

¹ Hans Ebeling, ed., *Der Tod in der Moderne* (Königstein, 1979).

² See for instance John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1994) 174ff. Both van Buren and Theodore Kisiel have been instrumental in uncovering the theological roots grounding Heidegger's thought. See the latter's *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1995). See also their respective essays: Kisiel, "Heidegger (1920-21) on Becoming a Christian: A Conceptual Picture Show"; and van Buren "Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther," in *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought*, ed. Kisiel and van Buren (Albany, 1994) 159-92.

³ These lectures have been published posthumously in the second division of the *Gesamtausgabe* as: *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"*, winter semester 1934/35 (GA 39); *Hölderlins Hymne "Andenken"*, winter semester 1941-42 (GA 52); *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister"*, summer semester 1942 (GA 53). Heidegger also published a collection of short essays and speeches on Hölderlin dating from the 1930s onward in the collection *Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung* (GA 4).

⁴ A chronological list of these lectures runs as follows: *Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst*, winter 1936/37 (GA 43); *Nietzsches metaphysische Grundstellung im abendländischen Denken: Die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen*, summer 1937 (GA 44); *Nietzsches II. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung*, winter 1938/39 (GA 46); *Nietzsches Lehre vom Willen zur Macht als Erkenntnis*, summer 1939 (GA 47); *Nietzsche: Der europäische Nihilismus*, 2nd trimester 1940 (GA 48); and *Nietzsches Metaphysik*, which was announced for the winter semester of 1940/41 but never actually held. Heidegger later revised these lectures along with other manuscripts in his published book *Nietzsche, Zwei Bände* (Pfullingen, 1961).

⁵ Heidegger probably borrowed this expression from Luther, whose *destructio* of Aristotelian Scholasticism was meant to revitalize Christian faith. On this connection, see van Buren, "Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther," in *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, 159-174.

⁶ Cf. the motto to *Sein und Zeit* which Heidegger drew from Plato's *Sophistes*, 244a: "'Denn offenbar seid ihr doch schon lange mit dem vertraut, was ihr eigentlich meint, wenn ihr den Ausdruck "seiend" gebraucht, wir aber sind in Verlegenheit gekommen"' (SZ, 1).

⁷ One of the first Heidegger studies to appear in print, Adolf Sternberger's *Der verstandene Tod: Eine Untersuchung zu Martin Heideggers Existenzial-Ontologie* (Leipzig, 1934), examines Nietzsche's possible influence on certain ideas expressed in *Sein und Zeit*, specifically the relation between *Vorlaufen* and *amor fati* and between authentic existence and the so-called *Herrenmensch*. However, this initial tendency to posit a connection between Nietzsche and the early Heidegger did not catch on, perhaps due to the intellectual hiatus brought about by the War years. The first major study of Heidegger after the War, Otto

Pöggeler's *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* (Pfullingen, 1963), comments only briefly on the young Heidegger's Nietzsche reception and has perhaps set a precedent in this matter. Pöggeler's opinion that Heidegger essentially remained free of any Nietzschean influence until after the appearance of *Sein und Zeit* (see Pöggeler, 105) has remained the basic view among scholars over the years. The most notable exception to this trend is David Ferrell Krell, who has shown himself to be well aware of Nietzsche's importance for *Sein und Zeit* but has yet to pursue the matter in a full-scale study. Several hints and "intimations" can nevertheless be found in his book *Intimations of Mortality; Time, Truth, and Finitude in Heidegger's Thinking of Being* (University Park/London, 1986). See esp. Chapters 8 and 10. Krell's statement that "However rarely cited in *Being and Time*, Nietzsche may well be the regnant genius of that work [...]" (ibid., 128) seems on the other hand somewhat of an exaggeration—or perhaps more of a deliberate Nietzschean hyperbole. For two recent studies that take a middle ground between Krell and scholars such as Pöggeler, see: Jacques Taminiaux, "The Presence of Nietzsche in *Sein und Zeit*," in *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, trans. Michael Gendre (Albany, 1991) 175-89; and Sean Ireton, "Heidegger's Ontological Analysis of Death and Its Prefiguration in Nietzsche," *Nietzsche-Studien* 26 (1997): 405-20.

⁸ For a more detailed comparison between Nietzsche's second meditation and Heidegger's view of temporality in *Sein und Zeit*, see Karl Löwith, *Heidegger: Denker in Dürftiger Zeit*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen, 1965) 83ff. Despite the numerous connections that Löwith brings to light, he is still of the overall opinion that Nietzsche "[...] dem jungen Heidegger noch ganz unwesentlich war [...]" (ibid. 13).

⁹ See the twelve-volume edition of Kierkegaard's collected works edited by Hermann Gottsched and Christoph Schrempf (Jena, 1909-22). Heidegger however probably read the translations that Ludwig von Ficker published in his journal *Der Brenner*. (See van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 150.) For illuminating studies of Kierkegaard's impact on Heidegger, see: "Kierkegaard, Division II, and Later Heidegger," in *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus (Cambridge MA/London, 1991) 283-362; and also: Dan Magurshak, "The Concept of Anxiety: The Keystone of the Kierkegaard-Heidegger Relationship," in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Concept of Anxiety*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon GA, 1985) 167-95. Jaspers, incidentally, was one of the first to see through Heidegger's rather dismissing footnotes on Kierkegaard, commenting on one such note: "Ungerecht. Heidegger übernimmt z.B. 'Wahl', 'Übernehmen', 'Angst', 'Augenblick', 'Möglichkeit', 'sich zu sich selbst verhalten', 'je meines'." See Karl Jaspers, *Notizen zu Martin Heidegger*, ed. Hans Saner (München, 1989) 272.

¹⁰ Quoted in van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 150.

¹¹ See *Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität)*, GA 63: 5, 30, 41.

¹² Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, 275.

¹³ Krell, *Intimations of Mortality*, 127.

¹⁴ Other authors that Heidegger mentions in this context are Stifter, Dostoyevsky, Hegel, Schelling, Rilke, Trakl, and Dilthey. Heidegger's passion for reading literature spurred him to organize an extracurricular reading circle with fellow *Gymnasium* students. In fact, according to one of his teachers, Heidegger "at times pursued German literature—in which he is very well read—a bit too much, to the detriment of other disciplines." Quoted in van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 62.

¹⁵ See Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. III, ed. Franz Zinkernagel (Leipzig, 1915).

¹⁶ van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 12.

¹⁷ Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, 422. Kisiel distinguishes and names the three drafts as follows: "The Dilthey Draft" from 1924-25; "The Ontoeroteric Draft" from 1925-26; and "The Final Draft" published in 1927. See his detailed discussion of all three in *ibid.*, 309-444.

¹⁸ Taminiaux, i.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xviii. For the further pursuit of this observation, see his essay "The Presence of Nietzsche in *Sein und Zeit*," in *ibid.*, 175-89.

²⁰ Jaspers, *Notizen zu Martin Heidegger*, 66.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

²² See Walther Kaufmann, *Discovering the Mind, Volume Two: Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Buber* (New York, 1980) 167-238.

²³ *Ibid.*, 196.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 209.

²⁵ Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* (Stuttgart, 1984) 59.

²⁶ This is perhaps debatable in the case of Hölderlin who was raised in a strict Pietistic environment and had extensive religious training in seminary school. Nevertheless, he tended to neglect theology for the sake of poetry and was certainly not as versed in theological matters as Kierkegaard and Heidegger. Furthermore, there is no indication in his work of any serious preoccupation with such figures as Augustine, Luther, and Pascal. There are however traces of Pauline thought, including a citation of the famous line on death from I Cor. 15:56: "Wo ist dein Stachel, Tod?" See "Die Unsterblichkeit der Seele," in *StA* 1, 32,33.

²⁷ See *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, 1996) xiii-xvi.

²⁸ See for example W.H. Bossart's lucid discussion of *Sein und Zeit* in Chapter 3 of his book *Apperception, Knowledge, and Experience* (Ottawa, 1994) 139ff. Compare also his article "Heidegger's Theory of Art," in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 27 (1968): 57-66.

²⁹ Jaspers' use of the adjective *existentiell*, strangely enough spelled with a "t", is however rendered in English as "existential".

³⁰ See Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (New York, 1970) 19. Gelven's book is in general an excellent companion to *Sein und Zeit* and recommended for all levels of Heidegger readership.

³¹ "Existential" as commonly understood in English, French, and German does however tend to overlap with the notion of *existenziell*. This degree of correspondence has to do with Heidegger's objections to those who, ignorant of the ontological difference between *Sein* and *Seiendes*, interpret *Existenz* from an ontic/*existenziell* rather than an ontological/*existenzial* perspective. That is to say, in their pursuit of existence most if not all existentialists are guided not by the supreme question of being but by an inquiry founded on any number of particular beings. Compare for example the following footnote, in which Heidegger points out the *existenziell* limitations of Kierkegaard's existential philosophy: "Im 19. Jahrhundert hat S. Kierkegaard das Existenzproblem als existenzielles ausdrücklich ergriffen und eindringlich durchdacht. Die existenziale Problematik ist ihm aber so fremd, daß er in ontologischer Hinsicht ganz unter der Botmäßigkeit Hegels und der durch diesen gesehenen antiken Philosophie steht. Daher ist von seinen 'erbaulichen' Schriften philosophisch mehr zu lernen als von den theoretischen — die Abhandlung über den Begriff der Angst ausgenommen" (SZ, 235n).

³² Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (Leipzig, 1906) 351; Wolfgang Schadewaldt, "Die Empedokles-Tragödie," in *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 11 (1958-60): 40. I also single out these two scholars for their relationship to Heidegger, who in his early thought was significantly influenced by Dilthey and who was acquainted with Schadewaldt later in life.

³³ Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, 431. For an excellent discussion of this bind that Heidegger creates and eventually overcomes, see Kisiel's section entitled "Ontic Ontology," 424-39.

Chapter Two

Heidegger's Ontological Analysis of Death in *Sein und Zeit*

Aber dies: den Tod,
den ganzen Tod, noch *vor* dem Leben so
sanft zu enthalten und nicht böß zu sein,
ist unbeschreiblich.

-Rilke, *Duineser Elegien*

Heidegger's analysis of death in the second division of *Sein und Zeit* carries out what his preparatory fundamental analysis of human existence in the first division failed to achieve: the examination of Dasein in its complete and authentic state. As it soon becomes apparent, this former task—that of experiencing the entirety of Dasein's existence or its *Ganzseinkönnen*—poses inherent difficulties:

Solange das Dasein als Seiendes ist, hat es seine "Gänze" nie erreicht. Gewinnt es sie aber, dann wird der Gewinn zum Verlust des In-der Welt-seins schlechthin. Als Seiendes wird es dann nie mehr erfahrbar. (SZ, 236)

This paradoxical situation, in which the effort to experience a complete existence is inevitably thwarted by the very termination thereof, arises from the traditional view of death as an exterior event occurring at the end of life. Terminally tacked on to existence as though it were a separate and often higher form of reality, death remains an existentially empty category (a *Kategorie* rather than an *Existenzial*) with no relation to Dasein and its being-in-the world. Heidegger further states that the common metaphysical notion of death as a fixed and final point only reduces it to a "noch nicht Vorhandenes" (SZ, 250) with no allowance whatsoever for Dasein's open potential as

sich-vorweg-sein. Death is indeed an end or limit, but not in a static chronological sense. Different modes of being are characterized by different types of termination, and as often throughout his analysis, Heidegger distinguishes between *Zuhandenheit*, *Vorhandenheit* and *daseinsmäßiges Sein*.

The idea of death as an *Ausstand*, i.e. as a missing part of a greater whole, is one approach in interpreting the incompleteness of Dasein. As Heidegger explains: “Der Ausdruck [Ausstand] meint das, was zu einem Seienden zwar ‘gehört’, aber noch fehlt. Ausstehen als Fehlen gründet in einer Zugehörigkeit” (SZ, 242). The fact that this remainder or lack naturally belongs to the existent in question would seem to speak well for its validity in view of the extreme individual and ownmost (*eigenst-*) quality of death discussed later. Yet the problem with defining death as an *Ausstand* is an implicit metaphysics of presence that makes a disposable object of the incomplete entity. Though the lack may gradually be filled and totality eventually reached, such a process remains more an “anhäufende Zusammenstückung” (SZ, 242) than a spontaneous organic development. Taking the example of an owed debt, Heidegger points out that the outstanding (*ausstehend-*) amount is but the missing sum of the whole settlement and hence makes up the same type of being. In other words, the debt has been terminated by the very means under which it existed in the first place; it has become complete through the self-same object that defined its existence all along. A debt of 100 dollars is not fulfilled by any other means than by payment in dollars. The final payment that brings the outstanding debt to completion is identical in its *Seinsart* to the previous paid amounts—whereas death is not identical to life, but traditionally believed to be opposite.

The sum becomes the total of its parts, an aggregation of composite units that can be used as ready-to-hand or *zuhandene* instruments of accounting. If abstracted and speculated upon as in mathematics, the parts take on the qualities of present-at-hand or *vorhandene* objects. Dasein however falls under neither of these forms of being, but is characterized by *Existenz*. To quote Heidegger in this regard: “Der Tod ist kein noch nicht Vorhandenes, nicht der auf ein Minimum reduzierte letzte Ausstand, sondern eher ein *Bevorstand*” (SZ, 250).

Since the German *Ausstand* has monetary connotations in its everyday usage, the above example may seem self-defeating or at best conveniently refutable. Heidegger’s discussion therefore continues with two further images. Speaking of the moon, one can say—at least in German—that the last quarter remains for it to be full: “[...] am Mond steht das letzte Viertel noch aus, bis er voll ist” (SZ, 243). Yet this “lack” or “not-yet” in the fullness of the moon has nothing to do with its actual state, but merely with our perception of it from earth. The moon is full at all times; in fact even when we see what is supposedly a full moon, we observe only one half of its bulk, as the so-called “dark side” remains forever obscured from our planet. Of course such is not the case with life: human existence is not complete from the start, regardless of one’s perspective. Instead Dasein must *become* its “not-yet”, and so Heidegger takes up another example “zu dessen Seinsart das Werden gehört” (SZ, 243).

A fruit reaches ripeness or completeness through its own growth. In contrast to the above examples, this process of maturation cannot be equated with an aggregate state, in which missing part becomes added to missing part until eventually a whole is obtained.

Nor can it be said that the fruit is always already ripe, but only fails to appear so to an outside perceiver. Its prolonged condition of not yet being what it is and conversely of being what it not yet is—in short, of being its “not-yet”—distinguishes it from static objects of presence. Here a far more dynamic and internal action is at work: in its process of ripening the fruit is in a constant state of immaturity, but at the same time undergoes progressive stages of maturation. Put plainly and perhaps somewhat tautologically: “[...] reifend *ist* sie [die Frucht] die Unreife” (SZ, 244). Despite the potentially useful implications of the above example for determining the nature of human death in terms of an end, there remains a crucial difference between the two ontological structures of completion. Whereas a fruit becomes complete in the sense of fulfillment or perfection (*Vollendung*), Dasein does not necessarily attain such a state with death. Unlike the apple, which is perfect, i.e. finished (cf. the Latin *perficere*) only when ripe, human existence can—and in fact often does—end prematurely. Just because Dasein has completed its course by dying does not guarantee that it has fulfilled itself. This claim is better borne out by the German with its various forms of *vollenden*, a verb which in turn contains the problematical root *enden*:

Mit der Reife vollendet sich die Frucht. Ist denn aber der Tod, zu dem das Dasein gelangt, eine Vollendung in diesem Sinne? Das Dasein hat zwar mit seinem Tod seinen “Lauf vollendet”. Hat es damit auch notwendig seine spezifischen Möglichkeiten erschöpft? Werden sie ihm vielmehr nicht gerade genommen? Auch “unvollendetes” Dasein endet. (SZ, 244)

Again, the difficulty of defining death as an end lies in the unfixed existence of Dasein. Since Dasein is neither subject or object, but an unbounded project (*Entwurf*), any attempt to limit its trajectory by positing an end is doomed to fail. Existentially, Dasein can never attain completion as if reaching a final point in time. Nor should its specific manner of ending be confused with other modes of termination that principally modify present-at-hand objects. The notion of “stopping” (*Aufhören*), for instance, inadequately describes Dasein’s coming to an end, as only objectively present things can be said to “stop”. To draw on some of Heidegger’s examples, the fact that the rain stops means that it is no longer there. When a path stops, its ending does not cause it to disappear as in the case of rain; only its theoretical continuation turns into absence. However, this view of its end as a “stopping” limits and defines the path as an objective presence. Such a being-at-hand can apply to an unfinished thing, for example a road that breaks off under construction, or to a “finished” object as in the case of a painting which becomes complete with the last stroke of the brush. In both instances, ending marks a termination as well as *determination* of a *Vorhandenes*, and as such constitutes a *zu-Ende-sein*. Yet the end of Dasein remains ontologically distinct from the above definitions:

Durch keinen dieser Modi des Endens läßt sich der Tod als Ende des Daseins angemessen charakterisieren. Würde das Sterben als Zu-Ende-sein im Sinne seines Endens der besprochenen Art verstanden, dann wäre das Dasein hiermit als Vorhandenes bzw. Zuhandenes gesetzt. Im Tod ist das Dasein weder vollendet, noch einfach verschwunden, noch gar fertig geworden oder als Zuhandenes ganz verfügbar. (SZ, 245)

One must instead conceive of death as an inverted end: “Das Ende, *zu dem das Dasein existierend ist*, bleibt durch ein Zu-Ende-sein unangemessen bestimmt. Zugleich sollte aber die Betrachtung deutlich machen, daß ihr Gang umgekehrt werden muß” (SZ, 246). This reverse approach leads Heidegger to designate Dasein’s end as a *Sein zum Ende* rather than a *Zu-Ende-sein*. Through this key terminological reversal, Heidegger contrasts Dasein’s life-long relation to its finitude (being unto its end) with the sudden, one-time occurrence that befalls and extinguishes human existence (being at an end). The former term stresses the conduct leading up to death as an ongoing process, thereby allowing for further change and possibility. Heidegger, who consistently asserts the primacy of *existentia* over *essentia* for Dasein’s state of Being-in-the-world, adheres to precisely the same practice with regard to Dasein’s termination. The existential potential implicit in the recurring statement of the first division “Das ‘Wesen’ des Daseins liegt in seiner Existenz”¹ still holds for the process of death: “Zunächst gilt es, das Sein zum Tode als ein Sein zu einer Möglichkeit und zwar zu einer ausgezeichneten Möglichkeit des Daseins selbst zu kennzeichnen” (SZ, 261). Heidegger cites in this context the late medieval meditation on death *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen*, also known under the title of *Der Ackermann und der Tod*: “Sobald ein Mensch zum Leben kommt, sogleich ist er alt genug zu sterben” (Cf. SZ, 245).² Because the prospect of dying remains continually present throughout the course of existence, even from the very moment of birth, the fine line commonly drawn between life and its cessation inevitably becomes blurred. Having been thrown into the world, Dasein is at the same time delivered into the facticity of its death, a *factum brutum* which implies that Dasein exists in a constant state of dying.

Hence, its entire form of existence is to be defined in view of its end, as a relation toward or a being unto death. In other words: “Der Tod im weitesten Sinne ist ein Phänomen des Lebens” (SZ, 246).

By viewing death as a phenomenon *of*—rather than subsequent to—life, Heidegger has integrated a traditionally separate realm into the very core of human existence. The ontological structure of this interiorized death will be explored further, but first a problem in the above statement must be addressed, a problem that resides in a word that would normally seem self-evident, namely “life”. The claim that death is a phenomenon of life carries certain restrictions for Heidegger, who does not regard himself as a *Lebensphilosoph* (which was much in vogue at the time) but as the first philosopher since Aristotle to seriously pose the question of being. Since Heidegger is not primarily concerned with life on an ontic level, he forgoes any kind of biological or physiological explanation of death. His reawakening of the *Seinsfrage* instead calls for an ontological analysis, one which examines the basic structures of human existence as they relate to being. As only one of the ways in which Dasein exists in the world, life cannot be the main object of investigation. Heidegger therefore insists on a fundamental ontological approach in the face of such established disciplines as biology, psychology, and theology, all of which have their own methods of interpreting reality and its principal phenomena of life and death. Speaking specifically of the dominant claim biology has come to hold on these phenomena, he emphasizes the need for an ontology free of scientific or metaphysical prejudice:

Dieser biologisch-ontischen Erforschung des Todes liegt eine ontologische Problematik zugrunde. Zu fragen bleibt, wie sich aus dem ontologischen Wesen des Lebens das des Todes bestimmt. In gewisser Weise hat die ontische Untersuchung des Todes darüber schon entschieden. Mehr oder minder geklärte Vorbegriffe von Leben und Tod sind in ihr wirksam. Sie bedürfen einer Vorzeichnung durch die Ontologie des Daseins. (SZ, 246-7)

Since Dasein is characterized by *Existenz* and potentiality, it can never be disposed over as an object of scientific inquiry. Even the otherwise broad concept of “life” amounts to a limitation of possibility and inadequately describes the full extent of Dasein’s being-in-the-world. Life in the biological sense is only one facet of existence, and as there are diverse modes of existing, so too there are distinct forms of dying. Whereas *Verenden* is restricted to the perishing of animals, the verbal *Ableben* denotes the purely biological aspect of Dasein’s death. *Sterben*, however, designates Dasein’s existential relation toward finitude, that is “die *Seinsweise*, in der das Dasein *zu seinem Tode ist*” (SZ, 247). As Heidegger’s highlighted words illustrate, *Sterben* is a *Sein zum Tode*, a term which is itself but another and indeed more thanatological way—of expressing Dasein’s dynamic and processual *Sein zum Ende*. In English this concept is usually translated as “being toward death”, however a more graphic rendering—and one that better adheres to tradition—would have to be “being unto death”.³ Elsewhere Heidegger has expressed this basic existential relation to death in a more provocative way. In his Marburg lecture course from 1925, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, he refutes the Cartesian certainty of existence based on thought (*cogito sum*) in favor of his own coinage “*sum moribundus*”. As he goes on to explain: “[...] und zwar nicht moribundus als

Schwerkranker oder Verwundeter, sondern sofern ich bin, bin ich moribundus – *das moribundus gibt dem sum allererst seinen Sinn*” (GA 20, 437f.).

Once he establishes human existence as a fundamental being unto death, Heidegger attempts to determine the ontological structure of finitude. It will be necessary to bear in mind that throughout his analysis he operates within a strictly existenzial-ontological framework and does not seek to address the practical implications of his findings on an existenziell-ontic level. Ultimately, his investigation aims at elucidating the existence of Dasein in connection to being. Dasein can perhaps best be understood as a kind of key to unlocking (*Entschlossenheit* in its original sense of *ent-schließen / auf-schließen* will later become an important notion) the mystery of being. Lexically, this “key” function of Dasein is borne out by the separable prefix *da* and the verb stem *sein*: being manifests itself, however obscurely, in this locus or *Da*. Dasein, then, provides the access for being to appear or literally “be there” in the world and thus become an issue at all. Put most pointedly in German (not however in so many words by Heidegger): “Dasein ist das Da des Seins.” Only by equating Dasein with concrete human existence—which is perhaps only natural given the everyday meaning of the word in German—can one expect from *Sein und Zeit* a commentary on factual life. As already mentioned, Dasein to a certain extent corresponds to our common conception of human reality, but does not exhaust itself therein. Its inherent potentiality places it beyond the realm of any such static and reifying categorization. This is precisely what makes talking about Dasein so difficult, for it cannot be “de-fined” in the proper “limiting” sense of the word (*de-finis*); it eludes one’s grasp because of its boundless *Entwurfscharakter*.

Heidegger has similarly destroyed the fixed limits of life and death and thereby overcome long-established definitions or boundaries between the two states. Death may well figure as a horizon of possibility against which one structures existence, but this limiting horizon does not separate so much as contain. That is, in contrast to the traditional view of a boundary as a line of disjunction dividing two distinct realms yet belonging to neither, Heidegger's boundary situation of death forms part of that which it limits; what is more, it becomes functionally integrated into the enclosed whole. In contrast to his attempt at integration, the more common act of demarcation leads to such dichotomies as *Diesseits* and *Jenseits*, with death as the fixed moment or point in between. Heidegger, who seeks to avoid metaphysical/theological dualisms of this sort, states in this regard:

Über das "Jenseits" und seine Möglichkeit wird ebensowenig ontisch entschieden wie über das "Diesseits", als sollten Normen und Regeln des Verhaltens zum Tode zur "Erbauung" vorgelegt werden. Die Analyse des Todes bleibt aber insofern rein "diesseitig", als sie das Phänomen lediglich daraufhin interpretiert, wie es als Seinsmöglichkeit des jeweiligen Daseins *in dieses hereinsteht*. (SZ, 248)

For the most part Heidegger shows an acute awareness of the difficulty involved in divorcing the ontic from the ontological and in making existential claims that should not be construed as factually binding or as existenziell ideals. He is even willing to concede that a certain degree of overlap can occur between the two regions of being but insists that this must be kept to a minimum in the ensuing existential-ontological analysis of death:

Daß in einer existenzialen Analyse des Todes existenzielle Möglichkeiten des Seins zum Tode mit anklingen, liegt im Wesen aller ontologischen Untersuchung. Um so ausdrücklicher muß mit der existenzialen Begriffsbestimmung die existenzielle Unverbindlichkeit zusammengehen und das besonders bezüglich des Todes, an dem sich der Möglichkeitscharakter des Daseins am schärfsten enthüllen läßt. (SZ, 248)

An initial sketch of the ontological structure of death reveals the following characteristics: “So enthüllt sich der *Tod* als die *eigenste, unbezügliche, unüberholbare Möglichkeit*” (SZ, 250). These three aspects can be delineated as follows.

Death as *eigenste* or one’s “ownmost” possibility underscores the extreme individual nature of finitude. Death is to be seen as the most personal and inalienable claim one has on existence, for it cannot be experienced by anyone else. Granted, one can die in another’s place through an act of sacrifice, but no one can die another’s death. In *comprehending* its end as ownmost possibility, Dasein at the same time *apprehends* (in the dual sense of understanding and seizing) itself. This double act of apprehension constitutes the first step toward an authentic mode of existence. The ownmost aspect of death furthermore recalls the idea of *Jemeinigkeit* ascribed to Dasein in the first division of *Sein und Zeit*. Since Heidegger eschews metaphysical categories such as subjectivity (which would in turn assume an objective basis of reality and hence perpetuate the subject/object split that has haunted modern philosophy since Descartes), he regards the particularity of Dasein in terms of “mineness” and selfhood. “Dasein ist je meines” implies that I myself am this Dasein insofar as I have an internal awareness of my own

existence and only a second-hand apprehension of other Daseins. These I do not perceive in the way that an inviolate subject takes in present-at-hand objects; my ontological understanding of selfhood instead leads me to say: “‘ich bin’, ‘du bist’” (SZ, 42). That is, I relate to others through a basic experience of being rather than through faculties of cognition. The “mineness” of Dasein also plays into the crucial concepts of authenticity and inauthenticity (*Eigentlichkeit/Uneigentlichkeit*), two modes of existence that become clearly defined in being-unto-death. The German root *eigen* illustrates this aspect of possession belonging to existence: authentic (*eigentlich-*) Dasein is aware of its own (*eigen-*) existence whereas its inauthentic counterpart does not have this awareness and is therefore not in full possession of itself. Much as Dasein’s possibility increases in its *Sein zum Tode*, its “mineness” and authenticity similarly reach an extreme in the face of death: “Der Tod ist eine Seinsmöglichkeit, die je das Dasein selbst zu übernehmen hat. Mit dem Tod steht das Dasein selbst in seinem *eigensten* Seinkönnen bevor” (SZ, 250).

The *Unbezüglichkeit* of death—that is, its nonreferential quality—equally suggests Dasein’s pronounced singularity, in particular its independence from the *Mitwelt* in which it by definition (as *Mitsein*) exists. As an extreme individualizing experience, death isolates Dasein from all relations with its environment so that it remains completely on its own, without the aid or presence of its fellow kind. The fact that death functions as Dasein’s ownmost possibility demands this radical detachment, for such is the necessary implication of the superlative *eigenst-*.

The fact that death cannot be outstripped or bypassed (*überholt*) is crucial for its potentiating function. Heidegger’s statement “Der Tod ist die Möglichkeit der

schlechthinnigen Daseinsunmöglichkeit” (SZ, 250) may seem to be yet another nonsensical paradox. Again, one must adopt an inverted perspective to make sense of death as an existential phenomenon rather than a metaphysical reality. The prospect of death offers Dasein, which is distinguished by potentiality, the *extreme* possibility for self-realization precisely because it looms over existence as a final horizon that cannot be transcended. Dasein, in a fashion, constantly projects itself toward and at the same time rebounds from the unsurpassable frontier set by finitude, a frontier that acts as “ein *ausgezeichneter* Bevorstand” (SZ, 251) as opposed to a present-at-hand *Gegenstand* or still absent *Ausstand*. This impendency of finitude is *supreme* for the simple reason that it is an *extreme*. As previously mentioned, Heidegger cannot, from an ontological standpoint, posit any form of reality beyond the limit of death. Existence thus becomes all the more charged with possibility, even if this results in an inevitable “Daseinsunmöglichkeit”. If impending death functions as Dasein’s most extreme possibility, this is not to say that death offers Dasein the chance to realize its goals or attain some desired state, for it only renders impossible what it simultaneously reveals as possibility: existence itself. Put more simply, death destroys Dasein’s projects and precludes any further potentiality, for once Dasein actually dies (in the biological sense of *Ableben*), it is reduced to a lifeless object or *ein Vorhandenes*. The *Unüberholbarkeit* of finitude thus implies the following: because one cannot evade death as a brute fact of existence, it takes on that much greater meaning for life and forms the most extreme possibility for Dasein to surrender and thereby realize itself.

These three existenzial-ontological aspects of finitude are, in a privative or otherwise qualifying sense, just as applicable to the far more frequent inauthentic mode of everyday Dasein or *das Man*. Heidegger's concept of *das Man*, which is introduced in section 27 of *Sein und Zeit* only to figure significantly in the present discussion of death, can be summarized as follows.

The self of daily life is first and foremost (*zunächst und zumeist*) not you or I, but *das Man*. This impersonal pronoun designates "the others", however not definite others, nor the sum of all others taken together. *Das Man* stands for, rather, the anonymous rule of public opinion that operates on all levels of society and exerts control over every aspect of life. "The one" or "the they" prescribes everything, whether in the form of advice, standards, or information:

Wir genießen und vergnügen uns, wie *man* genießt; wir lesen und urteilen über Literatur und Kunst, wie *man* sieht und urteilt; wir ziehen uns aber auch vom "großen Haufen" zurück, wie *man* sich zurückzieht; wir finden empörend, was *man* empörend findet. (SZ, 126-7)

This dominance—which Heidegger at one point calls a "Diktatur" (SZ, 126)—seems inescapable; not even a recluse can withdraw from the ubiquitous "they" and lead an independent existence. Whether we realize it or not, we in fact belong to the they and unwittingly consolidate their power. In the process, all sense of selfhood is lost such that identities become interchangeable: "Jeder ist der Andere und Keiner er selbst [...] Das Man [...] ist das *Niemand*, dem alles im Untereinandersein sich je schon ausgeliefert hat" (SZ, 128). It is important to note that Heidegger does not see himself in the role of a

moralist and thus has no intention of criticizing this predominant mode of existence. Ontic value judgements have no place in his ontological investigation. In the tradition of his teacher Husserl he considers his observations as purely phenomenological; that is, as an unprejudiced analysis of the manifold phenomena that make up our life-world. One of his many disclaimers in this regard reads:

Man ist in der Weise der Unselbstständigkeit und Uneigentlichkeit. Diese Weise zu sein bedeutet keine Herabminderung der Faktizität des Daseins, so wenig wie das Man als das Niemand ein Nichts ist. Im Gegenteil, in dieser Seinsart ist das Dasein ein *ens realissimum*, falls "Realität" als daseinsmäßiges Sein verstanden wird. (SZ, 128)

As mentioned earlier, the English "inauthenticity" can be even more misleading in this context. By *Eigentlichkeit* Heidegger does not mean a qualitatively higher or more genuine form of existence as is often understood even in everyday German. Again, *eigentlich* refers to that which is one's own or *eigen*. For Heidegger, selfhood resembles a personal possession (*Eigentum*) that has for the most part been co-opted by the public sphere of *das Man*. The German makes this point more clearly: "Das Selbst des alltäglichen Daseins ist das *Man-selbst*, das wir von dem *eigentlichen*, das heißt eigens ergriffenen *Selbst* unterscheiden" (SZ, 129). This distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity emerges most critically in being-unto-death, for it is one's comportment toward finitude that ultimately determines one's respective mode of selfhood.

Death as "*eigenste, unbezügliche, unüberholbare Möglichkeit*" becomes a public affair in the inauthentic mode of the they. Instead of apprehending death as its ownmost

possibility, *das Man* deals with the phenomenon as a “ständig vorkommendes Begegnis, als ‘Todesfall’” (SZ, 252). It is aware merely of instances where death occurs and strikes others, but it fails to see in these isolated cases any personal existential relevance.

Finitude remains a one-time event, remote and inconspicuous, relegated to the margins of existence.⁴ Even when death does, so to speak, make the front pages and catch the public’s eye, it remains an extraneous occurrence affecting only others. *Das Man* knows well enough that people die, but this is as far as it will allow its awareness to go: “[...] man stirbt am Ende auch einmal, aber zunächst bleibt man selbst unbetroffen” (SZ, 253). The notion that “man stirbt”, i.e. the attitude that it is always an anonymous other that dies while one himself (*das jeweilige Man-Selbst*) goes on living, is expressed by Heidegger as follows:

Das “man stirbt verbreitet die Meinung, der Tod treffe gleichsam das Man. Die öffentliche Daseinsauslegung sagt: “man stirbt”, weil damit jeder andere und man selbst sich einreden kann: je nicht gerade ich; denn dieses Man ist das *Niemand*. (SZ, 253)

This mentality only converts on a public scale what is essentially and inexchangeably my ownmost possibility. In shrugging off personal fate onto an impersonal collectivity, they chooses to preserve its anonymous existence. Not only does it fail to acknowledge the singular nature of its finitude but it furthermore refuses to sever all ties to its *Mitwelt* and act on strictly individual terms of *Unbezüglichkeit*. *Das Man* thereby forfeits any chance for authenticity, that is for self-determination and self-possession. Moreover, inauthentic Dasein persistently seeks to counter the

Umüberholbarkeit of death by bringing its dying fellows back into the everyday world of its affairs through either emotional or spiritual consolation. This comfort or appeasement in the face of finitude is not only directed toward the dying person, but also serves to mitigate the fears of the one doing the consoling. Of course death can only be postponed, never ultimately avoided, and when it does at last occur it is viewed as an embarrassing intrusion on society. Here Heidegger refers to Tolstoy's tale *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* and even assumes from the text such expressions as "Unannehmlichkeit" and "Taktlosigkeit", which *das Man* experiences in the death of others (cf. SZ, 254).⁵

This practice of denial results in the creation of such virtues as fearlessness and indifference toward death. Yet Heidegger insists on the prime importance of *Angst* for an authentic *Sein zum Tode*, and so he remarks in an only seeming paradox: "*Das Man läßt den Mut zur Angst vor dem Tode nicht aufkommen*" (SZ, 254). Following a line of thought that extends from Augustine to Kierkegaard, Heidegger differentiates between *Angst* and *Furcht*. Whereas one fears something definite (e.g. a dangerous animal, an avalanche, an examination) the primordial mood of anxiety or dread is directed at no particular thing. When overcome with this feeling, one is unable to locate its precise source; nor does it dissipate as readily as fear, where one need only eliminate the threatening object. In fact, as Heidegger points out on a quotidian note, when one is invaded with a spell of anxiety and later asked what was the matter, the usual reply is: "es war eigentlich nichts" (SZ, 187). This sense of nothingness is precisely what makes the threat brought about by *Angst* so indefinite: in anxiety I dread no-thing. In the earlier analysis of *Befindlichkeit* (cf. section 40) this no-thing was Dasein's being-in-the-world.

Anxiety isolates Dasein and produces an “existential solipsism” (cf. SZ, 188) that succeeds in disclosing to Dasein its existentiality, its potentiality, and its freedom for choosing itself. In other words, anxiety reveals to Dasein that it is not a thing or *Vorhandenes*; however it also intimates another kind of no-thingness, namely death. While *das Man*, insofar as it loses its ideal composure, feels a distinct fear of death as a concrete event, authentic Dasein’s being-unto-death principally consists of anxiety, a fundamental mood or *Grundbefindlichkeit* which frees Dasein for the realization of its ownmost possibility.

Two further authenticating characteristics of finitude are introduced in section 52: certainty (*Gewißheit*) and indefiniteness (*Unbestimmtheit*). The certainty of death must be understood apodictically and not empirically. That is, unlike *das Man*’s everyday ascertainment of “begegnenden Todesfällen” (SZ, 264) as a fact based on the daily observation that others die—i.e. that “man stirbt”—, authentic Dasein’s certainty arises from the ontological truth of its disclosure. As explained at length in section 44, Dasein possesses a basic relation to truth. However, like many philosophical concepts truth has been interpreted in radically different ways throughout the history of metaphysics, and it is Heidegger’s intention to recover the lost meaning of the original Greek word for truth ἀληθεια, which he translates as discoveredness or disclosure (*Entdecktheit* / *Erschlossenheit*).⁶ In contrast to later definitions of truth as a correspondence between statement and thing (Aristotle’s παθηματα της ψυχης των πραγματος ομοιωματα, medieval philosophy’s *adaequatio intellectus et rei*) and as subjective certitude since Descartes, the Greek notion of ἀληθεια does not arise from or otherwise depend on a

thinking subject. It involves rather a direct manifestation of being in the midst of existence, and Dasein's exposure to this appearance of truth remains a fundamental ontological fact that is entirely separate from cognition. As suggested previously, the *Da* of Dasein can be seen as a lexical illustration of this disclosure. Much as Dasein is to be understood as the *Da* of *Sein*, i.e. the place where being grounds itself in the world, this locus or *Da* also represents the site of truth as an unfolding of being. To quote Heidegger on this point:

Was früher hinsichtlich der existenzialen Konstitution des Da und bezüglich des alltäglichen Seins des Da aufgezeigt wurde, betraf nichts anderes als das ursprüngliche Phänomen der Wahrheit. Sofern das Dasein wesenhaft seine Erschlossenheit *ist*, als erschlossenes erschließt und entdeckt, ist es wesenhaft "wahr". *Dasein ist "in der Wahrheit"*. Diese Aussage hat ontologischen Sinn. Sie meint nicht, daß das Dasein ontisch immer oder auch nur je "in alle Wahrheit" eingeführt sei, sondern daß zu seiner existenzialen Verfassung Erschlossenheit seines eigensten Seins gehört. (SZ, 221)

Dasein equally has a tendency toward concealment or untruth. As the alpha-privative in the Greek $\alpha\text{-}\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ indicates, the notion of obscurity is prior to that of clarity.⁷ Heidegger also refers here to the poem of Parmenides, the first Western philosopher of being, who is placed before the bifurcating paths of discovery and concealment, i.e. truth and untruth (cf. SZ, 222). These examples are perhaps unnecessary, as the dialectical nature of truth seems a familiar if not accepted fact since Hegel. Heidegger, however, seeks to determine an essential interrelation between truth and untruth that predates metaphysical thinking. Dasein's potential to be in the light of

disclosure carries the reciprocal implication that it can just as easily find itself in the dark, for only that which is concealed can be disclosed: “Der volle existenzial-ontologische Sinn des Satzes: ‘Dasein ist in der Wahrheit’ sagt gleichursprünglich mit: ‘Dasein ist in der Unwahrheit’. Aber nur sofern Dasein erschlossen ist, ist es auch verschlossen [...] (SZ, 222). Everyday Dasein or *das Man* is indeed existentially shut out from truth; its state of *Verfallen* or addiction to mundane affairs obscures the ontological self-disclosure that allows an intimation of being. Its only form of truth is empirical certitude. As a mere witness to cases of death, *das Man* perceives these as affecting solely others and hence ignores their existential impact. Death remains an “unleugbare ‘Erfahrungstatsache’” (SZ, 257), but an experience based on aloof observation rather than on a more primordial relation to truth. The prospect of death as possibility becomes as veiled as the original presence of truth, and *das Man* staidly goes about its existence, devoting itself to everyday cares and avoiding any direct confrontation with finitude. Disclosure, on the other hand, leads authentic Dasein to apply the consequences of an inescapable end to its own potentiality. Dasein lives with the knowledge of death as an underlying truth of existence and structures its projects based on this continual awareness.

Carried one step further, certainty involves an indefiniteness as to the precise moment of death’s realization. By no means a contradiction, *unbestimmte Gewißheit* simply means: death is certain to come about, only its “when” remains indeterminate. In an authentic Being-unto-death Dasein becomes aware that its end can occur at any moment, and in view of this constant threat to its existence projects itself accordingly.

Das Man, in its contrasting empirical certitude, denies the perpetual imminency of its extinction, comforting itself with the thought: “[...] der Tod kommt gewiß, aber vorläufig noch nicht” (SZ, 258).

With the five concepts discussed above, Heidegger has managed to outline the existenzial-ontological structure of finitude. As he summarizes:

Der volle existenzial-ontologische Begriff des Todes läßt sich in folgenden Bestimmungen umgrenzen: *Der Tod als Ende des Daseins ist die eigenste, unbezügliche, gewisse und als solche unbestimmte, unüberholbare Möglichkeit des Daseins.* (SZ, 258-9)

This conception of death, however, remains a sketch and is hence far from complete. Heidegger even expresses—perhaps merely rhetorical—doubts with regard to the present stage of his undertaking: “Ist der Entwurf der existenzialen Möglichkeit eines so fragwürdigen existenziellen Seinkönnens nicht ein phantastisches Unterfangen? Wessen bedarf es, damit ein solcher Entwurf über eine nur dichtende, willkürliche Konstruktion hinauskommt?” (SZ, 260). In other words, Heidegger’s analysis of death is still in a preliminary phase: it lacks a stable ontological foundation and like any outline needs to be fleshed out. He must now directly pursue the question of possibility which all of the above characteristics only modify but do not adequately illuminate. This endeavor will lead him to the important conceptions of *Vorlaufen in den Tod* and *Freiheit zum Tode*, and it is here that the influence of Hölderlin and Nietzsche emerges.

Das Man’s comportment toward death has become clear. The above five characteristics, in their everyday inauthentic mode, combined with the mood of *Furcht*

have only served to conceal the extreme possibility of finitude. Clinging to life at all costs, *das Man* will put off the eventuality of death any way it can, a conduct tantamount to evasion and thus alienation. By refusing to acknowledge its most personal fate and instead passing it off onto others, inauthentic Dasein becomes alienated from its ownmost possibility. Its constant flight from death results in a forfeiture of an authentic existence, and so it persists in a state of ontological concealment where it can inconspicuously duck into the shelter of its *Besorgen* and lose itself in its everyday affairs.

How does this behavior compare with an authentic being-unto-death? Heidegger explores a number of attitudes toward finitude as an eminent possibility under the guiding words: “Zunächst gilt es, das Sein zum Tode als ein *Sein zu einer Möglichkeit* und zwar zu einer ausgezeichneten Möglichkeit des Daseins selbst zu kennzeichnen” (SZ, 261). Dasein is of course a potential being that continually encounters moments fraught with possibility. Finitude, however, is not just any possibility of existence but rather the *ultimate* possibility in the double sense of final and supreme. This understanding of ultimate possibility must be founded on Dasein’s original disclosedness and in no way obscure or otherwise infringe on this clarity/sanctum of being.

One can relate to something possible by “being out” (*Aussein*) for it in the sense of being intent on it and therefore seeking its actualization. Possibilities, after all, are there to be realized; they present themselves as attainable goals or at least entertainable notions. However, as soon as they become actualized they are no longer possibilities, but are made real and final. Similarly, being out for death would only bring about just such a final reality and thus annihilate the very possibility that an authentic existence was

supposed to hold. One might call this situation an existential impasse: *Dasein* undermines its own potentiality by attempting to capitalize on it. Yet this problem is not limited to the futile result; the entire process of *Aussein* remains basically functional, characterized by the notions of “Um-zu” and “Wofür-möglich” (SZ, 261). Possibility here serves some greater end for the benefit of *Dasein*, thereby becoming disclosed as a *Zuhandenes* that is to be utilized for a specific purpose.

Even a less active comportment toward death such as contemplation is problematical. Someone who broods over his coming end does not directly seek its actualization as though bent upon it, but he nonetheless thinks about this possibility, desiring to know when and how death might come about. Essentially, this is a form of calculation through which one disposes over finitude, albeit in thought rather than deed. Yet acts of thought are still just that—acts. They are in Husserl’s sense intentional—i.e. directed at something—while Heidegger further seems to consider them as basically intrusive.⁸ Brooding over death only succeeds in diminishing the extreme character of possibility. As Heidegger states in typical tautological fashion:

Er [der Tod] soll als Mögliches möglichst wenig von seiner Möglichkeit zeigen. Im Sein zum Tode dagegen, wenn anders es die charakterisierte Möglichkeit als *solche* verstehend zu erschließen hat, muß die Möglichkeit ungeschwächt *als Möglichkeit* verstanden, *als Möglichkeit* ausgebildet und im Verhalten zu ihr *als Möglichkeit* ausgehalten werden. (SZ, 261)

What he in other words seeks is some form of pure spontaneity in the face of finitude. This leads him to reject as a valid conduct all effective or conscious ways of

disposing over death. A third suggestion, “expectation” (*Erwartung*), would at first appear to be a satisfactory relation to something possible in its possibility, since it remains at bottom a passive attitude that does not encroach upon its object. In expecting something possible, I let it come to me and thus do not diminish or take away from its likelihood of occurring. But I do not fully endure it as possibility, for in the end I am waiting for some sort of actualization despite my inactive stance. I expect something for its eventual realization, not for its eternal and distant conceivability. I have so to speak one foot in the thick of possibility yet one still firmly planted in reality, which of course results in more than just a physical split: my being-unto-death itself becomes torn between an impendency of the possible and an irruption of the actual.

Heidegger settles upon the notion of *Vorlaufen*, problematically rendered in both existing English translations as “anticipation”.⁹ Contrary to its immediate connotation, *Vorlaufen* does not mean to imply that forward-running Dasein approaches the possible and thereby effects a gradual actualization. Common conceptions of proximity do not apply here: “Diese Näherung tendiert jedoch nicht auf ein besorgendes Verfügbarmachen eines Wirklichen, sondern im verstehenden Näherkommen wird die Möglichkeit des Möglichen nur ‘größer’” (SZ, 262). This “understanding act of approach” recalls the earlier analysis of *Verstehen* (section 31), the basic *Existenzial* associated with Dasein’s futural tendency. Understanding is essentially an *Entwerfen*, i.e. a kind of free projection that reveals to Dasein its possibilities. These are not necessarily unlimited, for in its thrownness (*Geworfenheit* and *Entwerfen* are more than just etymologically related) Dasein finds itself in a situation which offers only certain

possibilities. Dasein understands itself not based on its past facticity or present condition of being-in-the-world, but through its future possibilities. Its understanding has an anticipatory fore-structure that is but a manifestation of Dasein's own existential nature. Despite his abstruse language and terminology, the gist of Heidegger's argument is actually quite simple, which is perhaps what prompts him at one point to invoke a far more pithy paraphrase: "[...] weil es [Dasein] *ist*, was es wird bzw. nicht wird, kann es verstehend ihm selbst sagen: 'werde, was du bist!'" (SZ, 145). Though Heidegger neglects to cite his source—as discussed in an earlier context, a not untypical practice—this injunction in fact stems from Pindar's second Pythian ode and can also be found in various texts of Nietzsche. Hölderlin, who translated most of Pindar's odes, makes use of this line in *Der Tod des Empedokles* as well. This motif-like connection between Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Hölderlin will however be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

Vorlaufen, which has both the lexical and ontological "Vor-Struktur des Verstehens" (SZ, 151), is in effect an understanding in the face of death. It too has an anticipatory, projectional character that opens itself up for possibility, and as is generally the case with finitude, this possibility becomes all the more extreme, here even increasing without end:

Im Vorlaufen in diese Möglichkeit wird sie "immer größer", das heißt sie enthüllt sich als solche, die überhaupt kein Maß, kein mehr oder minder kennt, sondern die Möglichkeit der maßlosen Unmöglichkeit der Existenz bedeutet.
(SZ, 262)

Like the authentic Dasein that it characterizes, *Vorlaufen* builds upon itself, its extreme possibility being pushed ever further to the extreme. Not exactly an easy concept to imagine let alone describe in concrete terms, *Vorlaufen* seems to be a sheer and endlessly potentiating process of ultimate possibility. *Vorlaufen* never really reaches any particular point (death is of course not a fixed point in time), but continuously grows without end or measure. It is precisely the opposite mode of conduct to *das Man*'s flight before finitude. Both attitudes remain "höchst leibhafte Bewegungen"¹⁰ that lend a sense of vividness to Heidegger's otherwise highly conceptual analyses. Indeed, perhaps for the first time in *Sein und Zeit* one encounters language grounded in metaphor: *Vorlaufen in den Tod* does not literally mean a "running forward" into death, but rather stands for Dasein's anticipatory self-understanding in the face of finitude. Yet Heidegger's use of this relatively graphic image would seem to undermine his purely phenomenological and ontological intentions. To once again defer to Sternberger:

Wieder ist das Gewicht der leibhaft-räumlichen Sprachbilder so groß, daß die intendierte Raumlosigkeit existenzialer Möglichkeiten davon erdrückt, vielmehr verraten wird. Mehr noch als das Fliehen enthält überdies das Vorlaufen die Erinnerung der "Zeitstrecke", als auf welcher das Vorlaufen stattfindet: ein Zeichen, daß trotz aller vorsorglichen phänomenologischen Abscheidung des "nicht-daseinsmäßigen Endens" das Räumliche [...] dessen die Sprache ständig bedarf, nicht konnte ausgetrieben werden.¹¹

The spatial implication of *Vorlaufen* cannot be ignored, which is why the English "anticipation" remains inadequate. *Vorlaufen in den Tod* suggests, especially through the preposition *in* plus the accusative, a propulsive headlong conduct into death. Heidegger

however also employs *Vorlaufen zum Tode*, which like *Sein zum Tode* does not necessarily involve spatiality, but can equally indicate a comportment unto or toward, such is the range of the preposition *zu*. In his lecture course *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, which can be considered a preliminary draft of *Sein und Zeit*, he also employs, practically back-to-back, both prepositions in connection with *Vorlaufen*. Compare the following passage, which also sheds light on the problem of spontaneous conduct toward death/possibility:

[...] das Sein muß zur Möglichkeit, die bleiben soll, was sie ist, *vorlaufen*, nicht sie als Gegenwart heranziehen, sondern sie als Möglichkeit stehen lassen und so zu ihr sein. In solchem Vorlaufen in die Möglichkeit komme ich gleichsam in die nächste Nähe zu ihr selbst. Aber in diesem Näherkommen wird sie nicht etwa zur Welt, sondern immer mehr und mehr und eigentlicher nur Möglichkeit. Diese Möglichkeit, in die ich vorlaufen kann, ist wesensmäßig und in einem extremen Sinne die meine. (GA 20, 439)

The verb *vorlaufen* itself covers a broad range of meaning and needs to be explored in greater detail, particularly as Heidegger—perhaps unknowingly—makes use of it and its components (*vor* / *laufen*) in variant forms and various contexts.

It first ought to be noted that Heidegger displays a rather strange penchant for the prefix *vor* throughout *Sein und Zeit*. Words like *vorhanden*, *vorläufig*, *vorhaben*, *vorontologisch*, *Vorrang*, etc. permeate its pages to such a degree that they form somewhat of a motif complex. Despite its length and breadth, Heidegger's book remains of course only an initial project, which may in part be the reason for his frequent use of *vor* in the temporal meaning of “pre-”. As a preliminary undertaking (*ein vorläufiges*

Unternehmen), his project of fundamental ontology—which entails no less than a destruction of Western metaphysics—must at the same time be *vorsichtig* in both senses of the term: careful (i.e. meticulous) and cautious (as in wary). The extent of this motif-like presence can be observed in the following paragraph, cited in its entirety and highlighted in order to better illustrate the above point:

Die beiden skizzierten Charaktere des Daseins: einmal der *Vorrang* der “existentia” vor der *essentia* und dann die *Jemeinigkeit* – zeigen schon an, daß eine Analytik dieses Seienden vor einen eigenartigen phänomenalen Bezirk gestellt wird. Dieses Seiende hat nicht und nie die *Seinsart* des innerhalb der Welt nur *Vorhandenen*. Daher ist es auch nicht in der Weise des *Vorfindens* von *Vorhandenem* thematisch *vorzugeben*. Die rechte *Vorgabe* seiner ist so wenig selbstverständlich, daß deren Bestimmung selbst ein wesentliches Stück der ontologischen Analytik dieses Seienden ausmacht. Mit dem sicheren Vollzug der rechten *Vorgabe* dieses Seienden steht und fällt die Möglichkeit, das Sein dieses Seienden überhaupt zum Verständnis zu bringen. Mag die Analyse noch so *vorläufig* sein, sie fordert immer schon die Sicherung des rechten Ansatzes.

(43)

One might ask, as Heidegger later does: “Wie ist der Charakter dieses ‘Vor-’ zu begreifen?” (SZ, 150). This question, which is posed in the analysis of inauthentic understanding’s interpretive practices of *Vorhabe*, *Vorsicht*, and *Vorgriff*, could just as easily apply to the structure of *Vorlaufen*. The prefix/preposition *vor* can imply both spatiality and temporality. *Vorlaufen* as a literal running forward is naturally a spatial notion, whereas the *vor* contained in *vorläufig* has temporal connotations. Heidegger even seems to play on the contrary meaning of these two words when speaking of similarly contrasting attitudes toward death. *Das Man*’s source of solace, “der Tod

kommt gewiß, aber *vorläufig* noch nicht” (SZ, 258), is of course the precise opposite to authentic Dasein’s conduct of *Vorlaufen*, despite the fact that both terms are not only etymologically related but almost lexically identical. On a semantic level, *Vorlaufen*, like its morphological counterpart *vorläufig*, can take on a temporal meaning, as in the expression: “Meine Uhr läuft vor.” (As opposed to “Meine Uhr läuft nach.”) And of course a *Vorläufer* is not one who runs forward in space, but one who runs before in time, i.e. a forerunner or precursor.

The upshot of all this is that *Vorlaufen in den Tod* remains at root a highly problematical concept that cannot be interpreted too narrowly. One might choose simply to dismiss it—along with its many implications—as Heidegger’s direct and unreflective translation of Luther’s *cursus ad mortem*. In his exegesis of Genesis 2:17, Luther writes: “Paul says: ‘Daily we die’ [...] [Life] is nothing else than a perpetual running ahead toward death.”¹² Yet Heidegger is anything but undeliberative in his relationship with language; his often idiosyncratic use of words forms a conscious effort to reappropriate their original meanings, which have become obscured through centuries of metaphysical thought and discourse. (His critics of course accuse him, perhaps sometimes justly, of taking unwarranted liberties and exploiting language for his own purposes.)¹³

Heidegger’s etymological understanding of *Vorlaufen* would include then two possibilities: either a spatial and more literal running forward or a temporal running ahead. Or better yet, it would perhaps entail a combination of both, since the two notions remain fundamentally related.

The temporal definition ties in with Dasein's futural tendency: true to its *Entwurfscharakter*, Dasein perpetually runs ahead of real time, not unlike a fast-running clock. As Heidegger later demonstrates in his analysis of temporality, authentic Dasein's essential orientation toward the future is crystallized in the very notion of *Vorlaufen* (in contrast to the inauthentic practice of *Gewärtigen*): "Für die terminologische Kennzeichnung der eigentlichen Zukunft halten wir den Ausdruck *Vorlaufen* fest [...]. Dasein ist faktisch ständig sich-vorweg, aber unständig, der existenziellen Möglichkeit nach, vorlaufend" (SZ, 336-7). As the second division of *Sein und Zeit* shows (and the second part of its title makes even more apparent) "time" is as much the central topic of the book as "being". *Vorlaufen* is thus bound to take on temporal signification, particularly as it functions within the analysis of death which is itself but the first revealed phenomenon of temporality.

Yet as Heidegger himself points out (cf. SZ, 299), his book is also full of spatial phenomena: *Ent-fernung*, *Ausrichtung*, *In-der-Welt-sein*, *Situation*, *Da*, etc. As a project, Dasein literally finds itself "thrown forward" (*pro-jacere*) in space. This aspect of thrownness is partially conveyed in its factual condition of *Geworfenheit*, its self-understanding as *Entwerfen*, and its existential constitution as *Entwurf*. Yet *Vorlaufen* would better seem to suggest the forward direction of this trajectory. Much as *das Man*'s conduct toward death is characterized by a metaphorical *Flucht* or what one might in this context call a *Weglaufen*, authentic Dasein chooses to run in the opposite direction: forward, *vor*, into possibility. Heidegger generally tends to think in such projectional terms with regard to Dasein. Earlier in a discussion of concern or solicitude (*Fürsorge*),

he differentiates between inauthentic *einspringend-beherrschende* and authentic *vorspringend-befreiende Fürsorge*, the latter of which: “[...] verhilft dem Anderen dazu, in seiner Sorge sich durchsichtig und für die frei zu werden” (SZ, 122). Here the underlying image is one of “leaping” rather than running or throwing, yet the implicit forward motion remains no less graphic or apparent. A later work, *Beiträge zur Philosophie* (composed during the 1930’s but not published until 1989), offers numerous insights into the complex—and often misunderstood—ideas put forth in *Sein und Zeit*.¹⁴ Here *Sprung* is concretely linked to projection: “[Sprung] ist das eröffnende Sichwerfen ‘in’ das Da-sein. Dieses gründet sich im Sprung. Das, wohin er, eröffnend, springt, gründet sich erst durch den Sprung” (GA 65, 303). The notion of *Sprung* in fact takes on importance for the entire work, whose fugal structure is arranged according to eight central themes: *Vorblick, Der Anklang, Das Zuspiel, Der Sprung, Die Gründung, Die Zu-künftigen, Der letzte Gott, Das Seyn*. It is perhaps significant that Heidegger recapitulates his analysis of death from *Sein und Zeit* in the section entitled “Der Sprung”, though this expression becomes so metaphorical that it hardly seems to designate any one thing. Rather, many such steps/“leaps” emerge in the pursuit of being, from the original leap or *Ur-sprung* of even raising the basic question “What does it mean to be?” to a grounding of the *Seinsfrage* through a leap into (*Einsprung in*) the ontological disclosure of *Dasein*. Heidegger however gets nebulous here as he abandons his phenomenological method of *Sein und Zeit*. It suffices to note that his conception of *Vorlaufen*, however difficult it may be to envision or comprehend fully, has definite connotations of propelled motion, whether it implies a literal running forward or an

analogous action such as casting or leaping. These vivid overtones will prove important in connection with Empedokles and his projected plunge into the crater of Etna.

Whatever images, if any, *Vorlaufen* may evoke, there can be no doubt about its crucial function in Heidegger's analysis. As a form of understanding, *Vorlaufen* reveals to authentic Dasein the supreme possibility of finitude, and it does so by disclosing to Dasein its immersion in *das Man*, who persists in an eternal flight from death. In this process the five characteristics of finitude that Heidegger introduced in his preliminary sketch from section 50 become grounded in *Vorlaufen* and reinforced as contrasting modes of conduct to an inauthentic *Sein zum Tode*. These five aspects have received extensive treatment above and need not be discussed further. However, they have in part been rephrased and—as much as possible in an ontological analysis—concretized in relation to Dasein's new-found comportment. Death as ownmost possibility, for instance, makes it clear to Dasein “daß es in der ausgezeichneten Möglichkeit seiner selbst dem Man entrissen bleibt, das heißt vorlaufend sich je schon ihm entreißen kann” (SZ, 263). The nonreferential (*unbezüglich-*) aspect of finitude that becomes unveiled in *Vorlaufen* further underscores authentic Dasein's separation from the they. Here the anticipation of finitude completely isolates Dasein from others and forces it to act on its own potentiality rather than be swayed by public opinion: “Das Vorlaufen in die unbezügliche Möglichkeit zwingt das vorlaufende Seiende in die Möglichkeit, sein eigenstes Sein von ihm selbst her aus ihm selbst zu übernehmen” (SZ, 263f). There seem to be no new realizations or drastic reformulations with regard to the notions of certainty and indefiniteness. For the most part Heidegger repeats what he has already said,

emphasizing the fact—and thereby satisfying his previous demand that death should show as little as possible of its possibility (cf. SZ, 261)—that a certain but indefinite end compels Dasein to cultivate and endure the eminent/imminent possibility that death holds:

Im Vorlaufen zum unbestimmt gewissen Tode öffnet sich das Dasein für eine aus seinem Da selbst entspringende, ständige *Bedrohung*. Das Sein zum Ende muß sich in ihr halten und kann sie so wenig abblenden, daß es die Unbestimmtheit der Gewißheit vielmehr ausbilden muß. (SZ, 265)

The fifth aspect of *Unüberholbarkeit* however leads to several new insights. In an authentic *Sein zum Tode* Dasein understands that its end is not to be bypassed, and instead of side-stepping the perpetual threat to its existence as *das Man* habitually does, it frees itself for the impossibility of evading death. Heidegger terms this self-liberating action in the face of finitude “Das vorlaufende Freiwerden *für* den eigenen Tod [...]” (SZ, 264). In letting itself become free for an insurpassable death as extreme possibility, Dasein frees itself from its lostness in the chance possibilities of *das Man*. Such a process enables Dasein to understand and choose the factual possibilities that lead up to its extreme and definitive end. Thus, Dasein not only gains an understanding of its continual possibilities throughout existence; it further gains a perspective on its existence as a whole by projecting itself against the non-bypassable horizon of death. By reckoning with its end at any conceivable moment, it is able to “anticipate” its entire existence. Here Heidegger uses the verb *vorwegnehmen* for the first and only time (SZ, 264), which would seem to necessitate an alternative translation of *Vorlaufen* as

“anticipation”. Compare the use of the two terms in this context: “Weil das Vorlaufen in die unüberholbare Möglichkeit alle ihr vorgelagerten Möglichkeiten mit erschließt, liegt in ihm die Möglichkeit eines existenziellen Vorwegnehmens des *ganzen* Daseins, das heißt die Möglichkeit, als *ganzes Seinkönnen* zu existieren” (SZ, 264). More important than a fitting English translation is however the fact that Heidegger has found a solution to the initial dilemma of the *Todesanalytik*. Dasein’s inability to experience itself as a whole due to the termination of its existence from without has now been overcome through a more internal comprehension of death. The attitude of *Vorlaufen*, which amounts to no less than an integration of death into being, allows Dasein to anticipate existence in its entirety.

Even more radically, *Vorlaufen* reveals to Dasein that its extreme possibility lies in a final act of self-surrender, one that will keep it from clinging to existence at all costs. In Heidegger’s own words: “Das Vorlaufen erschließt der Existenz als äußerste Möglichkeit die Selbstaufgabe und zerbricht so jede Versteifung auf die je erreichte Existenz” (SZ, 264). This propulsive behavior should not be interpreted as a brazen act of suicide or self-sacrifice. In his *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, Heidegger in fact outright rejects any form of suicidal conduct, contending that suicide only converts possibility into actuality and thereby implying that it ought to be reckoned among such attitudes as *Aussein*, brooding, and expectation.

Ich deutete schon an, das Seinsverhältnis zu einer Möglichkeit muß so sein, daß es die Möglichkeit als Möglichkeit stehen läßt, nicht etwa so, daß die Möglichkeit zur Wirklichkeit wird, dadurch vielleicht, daß ich mich zum

Sterben im Selbstmord bringe. Durch den Selbstmord z.B. gebe ich die Möglichkeit als Möglichkeit gerade auf, sie wird von Grund aus verkehrt, nämlich zu einer Wirklichkeit. (GA 20, 439)

Dasein does not actively seek to bring about its destruction, for this would only turn it into a *Vorhandenes*, specifically a dead, static object. As *sich-vorweg-sein*, Dasein rather continually projects itself forward, even in the face of death, which it does not allow to stand in the way of its forward course or otherwise impair its potentiality. Contrary to *das Man*'s stubborn refusal to relinquish its prolonged and stagnant existence, authentic *Sein zum Tode* cultivates a free relation to finitude as a measure to avert falling behind itself and thereby lapse into existential stasis. It is in this context that Heidegger alludes to Nietzsche by way of paraphrase: "Das Dasein behütet sich, vorlaufend, davor, hinter sich selbst und das verstandene Seinkönnen zurückzufallen und 'für seine Siege zu alt zu werden' (Nietzsche)" (SZ, 264). This spontaneity on the part of Dasein to become free for death remains a conduct that Heidegger sums up as "Freiheit zum Tode" (SZ, 266). Authentic being-unto-death hence emerges as a freedom unto death. The implication here is that Dasein freely determines its time to die and does not fail to act upon this moment of extreme possibility. The expression *Freiheit zum Tode* both characterizes authentic Dasein as an unbound project and at the same time accentuates the privation of freedom in *das Man*'s persevering resistance toward dying. *Vorlaufen*'s key function of understanding in the face of finitude now becomes apparent in Heidegger's following summary of his analysis:

Die Charakteristik des existenzial entworfenen eigentlichen Seins zum Tode läßt sich dergestalt zusammenfassen: *Das Vorlaufen enthüllt dem Dasein die Verlorenheit in das Man-selbst und bringt es vor die Möglichkeit, auf die besorgende Fürsorge primär ungestützt, es selbst zu sein, selbst aber in der leidenschaftlichen, von den Illusionen des Man gelösten, faktischen, ihrer selbst gewissen und sich ängstenden Freiheit zum Tode.* (SZ, 266)

Heidegger's project of an authentic being-unto-death is a strictly existenzial-ontological undertaking, and as such a sort of philosophical blueprint. As he himself realizes, it lacks an ontic-existenziell foundation and hence remains an empty, unrealistic demand on factual Dasein:

Und trotzdem bleibt doch dieses existenzial "mögliche" Sein zum Tode existenziell eine phantastische Zumutung. Die ontologische Möglichkeit eines eigentlichen Ganzseinkönnens des Daseins bedeutet solange nichts, als nicht das entsprechende ontische Seinkönnen aus dem Dasein selbst erwiesen ist. (SZ, 266)

Heidegger thus devotes a chapter to what he calls "Die daseinsmäßige Bezeugung eines eigentlichen Seinkönnens". Through an investigation of Dasein's conscience and guilt, he arrives at the authentic factor of resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*), which, when fused with the ontological *Vorlaufen*, culminates in the authentic attested existence of Dasein as *vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*. This existenziell testimony will prove of central importance for determining further connections to Hölderlin's figure of Empedokles, whose guilt-ridden realization of a forward-running free death fulfills Heidegger's demand: "Wirft sich das Dasein je faktisch in ein solches Sein zum Tode?" (SZ, 266).

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ The fact that *Wesen* appears in quotation marks suggests a misgiving on the part of Heidegger toward the traditional meaning of the word. If *Wesen* is to be understood metaphysically as “essence”, then it seems clear why it must be employed with hesitancy and qualification: Dasein’s characterization as pure existentiality means that it can have no essence *per se*. (An idea that Sartre has made famous with the phrase: “Existence precedes essence.”) Lacking essential qualities that would predetermine it in any way, Dasein continually defines itself through the very act of existing. In his later thinking, Heidegger will offer his own revisionist definition of *Wesen* as an articular infinitive that can function as a verb in its own right much like *verwesen*. “Etwas west” means that something exists or perdures in some mode of being. See for example his essay “Die Frage nach der Technik”: “Vom Zeitwort ‘wesen’ stammt erst das Hauptwort ab. ‘Wesen’, verbal verstanden, ist das Selbe wie ‘währen’; nicht nur bedeutungsmäßig, sondern auch in der lautlichen Wortbildung” (VA, 34).

² Heidegger’s refers to the 1917 edition of Alois Brant and Konrad Burdach. This work, which has been handed down in numerous versions, is most readily available as a Reclam paperback based on the 1937 edition of Arthur Hübner: Johannes von Tepl, *Der Ackermann und der Tod*, (Stuttgart, 1984) 34/35. The actual passage reads somewhat differently here: “[...] sobald ein Mensch geboren wird, sobald hat er den Kauftrunk getan, daß er sterben muß.” (“[...] als balde ein mensche geboren wirt, als balde hat es den leikauf getrunken, das es sterben sol.”)

³ The standard King James translation of John 11.4 reads: ““This illness is not unto death [...]”” (Cf. Luther’s ““Diese Krankheit ist nicht zum Tode [...]””) Heidegger’s direct predecessor is however Kierkegaard, whose *Sygdommen til døden (Die Krankheit zum Tode / The Sickness unto Death)* identifies despair as an existential sickness in the face of death. Though Heidegger makes no reference to either Luther or Kierkegaard, he does mention Dilthey’s lexically similar notion of ““Leben zum Tode”” (see SZ, 249n).

⁴ One need only think in this regard of cemeteries and obituary pages, which for the most part are tucked away from the center of public attention. But this is an ontic observation and hence not found in Heidegger.

⁵ Cf. a German translation of Tolstoy’s tale, e.g. *Der Tod des Ivan Ijitsch*, trans. Gisela Drohla (Frankfurt a.M: Insel, 1961) 82. As there is perhaps no way of knowing which German edition Heidegger used (he neglects to cite more than author and title), this relatively modern translation will have to serve for now. More important is the fact that Heidegger’s entire discussion of “man stirbt”, clearly draws on Tolstoy’s work.

⁶ In his later thinking, Heidegger will consistently employ the term *Unverborgenheit*, which better

conveys the alpha-privative of the Greek and further suggests an opposing veiling of truth as *Verborgenheit*. See especially his essay from 1930 “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit,” in: *Wegmarken*, GA 9, 177-202.

⁷ Heidegger has often come under criticism for his interpretation and translation of the Greek ἀληθεια as unconcealment. However, his argument makes perfect sense from a linguistic standpoint. Ληθη is of course familiar as the river of forgetfulness in the underworld, and the word does in fact literally mean “forgetfulness” or “oblivion”. It stems from the verb λανθάνω, which in the active voice means “to escape the notice of” and in the middle “to forget”. Nor is Heidegger’s understanding of the term as seminal or unfounded as his followers/critics make it out to be. In the nineteenth century, ἀληθεια had been translated not only as “Wahrheit” but also along the lines of “Unverstecktheit” “Unverhülltheit”, etc. For a detailed discussion of this issue see: Holger Helting, “α-ληθεια-Etymologien vor Heidegger im Vergleich mit einigen Phasen der α-ληθεια-Auslegung bei Heidegger,” in: *Heidegger Studies* 13 (1997): 93-107.

⁸ In his later thought Heidegger tends to view acts of representation (*Vorstellungen*) as a subtle form of violence that ground the possibility for the dominion over nature. This development is a modern one, originating with the Cartesian *cogito* which posits a fundamental split between the primal thinking subject and the objective *res extensa* deduced by the “I think”. When representing something (*sich vorstellen*), the subject places it before him (*stellt es sich vor*) so as to dispose over it and make it an object not only of his imagination but ultimately of his machinations. This suspicion toward a metaphysics of subjectivity culminates in works conceived during the 1930’s, for instance “Die Zeit des Weltbildes”, yet it already has its undertones in *Sein und Zeit*. (See e.g. “Die Zeit des Weltbildes,” in: *Holzwege*, GA 5, 75-113.)

⁹ The first English translation of *Sein und Zeit* from 1962 contains the following explanatory note with regard to this term: “While we have used ‘anticipate’ to translate ‘vorgreifen’, which occurs rather seldom, we shall also use it—less literally—to translate ‘vorlaufen’, which appears very often in the following pages, and which has the special connotation of ‘running ahead’. But as Heidegger’s remarks have indicated, the kind of ‘anticipation’ which is involved in Being-towards-death, does not consist in ‘waiting for’ death or ‘dwelling upon it’ or ‘actualizing’ it before it normally comes; nor does ‘running ahead into it’ in this sense mean that we ‘rush headlong into it’. (*Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson [London, 1962] 306n.) Joan Stambaugh’s recent translation, which has the distinct advantage of being corrective after some thirty years of Anglo-American Heidegger scholarship and translational efforts, also adheres to “anticipation” despite her (faulty) observation in the Preface that Macquarrie and Robinson render *Vorlaufen* as “‘running forward in thought’”. Despite the awkwardness of the latter formulation, however, she admits that “[...] it may be the better choice.” (See *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh [Albany, 1996] xv.) As I will demonstrate in the course of this study,

especially later in my discussion of Hölderlin, Heidegger's concept of *Vorlaufen* needs to be not only retranslated but fundamentally rethought based both on its tradition and multivalent connotations.

¹⁰ Sternberger, 91.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹² Cf. Martin Luther, *Werke (Kritische Gesamtausgabe)* 42 (Weimar, 1911) 146. For this quote and its translation I am indebted to John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 175. Also to be observed in: van Buren, "Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther," 171.

¹³ An important critique in this regard can be found in: Theodor W. Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit: Zur deutschen Ideologie* (Frankfurt a.M., 1964).

¹⁴ Though he fails to shed any new light on the conception of *Vorlaufen* in this work (the only novelty is that he hyphenates it into "Vor-laufen" as he similarly does with *Da-sein*), he goes to great and unprecedented lengths to dissociate his analysis of death from its widespread interpretation as a "Philosophie des Todes". This leads him not only to reformulate sections of his analysis in more understandable terms, but also to lash out in uncharacteristic fashion at "Zeitungsschreiber und Spießbürger" who misconstrued his point the first time around. See Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, GA 65, esp. 283-6.

Chapter Three

The Attestation of an Authentic Being-unto-Death: An Analysis of Conscience, Guilt, and *vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*

[...] guilt is the expression for the strongest self-assertion of existence [...]

-Kierkegaard, *Concluding
Unscientific Postscript*

Heidegger's attestation of an authentic potentiality begins with an analysis of conscience, which like *Vorlaufen* reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they. The phenomenon of conscience is examined here as an *Existenzial* and, as will soon become apparent, has little to do with its common acceptance as an inner feeling, psychological reproach, or religious category. Conscience rather discloses to authentic Dasein its ontological guilt which in turn illustrates Dasein's basis of self-apprehension and decision-making. Because Dasein is not the author but only the fashioner of its being, it bears a fundamental guilt of existence, much like any creature toward its creator. Moreover, for every possibility that Dasein then affirms in its self-projection it passes up other potential courses of action, and this inevitable annulment of possibilities entails a further and more ongoing contraction of guilt. Dasein thus becomes a "ground of nullity"; that is, a perpetually guilty being that excludes possibilities at the same time that it grasps others. Fully aware of its annulling tendency, Dasein becomes resolute, which is to say that it makes choices based on its conscience and underlying existential guilt. Resoluteness is in effect a form of self-awareness and hence resembles *Vorlaufen* as an anticipatory understanding of a self-determined death.

The first thing to be established about conscience is that it intimates something to Dasein and hence has a disclosing function. As such it belongs among the existential phenomena that constitute the *Da* of Dasein as disclosedness. These include attunement (*Befindlichkeit*), understanding (*Verstehen*), and discourse (*Rede*). Fallenness (*Verfallen*) also plays an important role in this context. As Heidegger has already demonstrated in the first division and now summarizes in order to prepare for an analysis of conscience, Dasein's primal and factual condition of thrownness is disclosed through its attunement, principally through the mood of *Angst*. Understanding remains inextricably caught up with attunement, for it allows Dasein to project itself beyond its facticity and upon its futural possibilities, which can authentically be its own or become prescribed by the inauthentic they. In the latter case, Dasein becomes addicted to *das Man*, which is the true sense of *Verfallen*. Dasein's entanglement in public opinion is not to be construed as an onto-theological fall from grace, but as a form of existential addiction best borne out by the German: *Dasein verfällt dem Man*.¹ Dasein's lostness in the "idle talk" of the they (an inauthentic mode of discourse termed *Gerede*) causes it not so much to lose sight of as literally to overhear its own self. By listening (*hören*) to the they, Dasein cannot help but belong (*gehören*) to them and thereby forfeit its authentic potentiality. If Dasein is to overcome this addictive belonging, it must cease listening to others by instigating some form of interruption, one however that will be heard above the characteristic din, ambiguity, and novelty of everyday discourse. Such a signal comes silently, unambiguously, with no novel attachments. It comes from conscience.

Conscience is fundamentally characterized as a call. The act of calling necessarily entails four dimensions: the caller; the person being called; the issue of the call; and the task to which one is called. With Heidegger all four of these dimensions ultimately involve the self, albeit in its various aspects and modes: it is the self that calls; it is the self that is called; the self is at issue in the call; and the self is called to apprehend itself. What Heidegger specifically means becomes somewhat clearer through the fact that German has an assortment of verbs modifying the basic act of calling: *rufen*, *anrufen*, and *aufrufen*. The caller (*der Rufer*) is Dasein in its mood of anxiety. As discussed earlier in *Sein und Zeit*, anxiety induces an uncanniness in Dasein, which means in German that it brings about a feeling of not being at home (*Un-heim-lichkeit*). When struck with this mood, Dasein loses the comfortable and complacent feeling of togetherness with the they, amongst whom it has hitherto made itself at home. The self that is called (*der Angerufene*) is on the other hand Dasein in its inauthentic being. Hence, the summoner and the summoned are one and the same, only in different modes of existence. The self doing the calling seeks to extract the summoned self from its immersion in *das Man*, an act that makes clear what is at stake: selfhood. Thus, the call of conscience concerns the self insofar as it draws attention to the particular mode of existence in which Dasein happens to be; whether addresser or addressee, authentic or inauthentic, Dasein becomes aware that its self is at issue. The question then remains: “*Was ruft das Gewissen dem Angerufenen zu?*” (SZ, 273). Heidegger glibly answers: “Streng genommen—nichts” (SZ, 273). Conscience has nothing definite or practical to say, nor does it attempt to

initiate a conversation through its summons. Rather: “Dem angerufenen Selbst wird ‘nichts’ *zu*-gerufen, sondern es ist *aufgerufen* zu ihm selbst, das heißt zu seinem eigensten Seinkönnen” (SZ, 273). As a summons to one’s ownmost potentiality of being, conscience is “ein Vor-(nach-‘vorne’-)Rufen des Daseins in seine eigensten Möglichkeiten” (SZ, 273), and thus recalls both the lexical form and the general function of *Vorlaufen*. Both conscience and *Vorlaufen* are types of understanding that disclose existential possibilities, thereby giving Dasein a better apprehension of itself. In this process of self-understanding Dasein takes hold of its existence, grasping itself in both senses of the word and becoming ever more authentic.

In contrast to the standard notion of conscience, Heidegger’s analysis does away with any outside source such as God or other transcendent ethical principles. His interpretation is however not completely unprecedented, and he refers the reader to various studies that examine the phenomenon from a more ontological and less religious/moral perspective (cf. SZ, 272n). These studies expose a minor tradition in primal Christianity (*Urchristentum*) toward an existential view of this and related phenomena such as death, fear, falling, and—as shall soon be treated—guilt. Yet one need not be well-versed in this rather obscure line of thought to follow Heidegger’s general argument. The German *Gewissen* is of course etymologically related to *Wissen* just as the Latin *conscientia* stems from *scire*, “to know”. Conscience, consciousness, and knowledge all then merge into a single loose nexus, a fact that can still partially be observed in French, which has only the word *conscience* to designate both “conscience”

and “consciousness”.² And though Heidegger avoids the epistemological pitfalls of determining consciousness and equally abandons the ethical implications of conscience, he regards *Gewissen* as precisely a form of self-awareness or knowledge of the self. Rather than positing an outside agency or pointing to an imprecise faculty, he grounds the phenomenon of conscience in the existence of the self. The so-called “Rufcharakter des Gewissens” remains an inner voice of sorts and hence would seem to correspond in this respect to the vulgar interpretation of conscience as a voice of reproach or warning. Yet certain crucial differences emerge. For one, Heidegger’s conception of conscience is not a φωνη in the Greek sense of both voice and sound. It is rather a silent appeal, like the authentic mode of discourse known as *Schweigen*, and as such it counters the loudness of *das Man* who fails to hear itself—i.e. its “self”—in its incessant idle talk or *Gerede*. And as previously mentioned, the call of conscience does not impart any specific message but summons Dasein from its inauthentic entanglement in the they, forward into an authentic understanding of possibility. Hence, it has a double function as “vorrufender Rückruf”, a formulation that appears throughout Heidegger’s analysis.

A further departure from the common view of a “good” or “bad” conscience concerns the aspect of guilt upon which one’s pangs of conscience are normally based. One feels guilty because of some previous wrong committed, and the inner voice unremittingly points back to this fact as a critical reminder of the guilt incurred by the transgression. For Heidegger, this is in part true, yet the roots run deeper and the consequences go much further. Guilt remains an essentially ontological phenomenon.

Just as truth, knowledge, etc. arise through a primordial awareness of being rather than through cognition, one's guilt likewise remains attached to the predicate "I am". *Dasein* is guilty in its being. The precise nature of this *Schuldigsein* must however be pursued, first—and as often in Heidegger's analyses—by way of its everyday inauthentic interpretation. Only then can an original understanding of the phenomenon be brought to light, in accordance with his general method, cited as follows:

Alle ontologischen Untersuchungen von Phänomenen wie Schuld, Gewissen, Tod müssen in dem ansetzen, was die alltägliche Daseinsauslegung darüber "sagt". In der verfallenden Seinsart des Daseins liegt zugleich, daß seine Auslegung zumeist uneigentlich "orientiert" ist und das "Wesen" nicht trifft, weil ihm die ursprünglich angemessene ontologische Fragestellung fremd bleibt. Aber in jedem Fehlsehen liegt mitenthüllt eine Anweisung auf die ursprüngliche "Idee" des Phänomens. (SZ, 281)

Schuldigsein often takes on the meaning of *Schuldenhaben*, which would seem to be a natural connection given the double meaning of *Schuld* as guilt/debt. Heidegger's point here parallels his earlier remark concerning *Ausstand* as a being-at-an-end: the idea of guilt as debt resembles a "lack" insofar as it remains a present-at-hand object which can be disposed over and calculated. Like *Ausstand*, guilt is a mode of *Besorgen* with a similar material function in *Dasein*'s everyday practical affairs. Nietzsche for instance has observed: "Haben sich diese bisherigen Genealogen der Moral [the English moral philosophers] auch nur von Ferne Etwas davon träumen lassen, dass zum Beispiel jener moralische Hauptbegriff 'Schuld' seine Herkunft aus dem sehr materiellen Begriff

‘Schulden’ genommen hat?’ (*Genealogie der Moral*, KSA 5, 297). Heidegger, who would basically agree with his predecessor’s claim, has the further crucial objection that such a view of guilt fails to provide an adequate existenzial interpretation.

For this reason he equally rejects the validity of guilt as a social or moral obligation, which is in essence but a fusion of two non-existenzial perspectives: the above material viewpoint and the signification of guilt as a cause or origin. One can for instance be guilty without literally “owing” anything to another but rather by being responsible for an action.³ When combined with the material notion of “Schuld haben bei ...”, this sense of “schuld haben an ...” leads to an attitude which he calls: “‘sich schuldig machen’, das heißt durch das Schuldhaben an einem Schuldenhaben ein Recht verletzen und sich strafbar machen” (SZ, 282). Making oneself responsible toward others remains, however, a social behavior characteristic of *Mitsein*. It is to be found in ethics, for instance in Kant’s idea of a *Sittengesetz*, which not only addresses issues of responsibility but further offers a theory of the related phenomenon, conscience, as a court of law or *Gerichtshof*.

None of the above interpretations are able to represent guilt as an ontological problem, since they all place emphasis on the wrong component of “Schuldigsein”. As Heidegger is forced to highlight, “Schuldigsein” is the proper existenzial perspective to adopt. Still, true to his initial approach, he does not completely discard the “inauthentic” findings of his investigation into everyday perceptions of guilt. Rather, he identifies in them a common train of thought which concerns the quality of the “not” or *das Nicht*. As already mentioned, guilt/debt understood as a calculating act of *Besorgen* involves a kind

of lack in that a portion is not objectively present. Yet also the moral interpretation according to which guilt becomes a “making oneself responsible to others” is determined by a missing presence of what “ought to be”. In other words, one becomes guilty or socially irresponsible by failing to fulfill ethical codes and moral imperatives. This failure is as much a lack and non-presence as, say, an owed sum of money, and thus equally remains a “Nichtvorhandensein” (SZ, 283).

Heidegger attempts to rethink this notion of *Nicht* existenzially; that is, not as an objective presence or absence, but in accordance with the *Existenz* of Dasein. Taking up the special sense of guilt as “schuld haben an”, i.e. being a cause of, he modifies it into “das Grundsein für ...” (SZ, 283), which he then joins with the above idea of *Nicht* to obtain a full existenzial definition of guilt: “Die formal existenziale Idee des ‘schuld’ bestimmen wir daher also: Grundsein für ein durch ein Nicht bestimmtes Sein – das heißt *Grundsein einer Nichtigkeit*” (SZ, 283). What Heidegger means by this requires one to recall the being of Dasein as care, the ontological structure of which was worked out back in section 41 and once again appears by way of synopsis in the present discussion of guilt.

The being of Dasein as care or *Sorge* consists of facticity, existence, and fallenness/addiction. Dasein’s facticity lies in its thrownness (*Geworfenheit*); that is to say, Dasein has been thrown into this world, literally into its Da, and there can be no undoing this basic fact of being. Thrust into the world through no accord of its own, Dasein can never “get back behind” its thrownness, but must settle for the fact “daß es ist und zu sein hat [...]” (SZ, 284). This fact of thrownness does not lie behind Dasein as a single, one-

time occurrence that has since become separate and remote. *Geworfenheit* is a “factual” (*faktisch-*) as opposed to a “factual” (*tatsächlich-*) phenomenon, which means that it belongs to Dasein as a constant constituent of its being. Factuality, rather, characterizes objectively present things, as for instance an event that befalls Dasein from without. Such however is not the case here: Dasein forever finds itself in a factual state of thrownness and this facticity remains an internal, integral aspect of its being. As care Dasein is its perpetual “Daß”, which is but another way of saying that Dasein is the ground of its potentiality-of-being. Granted, it has not laid the ground itself as it cannot possibly bring about its own being. Dasein’s facticity as *geworfener Grund* does not allow it to gain control over that ground, so it must instead exist *from* that ground and *as* that ground, and it does so by projecting itself (*sich entwerfen*) upon the possibilities into which it has been thrown. In existence/projection Dasein does not so much overcome its *Grundsein* as take it over and appropriate it. It thus continually confronts the “not” of its thrownness: Dasein has *not* laid the ground for itself, it can *not* fall behind or undo this ground, and it is *not* able to gain power over this ground. Dasein can only seek to capitalize upon its facticity by existing, that is by understanding itself in terms of possibilities. Yet even this ability to exist is fraught with the “not”, for Dasein can either be or be not.⁴ What Heidegger means here is the following: for every possibility that Dasein chooses, it excludes other possibilities, thereby annulling the role these could play in existence. A simple existenziell illustration of this point would be to say that one has the choice of climbing a mountain or *not* climbing a mountain. Of course a plethora of further

possibilities can present themselves at any moment in existence, and Dasein's decision upon only one can simultaneously entail the annulment of several others. In climbing a mountain, Dasein not only renders null the possibility of not climbing a mountain, but further nullifies other options of potential conduct, for instance: going to the beach, attending a Stones concert, staying home to read a book, ad infinitum. Dasein is thus a constant ground of nullity (*Grundsein einer Nichtigkeit*) and as such is always guilty. This guilt does not however arise from some action that Dasein has taken; on the contrary, it is incurred through Dasein's very freedom *not* to choose certain courses of action or modes of existence. Dasein is guilty for the very reason that by being in such a way it is the ground for not being in such a way. Like conscience, ontological guilt is thus prior to moral concepts of good and evil:

Seiendes, dessen Sein Sorge ist, kann sich nicht nur mit faktischer Schuld beladen, sondern ist im Grunde seines Seins schuldig, welches Schuldigsein allererst die ontologische Bedingung dafür gibt, daß das Dasein faktisch existierend schuldig werden kann. Dieses wesenhafte Schuldigsein ist gleichursprünglich die existenziale Bedingung der Möglichkeit für das "moralisch" Gute und Böse, das heißt für die Moralität überhaupt und deren faktisch mögliche Ausformungen. (SZ, 286)

As Heidegger states along similar lines in a subsequent footnote, the concept of original sin, though perhaps primordial enough to be considered a true "Schuldigsein", remains in the end a matter of theology rather than ontology:

Die existenziale Analyse des Schuldigseins beweist weder etwas *für* noch *gegen*

die Möglichkeit der Sünde. Man kann streng genommen nicht einmal sagen, daß die Ontologie des Daseins *von sich aus* diese Möglichkeit überhaupt offen läßt, sofern sie als philosophisches Fragen grundsätzlich nichts von der Sünde "weiß". (SZ, 306n)

This necessary separation of ontological guilt from ontic sin will later prove important in connection with the merging of existential guilt and original sin in *Der Tod des Empedokles*. As for the present, it is to be noted that Heidegger's focus with regard to all such phenomena as death, conscience, and guilt must be restricted to the being of Dasein.

Only because Dasein is fundamentally, i.e. ontologically, guilty does conscience have meaning. The call of conscience as *vorrufender Rückruf* points Dasein, which is mainly in a state of *Verfallen*, in two directions: forward into possibility and backward into thrownness. That is, conscience gives Dasein to understand that it exists as both a projected (*geworfen*) and self-projecting (*entwerfend*) being whose null ground provides the necessary ontological basis for choosing possibilities. Dasein is free to choose itself, yet rarely does so in its prevailing inauthentic mode. As previously discussed, the call of conscience has the purpose of summoning Dasein from its addiction to the they; however Dasein must be ready for this call and willing to listen. It can accomplish this by accepting its guilty condition as a primordial fact of existence, which means authentically understanding its guilt as a potentiality-of-being. Guilt thus takes on the function not of an emotional burden but of an existential directive. *Das Man* has no such awareness of its guilt and hence never bothers listening to the summons of its conscience, which it would fail to hear anyway above the *Gerede* of its everyday affairs. Authentic understanding, on

the other hand, displays a readiness to be addressed and thus becomes free for the call. By understanding its guilt as the ground of nullity upon which all existential decisions are based, Dasein at the same time comes to understand the call of conscience as an appeal to an ownmost possibility of existence. In Heidegger's—somewhat tortured—words:

Das rechte Hören des Anrufs kommt dann gleich einem Sichverstehen in seinem eigensten Seinkönnen, das heißt dem Sichertwerfen auf das eigenste eigentliche Schuldigwerdenkönnen. Das verstehende Sichvorrufenlassen auf diese Möglichkeit schließt in sich das Freiwerden des Daseins für den Ruf: die Bereitschaft für das Angerufenwerdenkönnen. Das Dasein ist rufverstehend hörig seiner eigensten Existenzmöglichkeit. Es hat sich selbst gewählt. (SZ, 287)

Heidegger equates understanding the call with a willingness to have a conscience: “Gewissen-haben-wollen” (SZ, 288). That is, Dasein's desire for conscience indicates a readiness for being summoned as well as an acceptance of its guilt, both of which enable Dasein to gain an authentic comprehension of itself. As a kind of self-understanding, *Gewissen-haben-wollen* is a mode of disclosedness which reveals to Dasein its potentiality-of-being. Once again, Heidegger reminds the reader that disclosedness consists not only of understanding but also of attunement and discourse. Much as conscience announces itself in the uncanniness of *Angst*, wanting-to-have-a-conscience becomes a readiness for anxiety. Similarly, the silent call of conscience is now modified into reticence (*Verschwiegenheit*), for Dasein's *Gewissenhabenwollen* demands a non-talkative mode of discourse if the summons is to be perceived. Taken together with

understanding as a projection upon one's ownmost being-guilty, these elements add up to an eminent form of *Erschlossenheit*, one which Heidegger terms *Entschlossenheit*: "Diese ausgezeichnete, im Dasein selbst durch sein Gewissen bezeugte eigentliche Erschlossenheit – das verschwiegene, angstbereite Sichentwerfen auf das eigenste Schuldigsein – nennen wir die *Entschlossenheit*" (SZ, 297).

This term can be misleading in the original German and all the more so in the English translation as "resoluteness". Heidegger clearly makes an effort to draw a line between his use of the word and its common meaning of "determination" and "resolve", yet as with most of his attempts to recapture original significations for the sake of fundamental ontology, a certain ontic residue tends to remain attached to the reappropriated word. Of course, Heidegger's intention is apparent: just as the German *erschließen* is linguistically based on *schließen* and semantically follows from it ("to disclose" is the opposite in meaning of "to close"), *entschließen* should likewise signify "to open" or "to unlock". The fact that it carries no such connotation in everyday German usage does not deter him from insisting that it can and indeed does, particularly in view of his claim that the origins of language have been shrouded by metaphysical tradition. Like *Erschlossenheit*, Dasein's *Entschlossenheit* is a transparent mode of self-apprehension, only grounded in guilt, conscience, and a freely chosen selfhood. While *erschlossenes* Dasein becomes aware of itself in the truth of (self-)disclosure, *entschlossenes* Dasein puts this ontological truth into practice so as to lead a truthful, self-determined, and hence authentic existence. One senses here with Heidegger the potential for overlap between

ontological concepts and the ontic vocabulary upon which they must inevitably be founded: “Gleichwohl erschließt die existenzial ursprünglichere Interpretation auch *Möglichkeiten* ursprünglicheren existenziellen Verstehens, solange ontologisches Begreifen sich nicht von der ontischen Erfahrung abschnüren läßt” (SZ, 295). Ontically, *Entschlossenheit* would seem to imply decision-making, resolve, resoluteness, for that is the precise existenziell upshot of Dasein’s having chosen itself based on its call of conscience and primordial guilt. Its literal unlocking of itself is an act of self-disclosure that allows for a firm seizure of existence. Much like an authentic being-unto-death, *Entschlossenheit* enables Dasein to grasp itself in its self-transparency and ownmost potentiality-of-being and thus resolutely go about its existence.

In contrast to death, however, *Entschlossenheit* lacks an individualizing tendency. The ownmost potentiality of the authentic resolute self does not lead to a detachment from others as is the case with the non-referential quality of finitude. Heidegger has already demonstrated, particularly through his analyses of *Mitsein* and *Fürsorge*, that Dasein exists in a world with others whom it both cares for and cares about. *Entschlossenheit* further functions in this vein, directing self-aware Dasein not into existential aloofness and solipsism, but back into the world in which it as *In-der-Welt-sein* exists. In his examination of finitude, Heidegger was forced to isolate Dasein in order to grasp it in its entirety, and now that this task has been accomplished through the ascertainment of *Vorlaufen* Dasein can once again be situated among others. This is not to say that Dasein joins *das Man* or the public other, thereby automatically forfeiting the authenticity

intimated to it by conscience. Heidegger has shown through his analyses of death, guilt, conscience, and resoluteness that an authentic mode of existence is in fact possible, but nowhere has he advocated that Dasein must cut itself off from the world and lead the life of a recluse in order to gain authenticity. Death is indeed an extreme individual experience, there can be no getting around that fact. The isolation of the dying individual is however overcome in *Entschlossenheit*, which discloses to Dasein that the proper existence lies not in solitude but solicitude. And the authentic mode of solicitude is *vorspringend-befreiende Fürsorge*, which recalls *Vorlaufen in den Tod*, *vorrufendes Gewissen*, and Dasein's general forward trajectory as a thrown project. As Heidegger further defines resoluteness:

Die Entschlossenheit zu sich selbst bringt das Dasein erst in die Möglichkeit, die mitseienden Anderen "sein" zu lassen in ihrem eigensten Seinkönnen und dieses in der vorspringend-befreienden Fürsorge mitzuerschließen. Das entschlossene Dasein kann zum "Gewissen" der Anderen werden. Aus dem eigentlichen Selbstsein der Entschlossenheit entspringt allererst das eigentliche Miteinander, nicht aber aus den zweideutigen und eifersüchtigen Verabredungen und den redseligen Verbrüderungen im Man und dem, was man unternehmen will. (SZ, 298)

Resolute Dasein can authentically be with others only because it has a clear awareness of its being, which means that it is in full possession of itself as a self. Because *das Man*, on the other hand, has acquired no such sense of selfhood through a confrontation with death and a heeding of conscience, it cannot possibly be *entschlossen*. Its being remains instead

opaque, its existence one of self-concealment and untruth.

As an existenzial mode of disclosure and understanding, *Entschlossenheit* still has an existenziell indefiniteness about it. An attitude of resoluteness must necessarily involve a specific resolution or something definite to which Dasein resolves itself. Heidegger calls this actual factual possibility of disclosive projection an *Entschluß*:

Der Entschluß ist gerade erst das erschließende Entwerfen und Bestimmen der jeweiligen faktischen Möglichkeit. Zur Entschlossenheit gehört notwendig die Unbestimmtheit, die jedes faktisch-geworfene Seinkönnen des Daseins charakterisiert. Ihrer selbst sicher ist die Entschlossenheit nur als Entschluß."
(SZ, 298)

In other words, *Entschlossenheit* remains an ontological structure of authentic understanding and therefore a schematic projection upon possibilities. It lacks however a factual basis or at least the hint of a practical orientation. The call of conscience summons resolute Dasein forth into a "situation", which Heidegger interprets as a locus fraught with existenziell possibility and authentic choice. Authentic Dasein's apprehended *Situation* forms the precise contrast to *die "allgemeine Lage"* in which *das Man* happens to find itself by circumstance, that is through no self-made choice of its own. Placed into the situation through its existenzial resoluteness, Dasein makes factual decisions through existenziell resolutions. In this manner, the existenzial definiteness but existenziell indefiniteness of *Entschlossenheit* becomes existenziell concretized such that Dasein can seize upon a specific possibility of existence. Dasein thus "acts", thereby grounding its

self-projection in a determined and determinate conduct. This seizure of concrete possibilities in the situation is what testifies to Dasein's authentic potentiality-of-being. Such an attestation comes about through resolute choice which in turn can only arise from resoluteness as a supreme mode of existenzial self-awareness.

With his conception of *Entschlossenheit* Heidegger has proven authenticity to be "weder ein leerer Titel noch eine erfundene Idee" (SZ, 301). He has also succeeded in providing an existenziell attestation to an authentic *Seinkönnen* by reinterpreting the phenomena of conscience and guilt as integral elements of resoluteness that enable factual resolutions to be made at all. What he has yet to achieve, however, is a like testimony with regard to an authentic *Ganzseinkönnen*. This effort will lead him to anchor the still existenzial and as such unreasonable demand of *Vorlaufen zum Tode* in Dasein's attested mode of resoluteness. In short, he will seek an answer to the question: "Was soll der Tod mit der 'konkreten Situation' des Handelns gemein haben?" (SZ, 302).

In determining an existenziell authentic *Ganzseinkönnen* it is not simply a matter of combining the two findings of *Vorlaufen* and *Entschlossenheit* to arrive at the factual ideal of *vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*. Externally binding the two together does not result from a true philosophical method, but remains an artificial technique that fails to get at the inner core of the problem. Heidegger thus insists upon departing from the internal question: "[...] weist die *Entschlossenheit* in ihrer eigensten existenziellen *Seinstendenz selbst vor auf die vorlaufende Entschlossenheit als ihre eigenste eigentliche Möglichkeit?*" (SZ, 302). Resoluteness has been revealed as an authentic truth of Dasein

and has been grounded in practical resolution, which entails acting within an existenziell situation. However this self-certainty of Dasein has yet to be tested in the most extreme situation, that of death. It hence remains “preliminary” (Heidegger will once again play on this variant of *vorlaufen*) and must be further probed along the guiding lines:

Wenn die Entschlossenheit als *eigentliche* Wahrheit des Daseins erst im Vorlaufen zum Tode die ihr zugehörige *eigentliche Gewißheit* erreichte?
 Wenn im *Vorlaufen* zum Tode erst alle faktische “*Vorläufigkeit*” des Entschließens eigentlich verstanden, das heißt existenziell *eingeholt* wäre?
 (SZ, 302)

Resolute Dasein becomes aware that its guilt is not temporary or *vorläufig*, but primordial and continual. Its ground of nullity, originating in *Geworfenheit*, remains a constant and underlying fact of existence upon which Dasein projects itself as long as it exists—that is, unto its end. As an authentic understanding of guilt, resoluteness thus simultaneously becomes a “*verstehendes Sein zum Ende*” (SZ, 305), which is precisely the definition of *Vorlaufen*: an anticipatory understanding of the perpetual imminency of finitude. Both resoluteness and *Vorlaufen* are eminent modes of existential (here a fusion of *existenzial* and *existenziell*) comprehension whose connection is anything but arbitrary. Resoluteness and *Vorlaufen* are, rather, inextricably entwined: “*Sie [Entschlossenheit] birgt das eigentliche Sein zum Tode in sich als die mögliche existenzielle Modalität ihrer eigenen Eigentlichkeit*” (SZ, 305).

This inherent relation needs to be illustrated more phenomenally. Both guilt and

death are determining factors of an authentic existence. Dasein's desire for a conscience (its *Gewissen-haben-wollen*) is an acknowledgement of its ownmost originary guilt. By accepting the null ground of its *Schuldigsein*, Dasein finds itself in the position to make choices based on its thrownness and subsequent projection. These choices become its own and hence authentic. Similarly, in its being-unto-death Dasein is faced with the most individualizing prospect of existence, finitude, which it must authentically apprehend as its ownmost possibility of being so as to define itself against *das Man*. Its conduct of *Vorlaufen*—as opposed to the *Weglaufen* of the they—remains somewhat of an ontological prototype that only becomes attested in the self-certainty of *Entschlossenheit*. A further similarity between the two notions concerns the fact that they are both the basis of an impossibility or nullity. Whereas death presents the possibility of sheer impossibility from the very moment of Dasein's being thrown into the world, guilt functions as the null ground from which Dasein comprehends itself in its constant state of facticity. Dasein thus becomes “der nichtige Grund seiner Nichtigkeit” as well as “der geworfene [...] Grund seines Todes” (SZ, 306). Guilt and death then are primal phenomena of existence: Dasein “birgt Tod und Schuld gleichursprünglich in sich” (SZ, 306), assuming them as the perpetual basis and possibility of its being.

In more precise terms, *vorlaufende Entschlossenheit* can be described as an acute awareness and anticipation of death resulting from the choices one has made throughout existence. Dasein's *Vorlaufen zum Tode* stems from resolutions made in concrete situations and hence can no longer be considered a mere “freischwebende Verhaltung”

(SZ, 309) lacking a foundation for actual/authentic (here the double sense of *eigentlich-*) existence. What was originally an ontological analysis of death, i.e. an attempt to determine structures of being, has now been attested to ontically. Moreover, Heidegger has uncovered an ideal conduct in the process:

Aber liegt der durchgeführten ontologischen Interpretation der Existenz des Daseins nicht eine bestimmte ontische Auffassung von eigentlicher Existenz, ein faktisches Ideal des Daseins zugrunde? Das ist in der Tat so. (SZ, 310)

This factual ideal of *vorlaufende Entschlossenheit* points to Hölderlin's figure of Empedokles and thus concludes the present discussion of death in *Sein und Zeit*. It is in Hölderlin's drama that the search must continue for further attestation of Heidegger's ideas. To take a cue from one of the leading and most perceptive of Heidegger scholars, David Farrell Krell:

No reading of *Being and Time* ever finishes the book. For that matter, no writing ever finished it. By rights we ought to follow Heidegger's search for ontic attestation of the ontological possibility that constitutes existence, namely, its running ahead into death.⁵

Notes to Chapter Three

¹ Although Heidegger never uses the verb *verfallen* in this precise manner, he does speak of a “ständige Versuchung zum Verfallen” and goes on to state: “Das In-der-Welt-sein ist an ihm selbst *versucherisch*” (SZ, 177). With regard to the inevitable theological connotations of *Verfallen*, compare the following remark: “Die Verfallenheit des Daseins darf daher auch nicht als ‘Fall’ aus einem reineren und höheren ‘Urstand’ aufgefaßt werden. Davon haben wir ontisch nicht nur keine Erfahrung, sondern auch ontologisch keine Möglichkeiten und Leitfäden der Interpretation” (SZ, 176).

² Given the primacy of consciousness in French philosophy from Descartes to existentialism, this “double entendre” generally presents no problems in interpretation and/or translation. Even Sartre, who remains indebted to Heidegger on nearly every page of *L’être et le néant*, uses *conscience* in its English sense (the German *Gewissen*) perhaps as little as once in the course of his voluminous work. See in this regard the translator’s footnote in: *Being and Nothingness*, trans Hazel Barnes (New York, 1966) 676: “This is, I believe, the only passage in *Being and Nothingness* in which Sartre intends to emphasize the idea of a ‘conscience’ (English sense).” On a contrary and more critical note, one translator has obviously overlooked this point and rendered the French *conscience* as “consciouness” in an essay by Camus that addresses Heidegger’s analysis of *Gewissen*. See “An Absurd Reasoning,” in *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O’Brien (New York, 1955) 18. The opposite mistake occurs in the English translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s *L’Invitée*, whose intitial motto by Hegel reads, impossibly: “Each conscience seeks the death of the other.” Throughout the novel the French *conscience* is rendered as “conscience” when it is obvious that Beauvoir means “consciousness”, a crucial concept for both her and Sartre not to mention of course Hegel. See Simone de Beauvoir, *She Came to Stay*, trans. anonymously (New York/London, 1990).

³ Since Heidegger glosses over this point, it may be useful to indicate that this idea goes back to the Greeks according to whom being the cause or author of something is equivalent to being guilty or responsible for its existence. The Greek αἰτιος illustrates this connection far better than German or English. From the active verb αἰτέω (“to blame”), the adjective αἰτιος means “being blameworthy, culpable, guilty” and by extension “being responsible for or the cause of”. The neuter substantive τὸ αἴτιον simply stands for “the cause”, which is precisely the word Aristotle employs in his well-known doctrine of the four causes: material, formal, final, and efficient. Heidegger examines this question with respect to Aristotle in his lecture from 1953 “Die Frage nach der Technik,” in: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 9-40, esp. 11-16. Also compare the following remark—relevant for the discussion in *Sein und Zeit*—

concerning the Aristotelian concept of cause: “Wir Heutigen sind zu leicht geneigt, das Verschulden entweder moralisch als Verfehlung zu verstehen oder aber als eine Art des Wirkens zu deuten” (ibid., 14).

⁴ As opposed to the “be or not be” of Hamlet, which would falsely introduce the notion of death in this context. Despite the general relevance of the *Todesanalytik*, Heidegger here is not specifically referring to the possibility of death, which may be a *Nichts* but certainly not a *Nicht*.

⁵ David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1992) 98.

Chapter Four

Death in Letters: Hölderlin's Correspondence and *Hyperion*

[...] ohne Tod ist kein Leben.
-Diotima

Death is not solely an issue for Hölderlin in *Der Tod des Empedokles*. In his letters one finds numerous reflections on death, though from a more religious/metaphysical than ontological perspective. His novel *Hyperion*, whose second part was composed during the initial stages of the *Empedokles* project, contains however deeper existential insights into human finitude and thus anticipates several key aspects of the drama. One notes above all a connection between the death of Diotima and that of Empedokles, both of whom draw existential meaning from their resolve to die. This section of the dissertation forms then a kind of prelude to the later analysis of the tragedy, tracing the theme of death as it develops throughout Hölderlin's pre-*Empedokles* writings, whether these be epistolary, narrative, or even translational in nature.

Hölderlin was confronted with death from an early age.¹ In 1772, two years after his birth (March 20, 1770), his father suffered a fatal stroke at the age of 36. In the following few years Hölderlin was to lose three siblings, two of whom were offspring from his mother's second marriage, and an aunt, from whom he inherited a not insignificant sum of money. In 1779 the death of his step-father Gock, who died of pneumonia at the age of 34, had a profound impact on the nine-year-old, and traces of this experience can be found in his poetry, especially in the autobiographical "Einst und Jetzt": "Einst in des Vaters Schoose, — des liebenden / Geliebten Vaters – aber der Würger kam / Wir weinten,

flehten, doch der Würger / Schnellte den Pfeil; und es sank die Stütze!” (StA 1, 95). This image of “der Würger” as an embodiment of death figures in a number of early poems, for instance: “Schwärmerei”, “Der nächtliche Wanderer”, “Die Weisheit des Traurers”, “Lied der Liebe”. Yet the most revealing document with regard to the death of his step-father is a letter to his mother written twenty years after the event, on June 18, 1799. Here it is apparent that Hölderlin still carries the vivid memory of death at a time when he was immersed in his *Empedokles* project:

Wie herzlich dank’ ich Ihnen auch für die lieben Worte von meinem seeligen Vater. Der Gute, Edle! Glauben Sie, ich habe schon manchmal an seine immerheitre Seele gedacht, und daß ich ihm gleichen möchte. Auch Sie, liebste Mutter! Haben mir diesen Hang zur Trauer nicht gegeben, von dem ich mich freilich nicht ganz rein sprechen kann. Ich sehe ziemlich klar über mein ganzes Leben, fast bis in die früheste Jugend zurück, und weiß auch wohl, seit welcher Zeit mein Gemüth sich dahin neigte. Sie werdens kaum mir glauben, aber ich erinnere mich noch zu gut. Da mir mein zweiter Vater starb, dessen Liebe mir so unvergeßlich ist, da ich mich mit einem unbegreiflichen Schmerz als Waise fühlte, und Ihre tägliche Trauer und Thränen sah, da stimmte sich meine Seele zum erstenmal zu diesem Ernste, der mich nie ganz verlies, und freilich mit den Jahren nur wachsen konnte. (StA 6, 333)

At the age of eighteen he held vigil at the deathbed of a paternal aunt, Frederike Juliane Witwe Volmar, for an entire month. This experience is also reflected in a letter, written sometime during the second half of April 1788 (the aunt died on the 18th of that month) to his close friend Immanuel Nast. Interestingly, death appears in connection not only with his aunt, but with his real father as well—and even with the fictional Ossian:

Da leg' ich meinen Ossian weg, und komme zu Dir. Ich habe meine Seele gewaidet an den Helden des Barden, habe mit ihm getrauert, wann er trauerte über sterbende Mädchen [...]

Lange, lange schon ists freilich, daß wir nichts mehr von einander hören – und denke, Bruder, die ganze Vakanz war ich kaum eine Meile von Dir und konnte – unmöglich hin – nicht auf einen halben Tag. Da saß ich ganze vier Wochen am Todtenbette meiner Tante in Gröningen, und lernte dulden – von ihr! Und jezt Bruder, jezt ist sie todt!

O Bruder! Sie soll so ganz mein seeliger Vater gewesen sein, ich hab' ihn nie gekannt, ich war drei Jahre alt, als er starb, aber ein herrlicher Mann muß er gewesen sein, wenn er war, wie sie. Wann sie so unter den unaussprechlichsten Schmerzen trauernd zum Himmel sah, und sie in todesnahen Stunden die Sprache verlor, und ich für sie betete – und sie dann schnell wieder aus ihrem Röcheln aufwachte, und staunte, daß sie noch auf der Erde sei – Bruder! Bruder! Da ließ sich viel lernen! Und als ich wieder hierher reiste, und auf Nimmersehen von ihr Abschied nahm, und sie sagte – >>wann wir uns auf dieser Welt nimmer sehen, so finden wir uns in jener<< – O! diese Worte vergeß' ich nie! (StA 6, 29f.)

As remains to be seen in the forthcoming analysis of *Hyperion*, Hölderlin will in fact recall these words of his dying aunt and place them in the mouth of Diotima, who speaks in similar terms to Hyperion immediately before her death.

Other deaths that appear to have had a significant effect on Hölderlin, based on his letters, include the gruesome end of the Swabian Sturm-und-Drang poet Christian Daniel Schubart in 1791, and the deaths of his brother-in-law in 1800 and of his maternal grandmother in 1802. Schubart was reportedly buried alive, and in a letter (probably from

September, 1792) to his friend and life-long confidant Christian Ludwig Neuffer, Hölderlin—who had made Schubart’s acquaintance two years earlier—expresses the wish to be further informed about this “fürchterlich[e] Sage” (see StA 6, 80).² The deaths of his sister’s husband, Professor Breunlin, and of his grandmother lead him to console his correspondents in a traditional Christian manner, with thoughts of God, afterlife, immortality, etc. In these letters, there is absolutely no indication of a more existential understanding of death. To his sister Heinrike, with whom he had always kept close ties, Hölderlin writes sometime during April, 1800:

Eines denke ich besonders oft, daß der lebendige, der in uns und um uns ist, von Anbeginn in alle Ewigkeiten mächtiger, als aller Tod ist, und das Gefühl dieser Unsterblichkeit erfreuet mich oft in meinem Nahmen und im Nahmen aller, die da leben, und die gestorben sind, vor unseren Augen. Und so ists mein gewisser Glaube, daß am Ende alles gut ist, und alle Trauer nur der Weg zu wahrer heiliger Freude ist. (StA 6, 387)

And to his mother he expresses his belief—appropriate for a letter written on Good Friday (1802)—in the afterlife as follows:

Das neue reine Leben, das, wie ich glaube, die Gestorbenen nach dem Tode leben, und das der Lohn ist auch für die, die, wie unsere theure Grosnmutter, ihr Leben lebten in heiliger Einfalt, diese Jugend des Himmels, die nun ihr Antheil ist, nach dem Leiden wird auch Euer Lohn seyn, theure Mutter, theure Schwester; für meinen Bruder und mich ist wohl auch ein edler Tod, ein sicherer Fortgang vom Leben ins Leben aufbehalten, so wie ich glaube, allen den Unsrigen. (StA 6, 431)

This chronology of Hölderlin's correspondence is still not complete. An earlier letter from May 1795 to Neuffer, whose bride Rosine Stäudlin died after a long period of consumption, remains perhaps his most important commentary on death, for here he engages in a deeper reflection than anytime previously or since:

Ich gestehe Dir, es überwältiget mich auch, und ich weis nicht, was ich Dir sagen soll, wenn ich das edle unersezliche Wesen vor Augen habe, das für Dich lebte, und mir sagen muß: das ist Tod! O mein Freund! Ich begreif' es nicht, das Nahmenlose, das uns eine Weile erfreut und dann das Herz zerreißt, ich habe keinen Gedanken für das Vergehen, wo unser Herz, das Beste in uns, das Einzige, worauf zu hören noch der Mühe werth ist mit allen seinen Schmerzen um Bestand fleht – der Gott, zu dem ich betete als Kind, mag es mir verzeihen! ich begreife den Tod nicht in seiner Welt [...] (StA 6, 170f.)

Beyond its more speculative resonance, this letter contains statements that find further expression in various drafts of *Hyperion*. One scholar even sees in the death of Rosine a precedent to that of Diotima: “[...] für den Dichter des ‘Hyperion’ [verschmilzt] dieser Todesfall mit dem Ende der Diotima [...] wodurch die noch unerlebte Diotimawelt erst Farbe und Anschaulichkeit erhält.”³ In August 1794, Neuffer first wrote of Rosine's illness, to which Hölderlin responded (August 25th, 1794): “[...] Du wirst mit ihr gleichen Schritt halten, ihr werdet verwandt bleiben, wir ihr es seid, und was sich verwandt ist, findet sich doch wol wieder” (StA 6, 134). Rosine's actual death less than a year later prompts Hölderlin, in a lengthy letter dated May 8th 1795, to put to his grieving friend the rhetorical question: “[...] Du wirst sie wiederfinden?” (StA 6, 171). These words from

two separate occasions are echoed in the first *Hyperion* fragment from 1794: “Ich werde sie [Melite] wiederfinden, in irgend einer Periode des ewigen Daseyns. Gewiß! was sich verwandt ist, kann sich nicht ewig fliehen” (StA 3, 167). Later in the letter, Hölderlin’s reference to Rosine’s “wandellos[e] Liebenswürdigkeit” (StA 6, 171) parallels his concept of nature, beauty, and their incarnation in Diotima, all of which/whom he also describes as “wandellos” in both his poetry and prose.⁴ Surely the most illuminating words with regard to the Rosine/Diotima constellation remain the following:

Glaube mir, Freund meiner Seele, Du wirst mir künftig manchmal sagen, wenn ich Deines Werths mich freue und Dir sage, daß Du der Einzige seiest, der mich die Dürftigkeit des Lebens vergessen lasse, dann wirst Du mir sagen, das dank’ ich Ihr! sie half mir empor aus der Gleichgültigkeit, die uns das Leben giebt, in Ihr erschien mir mehr, als die Meisten nur glauben, mehr, als Tausende sind, sie gab mir Glauben an mich, sie gieng mir voran im Leben und im Tode [...] (StA 6, 172)

Not only does the—here comparatively minor—expression “die Dürftigkeit des Lebens” appear in two drafts of the novel,⁵ but this entire passage would generally seem to reflect *Hyperion*’s dramatic shift in mood upon meeting Diotima for the first time. More significantly, however, these consolatory words of Hölderlin to Neuffer will later be repeated upon the occasion of the former’s acquaintance with Susette Gontard, the real-life basis for the Diotima of the final *Hyperion* drafts. Thus, the constellation expands to one of Rosine/Diotima/Susette. Again, only in a completely different context and at a later date (probably the end of June, 1796), Hölderlin writes to Neuffer:

Ich möchte wissen, wie Dir's jezt gerade geht. Ich wollt', es gienge Dir, wie mir. Ich bin in einer neuen Welt [....] Du kannst mir glauben, auf mein Wort, daß selten so etwas geahndet, und schwerlich wieder gefunden wird in dieser Welt. Du weist ja, wie ich war, wie mir gewöhnliches entlaidet war, weist ja, wie ich ohne Glauben lebte, wie ich so karg werden, wie ich jezt bin, froh, wie ein Adler, wenn mir nicht diß, diß Eine erschienen wäre, und mir das Leben, das mir nichts mehr werth war, verjüngt, gestärkt, erheitert, verherrlicht hätte, mit seinem Frühlingslichte? Ich habe Augenblicke, wo all' meine alten Sorgen mir so durchaus thöricht scheinen, so unbegreiflich, wie den Kindern.

Es ist auch wirklich oft unmöglich, vor ihr an etwas sterbliches zu denken und eben deßwegen läßt so wenig sich von ihr sagen. (StA 6, 213)

Hölderlin's inability to express Susette's ineffable nature in his correspondence parallels Hyperion's difficulty of capturing Diotima's essence in the letters that make up the epistolary novel. Interestingly, both figures, the real and the fictional, become associated with death if only in the religious sense of immortality. As idealized embodiments of nature, beauty, and cosmic harmony, Susette and Diotima are immortal insofar as they are transcendent and eternal. As Hölderlin indicates in the above letter, all thoughts of death and transitory existence pale in Susette's presence, and by extension in Diotima's as well. This crucial connection between death and Diotima remains to be explored in an analysis of *Hyperion*, particularly of the second volume, where one encounters the following words, words that remain equally valid for Susette: "Sie war ein höheres Wesen. Sie gehörte zu den sterblichen Menschen nicht mehr" (StA 3, 98).

* * *

In each of its drafts, *Hyperion* contains a surprising number of references to death, a theme which seems to elude most interpretations of the novel.⁶ Even as early as the so-called “*Thalia-Fragment*” (published in Schiller’s journal *Die Neue Thalia* in autumn of 1794), death and such compounds as “Todesangst”, “Todesbote”, etc. appear on nearly every page (cf. esp. StA 3, 170, 173),⁷ and indeed this version ends with the key word: “Es muß heraus, das große Geheimniß, das mir das Leben giebt oder den Tod” (StA 3, 184). Later drafts such as “Die metrische Fassung” (conceived during the winter of 1794/95), “Hyperions Jugend” (from the first half of 1795), and “Die vorletzte Fassung” (from the final months of 1795) also feature numerous invocations of death. These are significantly reworked in the final version and take on even greater significance, particularly in the second volume, which was published in 1799 and will receive the most detailed treatment here.

First, however, an important element of death deserves to be discussed, one that exhibits a minimal presence in the published draft but figures all the greater in the previous ones. This concerns the allusion to Ajax, with whom the despairing Hyperion identifies in several of the manuscripts. In each case, the context for this identification proves to be the following: despondent over his unrequited love for Melite/Diotima, Hyperion turns to his cherished edition of *Ajax Mastigophoros* (*Ajax, the Scourge-Bearer*)—a Sophoclean tragedy that Hölderlin himself attempted to translate—and indulges in half-maddened

fantasies of suicide. In the original *Thalia* fragment this scene goes on for nearly half a page, and here Hyperion displays signs of suicidal dementia:

Darauf zwang ich mich nach Hause, schloß die Thüre ab, warf die Kleider von mir, schlug mir, nachdem meine Wahl ziemlich lange gezögert hatte, den Ajax Mastigophoros auf, und sah hinein [....]

Endlich ergrimmt ich über meinen Wahnsinn, und sann mit Ernst darauf, es von Grund aus zu vertilgen, dieses tödtende Sehnen. Aber mein Geist versagte mir den Dienst. Dafür schien es, als drängen sich falsche Dämonen mir auf, und böten mir Zaubertränke dar, mich vollends zu verderben mit ihren höllischen Arzneyen. (StA, 173)

This spell soon passes and Hyperion regains his peace of mind, though his love for Melite remains unfulfilled. In “Die vorletzte Fassung” the reference to Ajax consists of a brief paragraph which begins somewhat more circumstantially:

Der Ajax des Sophokles lag vor mir aufgeschlagen. Zufällig sah’ ich hinein, traf auf die Stelle, wo der Heroë Abschied nimmt von den Strömen und Grotten und Hainen am Meere—ihr habt mich lange behalten, sagt er, nun aber athme’ ich nimmer Lebensothem unter euch! Ihr nachbarlichen Wasser des Skamanders, die ihr so freundlich die Argiver empfiengt, ihr werdet nimmer mich sehen! — Hier lieg’ ich ruhmlos! (StA 3, 240)

In the final version, the only mention made is that Hyperion happens to be living “[...] auf der Insel des Ajax, der theuern Salamis” (StA 3, 47) sometime after the main action of the novel. It is from here that he reminisces about Diotima, who lies buried across the waters in her native Kalaurea, where she and Hyperion first met. According to one prominent

critic: “[...] seine Übersiedlung nach Salamis [...] bedeutet die bisher größte Annäherung an Diotimas Grab seit ihrem Tod.”⁸ Pierre Bertaux, who has become known for his controversial theories regarding Hölderlin’s insanity (or, as he claims, lack thereof), remains one of the few critics to have recognized the importance of this connection to Sophocles’ drama: “Warum schlägt er [Hyperion] gerade den Ajax auf? Weil da vom Wahnsinn des Ajax und seinem freiwilligen Tod die Rede ist.”⁹

It may be helpful in this context to recall the mythical/historical figure of Ajax and his role in Sophocles’ drama. Ajax, one of the most powerful Greek warriors in the Trojan War, expected to receive Achilles’ armor after the latter’s death at the hands of Paris. When the Greek generals instead awarded the armor to Odysseus, the infuriated Ajax planned to murder the entire assembly. Athena however intervened, mainly on Odysseus’ behalf, by striking Ajax with a fit of madness so that he slaughtered countless herd animals instead, under the impression that they were his sworn enemies and conspirators. Sophocles’ play opens at this juncture. Ajax has recovered his senses and realized the horror of his deed. He can only redeem his reputation through suicide and his determination upon a noble and expedient death in the face of utter shame forms the core of the drama. Death and madness hence constitute the principal themes of *Ajax*. With regard to the latter, it seems obvious why Hölderlin was drawn to the tragedy, particularly from Bertaux’s standpoint, whose book deals with the problem of insanity in the life and work of the allegedly mad poet.

Yet a reading of Sophocles’ play reveals a number of important thoughts on death

prior to Ajax' final act of self-impalement. These sections anticipate many of the ideas expressed in *Hyperion* and especially *Der Tod des Empedokles*. Ajax' conduct toward death, for instance, is guided by the words uttered early in the plot:

It is base for a man to crave the full term of life when he finds no varying in his woes. What joy is there in day following day, now pushing us forward, now drawing us back, on the verge—of death? I rate that man as nothing worth who feels the glow of idle hopes. No, one of generous strain should nobly live, or forthwith nobly die.¹⁰

From this point onward, Ajax becomes a man who “hastens to die”. Such are the basic words of his wife Tekmessa: “ανδρα γ’ ος σπευδη θανειν” (812) and of Ajax himself, who speaks of a “speedy death”: “δια ταχους θανειν” (822). And after his “noble” act of suicide in accordance with the classical ideal, Tekmessa once again makes a crucial pronouncement, which seems reminiscent of Heidegger’s notion of *eigener Tod*: “All that he yearned to win he has made his own—the death for which he longed.”¹¹

In the final published version of *Hyperion*, all three main characters similarly display a longing for death, and two of them actually have their wishes fulfilled. Whereas Hyperion eventually overcomes his yearning for elemental dissolution and retreats from the mean-spirited world in which he is unable to find a place, both Alabanda and Diotima freely accept if not assert their death as a necessary consequence of their failed existence within the contemporary barbaric age. In the following, the role of all three figures will be examined for signs of an existential awareness of death in anticipation of Empedokles’

Vorlaufen in den Tod.

Barbarism and cultural death prevail from the very outset of the novel. Hyperion, who has returned to his homeland after a long period of absence, finds himself surrounded by death and destruction. He hears a jackal singing “sein wildes Grablied” (StA 3, 7), sees the skeletal ruins of classical architecture, and feels as “schlüge man den Sargdeckel über mir zu [...]” (StA 3, 7). Hyperion’s predicament resembles that of Ajax in “Die vorletzte Fassung”, who, as previously cited, considers himself unrenowned (“ruhmlos”), never to draw another breath of life among the familiar landmarks of his homeland (“nun athm’ ich nimmer Lebensothen unter euch!”). The crucial difference remains of course that Hyperion is not literally going to his death. But given the situation in his native country, he might as well be: “Ruhmlos und einsam kehr’ ich zurück und wandre durch mein Vaterland, das, wie ein Todtengarten, weit umher liegt [...]” (StA 3, 8). This is the general atmosphere of the first book. The idealistic Hyperion seeks to be unified with nature (“Eines zu seyn mit Allem, was lebt!” becomes somewhat of a leitmotif in the novel), yet whenever he confronts the actual world he is devastated by its harsh reality. And with this experience comes a realization of death, whether a spiritual, metaphorical or literal death remains difficult to say:

Eines zu seyn mit Allem, was lebt! Mit diesem Worte legt die Tugend den zürnenden Harnisch, der Geist des Menschen den Zepter weg, und alle Gedanken schwinden vor dem Bilde der ewigeinigen Welt, wie die Regeln des ringenden Künstlers vor seiner Urania, und das eherne Schiksaal entsagt der Herrschaft, und aus dem Bunde der Wesen schwindet der Tod, und

Unzertrennlichkeit und ewige Jugend beseeligt, verschönert die Welt.

Auf dieser Höhe steh' ich oft, mein Bellarmin! Aber ein Moment des Besinnens wirft mich herab. Ich denke nach und finde mich, wie ich zuvor war, allein, mit allen Schmerzen der Sterblichkeit, und meines Herzens Asyl, die ewigeinige Welt, ist hin; die Natur verschließt die Arme, und ich stehe, wie ein Fremdling, vor ihr, und verstehe sie nicht. (StA 3, 9)

This passage illustrates Hyperion's ambivalent relation to death. On the one hand, he experiences a sense of immortality when overcome with enthusiasm for nature. This illusion of universal accord is however periodically shattered, whereupon an acute awareness of death sets in and Hyperion's feeling of infinite existence all at once becomes finite. As a modern, he realizes that he is mortal.

It would seem that the only ones not estranged from nature and hence unthreatened by death are children, who persist in a state of innocent bliss, uncorrupted by reason and calculation, temporarily free of man's destructive bent. Hyperion's reflections on childhood follow this general line of thought: "Ja! Ein göttlich Wesen ist das Kind, solange es nicht in die Chamäleonsfarbe der Menschen getaucht ist [...] Es ist unsterblich, denn es weiß vom Tode nichts" (StA 3, 10). Periodically throughout the course of the novel, Hyperion displays signs of melancholy whenever he contemplates this loss of innocence and forfeited sense of immortality. His desire for mankind to return to a condition of childhood—[...] daß noch die goldne Zeit der Unschuld wiederkehrt, die Zeit des Friedens und der Freiheit [...] (StA 3, 51)—is of course unreasonable, and this realization only heightens the general ambience of death and forces Hyperion into even

deeper depression:

Wie war denn ich? war ich nicht wie ein zerrissen Saitenspiel? Ein wenig tönt' ich noch, aber es waren Todestone. Ich hatte mir ein düster Schwanenlied gesungen! Einen Sterbekranz hätt' ich gern mir gewunden, aber ich hatte nur Winterblumen.

Und wo war sie denn nun, die Todtenstille, die Nacht und Öde meines Lebens? die ganze dürftige Sterblichkeit? (StA 3, 52)

Hyperion finds some consolation in the fact that he is not alone in his disillusionment with the modern world. He encounters two other major figures that transcend the present state of humanity, Alabanda and Diotima, and comes to regard them as more than just kindred spirits. He in fact latches on to both of them as if they were his salvation from the modern barbarism that has invaded Greece and uprooted classical Athenian culture from its native soil. More importantly, he witnesses or at least hears second-hand of Alabanda's and Diotima's deaths, subsequently resolving upon a suicidal course of action, out of which he however emerges unscathed. In contrast to his two companions, both of whom capitalize on the freedom of death, Hyperion clings fast to existence and becomes the titular "Eremit in Griechenland".

As an epitome of the heroic type, Alabanda strives to recover the classical ideal by forceful means: he is a member of the Nemesis League, a secret patriotic if not terrorist organization. Though Hyperion will later be repulsed by the crassness of the group and thereby jeopardize his friendship with Alabanda, he remains for the present at the side of his new-found "Freund und Kampfgenosse" (StA 3, 27). This union of friendship finds

expression in the Dioscuri, who, far from remaining a mere symbolic constellation in the heavens, become embodied in Hyperion and Alabanda themselves:

Da ich einst in heitrer Mitternacht die Dioskuren ihm wies, und Alabanda die Hand auf's Herz legt' und sagte: Das sind nur Sterne, Hyperion, nur Buchstaben, womit der Nahme der Heldenbrüder am Himmel geschrieben ist; in uns sind sie! lebendig und wahr, mit ihrem Muth und ihrer göttlichen Liebe, und du, du bist der Göttersohn, und theilst mit deinem sterblichen Kastor deine Unsterblichkeit!— (StA 3, 36)

The fact that Hölderlin conceives of their relationship in these terms is significant in light of the theme of death. Hyperion's role as the undying twin Pollux will be apparent by the end of the novel, for he alone goes on living despite his over-enthusiastic claim "daß es besser ist zu sterben, weil man lebte, als zu leben weil man nie gelebt!" (StA 3, 40). Alabanda/Castor, on the other hand, will choose death at the hands of the Nemesis League as "Strafe" (StA 3, 139)—hence the double meaning of "Nemesis"—for breaking his oath of brotherhood in favor of renewed friendship with his symbolic twin Hyperion/Pollux. It is here in the second book of the second volume that Alabanda once again plays a major role in the novel. He appears at Hyperion's bedside after the latter is wounded in battle and reveals to his injured friend the conditions under which he entered the Nemesis League. His decision to part from the secret fraternity amounts to no less than a death sentence, which he freely accepts: "O mein Hyperion! Ich hab es überwunden; ich hab' es über mich vermocht, das Todesurtheil über mein Herz zu sprechen und dich und mich zu trennen [...] (StA 3, 139, 141). Alabanda even rejects Hyperion's suggestion to join him

and Diotima in their future life together, instead opting for the freedom of death: “Um Diotimas willen würd’ ich dich betrügen und am Ende mich und Diotima morden, weil wir doch nicht Eines wären. Aber es soll nicht seinen Gang gehn; soll ich büßen, was ich that, so will ich es mit Freiheit [...]” (StA 3, 139). Hyperion’s response to Alabanda’s resolution amounts to an affirmation of death, however not so much of his own, since he still has reason to live: “Ja stirb nur, rief ich, stirb! Dein Herz ist herrlich genug, dein Leben ist reif, wie die Trauben am Herbsttag. Geh, Vollendeter! Ich gienge mit dir, wenn es keine Diotima gäbe” (StA 3, 140).

Hyperion of course does not yet realize that in the meantime Diotima also finds herself resolutely facing death. In contrast however to Alabanda, she does not resolve to die as a result of conscious deliberation. Her death rather seems to occur out of an inner necessity, as if her existence, even more so than that of Hyperion and Alabanda, were so irreconcilable with the modern world that the only possible recourse were for her to vanish from its face. There can be no doubt that this “necessary” death remains of central importance for the novel. Bertaux ascribes, perhaps with some exaggeration, an even greater significance to Diotima’s end: “Hölderlins Roman heißt *Hyperion*, aber er könnte genauso gut, ja mit besserem Recht, den Titel tragen: *Der Tod der Diotima*, denn dieser Tod ist ja der Eckstein des Romans.”¹² As Bertaux further points out, this “necessary” death is not only implied by the action of the novel, but Hölderlin himself employs precisely this term in his famous letter to Susette Gontard upon concluding the second part of *Hyperion*:

Hier unsern Hyperion, Liebe! Ein wenig Freude wird diese Frucht unserer seelenvollen Tage Dir doch geben. Verzeih mirs, daß Diotima stirbt. Du erinnerst Dich, wir haben uns ehemals nicht ganz darüber vereinigen können. Ich glaubte, es wäre, der ganzen Anlage nach, nothwendig. (StA 6, 370)

Hölderlin's words are of course portentous, charged with a verisimilitude and ironic necessity that he could not possibly have imagined. Susette Gontard, the basis for the fictional Diotima, would later die (on June 22, 1802) in a similar state of unrequited love, thereby living out perhaps the most significant occurrence in the novel, one over which she and Hölderlin had apparently disagreed according to the letter. Yet the intended meaning of "der ganzen Anlage nach" refers not to fact but to fiction, where the brief course of Diotima's life seems determined by an imminent and constantly prefigured death. It is in this sense that her existence resembles a Heideggerian *Sein zum Tode*, for "ihr Leben läuft auf das Sterben zu."¹³

The exact cause of Diotima's death remains indeterminable. Her own words to Hyperion also seem directed at the reader: "[...] erkläre diesen Tod dir nicht!" (StA 3, 145). Diotima does not commit suicide or otherwise appear directly responsible for her end. Her invocation of "die große Römerin" (StA 3, 147), Portia, who swallowed burning coals upon her husband Brutus' military defeat, remains a comparison that has to do not with the precise manner of death, but with the conduct unto it:

Ich habe viele Worte gemacht, und stillschweigend starb die große Römerin doch, da im Todeskampf ihr Brutus und das Vaterland rang. Was konnt' ich

aber bessers in den besten meiner letzten Lebenstage thun? – Auch treibt michs immer, mancherlei zu sagen. Stille war mein Leben; mein Tod ist bereedt.”
(StA 3, 147)

Indeed, Diotima speaks eloquently and extensively of her death, yet fails to shed much light on its cause. Again, she does not actively end her life, nor does she succumb to any ascertainable affliction, whether mental or physical. She simply loses all desire to go on living when she hears that Hyperion has perished in battle, and even the belated news of his survival cannot halt the course of her dying: “Aber es ist zu spät, Hyperion, es ist zu spät. Dein Mädchen ist verwelkt, seitdem du fort bist, ein Feuer in mir hat mälig mich verzehrt, und nur ein kleiner Rest ist übrig” (StA 3, 144). This withering/consumption set in as early as Hyperion’s departure from Kalaurea (cf. Diotima’s reminiscences in StA 3, 144f.), and has only now reached an irreversible stage. The remaining spark that she mentions proves insufficient to rekindle her interest in life; in fact, it only leads her to reflect further on death. And here she reveals that death, far from being a sudden wish prompted by the separation from Hyperion, has actually been with(in) her for some time: “Soll ich sagen, mich habe der Gram um dich getödtet? o nein! o nein! Er war mir ja willkommen, dieser Gram, er gab dem Tode, den ich in mir trug, Gestalt und Anmuth [...]” (StA 3, 146). This is as much of a plausible cause that the reader will glean from the plot of the novel.

On a more conceptual level, however, Diotima’s death has a definite logic and necessity. Realizing that she cannot change the world, let alone secure an adequate niche

in it, she has no recourse but to die. From an existential point of view, Diotima has exhausted her potentiality and can only overcome this impasse through the extreme possibility of death. In words vaguely reminiscent of Heidegger (yet, as remains to be seen, far more similar in tone to the proclamations of Zarathustra), Notara meditates on Diotima's death as follows: "Doch immer besser ist ein schöner Tod, Hyperion! denn solch ein schläfrig Leben, wie das unsre nun ist [...] Alt zu werden unter jugendlichen Völkern, scheint mir eine Lust, doch alt zu werden, da wo alles alt ist, scheint mir schlimmer, denn alles—" (StA 3, 149). This notion of "ein schöner Tod" is again uttered by Hyperion: "Einen schönen Tod ist meine Diotima gestorben [...]" (StA 3, 150). Diotima's death is thus both necessary and "beautiful". What exactly this latter term is supposed to mean leaves room for speculation. In a more anthropological-historical framework, one could interpret her death along the lines of the classical *ars moriendi*, according to which one was expected to die a good death just as one cultivated a good life. Diotima's end in this sense is peaceful, even harmonious, much like the entire course of her existence. Like Alabanda, she has perfected herself (Hyperion addresses both of his companions as "Vollendeter" and "Vollendete" [StA 3, 102/140]). That is, she has brought her existence to completion and used up all of her potentiality—save for the one last extreme step of ultimate possibility. Within the novel itself, the circumstances of her death are anything but horrific or for that matter morbid, as is often the case in later literature of modernity.¹⁴ She simply fades away, offering no struggle or resistance, fully reconciled with her death as if it were a logical consequence of nature, or indeed a

Naturereignis. As Isaak von Sinclair writes on June 30, 1802, informing Hölderlin of Susette Gontard's untimely death: "Sie ist sich bis zuletzt gleich geblieben. Ihr Tod war wie ihr Leben [...]" (StA 7, 170).

Diotima's composure in the face of finitude perhaps also results from her anticipation of an afterlife. Much like Hölderlin in his letters to certain relatives, Diotima expresses—also in letters, albeit highly fictionalized ones—her belief in a higher realm of divine unity that lies beyond death. Death thus takes on metaphysical significance as a threshold to eternal life. This understanding differs however from the traditional Christian view, for Diotima never speaks in strict theological terms. Her death does not lead her to heaven or to God per se. In accordance with Hölderlin's own pantheistic tendencies, she instead invokes a plurality of gods with whom she seeks to be reunited in the ethereal spheres of an imminent afterlife. This life-after-death remains in every way the opposite of terrestrial existence and indeed corresponds to the ideal that Hyperion, Diotima, and Alabanda seek throughout the novel. Hence, rather than constituting a singular tragic event, death instead signals a liberation—"die Götterfreiheit, die der Tod uns giebt" (StA 3, 147)—from the fettered and spiritually impoverished life that all three major figures are forced to endure in the modern world. Compare the following words of Diotima, both a summation of her life and an assertion of her death, with the general ideal of universal harmony that recurs throughout the novel:

Ich habe genug daran, um freudig, als ein griechisch Mädchen zu sterben
[....]

Ich werde seyn. Wie sollt' ich mich verlieren aus der Sphäre des Lebens, worinn die ewige Liebe, die allen gemein ist, die Naturen alle zusammenhält? wie sollt ich scheiden aus dem Bunde, der die Wesen alle verknüpft? [...] Wir trennen uns nur, um inniger einig zu seyn, göttlicher friedlich, mit allem, mit uns. Wir sterben, um zu leben [...]

Ich werde seyn; ich frage nicht, was ich werde. Zu seyn, zu leben, das ist genug, das ist die Ehre der Götter; und darum ist sich alles gleich, was nur ein Leben ist, in der göttlichen Welt, und es giebt in ihr nicht Herren und Knechte. Es leben umeinander die Naturen, wie Liebende; sie haben alles gemein, Geist, Freude und ewige Jugend.

Sieh auf in die Welt! Ist sie nicht, wie ein wandelnder Triumphzug, wo die Natur den ewigen Sieg über alle Verderbniß feiert? und führt nicht zur Verherrlichung das Leben den Tod mit sich [...] (StA 3, 148)

Hyperion fails to follow Diotima into this other world of nature and the divine.

Again, he is the immortal Pollux while Diotima now takes on Alabanda's former role of Castor: "Und wenn ich dann dich so umfasse, da werd' ich frohloken, als hättst du mir die Hälfte deiner Unsterblichkeit, wie Pollux dem Kastor, geschenkt [...] (StA 3, 89).

Despite his symbolic immortality, Hyperion has two near brushes with death. His suicidal rush into battle against the Turks is guided by the self-probing question: "[...] wie sollt' ich dann mich scheuen, den sogenannten Tod zu suchen?" (StA 3, 122). Failing to find death in battle, he is equally unable to end his life after the devastating loss of Diotima. In earlier drafts, Hyperion sought solace and perhaps courage in the heroic suicide of Ajax, but in each case he opted against carrying out the final act. In the published version, he contemplates his fate after the example of another classical figure, namely Empedocles. According more to legend than to fact, the Sicilian Empedocles was said to have thrown

himself into the crater of Mount Etna, and Hölderlin refers here in part to Horace's account from *Ars Poetica*, 463ff⁴⁵:

Und nun sage mir, wo ist noch eine Zuflucht? — Gestern war ich auf dem Aetna droben. Da fiel mir der große Sicilianer ein, der einst des Stundenzählens satt, vertraut mit der Seele der Welt, in seiner kühnen Lebenslust sich da hinabwarf in die herrlichen Flammen, denn der kalte Dichter hätte müssen am Feuer sich wärmen, sagt' ein Spötter [Horace] ihm nach.

O wie gerne hätt' ich solchen Spott auf mich geladen! aber man muß sich höher achten, denn ich mich achte, um so ungerufen der Natur ans Herz zu fliegen, oder wie du es sonst noch heißen magst, denn wirklich! wie ich jetzt bin, hab ich keinen Nahmen für die Dinge und es ist mir alles ungewiß. (StA 3, 151f.)

It is apparent from the above passage that Empedokles' act did not occur out of weakness or a suicidal bent, but out of existential plenitude. Hölderlin speaks of "seiner kühnen Lebenslust", thereby implying that the Sicilian's death was, paradoxically, a bold assertion of life. The reader of Heidegger however ought to be accustomed to such paradoxes by now. Death here forms the ultimate possibility of existence, and Empedokles, unlike Hyperion, did not shrink before this supreme threshold of self-realization. Hyperion fails to follow suit because he does not deem himself worthy of such a "auffallende Todesart" in his present state of misery. Mount Etna offers him foremost a place of solitude, where he hopes to find refuge ("wo ist noch eine Zuflucht?") from his haunting memories of Diotima. It is not until he attains the summit that Hyperion recalls

the example of Empedocles and entertains the notion of a grand suicide. This reconstructed sequence of events parallels the plot of *Der Tod des Empedokles*, in which the main character first withdraws to the slopes of Etna in order to find peace from the fanatic crowds of Acragas, only subsequently to decide upon self-immolation. Again, in contrast to his predecessor, Hyperion has no abundance of life (“kühne Lebenslust”) that would—from an existential point of view—justify committing such an act. Or in the alternative words of Johannes Hoffmeister: “Noch anders gesagt: was Hyperion zum Untergang fehlt, ist die dichterische Ermächtigung, der Dichtermut, und damit die Selbstachtung, das Selbstgefühl seines Wesens und Wertes. Um sich hinabstürzen zu dürfen, zu können, muß man auf den Gipfel gekommen sein, die Vollendung erreicht haben.”¹⁶

This does not seem to be the first time that Hyperion considers such a course of action. Earlier in the novel, during a retrospective interlude, he appears to speak of Mount Etna, though in extremely vague terms. However, his use of such words as “Zuflucht”, “Feuerflamme”, “herrlich[-]” as well as the general content of the passage bring to mind his other invocation of the volcano:

Es ist umsonst; ich kann's mir nicht verbergen. Wohin ich auch entfliehe mit meinen Gedanken, in die Himmel hinauf und in den Abgrund, zum Anfang und an's Ende der Zeiten, selbst wenn ich ihm, der meine letzte Zuflucht war, der sonst noch jede Sorge in mir verzehrte, der alle Lust und allen Schmerz des Lebens sonst mit der Feuerflamme, worinn er sich offenbarte, in mir versengte, selbst wenn ich ihm mich in die Arme werfe, dem herrlichen geheimen Geiste der Welt, in seine Tiefe mich tauche, wie in den bodenlosen Ocean hinab, auch

da, auch da finden die süßen Schrecken mich aus, die süßen verwirrenden tödtenden Schrecken, daß Diotima's Grab mir nah ist. (StA 3, 60)

Given the complicated structure of the novel, these words of Hyperion are perhaps even meant to occur simultaneously with the more obvious Etna reference toward the end of the book. At this point in the main narrative, Hyperion has just met Diotima, only to become sidetracked by thoughts of her grave, thereby introducing the narrative present from which—in Ulrich Gaier's terminology—"der schreibende Hyperion" (as opposed to the "experiencing" one)¹⁷ looks back upon the action of the novel. Compared to the problematical structure exemplified by this section, the content seems at least relatively clear: Hyperion alludes and even appears to identify with Empedokles, yet again does not choose to imitate him. The death of Empedokles remains an ideal, much like that of Demosthenes elsewhere in the novel. On his way to Athens, Hyperion recalls the Greek orator and statesman, whose suicidal resolve he equates with freedom:

Wir saßen einst zusammen auf unsrem Berge, auf einem Steine der alten Stadt dieser Insel und sprachen davon, wie hier der Löwe Demosthenes sein Ende gefunden, wie er hier mit heiligem selbsterwähltem Tode aus den Macedonsichen Ketten und Dolchen sich zur Freiheit geholfen – Der herrliche Geist gieng scherzend aus der Welt, rief einer, warum nicht? sagt' ich; er hatte nichts mehr hier zu suchen; Athen war Alexanders Dirne geworden, und die Welt, wie ein Hirsch, von dem großen Jäger zu Tode gehezt. (StA 3, 76f)

Due to his present state of mind, or perhaps to the more fundamental fact that he remains a modern, Hyperion is unable to assert his death in the classical manner. Though he is

aware of the potential freedom that death holds, he can only look up to the precedents set by Ajax, Empedokles, and Demosthenes, but not fully follow after them. He instead chooses to remain a wanderer and recluse, hence the subtitle of the novel: “Der Eremit in Griechenland”.

As suggested by Hyperion in the novel, the fate of Empedocles has more in common with that of Diotima. Both figures exist in constant tune with nature (Empedokles is described as being “vertraut mit der Seele der Welt”), and their necessary/sacrificial deaths bring about a union with the natural elements and perhaps even prepare the way for a less tragic union between all of humanity and nature¹⁸ By giving himself over to nature in the manner that he did (“so ungerufen der Natur ans Herz zu fliegen”), Empedokles immerses himself in the elemental substance of fire, one of the traditional four essences of matter as well as an important aspect of the historical Empedocles’ own cosmology. The image of fire in fact recurs throughout *Hyperion*, particularly in connection with Diotima. Her death in part results from a metaphorical consumption; that is to say, she becomes consumed by an inner flame during Hyperion’s absence: “[...] seitdem du fort bist, ein Feuer in mir hat mälig mich verzehrt [...]” (StA 3, 144). And she further has the Empedoklean wish “[...] daß sie lieber möcht’ im Feuer von der Erde scheiden, als begraben seyn [...]” (StA 3, 149). Hyperion of course has spared himself this end, choosing a life of solitude over death by flame. One might say that he is not yet far enough along in existence to convert the prospect of death into possibility. His concluding words “So dacht’ ich. Nächstens mehr.” (StA 3, 160) leave

room for speculation about a sequel to the novel¹⁹ and perhaps a greater *Todesbereitschaft* on the part of its hero. Hölderlin instead turned to a new project, one that grew out of *Hyperion* and that features a character briefly introduced there—a character, however, that displays a far more pronounced resoluteness toward death.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹ For much of the following biographical information I rely on Wilhelm Michel's classic work *Das Leben Friedrich Hölderlins* from 1940, reprinted with a forward by Friedrich Beißner in: Michel, Darmstadt, 1963. I also generally follow the structure of Pierre Bertaux's argument in the equally classic, though controversial, study *Friedrich Hölderlin* (Frankfurt a.M., 1978). This latter procedure seems unavoidable since there are a limited number of comments on death in Hölderlin's biography (as he did not keep a journal, these must be sought in his correspondence), and it is only natural for any scholar to focus on them in a roughly chronological sequence. Particularly with regard to the citations from Hölderlin's letters there will be quite a degree of overlap between my discussion and Bertaux's. However, rather than simply refer to my predecessor, I find it important to quote Hölderlin at length so as to give a better idea of the extent to which death figured in his life and possibly influenced his work.

² One can gather the details of this occurrence from Adolf Beck's commentary on Hölderlin's letters in: *Briefe*, StA 6/2, 611. Here Beck cites from David Friedrich Stauß' *Schubarts Leben in seinen Briefen*, 2. Bd., Berlin, 1849) 328: "Aber eine furchtbare Sage knüpft sich an Schubarts Begräbniß. Aus meinen Knabenjahren erinnere ich mich der Erzählung meiner Eltern, und noch jetzt kann man in Stuttgart und Umgegend hie und da von älteren Personen in verschiedenen Formen erzählen hören, daß der unglückliche Dichter lebendig begraben worden sei. Durch ein unterirdisches Getöse aufmerksam gemacht, habe der Todtengräber am Abend nach der Beerdigung den Sarg wieder ausgegraben und geöffnet . . . [sic] und in dem geöffneten Sarge habe man Schubart auf dem Bauche liegend, mit blutig gekratzten Nägeln, aber entseelt, gefunden." Pierre Bertaux asserts the significance of this story in the following terms: "Das Bild des 'lebendig Begrabenen' wird Hölderlin nie mehr verlassen." He fails, however, to comment any further and back his claim. See Bertaux, 610.

³ Hans Heinrich Borchardt, *Schiller und die Romantiker* (Stuttgart, 1948) 120. Cited in Adolf Beck's critical apparatus to Hölderlin's *Briefe* (StA 6/2, 744) and also in Bertaux, 610. Though Beck remains skeptical of Borchardt's claim, he nevertheless notes a number of parallels between this letter and certain drafts of *Hyperion*. (See StA 6/2, 744ff.) It is upon these parallels that I will base my argument above.

⁴ As Beck notes in his commentary: "Zum ersten Mal in Hölderlins Prosa erscheint hier das für sein Lebensideal so aufschlußreiche Beiwort, das bald danach im Zusammenhang seines Denkens über die Natur, die Schönheit und das Wesen Diotimas hohe Bedeutung gewinnt" (StA 6/2, 746). He supports his statement by referring to the poems "An die Unerkannte", verse 1-3: "[...] Kennst du sie, die seelig, wie

die Sterne / Von des Lebens dunkler Wooge ferne / Wandellos in stiller Schöne lebt [...]” (StA 1, 197) and “Diotima (Mittlere Fassung)”, verse 59f: “Wo, des Daseyns überhoben, / Wandellose Schöne blüht [...]” (StA 1, 218). The final version of *Hyperion* also contains this key word, first in immediate connection with nature, then with Diotima. Cf. StA 3, 8: “[...] die Arme der Natur, der wandellosen, stillen und schönen.”; and later in the novel (StA 3, 58): “[...] sie aber stand vor mir in wandelloser Schönheit, mühelos, in lächelnder Vollendung da.” It is also worth mentioning in this context that Hölderlin dedicated one poem—at least directly—to Rosine, in which nature plays an associative if not dominant role. Cf. the following lines from “Freundeswunsch”, composed in 1794: “Denn du bist ihr treu geblieben, / Deiner Mutter, der Natur!” and “Wo dein Auge weilt, begegne / Dir das Lächeln der Natur” (StA 1, 187, v. 23f; 188, v. 31f.). The short poem “An eine Rose” from 1793 is perhaps also addressed to Rosine: “Ewig trägt im Mutterschoose, / Süße Königin der Flur! / Dich und mich die stille, große, / Allbelebende Natur [...]” (StA 1, 172, v. 1ff).

⁵ Cf. *Hyperions Jugend* (StA 3, 201) and the first volume of the final *Hyperion* (StA 3, 10).

⁶ To gain an initial impression of this fact, one need only consult the *Wörterbuch zu Friedrich Hölderlin, II. Teil: Hyperion*, (Tübingen, 1992). The numerous entries under “Tod”, “sterben” and their compounds/variants seem astonishing for a novel that is not widely considered to revolve around the question of death. Among the few scholars that have recognized the importance of death in *Hyperion* are: Bertaux, esp. 617-25; and Lawrence Ryan, *Hölderlins “Hyperion”: Exzentrische Bahn und Dichterberuf* (Stuttgart, 1965) esp. 183-205.

⁷ Other compounds include “Todtenstille” (176), “Todtenfeier” (178), “Todtenopfer” (178), “Todesurtheil” (182). Considering the brevity of this draft, the theme of death exhibits a considerable presence.

⁸ Ulrich Gaier, *Hölderlin: Eine Einführung* (Tübingen/Basel, 1993) 212. Due to its scholarly rigor and sophistication, Gaier’s book is far more than an introduction for the casual reader. He gives an especially thorough (over 150 pages) analysis of *Hyperion*, tracing in detail the novel’s conception and offering a wealth of insights into the text. See the lengthy chapter entitled “Das Hyperion-Projekt”, 57-220.

⁹ Bertaux, 592. See also Meinhard Knigge, “Hölderlin und Aias oder Eine notwendige Identifikation,” *HJb* 24 (1985-85): 264-82; and R.B. Harrison, *Hölderlin and Greek Literature* (London, 1975) 192-219. This latter study, rooted as it is in Classical philology, examines more than ideas and motifs. In the chapter on *Ajax*, for instance, Harrison not only discusses numerous syntactic parallels

between *Hyperion* and Sophocles' drama but also compares Hölderlin's translated *Ajax* fragments with the original Greek. Hölderlin translated three choric passages of the drama, all totaled only some one hundred verses. (See StA 5, 277-80 and v. 394-427, 596-645, 693-718 of the original.) Not insignificantly, the first two excerpts deal with the hero's yearning for death.

¹⁰ Cf. *The Complete Plays of Sophocles*, trans. Sir Richard Claverhouse Jebb, ed. Moses Hadas (New York, 1967) 12. This passage corresponds to lines 475-480 in the original. Here "nobly" proves to be the multi-connotative *καλως*, which can be translated as either "good", "noble", or "beautiful" but fully corresponds to neither: "ἀλλ' ἡ καλως ζην ἡ καλως τεθνηκευαι / τον ευγενη χρη." (479-80)

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24. It ought to be noted that the original Greek contains the verb *εκτησαθη* from the middle/passive infinitive *κταομαι*, which means something more along the lines of: "to procure/gain/win for oneself": "ων γαρ ηρασθη τυχειν / εκτησαθ αυτω, θανατον ονπερ ηθελεν." (967-8) A more literal—and inevitably awkward—translation would therefore read: "For all that he desired to attain he procured for himself, / the death that he wished for."

¹² Bertaux, 619.

¹³ Ryan, 131.

¹⁴ An important example here is the death of Malte's paternal grandfather in Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, often considered the first "modern" German novel. (For a more detailed discussion of *Malte*, see the conclusion of this dissertation.) Other examples of such drawn-out, colossal death struggles include that of the main character in Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* and of the *Konsulin* (Thomas, Christian, and Tony's mother) in Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*.

¹⁵ Cf. the following modern German translation: "Und ich würde [...] vom Ende des sizilischen Dichters erzählen. 'Empedokles, der als unsterblicher Gott gelten wollte, sprang kaltblütig [*frigidus*] in den heißen Krater des Ätna. Die Dichter müssen das unbeschränkte Recht haben, zum Henker zu gehen. Wer einen solchen wider dessen Willen rettet, handelt genauso wie ein Mörder [...] Und wenn man ihn herauszieht, wird er kein vernünftiger Mensch und gibt sein Verlangen nach einer auffallenden Todesart [*famosae mortis*] nicht auf.'" Horaz, *Satiren und Episteln*, trans. Otto Schönberger, in *Schriften und Quellen der alten Welt*, Bd. 33 (Berlin-Ost, 1976) 261.

¹⁶ Johannes Hoffmeister, *Hölderlins Empedokles* (Bonn, 1963) 9f.

¹⁷ See the chapter "Der schreibende Hyperion: Selbstergreifung durch Erinnerung," in Gaier, 203-20.

¹⁸ Ryan also points to the relation between Empedokles and Diotima, commenting that "[...] der Tod

Diotimas nimmt das Empedokleische Selbstopfer in wesentlichen Punkten vorweg.” For more on this connection, see Ryan, 194.

¹⁹ A number of Hölderlin’s friends and correspondents (Sinclair, Böhlendorf, Emerich) anticipated a third book to *Hyperion*, but no definitive statement to this effect can be attributed to Hölderlin himself. See Beißner’s commentary to these last words of the novel in StA 3, 489.

Chapter Five

Death and Guilt in Hölderlin's *Empedokles* Project

Es bleibt für alle Zeiten wichtig zu wissen, was
Empedocles, inmitten der kräftigsten und
überschwänglichsten Lebenslust der griechischen
Cultur, über das Dasein ausgesagt hat [...]
Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*

Of the many aspects pertaining to Empedocles' life and work, his legendary death by flame seems to have held the most fascination for Hölderlin. As remains to be seen in the course of this chapter, Hölderlin integrates a number of biographical and philosophical details concerning Empedocles into his drama and generally demonstrates a remarkable knowledge of Presocratic thought at a time when their fragments had yet to be widely collected and interpreted. Still, true to the title of the unfinished drama, *Der Tod des Empedokles*, it is the hero's death that forms the cornerstone of Hölderlin's project, a project which occupied him for nearly as many years as his shaping of *Hyperion*. In the representative and guiding words of Emil Staiger, one of the early interpreters of the drama: "Was Hölderlin zu Empedokles hinzog, war nicht die Lehre und nicht die politische Stellung des Denkers in Agrigent, sondern der Tod im Krater des Aetna."¹

Due to the fragmentation of *Der Tod des Empedokles*, the death of its titular hero is never actually depicted in any of the three extant drafts. Nevertheless, this climactic moment was fixed from the start of the project and the fact that Hölderlin never completed the drama does not diminish Empedocles' determination to die in the flames

of Mount Etna. Indeed, this missing detail aligns the tragedy all the more with Heidegger's analysis of finitude, which stresses not the moment of death but the life-long conduct unto it. In this sense, the play is perhaps best left unfinished, since Empedokles' *Sein zum Tode* remains established in the first act of all three versions. Indeed, he even declares that his fate was determined from birth, thereby lending ontic testimony to Heidegger's ontological claim that death is *gewiß* but *unbestimmt*. In general, the manner in which Empedokles comports himself toward his impending end can be viewed as an ontic-existenziell attestation of Heidegger's existenzial-ontological model. Empedokles' resoluteness toward death is analogous, if not to the Heideggerian notion of *Entschlossenheit*, then at least to its factual pendant of *Entschluß*, a term that Hölderlin himself employs in connection with his hero's resolve to die. A further parallel to Heidegger concerns the distinction between two modes of conduct toward finitude. Again, while Hölderlin does not capitalize on the linguistic potential of such terms as *eigentlich* and *uneigentlich*, he nonetheless distinguishes the swift and opportune death of Empedokles from the slow and existentially stagnating death advocated by the priesthood. The most crucial correspondence to the analytic of *Sein und Zeit* remains however the idea of *Vorlaufen*, the fundamental attitude that authentic Dasein adopts toward its finitude. Whether interpreted literally as an act of running forward or more figuratively as a deportment of anticipation, *Vorlaufen* perfectly describes Empedokles' own confrontation with death. Not only does he reckon with the imminency of his death throughout the drama but the very implication of his projected sacrifice in the flames of Etna is one of running or more precisely leaping. Empedokles thus becomes a kind of

factual embodiment of *vorlaufende Entschlossenheit* and when one adds to that his existential condition of guilt for which his death becomes a form of atonement, the connection to Heidegger could not be more manifest.

It therefore seems astonishing that scholarship has almost completely ignored any relation between *Der Tod des Empedokles* and *Sein und Zeit*. The only scholar to have discerned the slightest link is Beda Allemann, whose *Hölderlin and Heidegger* from 1954 remains the first book-length study of the poet and thinker. As Allemann comments:

Die Temporalanalyse in *Sein und Zeit* fußt auf jener des *eigentlichen Ganzseinkönnens des Daseins* [...], das Ganzseinkönnen seinerseits wird aus dem *Sein zum Tode* expliziert [...] Von einem *Vorlaufen in den Tod* muß aber auch in bezug auf den *Empedokles* gesprochen werden, und zwar nicht nur in dem zutage liegenden handlungsmäßigen Sinn, sondern durchaus in der wesentlicheren Bedeutung des Vorlaufens als des *Seins zur Möglichkeit* [...]²

Yet this fruitful comparison does not develop into anything more than a passing observation due to the fact that Allemann perceives a fundamental difference between Hölderlin's and Heidegger's respective notions of temporality. Because Hölderlin tends to think in terms of infinity with regard to nature and being, Allemann argues that Empedokles' conduct of *Vorlaufen* leads him to embrace not finite existence but infinite nature. Strictly speaking, Hölderlin thus fails to interpret death as finitude, that is, as a temporally limiting factor of life. Heidegger, on the other hand, posits death as Dasein's temporal horizon of possibility. Allemann's point is cited here in full:

Mit der Feststellung einer solchen Übereinstimmung wäre indes wiederum nicht viel gewonnen, wenn sie lediglich dazu führen würde, nun auch das Drama

Empedokles zum vorontologischen Beleg für einen bestimmten Teil der Heideggerschen Existentialanalyse erklären zu können. Ein sachgerechter Vergleich muß vielmehr tiefer dringen und das Vorlaufen zum Tode auch im *Empedokles* auf seinen *temporalen* Sinn hin befragen. Nur so gelingt es, den Zusammenhang mit der Seinsfrage zu wahren.

Dann ergibt sich allerdings sogleich ein Antagonismus zwischen Hölderlins Zeitauffassung auf der Empedokles-Stufe und der Zeitinterpretation Heideggers, wie er entscheidener nicht gedacht werden kann. Bei Heidegger bedingt das Vorlaufen zum Tode das mögliche Ganzsein des Daseins. Damit ist dieses Ganzseinkönnen aber als wesentlich *endliches* bestimmt [....]

Dagegen eröffnet sich der Tod im *Empedokles* gerade als der mögliche Übergang zur *Unendlichkeit*, das heißt zur liebenden Vereinigung des endlich Getrennten im Arme der Natur.³

Here Allemann's comparative analysis of the two texts ends, before it ever truly got started. While it is certainly true that Empedokles seeks a reunion with infinite nature through his act of sacrifice, his death is not without its life-related foundation. As will be demonstrated in the course of this chapter, Empedokles' view of finitude in the drama is increasingly directed toward existence rather than toward some transcendent realm. In other words, like authentic Dasein, Empedokles capitalizes on his death as a supreme possibility of *self*-transcendence. Allemann however overlooks this general correlation not to mention the numerous other parallels between Hölderlin's drama and Heidegger's analytic.

Apart from Allemann, the only other interpreter who comes close to establishing a connection between *Der Tod des Empedokles* and *Sein und Zeit* is Jürgen Söring, whose *Die Dialektik der Rechtfertigung: Überlegungen zu Hölderlin's Empedokles-Projekt* is so replete with Heideggerian terminology that one would expect it to at least hint at some

parallisms. In his “Anmerkungen und Exkurse” Söring makes one of his few overt references to Heidegger, quoting and critiquing a passage from *Sein und Zeit* dealing with the notion of *Vorlaufen*:

“Weil das Vorlaufen in die unüberholbare Möglichkeit alle ihr vorgelagerten Möglichkeiten mit erschließt, liegt in ihm die Möglichkeit eines existenziellen Vorwegnehmens des ganzen Daseins, das heißt die Möglichkeit als ganzes Seinkönnen zu existieren” (*Sein und Zeit* § 53, S. 264). Dieser Vorschlag, ausgerechnet im ‘Sein zum Tode’ Ganzheit zu ergreifen, kann nicht überzeugen. Es ist fraglich, ob die Antizipation des Todes als solche Ganzheit verbürgt. Denn die Schwierigkeit wäre, wieso etwas, das endlich ist, dadurch, daß es sich seiner Endlichkeit konfrontiert, ganz wird.⁴

Yet Söring fails to relate this important concept to Hölderlin’s project, which is after all the topic of his investigation. One thus wonders why he mentions Heidegger in the first place. *Vorlaufen* remains perhaps the most crucial idea common to *Der Tod des Empedokles* and *Sein und Zeit*, and the baffling fact that it eludes the scrutiny of scholarship stands in need of correction.

Before such parallels can be discussed, certain other issues must be addressed. These primarily concern the historical figure of Empedocles upon whom Hölderlin based important aspects of his tragedy, particularly the biographical detail of death by flame and the philosophical tenet of primordial guilt. A discussion of Empedocles’ life and thought is thus necessary for a proper understanding of the two major themes in Hölderlin’s drama: death and guilt. This requires an examination of the original fragments attributed to Empedocles as well as of the various testimonia documenting his fate. A more complex problem that radically affects the interpretation of *Der Tod des*

Empedokles lies in the drama's fragmentation. Any attempt to analyze Hölderlin's tragedy must to some extent deal with the complicated issue of its fragmented form. For reasons that only allow for speculation, Hölderlin never completed the drama despite fairly detailed planning and a lengthy period of composition.⁵ One may choose to note a certain irony in the fact that Hölderlin's effort to create a drama around the life and fragments of Empedocles itself ended in fragmentation. The philological tradition has striven to reconstruct the extant texts of both authors, ancient and modern, with varying results. Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz have produced what is now considered the standard edition of all Presocratic fragments, from Thales to Diogenes. In the last two centuries of Hölderlin scholarship a number of editors have tried to present a similar definitive text of the *Empedokles* manuscripts.

I. **The Problem of the Fragmented Text from a Philological and Hermeneutic Standpoint**

According to Freidrich Beißner's essay "Hölderlins Trauerspiel *Der Tod des Empedokles* in seinen drei Fassungen,"⁶ the first collection of Hölderlin's poems by Gustav Schwab and Ludwig Uhland from 1826 contains three "Fragmente eines Trauerspiels". The two-volume *Sämmtliche Werke* edited by Schwab's son Christoph Theodor in 1846 introduces new material but adheres to a basic tripartite scheme. The arrangement of these fragments, however, varies significantly from what is accepted today as the proper sequence. Christoph Theodor Schwab, for example, took enormous liberties with textual variants and even transposed entire passages from—as has since

been established—one draft to another. The next edition to feature Hölderlin's drama, Berthold Litzmann's *Gesammelte Dichtungen* from 1896, orders the fragments according to the following three stages:

- I. Stufe: ein Plan
- II. Stufe: die Szenen und Entwürfe, die man unter der Bezeichnung "Empedokles auf dem Ätna" zusammenfaßt,
- III. Stufe: das Hauptfragment "Der Tod des Empedokles", von dem 2 Szenen noch in einer zweiten Fassung vorliegen.⁷

The last two stages of this arrangement conflict with what Beißner has established to be the proper sequence. Wilhelm Böhm, whose edition of Hölderlin's *Gesammelte Werke* appeared in 1905, and Wilhelm Dilthey, whose *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* elevated Hölderlin to the ranks of canonized authors such as Lessing, Goethe, and Novalis, were more perceptive in their assessment of the fragmented text.⁸ More importantly, they paved the way for the historical-critical editions of Franz Zinkernagel (1915) and Ludwig von Pigenot (1922), the latter of which forms the third volume of the *Sämtliche Werke* begun by Norbert von Hellingrath in 1913. In volume three of his series, Zinkernagel groups the fragments under the heading *Empedokles-Bruchstücke*. The ordering of these fragments is as follows:

Empedokles [der Frankfurter Plan]

Der Tod des Empedokles

[Die erste Fassung]

[Die zweite Fassung]

Empedokles auf dem Aetna

[Der Entwurf]
 [Der Ausführungsversuch]⁹

Ludwig von Pigenot's triadic model of what he simply titles *Empedokles* is basically the same:

- I. Stufe der Bearbeitung: Der Frankfurter Plan
- II. Stufe der Bearbeitung: Der Tod des Empedokles
 - 1. Fassung
 - 2. Fassung
- III. Stufe der Bearbeitung: Empedokles auf dem Aetna¹⁰

The Zinkernagel and Hellingrath/Pigenot editions, released during—and as a consequence of—the twentieth-century Hölderlin revival, are what Heidegger most likely read in the years leading up to *Sein und Zeit*.¹¹

There is no getting around the problem of fragmentation in *Der Tod des Empedokles*. Every edition since that of Uhland/Schwab has published the manuscripts as three distinct fragments. These fragments often differ within themselves from one edition to the next, and in some cases discrepancies between the drafts occur so that verses from one fragment are transplanted to another. In the end no definitive order exists, though Friedrich Beißner's *Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, a labor of painstaking philology that provides *Lesarten* and a wealth of commentary on the genesis of the project, has widely been accepted as the standard edition. Dietrich F. Sattler's even more meticulous *Frankfurter Ausgabe*, a facsimile of the manuscripts, remains the culmination of textual fidelity, but is not exactly what one would call "reader friendly". The most recent published version by Jochen Schmidt, while it favors Beißner's editing over that of

Sattler, still claims to have improved upon both of its immediate predecessors.¹²

Generations of readers have of course approached the drama less critically than its editors and must on some level make sense of the fragments as a single work of literature, albeit an unfinished one. Yet despite its incompleteness, the *Der Tod des Empedokles* can still be read in completion. In all of the editions, the entire text is basically there; readers from the mid-nineteenth to the late twentieth century have merely been presented with its different configurations. What Nietzsche had read in one of the Schwab volumes, Heidegger essentially read in the Zinkernagel or Pigenot editions, and these in turn largely correspond to the *Stuttgarter Ausgabe* that most readers rely on today. (It speaks for excellence of the Zinkernagel and Pigenot editorship that their text was not greatly improved upon by Beißner.) Thus, the basic whole of the drama has remained intact throughout the many published versions, while internally its parts have been subjected to varying degrees of change.

In this sense, *Der Tod des Empedokles* presents an intriguing example of the hermeneutic problem. The relation of parts to the whole is complicated by the formal aspect of its threefold fragmentation, which would seem to make it a text that defies the complete understanding and interpretability that hermeneutics strives to achieve. Though Hölderlin's drama may lack the self-contained completeness that aesthetic theories since Kant have posited for the ideal work of art, it nevertheless exists in its factual entirety and hence constitutes an aesthetic corpus of its own. One can bemoan its truncation or appreciate it as the artistic torso that it is. Rilke's focus on the preserved statue of Apollo in his poem "Archaischer Torso Apollos" parallels the latter approach. Himself a poet

who shared a certain kinship with Hölderlin,¹³ Rilke finds that the overwhelming presence of the torso more than compensates for the absence of those parts (head, limbs, etc.) that would, properly speaking, make the statue complete:

Wir kannten nicht sein unerhörtes Haupt,
 darin die Augenäpfel reiften. Aber
 sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber,
 in dem sein Schauen, nur zurückgeschraubt,

sich hält und glänzt. Sonst könnte nicht der Bug
 der Brust dich blenden, und im leisen Drehen
 der Lenden könnte nicht ein Lächeln gehen
 zu jener Mitte, die die Zeugung trug [...]¹⁴

One must take a similar interpretive stance with *Der Tod des Empedokles*, whose missing acts and scenes need not detract from the aesthetic experience as a whole. In fact, as in Rilke's description of the fragmented statue, the sheer presence of the text overrides all concerns of its curtailment and so-called "incompletion". The circular movement of hermeneutic understanding will never be complete when dealing with a text like *Der Tod des Empedokles*. Yet only traditional hermeneutics such as that propounded by Schleiermacher insists on an eventual closed circle of total comprehension; modern thinkers like Heidegger (whose own *Sein und Zeit* remains a fragment, its projected second half never written) and Gadamer are beyond thinking in terms of final results. They stress rather the fundamental *experience* of interpretation, a potentially endless process that does not reduce the work of art to an aesthetic object of methodological inquiry. Interpreting Hölderlin's drama thus remains a hermeneutic endeavor which not

only requires the reader to relate individual parts to the greater whole, but furthermore demands a processual and participatory engagement with the text much like Rilke's confrontation with the torso of Apollo. To take a cue from Gadamer: [...] *alle Begegnung mit der Sprache der Kunst [ist] Begegnung mit einem unabgeschlossenen Geschehen und selbst ein Teil dieses Geschehens [...]*"¹⁵ Johannes Hoffmeister has specifically addressed the *Empedokles* drama with respect to its fragmentary form and aesthetic wholeness. The following observation recalls Gadamer and especially Rilke:

So bleibt die Dichtung Fragment; aber sie erscheint uns wie ein griechischer Torso, den wir uns im Grunde gar nicht vollständig erhalten wünschen. In seiner Bruchstückhaftigkeit dünkt uns dies Werk so fertig, weil selbst das Scheitern des Dichters an ihm zu seinem Wesensgesetz zu gehören scheint.¹⁶

Despite its fragmentation and "failed" execution, there is after all a unifying conception behind *Der Tod des Empedokles*, even if Hölderlin reconceived certain themes, characters, and plot structures throughout the three drafts. The two most consistent elements remain of course death and guilt, both of which Hölderlin took over from tradition and turned into the main themes of his play. This tradition and Hölderlin's reception thereof will be discussed in the following section.

II. The Death and Philosophy of the Historical Empedocles

Critics agree that the primary source Hölderlin consulted for the particulars of his gestating play was the then standard *Leben und Meinungen berühmter Philosophen* by

Diogenes Laertius. This work, written in the third century AD, is a curious compendium of material on philosophers from Thales to post-Socratic figures such as Plato and Aristotle. It indiscriminately mixes biography with philosophical teachings, and much of the information is unreliable, often even apocryphal. Nevertheless, the collection was the most widespread authority on Presocratic thinkers available in Germany during the eighteenth century. Hölderlin, himself a talented *Gräzist*, did not fail to read it in preparation for his project, as he indicates in a letter to his friend Isaak von Sinclair from December 24th, 1798 (see StA 6, 300). Here Hölderlin would have encountered summaries of Empedocles' cosmogony as well as testimonies of his death, especially of his leap into the crater of Mount Etna. One finds in the now standard German edition of Diogenes Laertius (Hölderlin used the Greek-Latin edition of Henricus Stephanus published in 1570)¹⁷ the following account:

Hippobotos aber berichtet, er [Empedokles] sei, nachdem er sich erhoben, in der Richtung auf den Ätna zu gewandert und bei den Feuerschlünden angelangt, sei er hineingesprungen und verschwunden, in der Absicht, den über ihn verbreiteten Glauben, er sei zum Gott geworden, zu bestärken; weiterhin aber sei die Wahrheit zu Tage gekommen, als eine seiner Sandalen aus dem Krater herausgeschleudert worden sei; denn er pflegte eherne zu tragen.¹⁸

This is by no means the only version of Empedocles' death cited by Diogenes. Other sources would have it that he died after falling from a chariot at the age of seventy-seven; that he hanged himself; that he plunged not into volcanic fire but into the sea; and that he was not killed at all but exiled to the Peloponnesus.¹⁹ Yet Empedocles' reputed suicide in the flames of Etna appears to have captivated Hölderlin more than any of the other

testimonies found in Diogenes. Tradition does in fact adhere to the version favored by Hölderlin for his play. As already indicated, Horace speaks—however sarcastically—of Empedocles’ cold-blooded leap into Etna’s flames. Another central work of antiquity that Hölderlin undoubtedly studied at Maulbronn and Tübingen, Lucretius’ *De rerum natura*, does not directly mention Empedocles’ death, but nonetheless links the philosopher with the volcano. Lucretius’ graphic words might easily leave their mark on an impressionable mind:

An ihrer [the natural philosophers that posit four elements as primal matter] Spitze steht Empedokles aus Akragas, den die Insel an den Küsten ihres dreieckigen Landes getragen hat [...] Da ist die greuliche Charybdis, da droht auch das Grollen des Ätna, daß er wieder die Flammen seines Zornes sammle, daß seine Gewalt wieder aus seinem Schlund hervorbrechendes Feuer speie und wiederum bis zum Himmel den Blitz seiner Flammen werfe. Mag diese Gegend den Völkern der Menschen groß, in mancher Hinsicht auch bewundernswert erscheinen und als sehenswert gelten, reich an guten Dingen, geschützt durch den Reichtum an Männern, nichts jedoch, so scheint mir, hat sie je Berühmteres noch Heiligeres, nichts Wunderbareres und Kostbareres besessen als diesen Mann.²⁰

Throughout his work Hölderlin displays a similar fascination not only with Empedocles but with Mount Etna, or at least with volcanoes and fire in general. The imagery of fire is present from the earliest poems to the final hymns, not to mention throughout *Hyperion* and *Der Tod des Empedokles*.²¹ As the geographically most prominent volcano in the Classical world, Mount Etna dominates both much of the Mediterranean landscape and imagination. The eruption of Etna in 479/8 BC is described in Aeschylus’ *Prometheus*²² and two of Pindar’s Pythian odes, the latter of which

Hölderlin translated sometime in or after 1800.²³ Here one finds the lines from the first ode: “[...] Der schneeige Ätna [...] // Aus welchem ausgespien werden / Des reinen Feuers heiligste / Aus Kammern Quellen [...]” (StA 5, 64, vv. 36ff.). This description continues for several verses, increasingly drawing on mythical figures such as Hephaestus and Zeus. The third ode contains a direct reference “zum Aetnäischen Gastfreund” (StA 5, 80, v. 123), yet features a host of suggestive allusions to “Hephaistos” (v. 70), “Scheiterhaufen” (v. 78), and “Feuer” (vv. 66, 69, 87). In Hölderlin’s own poetry, Etna receives mention in “Archipelagus” and “Patmos”. Here he speaks, respectively and with a shift in gender, “vom gährenden Aetna” (StA 2, 105, v. 92) and of the “glühende Harze der Aetna” (StA 2, 170, v. 163). Most important however, given the various connections between *Hyperion* and *Der Tod des Empedokles*, is the presence of Etna in the novel prior to the hero’s contemplation of suicide and invocation of “der große Sicilianer”. Early in the first book, Hyperion refers to “das ungeheure Streben, Alles zu seyn, das, wie der Titan des Aetna, heraufzürnt aus den Tiefen unsers Wesens” (StA 3, 18). Further volcanic metaphors carry no specific name. As one of the Nemesis members states in a comparison with the revolutionary potential of youth: “Auch sagt man, auf verbrannten abgestorbenen Vulkanen gedeihe kein schlechter Most” (StA 3, 34). Later in the novel, when this potential is actualized and Greece goes to war against the Turks, the proverbial volcano erupts: “Der Vulkan bricht los” (StA 3, 111). Perhaps the most interesting case is Hyperion’s own identification not with an actual volcano, but with the anthropomorphic deities of fire Hephaistos/Vulcan. Here he expresses to Diotima his despondency over becoming separated from his two

great mentors, Adamas and Alabanda: “[...] nun wirst du sagen [...] spottet dieses Vulkans nicht, wenn er hinkt, denn ihn haben zweimal die Götter vom Himmel auf die Erde geworfen” (StA 3, 66).

Despite his absorption in volcanoes—specifically Mount Etna—and the tradition surrounding Empedocles’ death, Hölderlin did not lose sight of more philosophical questions. Empedocles developed the most advanced cosmogony of any Presocratic, one in which fire plays a fundamental part, as do the other prime elements earth, air, and water. In view of Hölderlin’s own tendency to invoke such elemental forces,²⁴ there seems to be more that draws him to the ancient philosopher than mere biographical detail.

In his philosophical poem *On Nature* (Περὶ φύσεως), written sometime in the mid-fifth century BC, Empedocles conceives of four pure substances—he actually calls them “roots” (ρίζοματᾶ), but tradition has established the more scientific term “elements”—that are both eternal and immutable: earth, air, fire, and water. These elements have existed from the beginning of time and they cannot be destroyed or otherwise undergo change. They are divine and frequently bear mythical names, e.g. Zeus (fire), Hera (air), Aidoneus (earth), and Nestis (water). Yet unlike the gods, the four substances do not exist separate from reality, aloof from the mortal world; rather, they inhabit all living matter, only in varying degrees. Depending on their mixture with one another, they can combine to form any “mortal”, i.e. non-permanent, compound. Blood and flesh, for instance, contain equal ratios of all four, while the presence of these elements in bone is two parts earth, two parts water, and four parts fire (cf. Fr.98 and 96).²⁵ Interestingly, he fails to mention air in this latter example. Either the presence of

this fourth pure substance is so negligible in bone that it deserves to go unmentioned or, in contrast to the theory espoused earlier in the poem, not all matter necessarily contains parts of every element. Whatever the case, too little survives from Empedocles' work (less than ten percent) for scholars to make a sound judgement, and as with all Presocratic philosophy, few definitive conclusions can be reached.²⁶ In Hölderlin's day the situation was worse, for even Classical scholars had limited access to the actual fragments of Empedocles. The first collection of original material, *Poesis philosophiae* edited by Henricus Etienne (a.k.a. Stephanus), appeared in France in 1573, but not until 1805 was an edition to be published in Germany. Thus, most if not all Presocratics were known second-hand, through testimonia found in ancient sources such as Cicero, Plutarch, Horace, Diogenes Laertius, etc. Through these and other authors,²⁷ Empedocles became generally known for his elemental theory, and Hölderlin was by no means the only writer of his time to display an interest in the subject.²⁸

In addition to the four prime substances, Empedocles posits two agents that are responsible for this constant elemental mixture and flux: Love and Strife (φιλοτης and Νεικος). Again, the exact conception behind these motive forces is problematic, yet their presence in the cosmos remains certain as does their effect on the four elements. Love unites the elements and the matter that they form, while Strife or Hate separates them and causes universal dissension. Throughout the history of the cosmos, one force tends to dominate the other. When Love prevails, the elements are uniformly mixed and the universe exists in a state of harmony, forming a single Parmenidean sphere. During the reign of Strife, the elements are unable to mix and thus amass separately so that each

substance becomes one homogenous bulk. Generally, we find ourselves in a period of transition, during which both forces are active but none holds sway. Here the elements continuously unite and separate, now mixing to form matter, now dispersing to bring about decay.

The above aspects of Empedocles' philosophy play only a relatively minor role in Hölderlin's drama.²⁹ While references to the prime elements and their movers Love and Hate can be found in the various drafts, they hardly occur with enough frequency to constitute a major theme. The third draft contains perhaps the most direct and detailed reference to the four elements. Here Empedokles describes the landscape surrounding Etna—whose fire Pausanias has just mentioned—in elemental terms:

Ja! ruhig wohnen wir, es öffnen groß
 Sich hier vor uns die heiligen Elemente.
 Die Mühelosen regen sich freudig hier um uns.
 An seinen vesten Ufern wallt und ruht
 Das alte Meer, und das Gebirge steigt
 Mit seiner Ströme Klang, es woogt und rauscht
 Sein grüner Wald von Thal zu Thal hinunter.
 Und oben weilt das Licht, der Aether stillt
 Den Geist und das geheimere Verlangen.

(StA 124, vv. 92ff)

Far more central for Hölderlin's drama is another facet of Empedocles' thought, one which he expressed in his other major work, *Purifications* (Καθαρμοί). Though classical scholars have recently tended toward the view that *On Nature* and *Purifications* actually form the same poem but became known under two different titles, this was not

the case in Hölderlin's day, nor need it be of concern for the present analysis.³⁰

Empedocles' *Katharmoi*, whether it belongs to the more cosmological *On Nature* or not, has a decidedly different focus.

The fragments that make up *Katharmoi* have come to be categorized as Empedocles' "religious" teachings. In contrast to the physical philosophy of *On Nature*, *Purifications* deals with a more spiritual realm and tells a tale that is vaguely reminiscent of Milton, with such Judeo-Christian elements as original sin, fall from grace, and the hope for paradise regained. Based on what one can best piece together from the fragments, Empedocles recounts the fate of the Daimones, who are transcendent entities that temporarily inhabit human bodies much like transmigrating souls. Daimones can be passed on and reincarnated without losing their essential identity. Like the Pythagoreans, who were also centered in the Greek colonies of southern Italy, Empedocles believed in reincarnation and consequently vegetarianism. As someone who claims to have been a boy and a girl, a bush, bird, and fish in his previous lives (Fr. 117), consuming meat would amount to potential cannibalism. (His life as a bush raises, however, an interesting problem with regard to his prescribed vegetarian diet.) The happy state of the Daimones, in which Love reigned supreme—here the connection to *On Nature*—and all creatures lived harmoniously, gradually gave way to the rise of Strife. For the first time, there was bloodshed, and the Daimones, soiled with this original guilt or sin, were exiled from their home and forced to enter the bodies of mortal creatures. "Wrapping [themselves] in an alien garb of flesh" (Fr. 126)³¹, they remain immortal but must be continually born into new living beings until their original state of Love is restored. The vegetarian imperative

thus makes perfect sense according to Fragment 136: “Will you not cease from harsh-sounding murder? Do you not see / that you are devouring each other in the carelessness of your thought?”³² The consumption of meat not only leads to cannibalism, but on a more fundamental level repeats the same act of killing that brought about their fall from grace. Though Empedocles never mentions the word, “guilt”—or if one will, the Christian notion of original sin—is what characterizes the exiled state of the Daimones. It is questionable whether the Greeks, especially the Presocratics, ever had a conception of guilt or sin that approximates our own. The word for “sin” in the New Testament is *αμαρτια*, which comes from a verb (*αμαρτανω*) that literally means “to miss the mark” (as in archery), hence “to err”. At the time of Empedocles, it is doubtful that it carried any moral connotations. In *Purifications* one finds, rather, the verb *αμπλακειν* (Fr. 115, v. 3), which means “to come short of”, “to lose, be bereft of”, or “to sin”. This latter definition is what McKirihan chooses in his translation of the crucial Fragment 115, cited here in its entirety so as to give a better idea of the poem’s content:

There is an oracle of Necessity, an ancient decree of the gods,
 Eternal and sealed with broad oaths,
 That whenever anyone pollutes his own dear limbs with the *sin* [my italics] of murder,
 [...] commits offense and swears a false oath—
 divinities (DAIMONES) who possess immensely long life—
 he wanders away from the blessed ones for thrice ten thousand seasons,
 growing to be through time all different kinds of mortals
 taking the difficult paths of life one after another.
 For the force of AITHER pursues them to the sea
 and the sea spits them out onto the surface of the earth, and the earth into the rays
 of the shining sun, and he [the sun] casts them into the vortices of AITHER.

One receives them after another, but all hate them.
 Of them I am now one, a fugitive from the gods and a wanderer,
 Putting my reliance on raving Strife.³³

As becomes apparent in these final verses, Empedocles believes he is possessed by a Daimon and consequently considers himself a sinner. Indeed, his current profession as prophet, bard, and physician (he has already existed as other entities, e.g. a bush and bird) places him at the upper end of the reincarnation scale: “In the end they [the Daimones] are prophets and bards and physicians / and chiefs among men on earth, / and from there they arise as gods mightiest in honors” (Fr. 146).³⁴ Empedocles’ claim to be a god at the beginning of *Purifications* (see Fr. 112: “I go about among you, an immortal god, no longer mortal [...]”³⁵) is probably an anticipation of his next stage in the cycle, rather than an act of hubris as interpreted by Hölderlin and discussed later in this chapter. With this hint at imminent divinity, Empedocles may be implying that the exile of “thrice ten thousand seasons” is coming to a close. This at least is the implication of the poem’s title: through a series of purifications, mainly by abstaining from killing and consuming animals, the Daimones can cleanse themselves of sin and eventually regain paradise, in which case the thirty-thousand seasons mentioned by Empedocles is not to be taken literally. Dietary and spiritual cleansing would thus hasten the purgation of guilt and the return to a blissful state.

Due to the fragmentary nature of Empedocles’ philosophy, it remains difficult to make any definitive statements let alone reach any final conclusions. One is utterly dependent on traditional interpretations or accounts such as those collected in Diogenes.

These all tend to emphasize the aspects of Empedocles' philosophy discussed above: his elemental theory and religious notion of guilt. While the former figures only marginally in Hölderlin's drama, the latter takes on all the greater importance, at least in certain phases of the *Empedokles* project, a project that by no means consists solely of the three dramatic drafts that make up the fragmented work entitled *Der Tod des Empedokles*. Between 1797 and 1800 Hölderlin experimented with various literary forms, all in an attempt to come to terms with the legendary death and guilt-based cosmogony of the Presocratic philosopher. Not only did he try his hand at poetry, drama, and essays; even his Sophocles translations, published in 1804, can be considered an extension of his *Empedokles* insofar as they, if only indirectly, deal with the notions of death and guilt. In the following, all of these genres will be examined in an effort to explain Hölderlin's enduring fascination for the personality and thought of Empedocles. Since Hölderlin's project is fraught with displacements, discontinuities, and ultimately failure, a chronological discussion of its various stages seems the wisest approach. Hölderlin continually reconceived plot, characters, and ideas throughout the genesis of *Empedokles*, and even the two most consistent themes of death and guilt undergo significant shifts in emphasis and/or function. A genetic analysis of these and related aspects will thus more effectively bring out the many connections to Heidegger and Nietzsche, both of whom were undoubtedly familiar with the main phases of Hölderlin's project.

III. The Gestation of Hölderlin's Project: The Death of Socrates, the Ode "Empedokles", and the "Frankfurter Plan"

The germ of Hölderlin's *Empedokles* project could be situated as early as 1794, when he envisioned a drama revolving around the death of an even more famous Greek philosopher: Socrates. At this point he was working on *Hyperion* (the first five letters of which had just appeared in Schiller's *Thalia*), though on what are regarded today as only preliminary drafts. Hölderlin, unaware that his novel would occupy him for several more years, is barely able to contain his enthusiasm for the next plan, which he communicates to Neuffer on October 10th, 1794:

Ich freue mich übrigens doch auf den Tag, wo ich mit dem Ganzen im Reinen sein werde, weil ich dann unverzüglich einen anderen Plan, der mir beinahe noch mehr am Herzen liegt, den Tod des Sokrates, nach den Idealen der griechischen Dramen zu bearbeiten versuchen werde. (StA 6, 137)

Hölderlin gives no further information about his budding idea, yet two points mentioned above are sufficient to establish a connection with the *Empedokles* drama sketched out three years later, in 1797.

The first point concerns death. As with Empedocles, whose actual teachings are not the main impetus behind the significantly titled *Der Tod des Empedokles*, Hölderlin's focus lies not on the philosophy but on the "Tod des Sokrates." His second point about the ideals of Greek drama follows from this emphasis on death. These ideals imply tragedy, and the exemplary tragic hero is hardly Socrates the dialectician, forever probing public opinion in the streets of Athens and engaging his interlocutors in the Socratic

method of eliciting latent knowledge. What makes for tragedy is rather the condemned man of the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*, who chose death over exile and calmly drank from the cup of hemlock, thereby asserting his death like such tragic heroes as Ajax and Antigone. Potential analogies abound between the fates of this Socrates and Hölderlin's Empedokles, yet they must remain within the realm of speculation due to the lack of further dramatic details. Here it seems best to follow the advice of Walther Kranz, who attempts to draw only one parallel between the two heroes:

In Frankfurt, während der Arbeit am 'Hyperion' und seiner Beendigung, trat an die Stelle des Sokrates: Empedokles. Wir wagen nicht an das Geheimnis zu rühren, wodurch solche Heldenwandlung notwendig wurde. Vielleicht ist die Auffassung richtig, daß Sokrates durch Platon zu sehr schon vorgeprägte Gestalt geworden war, als daß ihm neue Formung möglich schien [...] Sich Opfernde waren sie beide.³⁶

Self-sacrifice is certainly the upshot of Hölderlin's ode "Empedokles", conceived sometime during the course of 1797³⁷:

Das Leben suchst du, suchst, und es quillt und glänzt
 Ein göttlich Feuer tief aus der Erde dir,
 Und du in schauerndem Verlangen
 Wirfst dich hinab, in des Aetna Flammen.

So schmelzt' im Weine Perlen der Übermut
 Der Königin; und mochte sie doch! hättst du
 Nur deinen Reichtum nicht, o Dichter,
 Hin in den gärenden Kelch geopfert!

Doch heilig bist du mir, wie der Erde Macht,

Die dich hinwegnahm, kühner Getöteter!
 Und folgen möcht ich in die Tiefe,
 Hielte die Liebe mich nicht, dem Helden.

(StA 1, 240)

Hölderlin even employs here the key word “geopfert” to describe Empedokles’ act. Several other important points emerge from this poem. The initial words, “Das Leben” are perhaps most crucial, for they reveal an existential affirmation of death on the part of the title figure and presumably the author himself. Empedokles, in other words, is not attracted to death per se; his “schaudernde[s] Verlangen” remains anything but a morbid fascination with the phenomenon of death or even a resignation toward it. Nor does the metaphysical view of finitude as transcendence have any place in the poem. Empedokles’ leap into “des Aetna Flammen” results rather from his passion for life and its plenitude. Hölderlin seems to speak here with Goethe in “Selige Sehnsucht”: “Das Lebend’ge will ich preisen / Das nach Flammentod sich sehnet.”³⁸ Indeed, Empedokles’ suicidal act of self-realization lives up to the subsequent imperative: “Stirb und werde!”, a fact that becomes even more apparent in Pausanias’ words to his master from the first draft of the play: “[...] stirb denn nur / Und zeuge so von dir” (StA 4, 77). Suicide is perhaps a misleading term, for Empedokles remains “kühn[-]”, not world-weary and weak; a hero (cf. the last word of the poem) whose actions inspire emulation, not sympathy. Death here does not offer an escape from hardship and woe, but forms the inevitable consequence of a full—and fulfilled—existence, an existence that is as ardent and intense as the flames of Etna. The metaphor of pearls dissolving in wine, an allusion to Cleopatra’s ruse of consuming ten million sesterces of wealth, conveys both

Empedokles' superabundance—or “Reichtum”—and the consumptive intensity of the volcano to which he surrenders himself.

The “Reichtum” that Empedokles sacrifices may be that of a “Dichter”, but it is important to recall that the historical Empedocles was foremost a poet who sang of creation, the cosmos, human existence; in short, a poet of being. Indeed, the distinction between poet, philosopher, and scientist does not apply to the Presocratics, especially not to Empedocles, who was of all these professions and more: rhetorician, statesman, prophet, magician/healer (*Wunderarzt*), etc. In sum, he remains “ein Vollmensch althellenischer Art [...]”³⁹ It is nevertheless interesting that Hölderlin chooses to call his hero “Dichter” rather than, say, “Denker” or “Philosoph”, etc. “Dichter” remains the most fitting epithet for various reasons. First of all, Empedocles viewed himself as such in the already cited Fragment 146, in which he suggests that his Daimon has attained the second-highest stage of reincarnation occupied by prophets, bards, and physicians. Furthermore, he is generally considered the most “poetic” Presocratic. He composed *On Nature* and *Purifications* in epic verse, dactylic hexameter, and even his non-surviving works were essentially literary: he is said to have written tragedies (in verse), a historical poem dealing with the Persian War, and a poem dedicated to Apollo. In this sense, he remains an ideal figure for Hölderlin, whose own identity was defined by his profession as poet. The exclamation “o Dichter” points then in two directions: at Empedokles, the object of the ode and bearer of its title; and at Hölderlin, who implicitly addresses himself through his hero.

Indeed, Hölderlin identifies with Empedokles on two levels. Beyond his fellowship with the latter as poet, he is drawn to the extraordinary death of the Presocratic, whose plunge into Etna manifests a supreme act of self-affirmation and reunites mankind with the primal elements of nature, here earth and fire. However much Hölderlin seeks to follow in Empedokles' footsteps ("Und folgen möchte ich in die Tiefe [...]"), he is held back by his love for Diotima/Susette, two figures that would themselves soon rejoin nature through less dramatic deaths. One may wonder about the earnestness of Hölderlin's claim to emulate his hero to such an extreme, as it smacks of over-enthusiasm and romantic idolization—in a word, of *Schwärmerei*. Yet a glance at a poem composed immediately after "Empedokles" reveals his serious existential preoccupation with death at the time. In his ode to the Fates, "An die Parzen", Hölderlin *anticipates* death in Heidegger's sense; that is, he does not *expect* it to occur as a likely concrete event, but opens himself up for its possibility:

Nur einen Sommer gönnt, ihr Gewaltigen!
 Und einen Herbst zu reifem Gesange mir,
 Daß williger mein Herz, vom süßen
 Spiele gesättigt, dann mir sterbe.

Die Seele, der im Leben ihr göttlich Recht
 Nicht ward, sie ruht auch drunten im Orkus nicht;
 Doch ist mir einst das Heilige, das am
 Herzen mir liegt, das Gedicht, gelungen,

Willkommen dann, o Stille der Schattenwelt!
 Zufrieden bin ich, wenn auch mein Saitenspiel
 Mich nicht hinab geleitet; Einmal

Lebt ich, wie Götter, und mehr bedarfs nicht.

(StA 1, 241)

Death here forms a horizon against which Hölderlin projects his poetic endeavors. The poem that he mentions and regards as sacred may stand collectively for his lyric production, but it seems to refer to a single, more ambitious undertaking. Given the time period in which “An die Parzen” was written, a period in which Hölderlin began to devote himself fully to his *Empedokles* project, there is legitimate reason to believe that “das Gedicht” points to his nascent dramatic poem. The fact that he desires to complete the poem in question before the mythical Fates cut his life thread implies a lengthy and substantial enterprise, one that would surely exceed the figurative time frame of “Sommer” and “Herbst” stated in the ode.⁴⁰ Empedokles and death thus merge in a strange nexus of personal biography and literary projects. 1797 marks a year in which such projects were deliberated, fleshed out, and gradually began to materialize. The odes “Empedokles” and “An die Parzen” indirectly manifest Hölderlin’s involvement in this conceptual process, yet the so-called “Frankfurter Plan”, also from 1797, constitutes the most immediate step toward the final—but never finalized—drama. This detailed plan, which was never published during Hölderlin’s lifetime, remains today the most crucial document for any attempt to interpret the fragmented *Der Tod des Empedokles*.

In either August or the beginning of September, 1797,⁴¹ Hölderlin writes to his half-brother Karl Gok: “Ich habe den ganz detaillirten Plan zu einem Trauerspiele gemacht, dessen Stoff mich hinreißt” (StA 6, 247). This outline, which Hölderlin copied into a notebook of his pupil Henry Gontard, has since become known as the “Frankfurter

Plan,” after its place of origin. It contains ideas and plot for all five acts (and sometimes even individual scenes) of what at that point bore the title: “Empedokles: Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Acten” (StA 4, 145). Though certain modifications were to occur in the future three drafts, this sketch offers the best overall insight into the *Empedokles* project and its emerging tragic hero. Moreover, it appeared in early editions of Hölderlin’s complete works (both Schwab’s and Hellingrath’s) and therefore could not have been ignored by either Nietzsche or Heidegger.

The first point that Hölderlin makes in the “Frankfurter Plan” forms the basis for Empedokles’ tragic fate. Like Hyperion in the *Scheltrede*, Empedokles is vehemently opposed to any kind of particularization, as it disrupts a total and harmonious existence:

Empedokles, durch sein Gemüth und seine Philosophie schon längst zu Kulturhaß gestimmt, zu Verachtung alles sehr bestimmten Geschäfts, alles nach verschiedenen Gegenständen gerichteten Interesses, ein Todtfeind aller einseitigen Existenz, und deswegen auch in wirklich schönen Verhältnissen unbefriedigt, unstät, leidend, blos weil sie besondere Verhältnisse sind und, nur im großen Akkord mit allem Lebendigen empfunden ganz ihn erfüllen, blos weil er nicht mit allgegenwärtigem Herzen innig, wie ein Gott, und frei und ausgebreitet, wie ein Gott, in ihnen leben und lieben kan, blos weil er, so bald sein Herz und sein Gedanke das Vorhandene umfaßt, ans Gesez der Succession gebunden ist — (StA 4, 145)

Empedokles’ wish to be “wie ein Gott” is not an act of hubris (as in later drafts), but a yearning for freedom from a one-dimensional, fettered existence. At this early stage of the project he bears a resemblance to Hyperion, who allowed his feelings for the Germans to get the better of him in the penultimate letter of the novel. While the latter-

day Greek takes offense at the disjointed existence of the German *Fachmensch*, the ancient philosopher becomes irritated with the no less specialized mentality of his fellow citizens.⁴² In addition to his passionate “Kulturhaß” and “Verachtung alles sehr bestimmten Geschäfts”, he is full of “Mismuth” and “Aergernis” (StA 4, 146). The latter word in fact occurs three times in the sketched-out first act (cf. also StA 4, 145), which then ends on a petulant note: “Häuslicher Zwist. Abschied des Empedokles [...] ohne zu sagen, was seine Absicht ist, wohin er geht” (StA 4, 146).

His destination becomes apparent in the second act, whose opening scene bears the caption: “Empedokles auf dem Aetna” (StA 4, 147). Here he meets with his disciples and more frequently with his “Liebling”, the Pausanias of the later drafts. (The real-life Empedocles addresses this figure by name at the beginning of *On Nature* and the entire poem is presumably directed at the younger lover.) Empedokles’ contempt for “all[e] einseitig[e] Existenz” leads him to the heights of Etna, and it is here that he resolves upon death as a means to unite himself with nature and thereby regain totality. In the first and second act, his strong attachment to nature is emphasized. The second scene of act one calls for a “Monolog des Empedokles. / Gebet an die Natur” (StA 4, 146), whereas act two begins upon the volcano with yet another soliloquy: “Monolog. Entschiednere Devotion des Empedokles gegen die Natur” (StA 4, 147). Not until the fourth act, however, does his devotion develop into a firm resolution toward death: “Nun reift sein Entschluß, der längst schon in ihm dämmerte, durch freiwilligen Tod sich mit der unendlichen Natur zu vereinen” (StA 4, 147). Empedokles’ increasingly determined devotion does not suggest a gentle, pious attitude but a mode of conduct that has more to

do with surrender and sacrifice. As in the poem, Empedokles worships the elemental forces of nature so fervently that he surrenders himself to them in the prime of his life; indeed, paradoxically, his self-sacrifice forms the very pursuit of a full life and uncompromised existence. Far from an act of suicide committed out of weakness and despair, his death is freely willed (“freiwillig[-]”), affirmed with unshakable resolve. By the fifth act, this will and determination yield to an inner necessity and death becomes unavoidable:

Empedokles bereitet sich zu seinem Tode vor. Die zufälligen Veranlassungen zu seinem Entschlusse fallen nun ganz für ihn weg und er betrachtet ihn als eine Nothwendigkeit, die aus seinem innersten Wesen folge. In den kleinen Scenen, die er noch hie und da mit den Bewohnern der Gegend hat, findet er überall Bestätigung seiner Denkart, seines Entschlusses. (StA 4, 148)

After a final encounter with his “Liebling”, Empedokles “stürzt sich [...] in den lodernden Aetna” (StA 4, 148), a crowning event that none of the later drafts depict. The only sign that remains of Empedokles are his iron shoes, which the volcano spits out of its crater for the “Liebling” to find and carry back to Acragas. (A detail from Diogenes Laertius: VIII, 69.) The “Frankfurter Plan” concludes with a celebration of Empedokles’ death by his family and followers, who all gather on Etna: “[...] um Laid zu tragen, und den Tod des großen Mannes zu feiern” (StA 4, 148).

Hölderlin’s plan raises certain points that not only figure in later drafts of the drama, but that exhibit a presence in the thought of Heidegger and Nietzsche as well. The latter’s own plans for an *Empedokles* tragedy will be examined in subsequent

chapters, as will his notions of *freier* and *freiwilliger Tod* formulated in *Also sprach Zarathustra*. With regard to the already familiar analysis of death in *Sein und Zeit*, the predominance of Empedokles' "Entschluß" in acts four and five of the "Frankfurter Plan" brings to mind Heidegger's notions of ontological *Entschlossenheit* and especially existenziell *Entschluß*. Though Heidegger strips the former of its traditional meaning to redefine it in ontological terms, the latter concept would seem perfectly applicable to Empedokles' "situation", in which he demonstrates a resolve toward death as the possibility of attaining a full existence. To recall Heidegger's definition: "*Der Entschluß ist gerade erst das erschließende Entwerfen und Bestimmen der jeweiligen faktischen Möglichkeit*" (SZ, 298). Though the later drafts lack this key word, *Entschluß*, Empedokles' comportment generally remains one of single-minded resoluteness. (The advantage of the "Frankfurter Plan" is that it often summarizes by means of convenient concepts, whereas the actual drama relies on more nuanced words and actions.)

Empedokles stands firm in his decision throughout all phases of the project, regardless whether any one word sums up his attitude or not. His own name in fact contains enough suggestive power to illustrate his potential resolve: Hölderlin surely could not have ignored the latent significance of the name εμπεδοκλης, which resembles and is perhaps even derived from the Greek εμπεδος, a word that literally means "in the ground" (εν-πεδον), hence "firm-set" and "steadfast". In the context of time, εμπεδος takes on the meaning of "lasting" or "continual". Empedokles himself seems to play on this latter signification of his name in Fragment 17, v. 11 of *On Nature*: τη μεν γινονται

τε και ου σφισιν εμπεδος αιων (“[...] in that way they [mortal things] come to be and their life is not lasting [...]”)⁴³.

While such notions as resoluteness or steadfastness figure directly in the “Frankfurter Plan”, another fundamental aspect of the tragedy goes unmentioned in the sketch: guilt. What is here an inner necessity (“eine Nothwendigkeit, die aus seinem innersten Wesen folge”) that results from an imbalanced existence will become an outward act of atonement for guilt incurred through self-deification. With the introduction of *Schuld* into later stages of the project, Empedokles’ self-sacrifice acquires a more tragic motivation and furthermore sets a precedent for the existenziell analysis of Heidegger.

IV. The First Draft of the Drama

Because he still had the second volume of *Hyperion* to finish, Hölderlin probably did not begin to work on the *Empedokles* tragedy until the latter months of 1798, a full year after he had conceived the “Frankfurter Plan”.⁴⁴ This initial dramatic attempt consists of two acts that add up to some 2,000 verses. (Dietrich Sattler’s *Frankfurter Ausgabe* contains only 1,864 lines.) A number of critics consider this version of the play an essentially finished work, in large part due to its length and thematic scope.⁴⁵ The acts are long and cover much ground with respect to the plot and ideas that Hölderlin outlined in his original plan. Though three additional acts would, formally speaking, make for a

better tragedy, one wonders about the further potential for tragic material, since the general consensus is “daß Hölderlin sein argumentatives und motivliches Pulver schon am Ende des zweiten Aktes verschossen habe.”⁴⁶ In its length, the play approximates Goethe’s *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, a short—but well-rounded—drama by eighteenth-century standards at just under 2,200 verses. Schiller’s *Don Carlos*, on the other hand, runs well over 5,000 verses, which roughly corresponds to the projected content of a five-act *Empedokles* drama.⁴⁷ Beißner in particular insists on three further acts and philologically backs his claim by referring to the “Frankfurter Plan” as well as to the fair copy of the second draft, which reads: “Der Tod des Empedokles / Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Acten” (StA 4, 89). On a more conceptual level, he points out the paradox of a two-act tragedy: “Obgleich es bei genauer Interpretation der überlieferten Handschriften schlechthin evident ist, daß alle drei Fassungen in fünf Akte gegliedert sein sollten, haben mehrere Ausleger die erste Fassung als vollendet ansehen und dem einzigen Kunstsinn des klassisch gestaltenden Dichters ein Trauerspiel in zwei Akten zutrauen wollen.”⁴⁸ In Heidegger’s day, such controversy did not prevail; Zinkernagel and Pigenot struck a sort of middle ground and supplemented the text with verses from what is now regarded as the second draft, thereby creating some semblance of completion.

Whether this first draft can be considered nearly complete or not, the crucial fact is that by the end Empedokles still has not sealed his fate in the crater of Etna. Though he has meditated on death a number of times and dismissed Pausanias from his side (cf. act five of the “Frankfurter Plan”), the supreme act of sacrifice represented in the poem and dramatic plan does not occur here. Again, this final moment of an actualized death is

perhaps not so important; the central issue remains rather Empedokles' long-term conduct throughout the drama.

Hölderlin strikes up the theme of death from the very beginning of the first draft. Following Diogenes Laertius, he includes a figure whom the historical Empedocles reportedly resurrected from the dead: “[...] eine gewisse Pantheia aus Akragas, die von den Ärzten aufgegeben [...]”⁴⁹ Panthea (in Hölderlin's spelling) seems a new addition to the project, as there is no indication of her role in the “Frankfurter Plan”. In his already cited letter to Sinclair from December, 1798 (StA 6, 300), Hölderlin refers to the fact that he borrowed his friend's edition of Diogenes, presumably to reread in preparation for his dramatic undertaking. Though this cannot be his first reading of Diogenes (his classical background aside, Hölderlin's “Frankfurter Plan” from 1797 contains definite motifs from *The Lives of the Philosophers*)⁵⁰, it was nevertheless one that helped him shape further elements of his drama as well as add to its cast of characters. Panthea's role serves to introduce the theme of death into the play as well as to foreshadow Empedokles' own impending end. Through his act of resurrection, Empedokles proves that he can master death by summoning the deceased back into the realm of the living, an interesting contrast to the mastery that he displays over his personal fate: out of a zest for life he brings about his death, only here there is no prospect of an afterlife let alone a miraculous reprieve.

Other characters that contribute to the problematic of death include Hermokrates, the high priest, and Kritias, the archon of Acragas and father of Panthea. Whereas Kritias remains somewhat reserved in his persecution of Empedokles, thanks to whom he has

after all regained a daughter, Hermokrates is intent upon ruining the self-proclaimed god who refuses to abide by established religious laws. The first clear sign of Empedokles' resolve to die occurs during an initial dispute with Hermokrates, Kritias, and other citizens of Acragas, all of whom obstruct the hero's chosen path of death:

Gönnet mirs
Den Pfad, worauf ich wandle, still zu gehen,
Den heiligen stillen Todespfad hinfort.
[...] entwürdigt
Mein Leiden mir mit böser Rede nicht,
Denn heilig ists; und laßt die Brust mir frei
Von eurer Noth [...]

(StA 4, 24)

Now that Empedokles seems to realize his fate, he begins to distinguish himself from his adversaries in terms of death. His contemptuous words to the crowd: "Sterbt langsamen Tods, und euch geleite / Des Priesters Rabengesang!" (StA 4, 31) define his increasing determination to meet his end expediently in contrast to the slow and stagnant death that he wishes upon the masses. This split between two diverse modes of death, reminiscent of that between authentic and inauthentic *Sein zum Tode*, appears most pronounced during a final confrontation with Hermokrates in the second act. Here the distinction is not temporal but qualitative: "Es ist umsonst; wir gehn verschieden Weg. / Stirb du gemeinen Tod, wie sichs gebührt / Am seelenlosen Knechtsgefühl [...]" (StA 4, 58). Hermokrates' finitude remains that of a slave, for it lacks the freedom of choice that Empedokles comes to recognize with respect to his own imminent fate: "Und geh in

meiner Kraft, furchtlos hinab / Den selbsterkornen Pfad; mein Glück ist diß, / Mein Vorrecht ists" (StA 4, 79). Like the multitude to whom he preaches, Hermokrates will die a prolonged and commonplace death, seeking to squeeze out as many years of life as biologically possible. At this point overtones of *das Man*'s conduct toward finitude cannot be ignored. The following remark of Empedokles further illustrates the difference between his *Sein zum Tode* and that of the everyday crowd: "Ihr dürft leben / So lang' ihr Othem habt; ich nicht" (StA 4, 73). His subsequent words to the citizens of Acragas underscore an "authentic" comportment toward death as opposed to the predominant trend of growing old and hanging on to existence at all costs. Empedokles here speaks in the plural, grouping himself among other mortals graced by the gods:

Es offenbart die göttliche Natur
 Sich göttlich oft durch Menschen, so erkennt
 Das vielversuchende Geschlecht sie wieder.
 [...]
 Laßt diese Glücklichen doch sterben, laßt
 Eh sie in Eigenmacht und Tand und Schmach
 Vergehn, die Freien sich bei guter Zeit
 Den Göttern liebend opfern. Mein ist diß.
 Und wohlbewußt ist mir mein Loos und längst
 Am jugendlichen Tage hab' ich mirs
 Geweissagt; ehret mirs! und wenn ihr morgen
 Mich nimmer findet, sprecht: veralten sollt
 Er nicht und Tage zählen, dienen nicht
 Der Sorg und Krankheit [...]

(StA 4, 73)

Empedokles, one of the “Freien”, has the good sense—the kind that distinguishes authentic Dasein from *das Man*—to give up his existence at the proper time (“bei guter Zeit”) rather than live on in a stagnant state of being and squander his potentiality. This notion of the right moment to die, of a death “bei guter Stund” (StA 4, 70) and “zu rechter Zeit” (StA 4, 65), not only evokes authentic Dasein’s seizure of extreme possibility; it also points to Nietzsche, whose Zarathustra even adopts a similar vocabulary in his maxim: “Stirb zur rechten Zeit!” (KSA 4, 93).

The “right time” to die seems to hit Empedokles with full force toward the end of the first act, when he realizes that he has skirted the issue long enough: “Und schämen muß ich mich / Daß ich gezögert bis zum Äußersten” (StA 4, 37). It is perhaps no coincidence that he grants his personal slaves freedom (cf. StA 4, 38f.) when he himself begins to sense a growing liberation. This liberating function of death is primarily portrayed as a form of catharsis: Hölderlin speaks of “dem reinigenden Tode” (StA 4, 65) as well as of the “Zeit der Läuterung” (StA 4, 70). As if to make up for the lost time spent in an impure, confined existence, Empedokles feels the need to accelerate his fatal course, and the following metaphor describes this path as a running forward into death:

Wohin nun, ihr Pfade der Sterblichen? viel
Sind euer, wo ist der meine, der kürzeste? wo?
Der schnellste? denn zu zögern ist Schmach.
Ha! meine Götter! im Stadium lenkt ich den Wagen
Einst unbekümmert auf rauchendem Rad, so will
Ich bald zu euch zurück, ist gleich die Eile gefährlich.

(StA 4, 40)

This form of *Vorlaufen* as a chariot race may be metaphorical in the above context, but it remains an activity in which Empedokles—according to Hölderlin at least—literally engaged. At the opening of the play, Delia comments to the recently resurrected Panthea that she once witnessed Empedokles “auf einem Kämpfer- / wagen bei den Spielen zu Olympia” (StA 4, 3).⁵¹ This detail conveys Empedokles’ resolve upon a rapid course of death and furthermore calls to mind the more physical connotations of *Vorlaufen*.

Similar to the literal meaning of Heidegger’s notion, Empedokles’ conduct amounts to a rush forward into death. Strictly speaking, he is of course not running but racing upon a horse-drawn chariot, and one might more accurately employ the word *Vorrennen*.

Nonetheless, the image suggested by Hölderlin’s literary metaphor and Heidegger’s more conceptual term seems basically the same, as both involve a forward propulsion or acceleration.

To look back upon a further point in *Sein und Zeit*, the process of *Vorlaufen* allows Dasein’s possibility to increase without measure:

Im Vorlaufen in diese Möglichkeit wird sie “immer größer”, das heißt sie enthüllt sich als solche, die überhaupt kein Maß, kein mehr oder minder kennt, sondern die Möglichkeit der maßlosen Unmöglichkeit der Existenz bedeutet.
(SZ, 262)

Looking ahead for a moment to the second draft of *Der Tod des Empedokles* so as to examine this aspect of forward projection more uniformly, one finds a metaphor that better expresses the boundless acceleration of chariot racing. Here Hölderlin has Panthea speak on Empedokles’ behalf:

[...] gedachtet ihr,
 Es halte der Stachel ihn auf? es beschleunigen ihm
 Die Schmerzen den Flug und wie der Wagenlenker,
 Wenn ihm das Rad in der Bahn
 Zu rauchen beginnt, eilt
 Der Gefährdete nur schneller zum Kranze!
 (StA 4, 116)

Empedokles' forward-running conduct toward death can be considered a form of *Vorlaufen* insofar as it is a self-driving force that answers to its own inner necessity and continually increases in momentum. The extreme possibility of finitude intensifies in direct proportion to its anticipation on the part of the forward-runner or *Vorläufer*. The closer one comes to death, the faster the pace, the shorter the path. Empedokles' metaphorical chariot hurtles along this track or "Todespfad" until its wheels begin to smoke from the friction of acceleration. His "dangerous" and self-destructive race hence remains more than an analogous fulfillment of Heidegger's notion; it is also a highly graphic realization of forward-running Dasein's projection into the possibility of death. Though a metaphor within the drama, Empedokles' chariot race becomes a literal *Vorlaufen in den Tod* in the broader context of *Sein und Zeit*. Despite the fact that there is some convincing philological evidence to support a connection between Luther's *cursus ad mortem* and its direct translation into German by Heidegger, it would seem that Hölderlin's Empedokles remains a more fleshed-out *Vorläufer* in the dual sense of the word: as both a "forward-runner" who factually attests to Heidegger's existenzial-

ontological model; and as a temporal “forerunner” who prefigures and in some fashion helped shape the analyses of *Sein und Zeit*.

It is according to this latter meaning of *Vorläufer* that Empedokles might be considered, in Allemann’s previously cited words, a “vorontologischen Beleg”⁵² for Heidegger’s existenzial-ontological inquiry into death. Though Allemann ultimately rejects any significant affinity between Hölderlin’s drama and Heidegger’s analytic, he is nevertheless correct to be searching for such pre-ontological testimony. Heidegger himself tends to do just that in *Sein und Zeit*, the most noted example being his discussion of the Cura fable as proof of Dasein’s being as care or *Sorge*. (Cf. SZ, 197f.)

Allemann’s contention that Hölderlin does not view death as finitude but as a gateway to the infinite is however only part of the truth. Though Empedokles’ death ultimately results in elemental dissolution (“und sterbend kehrt / Ins Element ein jedes” [StA 4, 65]) and thus reunites him with infinite nature, he still draws existential meaning from his resolve and furthermore recognizes that only in the face of his finitude does he actually or for that matter authentically (here the double meaning of *eigentlich*) exist. In his final monologue, rather than anticipating a transcendent death, whether a Christian afterlife or a pantheistic reunion with the elements, Empedokles looks back upon existence and comes to regard his imminent end as a supreme summation of life:

Wie ist mir? staunen muß ich noch, als fieng
 Ich erst zu leben an, denn all ist anders,
 Und jezt erst bin ich, bin — und darum wars,
 Daß in der frommen Ruhe dich so oft,
 Du Müßiger, ein Sehnen überfiel?

O darum ward das Leben dir so leicht,
 Daß du des Überwinders Freuden all
 In einer vollen That am Ende fändest?
 Ich komme. Sterben? nur ins Dunkel ists
 Ein Schritt, und sehen möchtest du doch, mein Auge!
 Du hast mir ausgedient, dienstfertiges!
 Es muß die Nacht itzt eine Weile mir
 Das Haupt umschatten. Aber freudig quillt
 Aus muthger Brust die Flamme. Schauerndes
 Verlangen! Was? Am Tod entzündet mir
 Das Leben sich zuletzt? [...]

(StA 4, 80f.)

At this indeterminable point before his plunge into volcanic fire, Empedokles' confrontation with death becomes a reckoning with life. This inversion of perspective contrasts with the more Christian sentiments that Hölderlin expresses in his correspondence, where he inclines toward a view of death as transcendence, if only to comfort his grieving friends and relatives. Empedokles' fate, rather, has more in common with that of Diotima, whose parting words reveal the existential significance of finitude: "[...] ohne Tod ist kein Leben" (StA 3, 150). Empedokles similarly cannot divorce life from its traditional negation; death forms an integral part of his existence as it does for Diotima and Heidegger, whose statement "Der Tod im weitesten Sinne ist ein Phänomen des Lebens" (SZ, 246) is essentially but a reformulation of Diotima's words. This is precisely Empedokles' realization in the above monologue, which occurs near the end of the first draft, but perhaps only midway through the projected course of the drama. The fact that Empedokles never fully carries out his resolution in Hölderlin's fragment by no means diminishes the possibility of his *Vorlaufen*, for from an existential standpoint

the anticipation of death outweighs its actualization. And it would seem that Empedokles has reckoned with his fate long before this final monologue, indeed his path unto death has been determined from birth: “[...] mir ist / ein ander Loos beschieden, andern Pfad / Weissaget einst, da ich geboren ward, / Ihr Götter mir [...]” (StA 4, 58). Later in the draft, this predetermination on the part of the gods is made into Empedokles’ own existential directive: “Und wohlbewußt ist mir mein Loos und längst / Am jugendlichen Tage hab’ ich mirs / Geweissagt [...]” (StA 4, 73). As with *geworfenes* Dasein, which enters upon a course of death as soon as it is thrown into the world, Empedokles’ *Sein zum Tode* remains established from an early age, even from the moment of birth. His death is existentially grounded from the start and requires no further portrayal. The reader knows, through the tragic hero’s own anticipatory words and accelerated actions, that it will come swiftly and “zu rechter Zeit”.

Empedokles’ death is rooted in life, existence, being; yet it has an even further ground: guilt. According to Hermokrates at the beginning of the play, Empedokles has been punished by the gods for aspiring to become one of them:

Denn es haben
 Die Götter seine Kraft von ihm genommen,
 Seit jenem Tage, da der trunkne Mann
 Vor allem Volk sich einen Gott genannt.
 [...]
 Es haben ihn die Götter sehr geliebt,
 Doch nicht ist er der Erste, den sie drauf
 Hinab in sinnlose Nacht verstoßen,
 Vom Gipfel ihres gütigen Vertrauns
 Weil er des Unterschieds zu sehr vergaß

Im übergroßen Glück, und sich allein
 Nur fühlte; so ergieng es ihm, er ist
 Mit gränzenloser Oede nun gestraft —

(StA 4, 10, 11)

This aspect of self-deification comes from the *Katharmoi*, where Empedocles proclaims to all of Acragas: “I go about among you, an immortal god, no longer mortal [...]” (Fr. 112). Hölderlin found these words echoed in Diogenes, who quotes these lines and a fragment on metempsychosis from the *Purifications*.⁵³ Otherwise, Diogenes merely refers in passing to Empedocles’ “Sühnelied” but fails to discuss this work in any detail. The fact that Hölderlin incorporates the notion of crime and guilt into his project therefore presupposes a familiarity with other sources, perhaps with the actual fragments themselves.⁵⁴ In these, however, the offense is not one of blasphemy or hubris, nor does the ensuing guilt apply solely to Empedocles as an individual. The entire race of Daimones has fallen from grace through an act of bloodshed and must henceforth refrain from further killing in their series of reincarnations from plants to humans. As exiled divinities forced to take on mortal form, they cannot be guilty of presumption; on the contrary, they have lowered their level of existence rather than sought to raise it. Whereas Hölderlin’s Empedokles remains a mortal who strives for the divine, the Empedocles of the *Katharmoi* can consider himself a god because he is originally a Daimon who hopes to attain this last stage of palingenesis so as to terminate his period of exile. Hölderlin’s shift from a universal to a personal guilt and from a divine to a human perspective forms a major departure from the original fragments. His Empedokles equates himself with the most notorious transgressor of the Greek world, or at least with

the one whose actions had the most tragic consequences for posterity: [...] du hast es selbst verschuldet, armer Tantalus / Das Heiligtum hast du geschändet, hast / Mit frechem Stolz den schönen Bund entzweit [...] (StA, 4, 15). This identification with Tantalus, the father of the House of Atreus, contains the only form of the word *Schuld* in the first draft. In his next admission of guilt, this time not to himself but to Pausanias, he again speaks of his insolent pride and, like another famous figure of Greek tragedy, voices the most existential lament, that of his very birth:

Die Götter waren
 Mir dienstbar geworden, ich allein
 War Gott, und sprachs im frechen Stolz heraus.
 O glaub es mir, ich wäre lieber nicht
 Geboren!⁵⁵

(StA 4, 21)

Pausanias' reaction to his master's confession has led some critics to speak of a "Wortschuld" and consequently to underestimate the gravity of Empedokles's guilt⁵⁶: "Was? um eines Wortes willen? / Wie kannst so du verzagen, kühner Mann!" (StA 4, 21). Empedokles' response: "Um eines Wortes willen? ja" (StA 4, 21) only seems to reinforce the fact that his guilt is based on blasphemous words rather than actual deeds. Beißner however speaks here of a "Tröstungsversuch des Pausanias" (StA 4, 342) and warns the reader against taking Empedokles' agreement too literally, i.e. lightly. (StA 4, 341). Though he in part defers to his predecessors Böhm and Böckmann, he concretely supports his argument with two revealing notes that Hölderlin wrote in the margins of the

draft. The first such *Randbemerkung* follows the words of Hermokrates quoted above, “Vor allem Volk sich einen Gott genannt” (StA 4, 10):

Bei uns ist so etwas mehr eine Sünde gegen den Verstand, bei den Alten war es von dieser Seite verzeihlicher, weil es ihnen begreiflicher war. Nicht Ungereimtheit, Verbrechen war es ihnen. Aber sie verzeihen es nicht, weil ihr Freiheitssinn kein solches Wort ertragen wollte. Eben weil sie es mehr ehrten und verstanden fürchteten sie auch mehr den Übermuth des Genies. Uns ist es nicht gefährlich, weil wir nicht berührbar sind dafür. (StA 4/2, 446)

The second marginal note ties in with Empedokles’ admission of guilt to Pausanias (StA 4, 20; vv. 466ff.) and here Hölderlin draws a decidedly Christian parallel:

Seine Sünde ist die / Ursünde, deßwegen / nichts weniger, als / ein Abstractum, so / wenig, als höchste Freude / ein Abstractum ist, / nur <muß> sie genetisch leben / dig dargestellt werden. (StA 4/2, 464)

One way of depicting his guilt/sin in a “genetically vivid” manner is perhaps to create a plot that retells the Passion story.⁵⁷ In the course of the three drafts, Empedokles, whose originary guilt seems more an inner *Wesens-* than linguistic *Wortschuld*, increasingly functions as a Christ-like redeemer who reconciles the realms of the human and divine. His healing of Panthea, who was given up for dead by the rest of Acragas, points beyond the biographical detail related by Diogenes to Christ’s resurrection of Lazarus. Indeed, Panthea and Delia may even be modeled after the constellation of Lazarus’ sisters, Martha and Mary, though due to Panthea’s romantic sentiment toward Empedokles it seems more likely that Hölderlin had Mary Magdalene in mind. Far more unequivocal is the character configuration of Hermokrates and Kritias, who as high priest

and archon play out the roles of Caiaphus and Pontius Pilate. Pausanias' part in the drama is both that of Greek pupil and lover (ερωμενος) as well as that of a disciple. He is even told by his master near the end of the draft to prepare a meal resembling the Last Supper: "[...] gehe nun hinein, / Bereit ein Mahl, daß ich des Halmes Frucht / Noch Einmal koste, und der Rebe Kraft, / Und dankesfroh mein Abschied sei [...]" (StA 4, 79). Empedokles' subsequent departure from the world remains perhaps the most crucial similarity between his fate and that of Christ. Despite their vastly different modes of death, both figures redeem guilt or sin not through outward punishment per se, but through an internally motivated self-sacrifice. While Christ accepts crucifixion in order to expiate the original sin of mankind, Empedokles overcomes his more personal guilt by embracing death in volcanic flames.

Though personal, Empedokles' guilt is still a fundamental component of his existence, just as original sin, according to Christian dogma, belongs to the essence of mankind.⁵⁸ Both forms of transgression are in a sense primordial, for their roots run deep into being. The pronouncement "ich allein / War Gott" is an ontological one: Empedokles once *was* a god, and his words, far from being an empty claim of divinity (and hence a *Wortschuld*), describe this previous state of existence. Empedokles' guilt, in other words, "ist existentiell, steckt in seinem innersten Wesen."⁵⁹ As with *Dasein*, it constitutes the ground of his being from which he projects himself and structures his existence. Empedokles' existential guilt thus has the ontological profundity of *Dasein's Schuldigsein*. Though it does not fully correspond to Heidegger's rather singular notion of *Grundsein einer Nichtigkeit*, it does to an extent form the basis of Empedokles' resolve

to sacrifice himself and hence nullifies other courses of action that he might take to expiate his crime. By fixing his sights on Etna he rules out other options of potential conduct, whether to go on living and be confronted with a myriad of additional choices or to assert a different manner of death, such as those documented in Diogenes. The consequences that Empedokles draws from his ontologically guilty state spur him along a freely chosen path of death, a path that is fraught with both affirmed and annulled possibilities.

V. The Second Draft of the Drama

The second draft is the only one of the three to bear a definite title in the manuscripts: *Der Tod des Empedokles / Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Acten*. Despite the projected five acts, only the first and end of the second are preserved, in all a total of 732 verses, which makes this version about one third the length of the first draft.⁶⁰ Because the second draft is far more fragmented than the first, it poses difficulties for any attempt at a comprehensive interpretation. This problem becomes especially acute when dealing with thematic issues such as death and guilt, which, due to the limited exposition of this draft, cannot possibly receive the treatment that they did in the first. The reader is thus forced to second guess Hölderlin's intentions more so than in any previous stage of the project. There is however no need to speculate beyond the text, for Empedokles' fate remains predetermined, his anticipation of death already a requisite element of the tragedy. What seems new in this attempted version of the drama is the motivation behind

his *Vorlaufen in den Tod*. While still *driven* toward death by guilt (and metaphorically by his chariot), Empedokles commits a slightly different crime: rather than seeking to become a god out of sheer hubris and for individual *Existenzsteigerung*, he takes on the role of a mediator between the human and divine—not for personal gain but for love of his fellow man.

In the first draft, Empedokles joins the gods only to fall from their favor, consequently becoming guilty of a Tantalus-like insolence. Now his arrogance toward the gods and his subsequent expulsion from their ranks have a different precedent, as revealed by Hermokrates at the beginning of the second draft:

Das hat zu mächtig ihn
 Gemacht, daß er vertraut
 Mit Göttern worden ist.
 Es tönt sein Wort dem Volk',
 Als käm es vom Olymp;
 Sie dankens ihm,
 Daß er vom Himmel raubt
 Die Lebensflamm' und sie
 Verräth den Sterblichen.

(StA 4, 92)

Empedokles in other words replays the role of Prometheus, who out of his love for mortals fashioned them after the gods and gave them fire for protection. According to Hermokrates, Empedokles similarly acted out of love for mankind: “[...] er wird es büßen / Daß er zu sehr geliebt die Sterblichen” (StA 4, 93). There is of course some irony, perhaps deliberate on Hölderlin’s part, with regard to the motif of fire in both

cases: whereas Prometheus' *crime* lies in stealing the "Lebensflam", Empedokles' *atonement* is caught up in this very element. Nevertheless, they share the common guilt of a "sublime *Mittler-Hybris*"⁶¹. This function of Empedokles forms his principal conflict with Hermokrates, who as high priest considers himself the official mediator between man and the gods. In this version of the play, Hermokrates and the archon of Acragas, who is now called Mekades, conspire even more than in the first draft to bring about Empedokles' downfall. In fact, Hermokrates intends to sacrifice him directly rather than wait out his decision for a voluntary death: "Und Schaden ist es nicht, / So wir ihn opfern. Untergehen muß / Er doch!" (StA 4, 96). Mekades, like his predecessor Kritias, opts for a less aggressive approach:

Laß ihn! gieb ihm nicht Anstoß! findet den
 Zu frecher That der Übermüthge nicht,
 Und kann er nur im Worte sündigen,
 So stirbt er, als ein Thor, und schadet uns
 Nicht viel.

(StA 4, 96)

Again, the notion of "Wortschuld"—or in this context "Wortsünde"—appears in contrast to the sinful act itself. Hoffmeister stresses the important verbal or dialectical aspect implicit in the term "Wortschuld" within the limited context of this draft. Here his argument is worth citing at length:

Einmal kommt die Vorstellung der Wortschuld jetzt dichterisch-darstellerisch zur Geltung, und zwar [...] als Bericht aus dem Mund des Hermokrates [...] Hölderlin bemüht sich nun wirklich um eine "genetisch-lebendige" Vorstellung

der Wortschuld; er läßt Hermokrates schildern, wie es kam, daß Empedokles wortschuldig wurde. Zum andern aber verbreitet sich mit dieser konkreten Darstellung, dieser stärkeren Integration der genannten Momente, die Basis der Existenz des Empedokles überhaupt; — es geht nicht mehr um das Heraustreten eines begnadeten einzelnen aus seiner Innigkeit bis zum Positivwerden in einem Wort, sondern es geht jetzt um die Problematik der Mitteilung des Göttlichen durch einen einzelnen überhaupt, anders gesagt, um die Problematik der Mittlerschaft.⁶²

The implication here is that the theme of guilt was to unfold throughout Hölderlin's second unsuccessful attempt at the tragedy. This unfolding was to occur both dynamically through dramatic dialogue, the principal spokesman being not Empedokles but Hermokrates, and thematically through the broader question of mediation. In both cases, guilt becomes dialectic (i.e. dialogic and mediative) and as such an essential component of the *Empedokles* tragedy. Given the minimal length of the draft, it is impossible to trace the dialectical progression of guilt and indeed difficult enough to discern its presence. The following situation however seems clear: Empedokles is guilty of playing the mediator between mankind and the gods, yet in contrast to the first draft he himself has little to say about his crime or for that matter about his death. It is principally Hermokrates and Mekades that discuss his guilt, while Delia and Panthea are left to contemplate his resolve to die. Hölderlin even casts a number of characters to represent the people of Acragas (he previously had anonymous citizens do the talking): Amphares, Demokles, and Hylas. Though the drama breaks off before these figures can be introduced, Hölderlin's intentions are evident: to create yet another perspective through which Empedokles becomes mediated.

Hölderlin's serious concern with the problem of guilt or at least transgression is apparent in another fragmented text, namely the essay from 1795 "Über den Begriff der Strafe." Pierre Bertaux places special emphasis on this relatively obscure writing in his epilogue entitled "Triptychon", which addresses "[d]rei miteinander verwandte Themen" in Hölderlin's work: (1) "der Begriff des Wahnsinns" (2) "die Begriffe von Schuld, Strafe und Sühne" (3) "der Begriff des Todes."⁶³ Hölderlin's central statement in this brief essay is: "Alles Leiden ist Strafe" (StA 4, 215). His definition of this key concept remains tautological, which is perhaps but symptomatic of the viciously circular relation between established laws and their transgression:

Strafe ist, was auf das Böse folgt. Und böse ist, worauf Strafe folgt.
Es scheint dann aber doch mit der Unterscheidung zwischen dem Erkenntnisgrunde und Realgrunde wenig geholfen zu seyn. Wenn der Widerstand des Gesezes gegen meinen Willen Strafe ist und ich also an der Strafe das Gesez erkenne, so fragt sich einmal, kann ich an der Strafe das Gesez erkennen? und dann, kann ich bestraft werden für die Übertretung eines Gesezes das ich nicht kannte? (StA 4, 215)

Not once does Hölderlin speak of guilt, but Bertaux finds significance in this fact:

"Merkwürdigerweise wird in den sechzig Zeilen der Abhandlung vom Wort *Schuld* kein Gebrauch gemacht. Dies ist kein Zufall, sondern Absicht. Dieser Begriff ist für Hölderlin nicht brauchbar. Warum nicht?"⁶⁴ This question leads Bertaux to Hegel's concept of "schuldlose Schuld" from *Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal*, a work that was conceived around the same time as *Der Tod des Empedokles*.⁶⁵ Bertaux speculates on the intellectual exchange between the poet and philosopher:

Wenn Hegel durch seine historisch-ethischen Betrachtungen zum Begriff der schuldlosen Schuld geführt worden war, so hatte Hölderlin durch rein dramaturgische Erwägungen zum selben Begriff geführt werden können. Nur ein Held, der zugleich schuldig und unschuldig ist—wie Ödipus, wie Antigone—kann ein tragischer Held sein. Wenn er rein unschuldig wäre, so wäre er ein Opfer der Welt und der Geschichte—keine tragische Figur. Wenn er völlig schuldig wäre, so wäre sein tragisches Ende ein wohlverdientes und einfach gerechtes. Erst durch eine jeweilige Kombination von Schuld und Schuldlosigkeit wird der Held zu einer tragischen Figur.⁶⁶

The fact that Oedipus and Antigone figure in the work of both Hölderlin and Hegel lends support to Bertaux's argument. Hölderlin's translations of *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone*, published in 1804, are accompanied by theoretical "Anmerkungen" that attempt to explain the notion of tragedy, though not necessarily in terms of guilt. This is reserved for Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* from 1807, in which he discusses the tragic figures of Oedipus and especially Antigone within the context of *Sittlichkeit*. Antigone's conscious offense against the laws of the state results in a "pure guilt" (in other words, a *schuldlose Schuld*) whose burden is to be shouldered rather than shrugged off:

Aber das sittliche Bewußtsein ist vollständiger, seine Schuld reiner, wenn es das Gesetz und die Macht vorher kennt, der es gegenüber tritt, sie für Gewalt und Unrecht, für eine sittliche Zufälligkeit nimmt, und wissentlich, wie Antigone, das Verbrechen begeht [...] Das sittliche Bewußtsein muß sein Entgegengesetztes um dieser Wirklichkeit willen, und um seines Tuns willen, als die seinige, es muß seine Schuld anerkennen [...]⁶⁷

Whereas Hölderlin focuses on *Strafe*, Hegel takes up the more ordinary notion of *Schuld*. This difference in emphasis is exemplified in their respective statements “Alles Leiden ist Straffe” and “jedes Leiden [...] ist Schuld”⁶⁸ Still, punishment presupposes guilt, as effect does a cause. Whether Hegel’s analysis of tragic guilt was caused by or instead had an effect on Hölderlin’s ideas concerning transgression is impossible to say. The biographical and intellectual relations between them are too intertwined for one to make clear distinctions. The following claim by Bertaux could therefore hold true: “Das Prinzip der schuldlosen Schuld des tragischen Helden, das Hölderlin anhand der Tragödien des Sophokles analysiert hatte, verwendet er jetzt als Tragiker: darauf wird die Empedokles-Tragödie aufgebaut.”⁶⁹

More noticeable in Hölderlin’s preoccupation with Sophoclean tragedy is the important role of death. In his “Anmerkungen zur Antigonä” Hölderlin differentiates between Greek and Hesperian art, the latter also called “vaterländische Kunst”:

Und so ist wohl *das tödtlichfactische, der wirkliche Mord aus Worten, mehr als eigenthümlich griechische und einer vaterländischeren Kunstform subordinirte Kunstform zu betrachten*. Eine vaterländische mag, wie wohl beweislich ist, mehr tödtendfactisches, als tödtlichfactisches Wort sein; nicht eigentlich mit Mord oder Tod endigen, weil doch hieran das Tragische muß gefaßt werden [...] (StA 5, 270)

As often in his speculative writings, Hölderlin is not entirely lucid, especially here with regard to the principles “tödtlichfactisch” and “tödtendfactisch”. It would seem that the former calls for death within the tragedy whereas the latter avoids its direct portrayal and merely points to its future occurrence. Hölderlin’s general argument in the notes to

Antigone is that words have a physical effect in tragedy and often result in the death of certain characters. As he states: “[...] daß das Wort *mittelbarer factisch* wird, indem es den sinnlichen Körper ergreift [...]” (StA 5, 269). This idea makes perfect sense in view of the fact that, compared to modern drama, little action takes place in Greek tragedy; for the most part, characters stand around and talk about events rather than act them out, and rarely does a violent scene occur on stage. (The suicide of Ajax is one of the few exceptions to this rule.) Characters are judged, condemned, and killed not through direct actions but through the medium of words. The spoken word thus lays hold of characters and operates through them with any number of effects, including murder: “Das *griechischtragische Wort ist tödtlichfactisch*, weil der Leib, den es ergreift, wirklich tödtet” (StA 5, 269). Within the context of Sophocles’ play, Creon’s verbal decree against the burial of Polynices, brings about the physical deaths of Antigone, his son Haemon, and his wife Eurydice.⁷⁰ Creon realizes that at least the latter has died as a consequence of his “tödtlichfactisches Wort”: “And the guilt is mine— / can never be fixed on another man, / no escape for me. I killed you, / I, god help me, I admit it all!”⁷¹

The Hesperian word, in contrast, does not lead to actual death but merely intimates its occurrence, as Hölderlin suggests is the case in another Sophoclean play, *Oedipus at Colonus*: “[...] so daß *das Wort* aus begeistertem Munde schrecklich ist, und tödtet, nicht griechisch faßlich, in athletischem und plastischem Geiste, wo das Wort den Körper ergreift, daß dieser tödtet” (StA 5, 270). A brief examination of the plot of *Oedipus at Colonus* helps unlock Hölderlin’s cryptic point. The blind and broken Oedipus wanders off to die, but his end is not depicted in the course of the play. All of the characters (as

well as members of the audience) are left in the dark about the exact cause or moment of his death: “But by what doom / Oedipus died not a man can say [...]”⁷² Even the fateful site where he chooses to end his life remains a secret, known only to himself and Theseus, the ruler of Athens. Oedipus has long decided upon and anticipated his fate, and that takes precedence over the actuality of death, which is what Hölderlin means with his concept of *tödtendfaktisch*. Again, this concept remains rather nebulous and one is dependent on the few scholars that have attempted an explanation, for instance Klaus Düsing, who comments: “[...] aber es [tödtendfactisches Wort] verursacht nicht wirklichen Tod einer sinnlich gegenwärtigen Person, sondern wirkt innerlicher und geistig bedeutsamer.”⁷³

These words seem to describe the situation in Hölderlin’s own tragedy, where death becomes spiritually internalized rather than physically actualized. This remains of course in part due to the incompleteness of the drama, which never progresses beyond Empedokles’ anticipation of death. Since the second draft is even more fragmented than the first, it contains fewer references to death, but this by no means diminishes the tragic hero’s anticipatory conduct. As mentioned earlier, these references seldom come from Empedokles himself, but from his followers, Pausanias, Delia, and Panthea, all of whom assemble at the end of the text to comment on his fate.

One of the few times that Empedokles hints at his coming death occurs during a conversation with his disciple Pausanias near the end of the first act. Empedokles, having been cast out of Olympus where he coexisted with the gods—“ich bin heraus geworfen,

bin / Ganz einsam” (StA 4, 107)—reveals to the less reflective Pausanias his resulting isolation, a condition of literal *Geworfenheit* which he equates with death:

EMPEDOKLES

Du kennest mich und dich und Tod und Leben nicht.

PAUSANIAS

Den Tod, ich kenn' ihn wenig nur,
Denn wenig dacht' ich seiner.

EMPEDOKLES

Allein zu seyn,
Und ohne Götter, ist der Tod.

(StA 4, 108)

The first act however soon ends, and the text skips to the end of act two, where Pausanias, Delia, and Panthea speak about Empedokles' resolve to die. As previously cited, Panthea describes him as a “Wagenlenker” whose chariot increases in acceleration the closer it comes to its goal (StA 4, 116). Delia for her part speaks of his readiness to die in less metaphorical terms: “Zu gern nur, Empedokles, / Zu gerne opferst du dich [...] (StA 115). Interestingly, Empedokles' anticipated death is shown to have both historical and mythological precedents. In the following lines Panthea alludes to Socrates, whose death Hölderlin originally planned to dramatize: “Und trinkt, wie mein Held, doch auch / Am Todeskelche sich glücklich” (StA 116). A further allusion, one that specifically concerns death by flame, also stems from Panthea, who most likely refers to Hercules' ceremonial cremation upon Mount Oeta in her statement: “Sind nicht, wie er, auch / Der Heroen einige zu den Göttern gegangen?” (StA 4, 117).⁷⁴ Much as Hercules'

death becomes a festive occasion, Empedokles' own "Flammentod" is regarded as a celebratory act by his followers and commentators, two of whom (Pausanias and Panthea) remark that he "geh[e]t festlich hinab" (StA 4, 117) into the crater of Etna. This idea of death as a *Fest* will later figure in Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. For now, in anticipation of this link between Hölderlin and Nietzsche, it is important to point out that Empedokles affirms his death in the prime of life or in his "Blüte" as Pausanias, Delia, and Panthea all agree (cf. StA 4, 114, 115, 116). In other words, Empedokles becomes ripe for death at the height of existence rather than at an advanced age, when wizened and debilitated like Oedipus. Within the framework of the second draft, this accelerated process of *Todesreife* manifests itself in the structure of the tragedy, for Empedokles is already given up for dead at the end of act two. Though not yet dead, he might as well be: his intentions are clear early on in the drama and only await finalization. His *Vorlaufen* appears to have accelerated at such a rate that the final three acts become, if not superfluous, then at least impossible to fill with further dramatic action. Once again, Hölderlin must call a halt to this breakneck pace and rethink his project.

VI. The Third Draft of the Drama

His drama now interrupted for the second time, Hölderlin engaged in a period of philosophical reflection, from which emerged the essay "Grund zum Empedokles". This rather abstruse theoretical writing gives an entirely new foundation to the project. Here

Hölderlin discusses the opposition of nature and art in terms of *das Aorgische* and *das Organische*. The former notion, whose etymology has long baffled scholars,⁷⁵ encompasses the extremes “des Unbegreiflichen, des Unfühlbaren, des Unbegrenzten” (StA 153), whereas the latter concept designates finite and mediated phenomena such as art and human existence. These two principles conflict with one another dialectically and become reconciled in the tragic figure of Empedokles, “Ein Mensch, in dem sich jene Gegensätze so innig vereinigen, daß sie zu Einem in ihm werden [...]” (StA 4, 154). This synthetic function of Empedokles forms the basis of his death, which is still conceived as a sacrifice, but one over which he no longer has control. In Hölderlin’s own words, here excerpted from a single sentence that runs over an entire page:

[...] das Schicksaal seiner Zeit [...] erforderte ein Opfer, [...] wo die Extreme sich in Einem wirklich und sichtbar zu vereinigen scheinen, aber eben deswegen zu innig vereinigt sind, und in einer idealischen That das Individuum deswegen untergeht und untergehen muß, [...] weil sonst das Allgemeine im Individuum sich verlöre und [...] das Leben einer Welt in seiner Einzelheit abstürbe [...]
(StA 4, 156f.)

Of course there was always some sense of necessity to Empedokles’s sacrifice, even as early as the “Frankfurter Plan”, where he comes to regard his death as “[...] eine Nothwendigkeit, die aus seinem innersten Wesen folge” (StA 4, 148). In the first two drafts, this inner necessity is replaced by an equally deep-seated existential guilt. His death in all three cases may transcend individual bounds insofar as it brings about a more universal reunification with nature, but the original determination to die still lies with Empedokles himself. In Hölderlin’s essay, however, Empedokles is deprived of all

volition and becomes the product of a greater cosmic destiny. He is “das Resultat seiner Periode” (StA 4, 155) and “ein Opfer seiner Zeit” (StA 4, 157), who has no say in the matter of his fate. His death can therefore no longer be considered “freiwillig[-]” (StA 4, 147) or existentially necessary; its necessity instead remains that of an impersonal outside force or ἀνάγκη. The fact that Hölderlin completely reconceives the motivation behind Empedokles’ death and makes no mention of guilt throughout the essay has led a number of critics to ignore any further development of this motive/motif in the third draft of the play,⁷⁶ a draft that is even more truncated than the previous two and therefore all the more problematical to interpret.

The third draft of the drama became known as *Empedokles auf dem Aetna* through the editions of Zinkernagel and Pigenot. Beißner however, arguing on the basis of manuscripts, maintains that this title applies to certain scenes rather than to the drama as a whole.⁷⁷ He also observes that Hölderlin, in a letter to Schiller written sometime in September, 1799, refers to this version of the tragedy as “den Tod des Empedokles” (cf. StA 6, 364).⁷⁸ The title of the play hence remains unchanged since at least the second draft, and Empedokles’ death also remains the focus of this final dramatic attempt. A crucial difference lies however in the acceleration of his resolve. Whereas the first two versions do not introduce the character of Empedokles let alone his *Todesentschluß* until well after the first scene, the third and final draft opens with his monologue on nature and death. Once again, Hölderlin seems to become caught in the very pitfall that plagued his earlier dramatic attempts: how to compose a full five-act tragedy when the tragic hero is ready to die from the start? Empedokles’ *Vorlaufen* thus appears to work to the

disadvantage of the drama, for his propulsion toward death outstrips the momentum of the plot itself.

A further difference concerns the cast of characters or at least their relations to one another. Pausanias remains Empedokles' follower, yet here in the more literal sense, as he is prepared to follow his master even into death. Empedokles repeatedly discourages Pausanias from imitating his actions, in one instance pointing to the basic difference between them: "Nein! du bist ohne Schuld [...]" (StA 4, 126). A new figure, the Egyptian Manes, is a prophet who reveals to Empedokles his destiny as redeemer of mankind. Two characters listed in the *dramatis personae* that never actually appear in the first and only act of the play are Strato and Panthea, the latter now Empedokles' sister, the former his brother and principal adversary as ruler of Acragas. (Strato is apparently a composite of Hermokrates and Kritias/Manes.) By creating this fraternal link between Empedokles and his enemy, Hölderlin is better able to illustrate the dialectical opposition at the heart of his reconceived drama. The necessity of Empedokles' death is not only due to abstract cosmic forces (as suggested in the essay), but to the concrete and primal fact of his birth.

Yet the important question in light of the theoretical "Grund zum Empedokles" concerns the precise motivation behind the dramatic hero's death. Given the limited progress that Hölderlin made on this stage of the project, it is difficult if not impossible to trace the roots of Empedokles' resolution and establish a definitive ground for his death—certainly not to the extent that Hölderlin justifies his figure's sacrifice in the essay. At just over 500 verses, this draft remains the shortest of the three, and the interpreter has

little text upon which to base his claims. Nevertheless there are more than enough references to guilt/sin to show that Hölderlin did not utterly abandon this central impetus behind the death of Empedokles.

This version of the drama opens with a monologue of Empedokles, in which he expresses both his guilt and will to die. As mentioned above, he has been exiled from Acragas and now roams the slopes of Etna, reflecting on the banishment that his brother decreed and the citizens applauded:

Beim Todtenrichter! wohl hab ichs verdient!
 Und heilsam wars; die Kranken heilt das Gift
 Und eine Sünde straft die andere.
 Denn viel gesündigt hab ich von Jugend auf,
 Die Menschen menschlich nie geliebt, gedient
 [...]

(StA 4, 122)

The source of Empedokles' guilt lies in his life-long neglect of his fellow man. There is no indication here of hybris, whether that of an arrogant mortal who fancies himself a god, as was originally the case in the first draft, or that of a Promethean mediator, as in the second. Empedokles' "schwarze Sünde" (StA 4, 135) results rather from a communal breach. In the course of Hölderlin's project, the ideal bond between Empedokles and his people becomes stronger, if not in execution then at least in conception.⁷⁹ In the first draft, Empedokles feels little attachment to mankind; expelled from Olympus, he is forced to dwell among mortals, with whom he has an antagonistic relationship, particularly when it comes to the question of death. His *Vorlaufen* distinguishes him

from the masses, who, like Heidegger's *das Man*, seek to prolong their existence beyond its potential. The second draft "bezieht den Empedokles von Anfang an stärker auf seine historische Funktion und das Volk der Agrigentiner."⁸⁰ His original self-promoting act of *hybris* becomes a crime committed out of altruism. In the final version of the play, Empedokles' guilt seems to have become secularized. His feeling of kinship is no longer with the gods above, but with the elements around him and—as Hölderlin meant to develop in the never completed acts of the drama—with the countrymen that he has hitherto ignored. The essay "Grund zum Empedokles" clarifies this point: "Aber in so innigem Verhältnisse wie er mit dem Lebendigen der Elemente steht, stehet er auch mit seinem Volke" (StA 4, 160). Manes awakens Empedokles' latent calling as "der neue Retter" (StA 4, 136), who, again in the function of a mediator, reconciles the realms of the human and divine: "Die Menschen und die Götter söhnt er aus / Und nahe wieder leben sie, wie vormals" (StA 4, 136). The crucial difference between Empedokles' role as savior in the third draft and his intermediary function in the second resides in the basis of his guilt. Whereas in the second version he forsook the gods for the benefit of man, thereby becoming guilty of a "Mittler-Hybris", he now suffers guilt from deserting his people for the sake of divine nature. By refusing to join the greater body of humanity, Empedokles not only brings guilt upon himself, but ultimately prepares the way for his own death. Again, Hölderlin theorizes this chain of events in his essay, though he omits the key motivation of guilt: "So individualisirt sich seine Zeit in Empedokles, und jemehr sie sich in ihm individualisirt, [...] um so nothwendiger wird sein Untergang" (StA 4, 158).

Empedokles' death may be necessary from a theoretical standpoint; within the context of the drama, however, it still appears to be freely willed. In the opening scene upon Etna he announces: "Denn sterben will ja ich. Mein Recht ist diß" (StA 4, 122). By the end of the first act his death remains voluntary, though a hint of divine necessity becomes noticeable:

O euch, ihr Genien,

[...]

Ihr Fernentwerfenden! euch dank ich, daß ihr mirs

Gegeben habt, die lange Zahl der Leiden

Zu enden hier, befreit von andrer Pflicht

In freiem Tode, nach göttlichem Geseze!

(StA 4, 139)

Empedokles' "frei[er] Tod[-]" prefigures Zarathustra's "Rede vom freien Tode" as well as Heidegger's formulation "Freiheit zum Tode". Due to the minimal amount of text in the draft, there is simply not enough con-text to help illuminate this important notion of a free death. It of course evokes the original "freiwillig[e] Tod" of Empedokles in the "Frankfurter Plan" and would furthermore seem to designate his general conduct toward finitude in the other versions of the play. Empedokles' death is free because it has been freely chosen over other courses of action. His *freier Tod* should not be confused with *Freitod*, the common euphemism for *Selbstmord*. While Empedokles does in fact kill himself and thus, strictly speaking, commit "suicide" (*sui-caedere*), his act is not a suicidal one in the traditional sense. The German *Freitod* even more than the Latinate "suicide" implies free will, volition, the potential to assert one's individual

freedom amidst the constraints of existence—which is also the implication of Dasein’s *Freiheit zum Tode*. Heidegger, who rejects suicide—*Selbstmord*—as an existenzially valid mode of conduct on the grounds that it converts Dasein’s possibility into actuality (cf. GA 20, 439), seeks to posit an attitude of openness and anticipation toward death. This is not to say that Dasein passively or speculatively awaits its end, for Heidegger equally dismisses such deportments as expectation and brooding, both of which also dispose over death as a present-at-hand object. Dasein rather runs forward into the extreme possibility that its finitude holds. This notion of *Vorlaufen* cannot of course be interpreted as literally with Heidegger as with Hölderlin. Dasein does not in effect run headlong into the jaws of death, thereby giving up its possibility for actuality, at least not in the context of Heidegger’s existenzial-ontological analytic, which only outlines an authentic conduct toward finitude but forgoes any detailed description of such a being unto death. His search for ontic attestation of his ontological analysis does however seem to point directly to Empedokles, whose factual *Vorlaufen* is both a literal and figurative freedom unto death as a physical act of running forward and a more internal attitude of anticipation. Whether or not Heidegger had Empedokles in mind for a factual foundation of his ontological blueprint, the projected fate of Hölderlin’s tragic hero provides a near perfect answer to the following questions: “Wirft sich das Dasein je faktisch in ein solches Sein zum Tode? *Fordert* es auch nur aus dem Grunde seines eigensten Seins ein eigentliches Seinkönnen, das durch das Vorlaufen bestimmt ist?” (SZ, 266).

Empedokles of course literally throws himself into such a being unto death in that he hurtles along a “Todespfad” which leads to a final, consummate leap into the crater of Etna. His act of running or racing forward into death is thus a graphic realization of Heidegger’s conceptualized mode of conduct. Yet Empedokles also finds himself caught up in another, less active, trajectory, namely that of *Geworfenheit*. As in the previous fragments, his course unto death here in the third draft remains fixed from birth: “Und was ich mein’, es ist von heute nicht, / Da ich geboren wurde, wars beschlossen” (StA 4, 127). Manes later reinforces this Heideggerian point of thrownness and Dasein’s consequential facticity of being unto death: “Der Tod, der jähe, er ist von Anbeginn, / Das weist du wohl [...]” (StA 4, 135).

In view of such parallels between *Sein und Zeit* and *Der Tod des Empedokles*, it seems highly unlikely that Heidegger was not the least bit influenced by Hölderlin. Though the notion of *Vorlaufen* remains the most obvious connection, such related themes as (in)authentic death, guilt, and resoluteness all have their pre-ontological place in Hölderlin’s drama. Particularly with regard to the latter two concepts, Heidegger’s ontological reinterpretation almost succeeds in divorcing any relation between their treatment in *Sein und Zeit* and their function in the play. Nevertheless, Empedokles’ existential state of guilt corresponds to Dasein’s *Schuldigsein* on a profound and primordial level. In both cases, their condition of being guilty forms the basis for their actions, especially for their conduct toward death. And again in both cases, this conduct is characterized by resoluteness. With Dasein such a resolute seizure of existence occurs existenzially as *Entschlossenheit* and existenzielly as *Entschluß*. Whereas the former

term designates an “unlocking” or apprehension of selfhood, the latter denotes the individual, praxis-oriented act of making choices in specific situations. Empedokles’ resolve to affirm a free death resembles more of an *Entschluß*, which is precisely the word Hölderlin employs three times in the “Frankfurter Plan”. And as Heidegger himself states, indirectly asserting the existenziell primacy of Empedokles’ resolve: “Ihrer selbst sicher ist die Entschlossenheit nur als Entschluß” (SZ, 298).

Notes to Chapter Five

¹ Emil Staiger, "Der Opfertod von Hölderlins Empedokles," *HJb* 13 (1963/64): 2f.

² Beda Allemann, *Hölderlin und Heidegger*, 2nd ed. (Zürich/Freiburg, 1954) 91.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Jürgen Söring, *Die Dialektik der Rechtfertigung: Überlegungen zu Hölderlins Empedokles-Projekt* (Frankfurt a.M., 1973) 266.

⁵ Ulrich Gaier puts forth the two most intriguing theories with regard to this question. He maintains that Hölderlin learned of Schiller's work on *Wallenstein* during his own writing of *Empedokles* and hoped to gain access, if not to the text itself, then to the underlying tragic element of the play in order to know where he stood with his own drama. Schiller, however, neglected to answer Hölderlin's letter, and so the unfinished drama was put aside indefinitely until *Wallenstein* became available in print. By this time, however, Hölderlin was involved in other plans and his life was increasing in turmoil; bouts with insanity were not long in coming. Another reason—this one of a political nature—for the abandonment of the *Empedokles* project relates to Napoleon's sudden act of declaring himself dictator. Since *Empedokles* was originally conceived as a Napoleonic force of liberation (according to Gaier at any rate), Hölderlin now had to wait out Napoleon's next move and determine whether or not it would upset the dramatic conception of his work in progress. See Gaier, *Hölderlin: Eine Einführung*, 318f.

⁶ See Beißner, *Hölderlin: Reden und Aufsätze* (Weimar, 1961) 67-91; for quote, p. 67. Originally published in *Neophilologus* 42 (1958): 186-212.

⁷ Since I have no access to the Litzmann edition, I cite from Georg Neumann, "Zur Entstehung von Hölderlins Empedokles," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 12 (1923): 278.

⁸ See Beißner, "Hölderlins Trauerspiel *Der Tod des Empedokles* in seinen drei Fassungen," 87. See also Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung*, 353.

⁹ See the table of contents to Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe in fünf Bänden*, ed. Franz Zinkernagel, vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1915) 495.

¹⁰ From the table of contents of Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 3, ed. Ludwig v. Pigenot (Berlin, 1922) vii.

¹¹ In his university lectures of the mid-1930's, Heidegger documents his sources and indeed draws on the two editions in question. His interpretation of the hymn "Germanien" from the *Wintersemester* of 1934/35 even begins with a remark concerning Hellingrath's "maßgebende Ausgabe" and "[d]ie andere kritische Ausgabe von Franz Zinkernagel, die bei der wirklichen Arbeit notwendig mitbenutzt werden muß [...]" (GA 39, 9). In his related lecture from the same semester on "Der Rhein", Heidegger quotes a passage from the first draft of *Der Tod des Empedokles* based on the Hellingrath/Pigenot edition (cf. GA

39, 215f.). The point that Heidegger seeks to illustrate with this excerpt, a dialogue between Panthea and Rhea (the latter figure is called Delia in subsequent editions), regrettably does not concern death, but rather one of his major post-*Kehre* themes: “[d]as so in der Dichtung gestiftete Seyn [...]” (GA 39, 215). A later comment on the drama’s fragmentation, however, has a more proper place in the present context: “Zwar ist die Empedoklesdichtung Bruchstück geblieben, doch wir vergessen immer, daß in solchen Dichtungen wie ‘Germanien’ und ‘Der Rhein’ das zur höchsten Reinheit gestaltet ist, was die Empedoklesdichtung suchte” (GA 39, 258f.). Further allusions to Hölderlin’s drama can be found in *Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung* (GA 4, 44f.), the essay “‘Andenken’” (GA 4, 128), the university lecture *Hölderlins Hymne ‘Andenken’* (GA 52, 101f.), and *Hölderlins Hymne ‘Der Ister’* (GA 53, 70). All of these references are brief and in no way concern death. Still, there can be no doubt that Heidegger was quite familiar with *Empedokles* during this period as also with *Hyperion*, which receives passing mention a number of times in these lectures.

¹² Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 2, ed. Jochen Schmidt (Frankfurt a.M., 1994). See especially his commentary “Zur Textkonstitution”, 1113-8. See also the more detailed article by Katharina Grätz, Schmidt’s editorial assistant: “Der ‘Empedokles’-Text der Großen Stuttgarter Ausgabe und der Frankfurter Ausgabe. Editions kritik und Folgerungen für die Neu-Edition im Deutschen Klassiker Verlag,” *HJb* 28 (1992-93): 264-299.

¹³ Rilke and Hölderlin display a common striving for poetic and existential totality. Hölderlin’s influence seems especially apparent in the *Duineser Elegien*, written during the height of the Hölderlin revival. Rilke in fact made the acquaintance of Norbert von Hellingrath in 1910 and wholeheartedly supported the young scholar’s editorial enterprise. The most direct testimony of Rilke’s admiration and affinity remains, however, his poem “An Hölderlin”. See Rilke, *Werke* II (Frankfurt a.M., 1987) 93f.

¹⁴ Rilke, *Werke* I, 557.

¹⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 4th ed. (Tübingen, 1975) 94.

¹⁶ Hoffmeister, 5f.

¹⁷ See Beck, *StA* 6/2, 908. Also Walther Kranz, *Empedokles: Antike Gestalt und romantische Neuschöpfung* (Zürich, 1949) 166.

¹⁸ Diogenes Laertius, *Leben und Meinungen berühmter Philosophen*, vol. 2, trans. Otto Apelt (Leipzig, 1921) 123 (Book VIII, section 69). Diogenes’ chapter on Empedocles is also translated by Walther Kranz, 118-28.

¹⁹ Diogenes Laertius, VIII, sec. 71-4. German translation, pp. 124f. Kranz, 126f.

²⁰ Cited from Lukrez, *Über die Natur der Dinge*, trans. Josef Martin, in *Schriften und Quellen der alten Welt*, vol. 32 (Berlin-Ost, 1972) 73-4. This passage is from Book 1, vv. 716ff.

²¹ For a helpful and lucid analysis of this aspect, see the unpublished dissertation by William Reid Gilby, "Hölderlin und das Feuer: Versuch einer genetischen Betrachtung vom Bild des Feuers in Hölderlins Dichtung," (Diss. University of Washington, 1971).

²² See vv. 367ff.

²³ For the contested dating of his Pindar translations see Beißner's commentary in StA 5, 376.

²⁴ Cf. "An den Aether", his so-called *Stromgedichte*, his frequent appeal to "Vater Helios", the presence of earth and soil in such poems as "Der Mensch" and "Wie wenn am Feiertage ..." etc.

²⁵ Since there are now several editions of the Presocratic fragments available for use in either German or English, I will merely give the fragment number based on the standard edition and numeration by Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. (Berlin, 1951).

²⁶ For a more thorough discussion of Empedocles' fragments the reader is referred to the classic study by G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1957) or its more readily available expanded edition: G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1983). Most recent and helpful is Richard D. McKirahan Jr., *Philosophy before Socrates* (Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1994). I have especially relied on McKirahan's book for much of my own attempt to explain Empedocles' thought and will generally use his translations of the fragments.

²⁷ Many scholars also point to the book that Hölderlin used while researching his *Magisterarbeit* as a potential source for certain—admittedly minor—details concerning Empedocles: *Zuverlässige Nachrichten von den vornehmsten Schriftstellern vom Anfang der Welt bis 1500* by Georg Christoph Hamberger. See for example Beißner's note in StA 4, 388.

²⁸ Kranz discusses the Empedoclean legacy in the works of such contemporary figures as Wieland, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, and others. See Kranz, 97ff.

²⁹ Opinions vary with regard to this question. The two most in-depth studies of Hölderlin and the doctrines of Empedocles are: Gisela Wagner, "Hölderlin und die Vorsokratiker," (Diss. Würzburg, 1937) and Uvo Hölscher, *Empedokles und Hölderlin* (Frankfurt a.M., 1965). Harrison's chapter on "Empedocles" in *Hölderlin and Greek Literature* conveniently synthesizes much of the previous scholarship. See Harrison, 121-59.

³⁰ The reader interested in these more classical-philological matters is referred to C. Osborne, "Empedocles Recycled," *Classical Quarterly* 37 (1987): 24-31; and Brad Inwood, *The Poem of Empedocles: A Text and Translation with an Interpretation* (Toronto, 1992) 8-19.

³¹ McKirahan, 253. The reader ought to be aware that although McKirahan always gives the standard Diels-Kranz number, he does not follow their order, arranging the fragments rather according to topics.

Hence, for the following translations I will cite both DK fragment number and the page where they appear in *Philosophy before Socrates*.

³² Ibid., 254.

³³ Ibid., 235.

³⁴ Ibid., 253.

³⁵ Ibid., 232.

³⁶ Kranz, 162.

³⁷ A more precise dating is not possible. Cf. Beißner's thesis: "Nach den Handschriften zu urteilen, ist die dreistrophige Ode Empedokles [...] zwar verhältnismäßig früh, wohl bald nach dem Frankfurter Plan [Sommer, 1797], entworfen, doch findet sie ihre endgültige Form vielleicht erst im Jahr 1800." (StA 4, 327)

³⁸ Cf. Goethe, *West-Östlicher Divan, Hamburger Ausgabe*, vol. 2, (München, 1986) 18f.

³⁹ Kranz, 20.

⁴⁰ Some scholars have noted this connection between "An die Parzen" and *Der Tod des Empedokles*. See for instance: Kranz, 367f.; and Klaus-Rüdiger Wöhrmann, *Hölderlins Wille zur Tragödie* (München, 1967) 48n.

⁴¹ Beck, StA 6/2, 845.

⁴² It is worth recalling that the second volume of *Hyperion* (which did not see print until 1799) and much of *Empedokles* overlap in conception. The simultaneity of these two projects is illustrated in the fact that Henry Gontard's notebook contains not only the "Frankfurter Plan" but also a number of sketches to *Hyperion*. See Beißner, StA 3, 346f. and StA 4, 369.

⁴³ Translation by McKirahan, 236. The Greeks took the matter of names seriously and tended to associate the name of a person with his character or destiny. A prominent example is that of Prometheus, which literally means "forethought". Plato takes advantage of this etymology in his dialogue *Protagoras* (320d), where the smarter Prometheus is contrasted with the more dim-witted Epimetheus ("afterthought"). In his drama *Prometheus* (85ff.), Aeschylus on the other hand pokes fun at the Titan, who should have had the "forethought" not to cross the gods.

⁴⁴ Beißner, StA 4, 333. The first indication that Hölderlin is fully occupied with his "Trauerspiel" can be found in a letter to Neuffer from November 12th, 1798. See StA 6, 288.

⁴⁵ See in chronological order: Paul Böckmann, *Hölderlin und seine Götter* (München, 1935) 278; Wolfgang Schadewaldt, "Die Empedokles-Tragödie Hölderlins," in *HJb* 11 (1958-60): 40-54; Emil Staiger, "Der Opfertod von Hölderlins Empedokles," 12; Johannes Hoffmeister, 49; especially Jürgen Söring, *Die Dialektik der Rechtfertigung: Überlegungen zu Hölderlins Empedokles-Projekt*; and most recently Éva

Kocziszky, "Die Empedokles-Fragmente als Übersetzung," *HJb* 26 (1988-89): 141. Maurice Bernard Benn anticipates a final third act to round out the action. See Benn, "The Dramatic Structure of Hölderlin's 'Empedokles'," *Modern Language Review* 62 (1967): 92-7.

⁴⁶ Gaier, 304.

⁴⁷ For more thematic parallels between these dramas, see Jürgen Link, "Schillers Don Carlos und Hölderlins Empedokles: Dialektik der Aufklärung und heroisch-politische Tragödie," in *Elementare Literatur und generative Diskursanalyse* (München, 1983) 87-125.

⁴⁸ Beißner, "Hölderlins Trauerspiel *Der Tod des Empedokles* in seinen drei Fassungen," 73.

⁴⁹ Diogenes Laertius, VIII, sec. 69. German translation, p. 123.

⁵⁰ Empedocles' philosophy and legendary death were of course relatively widespread in classical accounts, yet two—admittedly minor—details seem attested only in Diogenes. In the third act of his plan, Hölderlin picks up on the fact that the citizens of Acragas erected a statue in Empedocles' honor (StA 4, 147; Diogenes Laertius XIII, sec. 72 or p. 124), while for the end of his tragedy he integrates the only surviving testimony of Empedocles' death, his iron shoes which stood the test of volcanic fire (StA 4, 148; Diogenes Laertius XIII, sec. 69 or p. 123).

⁵¹ Hölderlin here seems to be mixing testimonia in Diogenes, confusing Empedokles with his grandfather of the same name, who rode to victory in the 71st Olympiade. (Cf. Diogenes Laertius, VIII, sec. 52; p. 116.) There is, however, no evidence in Diogenes that Empedokles the younger participated in chariot racing let alone in Olympic competition. His only attested adventure with a chariot in fact leads to anything but a sublime death: "Späterhin brach er auf einer Reise zu einer Festversammlung nach Messene durch einen Sturz vom Wagen das Bein. Daran krankend soll er im siebenundsiebzigsten Jahre gestorben sein" (ibid., VIII, sec. 73; p. 125). It is of course impossible to determine whether Hölderlin merely misread Diogenes or deliberately took liberties with the text. In the end, the question seems irrelevant, for the fact of the matter remains that in the context of the drama—and regardless of tradition, much of which is apocryphal anyway—Empedokles appears as a former charioteer. This aspect, though minor, was obviously important enough for Hölderlin to integrate into his project and perhaps even to modify for his own purposes.

⁵² Allemann, 91.

⁵³ Cf. Diogenes Laertius, VIII, sec. 66 (p. 122) and VIII, sec. 77, (p. 126).

⁵⁴ Walther Kranz tends to rule out the possibility that Hölderlin could have directly consulted the original fragments of the *Katharmoi*, but has no other definite solution to offer: "Also muß dieses Wissen von Empedokles zu dem gehören, was Hölderlin von früher her besaß, also aus der Studienzeit, oder durch andere Quelle neu gewann, auf welchem Wege, wissen wir freilich nicht" (Kranz, 175). Uvo Hölscher, on

the other hand, calls attention to the Empedocles fragments collected in the Stephanus edition of *Poesis Philosophica* from 1573, which can now be found in the Tübingen Library and “[...] sich nach aller Wahrscheinlichkeit auch schon am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts dort befunden [hat].” See Uvo Hölscher, “Empedokles von Akragas. Erkenntnis und Reinigung,” *HJb* 13 (1963/64): 23f. While Kranz maintains that Hölderlin could not have been familiar with the Stephanus collection (see Kranz, 164), Hölscher sees no other possible source, particularly with regard to the question of guilt: “In den ausgeführten Texten [the *Empedokles* drafts as opposed to the “Frankfurter Plan”] finden sich Motive, selbst Formulierungen aus Empedokleischen Versen, die *nicht* im Diogenes überliefert sind. Da sind vor allem solche, die mit dem Thema der Schuld des Empedokles zusammenhängen” (Hölscher, 24).

⁵⁵ Cf. the chorus in Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*, v. 1224. Hölderlin’s allusion to *Oedipus at Colonus* is surely calculated, for a number of similarities between the two plays can be noted, particularly as concerns the resoluteness of both heroes toward death and their essential condition of tragic guilt. Hölderlin also employs this famous quote in its entirety as a motto for the second volume of *Hyperion*, here translated from the Greek by Reißner: “Nicht geboren zu werden, übertrifft jeglichen Wert; das weitaus zweitbeste jedoch ist (wenn einer schon erschienen), schnellstens dorthin zu gehn, woher er gekommen” (StA 3, 469). The lines preceding this passage recall Empedokles’ desire for a ripe moment of death, especially as expressed to Hermokrates and the people of Acragas (cf. StA 4, 73):

Show me a man who longs to live a day beyond his time
 who turns his back on a decent length of life,
 I’ll show the world a man who clings to folly.
 For the long, looming days lay up a thousand things
 closer to pain than pleasure, and the pleasures disappear,
 you look and know not where
 when a man’s outlived his limit, plunged in age [....]

Oedipus at Colonus, vv. 1378ff., trans. Robert Fagles, in Sophocles, *Three Theban Plays* (London, 1984) 358.

⁵⁶ See Emil Staiger, *Der Geist der Liebe und das Schicksal: Schelling, Hegel und Hölderlin* (Frauenfeld/Leipzig, 1935) 94f. See also Beda Allemann, who notes in support of Staiger: “Daß das Schuld-Motiv nur im Sinn eines Kunstgriffs und vorübergehend Verwendung findet, wird dadurch belegt, daß im *Grund zum Empedokles* (nach der zweiten Fassung) nicht mehr weiter davon die Rede ist. Der Schuld-Sühne-Gedanke an sich ist der Hölderlinschen Welt doch wohl eher fremd [...]” (Allemann, 18n). These views of Staiger and Allemann are to some extent a reaction against early interpretations that emphasize the themes of guilt and atonement in both the drama and Hölderlin’s general thinking. See especially Wilhelm Böhm, *Hölderlin I* (Halle, 1928) 362ff. and Paul Böckmann, *Hölderlin und seine Götter* (München, 1935) 260ff. As remains to be seen, Staiger and Allemann will come under criticism by

later scholars, particularly Beißner and Hoffmeister. In fairness to Staiger, however, it ought to be noted that he seems to revise his opinion in a later essay, in which he points out the “genaue Relation” between “Schuld und Sühne.” See Emil Staiger, “Der Opfertod von Hölderlins Empedokles,” 11.

⁵⁷ There is hardly a study of Hölderlin’s drama that does not to some extent address the parallels between Empedokles and Christ. For the most part these connections are obvious enough to be dealt with on their own terms. Among the scholars that have pointed to the “genetisch lebendig” representation of guilt in the drama are Allemann and Hoffmeister. While Allemann downplays the importance of guilt, calling it a “Kunstgriff”, Hoffmeister stresses its dialectical function, contending that dialogue allows for the most genetically vivid depiction of guilt. See Allemann, 18; Hoffmeister 89f.

⁵⁸ It is worth recalling in this context that Heidegger’s existenzial analysis of guilt neither proves nor disproves the Christian notion of sin. See SZ, 306n.

⁵⁹ Éva Kocziszky, 152.

⁶⁰ Hölderlin claimed to have written all but the final act in a letter to Neuffer, to whom he mentions his “[...] Trauerspiel, den Tod des Empedokles, mit dem ich, bis auf den letzten Act fertig bin [...] (StA 6, 323). The broader context of this letter from June 4th, 1799 suggests however that Hölderlin is probably exaggerating in order to make a good impression upon Neuffer, whose connections with the publisher Steinkopf could possibly secure Hölderlin financial backing for his latest project, “[...] eine poëtische Monatschrift herauszugeben” (StA 6, 323).

⁶¹ Michel, 296.

⁶² Hoffmeister, 89f. Following the tradition of early *Empedokles* scholarship, Hoffmeister speaks of “Wortschuld”, yet given his intense preoccupation with the theme he obviously believes that the guilt of Empedokles cuts deeper than words

⁶³ Bertaux, 589.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 600.

⁶⁵ Numerous scholars, beginning with Dilthey, have noted a connection between these two works. Probably the most detailed and illuminating study is by Christoph Jamme, “Liebe, Schicksal und Tragik: Hegels ‘Geist des Christentums’ und Hölderlins ‘Empedokles’,” in *Frankfurt aber ist der Nabel dieser Erde ...* — *Das Schicksal einer Generation der Goethezeit*, ed. C. Jamme und Otto Pöggeler (Stuttgart, 1983) 300-24

⁶⁶ Bertaux, 600.

⁶⁷ G.F.W. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Hans-Friedrich Wessels and Heinrich Clairmont (Hamburg, 1988) 309f.

⁶⁸ The latter remark by Hegel is cited in Staiger, “Der Opfertod von Hölderlins Empedokles,” 7. Staiger quotes from Hegel’s *Theologische Jugendschriften*, ed. H. Nohl (Tübingen, 1907) 284.

⁶⁹ Bertaux, 602.

⁷⁰ In his *Phenomenology*, Hegel also emphasizes the significance of Antigone’s death, asserting that in time of war the individual must be sacrificed to the state. Antigone dies, but the *polis* lives on, as does the dialectic of Spirit. See *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 314ff. (Section VI, A, b.)

⁷¹ *Antigone*, vv. 1441ff., trans. Robert Fagles, in *Three Theban Plays*, 126.

⁷² *Oedipus at Colonus*, vv. 1879f., in *ibid.*, 381.

⁷³ Klaus Düsing, “Die Theorie der Tragödie bei Hölderlin und Hegel,” in *Jenseits des Idealismus: Hölderlins letzte Homburger Jahre (1804-1806)*, ed. Christoph Jamme and Otto Pöggeler (Bonn, 1988) 64.

⁷⁴ Cf. Beißner’s commentary: “Es ist vornehmlich an Herakles und seinen Flammentod auf dem Oetagipfel zu denken” (StA 4, 361). Hercules’ death is summarized in Edith Hamilton’s classic *Mythology* (New York, 1969) 171: “Since death would not come to him, he would go to death. He ordered those around him to build a great pyre on Mount Oeta and carry him to it. When at last he reached it he knew that now he could die and he was glad. ‘This is rest,’ he said. ‘This is the end.’ As as they lifted him to the pyre he lay down on it as one who at a banquet table lies down upon his couch.” Hercules is yet another figure from antiquity with whom Hölderlin tends to identify in his poetry. See for example his poem from 1796 “An Herakles” and the later hymns “Der Archipelagus”, “Patmos”, and “Der Ister”.

⁷⁵ See for example Hans Schwerte, “Aorgisch,” *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 34 (1953) 29-38. The basic consensus is that Hölderlin has either deliberately or unwittingly created a neologism, perhaps inspired by Schelling’s concept of *anorgisch*. See also Kranz, 371.

⁷⁶ See for example Anni Meetz, “Zu Hölderlins Quellen für den ‘Empedokles’: Empedokles—Porphyrios—Muhammed asch-Schahrastani—Hölderlin,” *Euphorion* 50 (1956): 392. See also Uvo Hölscher, “Empedokles von Akragas: Erkenntnis und Reinigung,” 39.

⁷⁷ Cf. Beißner, “Hölderlins Trauerspiel *Der Tod des Empedokles* in seinen drei Fassungen,” 71: “Hölderlin hätte sein Trauerspiel in dritter Fassung ‘Empedokles auf dem Aetna’ heißen können, wenn es bis zum Schluß auf dem Aetna hätte spielen sollen. An den beiden Stellen, wo er diese Wendung gebraucht, meint er eine einzelne (szenische oder odische) Situation, nicht aber das ganze Trauerspiel.”

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ The socio-political level of the drama is emphasized by Gaier, who detects in Empedokles not only Prometheus and Christ, but also Napoleon and Robespierre. See Gaier, 287-320. Compare also the study by Cristoph Prignitz, *Hölderlins ‘Empedokles’: Die Vision einer erneuerten Gesellschaft und ihre zeitgeschichtlichen Hintergründe* (Hamburg, 1985). According to Prignitz, Empedokles functions “[...] als

geistig-religiöser und [...] daneben und darüber hinaus als *gesellschaftlich-politischer Reformator* seines Vaterlands [...]” (12). For a briefer and more readily available version, see Prignitz, “Zeitgeschichtliche Hintergründe der ‘Empedokles’-Fragmente Hölderlins,” *HJb* 23 (1982-83): 229-257. The implicit political dimension of Hölderlin’s play is also apparent in *L’homme révolté* (*The Rebel*) by Camus, who quotes a passage from *Der Tod des Empedokles* as the motto for his treatise: “And openly I pledged my heart to the grave and suffering land, and often in the consecrated night, I promised to love her faithfully until death, unafraid, with her heavy burden of fatality, and never to despise a single one of her enigmas. Thus did I join myself to her with a mortal cord.” Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York, 1956) 2. For the original, see *L’homme révolté*, in *Essais* (Paris, 1965) 411. Also quoted in *Carnets II* (Paris, 1964) 316.

⁸⁰ Gaier, 310.

Chapter Six

Nietzsche's *Empedokles* Project and His Reception of Hölderlin

*Bliebe unsere Kenntnis auf das von Nietzsche selbst
Veröffentliche beschränkt, dann könnten wir niemals
erfahren, was Nietzsche schon wußte und
vorbereitete und ständig durchdachte, aber
zurückbehielt.*

-Heidegger, *Nietzsche I*

The figure of Empedocles remains as present in the work of Nietzsche as in that of Hölderlin. This presence, however, is not readily apparent to the casual reader and must often be sought in Nietzsche's more obscure writings. Like Hölderlin, he, too, intended an *Empedokles* tragedy but never progressed beyond preliminary notes and outlines, which, even when taken together, lack the thematic breadth and dramatic structure of the "Frankfurter Plan". Hölderlin and Nietzsche also had highly original if not radical insights into Hellenistic culture and both felt themselves particularly drawn to Presocratic philosophy. As a professor of classical philology whose career at the University of Basel spanned a decade (1869-79), Nietzsche had a far better opportunity to lecture and publish on this common area of interest than did Hölderlin, who essentially remained an itinerant *Hofmeister* for the ten fruitful years of his literary activity (1794-1804). Nevertheless, Nietzsche's lectures and academic publications reveal a surprisingly limited preoccupation with Empedocles the Presocratic. It would seem that Nietzsche is deliberately creating a distance between himself and Empedocles, for the time "postponing" a serious encounter with the tragic figure who made such an early impression upon him through Hölderlin's drama.¹

At the age of seventeen Nietzsche wrote a school essay in the form of a fictional letter which he entitled: “Brief an meinen Freund, in dem ich ihm meinen Lieblingsdichter zum Lesen empfehle”. This favorite poet turns out to be none other than Hölderlin, who at the time (the piece is dated October 19, 1861) was not widely known in Germany, as Nietzsche points out at the close of his letter: “[...] ich wünsche nur—und das betrachte ich als den Zweck meines Briefes—daß du durch denselben zu einer Kenntnisnahme und vorurteilsfreien Würdigung jenes Dichters bewogen würdest, den die Mehrzahl seines Volkes kaum dem Namen nach kennt.”² If one had read anything by Hölderlin in the nineteenth century, it was most likely his poems, many of which met with moderate success during his lifetime. Nietzsche, however, typically the exception to any rule, expresses the most enthusiasm not for Hölderlin’s poetry but for the fragmented *Empedokles* drama:

Überhaupt scheinst du in dem Glauben zu stehen, als ob er nur Gedichte geschrieben hätte. So kennst du denn also nicht den Empedokles, dieses so bedeutungsvolle dramatische Fragment, in dessen schwermütigen Tönen die Zukunft des unglücklichen Dichters, das Grab eines jahrelangen Irrsinns, hindurchklingt, aber nicht, wie du meinst, in unklarem Gerede, sondern in der reinsten sophokleischen Sprache und in einer unendlichen Fülle von tiefsinnigen Gedanken.³

Nietzsche goes on to extol the musical prose of *Hyperion* as well as the lyric quality of several poems, especially “Abendphantasie”, three stanzas of which he quotes. Yet he soon comes back to *Empedokles*, highlighting the various motives behind the hero’s death:

In dem nicht vollendeten Trauerspiel "Empedokles" entfaltet uns der Dichter seine eigne Natur. Empedokles' Tod ist ein Tod aus Götterstolz, aus Menschenverachtung, aus Erdensattheit und Pantheismus. Das ganze Werk hat mich immer beim Lesen ganz besonders erschüttert; es lebt eine göttliche Hoheit in diesem Empedokles.⁴

The untimeliness of Nietzsche's interest in Hölderlin is evident in the teacher's commentary to the essay: "Ich möchte dem Verfasser doch den freundlichen Rat erteilen, sich an einen gesünderen, klareren, deutscheren Dichter zu halten."⁵ Henceforth, one fails to find any direct mention of Hölderlin in Nietzsche's writings. Given the obviously strong impact of the poet upon the young and impressionable *Gymnasiast*, it seems unlikely that this initial bond between two remarkably kindred spirits would all at once disintegrate in compliance with the teacher's admonition. Nietzsche's early fascination with Hölderlin, particularly with *Der Tod des Empedokles*, though not immediately noticeable on the surface of his later work, becomes apparent enough through deeper probing.

At the age of twenty-four Nietzsche received a professorship in classical philology at the University of Basel. Through his schooling at Pforta and subsequent studies in Bonn and Leipzig he became one of the best philologists of his generation. His mentor at the latter two institutions, Friedrich Ritschl, one of the outstanding classicists of the nineteenth century, played an instrumental role in securing Nietzsche what was to be his first and only academic position. Ritschl wrote the following recommendation on his pupil's behalf:

So viele junge Kräfte ich auch seit nunmehr 39 Jahren unter meinen Augen sich habe entwickeln sehen: noch *nie* habe ich einen jungen Mann gekannt, resp. in meiner discipline nach meinen Kräften zu fördern gesucht, der *so* früh und *so* jung *so* reif gewesen wäre, wie diesen Nietzsche [...] Bleibt er, was Gott gebe lange leben, so prophezeie ich, daß er dereinst im vordersten Range der deutschen Philologie stehen wird [...] Er ist der Abgott und (ohne es zu wollen) Führer der ganzen jungen Philologenwelt hier in Leipzig, die (ziemlich zahlreich) die Zeit nicht erwarten kann, ihn als Dozenten zu hören.⁶

These words of praise rest not only on Nietzsche's excellence in seminars and colloquia; he also had a formidable publication record which helped establish his reputation in philological circles throughout Germany. His most important published work at the time was *De fontibus Diogenes Laertii*, which Ritschl originally encouraged him to write and submit to an annual essay contest at the University of Leipzig. Nietzsche's composition took first prize and eventually appeared in the professional journal edited by Ritschl *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*.⁷ His study of Diogenes Laertius, specifically of the sources Diogenes drew upon, thus parallels or at least brings to mind Hölderlin's—granted, less scholarly—immersion in the classic *Leben und Meinungen berühmter Philosophen*.

This incidental parallel takes on greater significance in view of the motto that Nietzsche gave to his manuscript: ενοι ενοι οιος εσαι (“Be, be who you are!”).⁸ These slightly modified words from Pindar's second Pythian Ode—the original reads Γενοι οιος εσαι (“Become who you are!”)⁹—will become a kind of existential imperative for Nietzsche throughout the course of his writings. *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* in particular relies heavily on this phrase of Pindar. Here one finds an

aphorism that is almost as brief and urgent as the original Greek: “*Was sagt dein Gewissen?* — “Du sollst der werden, der du bist” (KSA 3, 519), while later in the book Nietzsche expands on this imperative, shedding some light on its implication: “Wir aber wollen Die werden, die wir sind, — die Neuen, die Einmaligen, die Unvergleichbaren, die Sich-selber-Gesetzgebenden, die Sich-selber-Schaffenden!” (KSA 3, 563).¹⁰ For Nietzsche, Pindar’s words thus function as a code of self-fashioning according to which one constantly creates and defines his existence. Existence in this sense is therefore not fixed or static but determined by a foregoing—and presumably ongoing—process of becoming. Nietzsche’s personal attachment to this existential code becomes even more apparent in his last work, *Ecce Homo*, a kind of hyperbolic autobiography whose subtitle reads “Wie man wird, was man ist.” Most important in view of the later development from Empedokles to Zarathustra remains, however, the maxim of Nietzsche’s self-overcoming prophet: “Werde, der du bist!” (KSA 4, 297).

This exhortation of Zarathustra not only takes on significance within the work of Nietzsche, but figures in Hölderlin and Heidegger as well. The former, for instance, employs Pindar’s saying in the third draft of *Der Tod des Empedokles*, though with some modification. Pausanias’ words to Empedokles “o denk an dich, / Sei, der du bist” (StA 4, 127) rely on the verb “to be” rather than “to become”, but given the degree of overlap between these two verbs in Greek, Hölderlin’s formulation can hardly be criticized.¹¹ In his translations of Pindar’s odes, which he probably worked on while composing the final draft of *Empedokles*, Hölderlin adheres more closely to the original Greek. Here he properly translates γινεσθαι and includes the requisite participle μαθων: “Werde

welcher du bist erfahren” (StA 5, 74, v. 130). (In his *Lesarten* Beißner shows that Hölderlin revised this “Werde” from “Seie”, an act which only underscores the peculiar relation between these two fundamental verbs.)¹² It would of course be unreasonable to suggest any direct influence of Hölderlin upon Nietzsche with regard to Pindar’s phrase. Even Nietzsche’s advice to his close friend Erwin Rohde “γενοι οιος εσσι”,¹³ though they echo Pausanias’ words to his equally trusted companion Empedokles, cannot seriously be considered a conscious appropriation from Hölderlin’s tragedy.

Nevertheless, the fact that Empedokles, Diogenes, and Pindar all join to form a common link between Hölderlin and Nietzsche seems the result of more than just circumstance. Indeed, an element of necessity enters this constellation with Heidegger, who may have both of his predecessors in mind when he too quotes Pindar, here in the context of Dasein’s self-understanding: “[...] weil es [Dasein] *ist*, was es wird bzw. nicht wird, kann es verstehend ihm selbst sagen: ‘werde, was du bist!’” (SZ, 145). Heidegger, who gives no precise source for this borrowed motto of Dasein, could be citing Pindar, Hölderlin or Nietzsche—or better yet, any combination of the three. It remains however impossible to determine whether he is immediately referring to the original Pindar or cryptically alluding to Nietzsche’s Zarathustra and/or Hölderlin’s Empedokles. All that can be definitively said with respect to this connection is that these words of Pindar constitute a motif that runs through the work of Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger—a motif that significantly appears in the three principal texts examined in this dissertation: *Der Tod des Empedokles*, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and *Sein und Zeit*.

Long before Nietzsche conceived of his *Zarathustra* book, he made plans for a drama around the figure of Empedocles. Yet it is not so much the Presocratic philosopher that spurs Nietzsche's imagination in this dramatic endeavor from 1871; the main impulse stems rather from his "Lieblingsdichter" Hölderlin, whose dramatized portrayal of Empedokles still seems to occupy him some ten years after his *Schulaufsatz* from 1861. Yet Nietzsche was more than an enthusiastic reader of Hölderlin; his educational background and later professorship in classical philology made him an authority on numerous aspects of Greek and Roman culture, including Presocratic philosophy.¹⁴ Given however his ten years of teaching and scholarship at the University of Basel (1869-79), one finds an astonishingly limited treatment of Empedocles in his academic writings. Empedocles for Nietzsche remained the Empedokles of Hölderlin's tragedy, a figure to be reckoned with outside academe, as if Nietzsche felt that scholarly publications and pontifications could not possibly do justice to the tragic hero of his youth.

At Basel Nietzsche repeatedly held a lecture course entitled "Die vorplatonischen Philosophen"¹⁵, in which he summarizes the thought of the main Presocratics (he prefers here the categorization "Vorplatoniker")¹⁶ from Thales to Socrates after an initial examination of their precursors Homer and Hesiod. His discussion of Empedocles (throughout the lecture Nietzsche adopts the spelling "Empedocles") begins with the Sicilian's genealogy and then touches on the *Katharmoi*, whose central theme of guilt Nietzsche briefly addresses:

Schwer wandelt er [Empedocles] in dieser Welt der Qual, des Gegensatzes: daß er in ihr ist, kann er sich nur aus einem Fehltritt erklären: in irgend einer Zeit muß er einen Frevel, einen Mord einen Meineid begangen haben. Am Dasein in einer solchen Welt haftet eine Schuld.¹⁷

There follow some observations on Empedocles' political role in Agracae, after which the diverse accounts of his death come under discussion. Here Nietzsche no doubt summarizes the testimonies found in Diogenes, as this remains the best source of such biographical information even today, and Nietzsche was of course already quite familiar with this text. He mentions the conflicting stories of Empedocles' exile and eventual disappearance in the Peloponnesus; his fatal fall from a chariot; and his leap into the crater of Mount Etna. Nietzsche's final assessment of the legends surrounding Empedocles' death remains impartial and synoptic: "Die gläubige Legende läßt ihn verschwinden, die ironische stürzt ihn in den Aetna, die pragmatische läßt ihn die Rippe brechen u. bei Megara begraben sein."¹⁸ As will soon be seen, this noncommittal summary on the part of Nietzsche the scholar does not hold for Nietzsche the aspiring dramatist, who in his *Empedokles* sketches and posthumously published notes for a sequel to *Zarathustra* opts for the more spectacular death by volcanic flame.

Generally, Nietzsche tends to associate Empedocles with tragedy. In his lecture on the pre-Platonic philosophers, he makes the claim: "Er ist der tragische Philosoph, der Zeitgenosse des Aeschylus." Several notes from the mid-1870's similarly state this connection in the broadest of terms (cf. KSA 8, 100, 105, 119), but in none of these does Nietzsche give a proper definition of tragedy or otherwise elaborate on Empedocles' role as tragic hero. Even a previous observation from the early 1870's offers little more than

a motivation for the hero's death: "Empedocles ist der reine tragische Mensch. Sein Sprung in den Aetna aus — Wissenstrieb! Er sehnte sich nach Kunst und fand nur das Wissen. Das Wissen aber macht Fausten" (KSA 7, 118). Again, Nietzsche does not adequately explain why Empedocles, more than any other ancient philosopher, should be considered a representative of the tragic. Indeed, the parallel that he draws between Empedocles and Faust, perhaps *the* representative figure of German tragedy, only confuses the issue.¹⁹ Is the fate of the tragic hero necessarily caught up with his yearning for art and/or knowledge? What do art and/or knowledge have to do with tragedy in the first place? Nietzsche's notion of what constitutes tragedy is difficult to ascertain, as he has expressed his opinions on the matter in a number of texts and from a variety of perspectives. One text that may shed light on the role of Empedocles as tragic figure is the early treatise from 1872, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*.

In this first major work Nietzsche traces the development of tragedy from the choruses of early satyr plays to the "enlightened" dramas of Euripides, all under the rubric of the Apollinian and Dionysian. Nietzsche's book on tragedy remains less a rigorous philological study of the genre than a poetic rapture on its roots and rebirth in the philosophy of Schopenhauer and the music of Wagner; it hence departs radically from the aesthetic tradition that began with Aristotle's *Poetics*. Unlike the attempts of, for instance, Lessing and Schiller to define tragedy in an Aristotelian fashion according to technical and generic criteria, Nietzsche takes a more philosophic approach and interprets tragedy not so much as a literary art form, but as a comprehensive world view and fundamental expression of existence. As he himself states: "[...] denn erst jetzt glaubte

ich des Zaubers mächtig zu sein, über die Phraseologie unserer üblichen Aesthetik hinaus, das Urproblem der Tragödie mir leibhaft vor die Seele stellen zu können [...]” (KSA 1, 104). With *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche took the first step toward emancipating himself from the field of philology to which he was professionally bound, at the same time launching himself on a philosophic career that has made him better known to posterity. His mentor Ritschl, who had once written only the most enthusiastic of praise on behalf of Nietzsche the philologist, now felt alienated from the emerging philosopher. His reaction to *Die Geburt der Tragödie* is representative of the philological camp, which detected not the slightest trace of scholarly rigor in Nietzsche’s publication:

Es ist wundersam, wie in dem Manne geradezu zwei Seelen nebeneinander leben. Einerseits die strengste Methode geschulter wissenschaftlicher Forschung [...] anderseits diese phantastisch-überschwengliche, übergeistreich ins Unverstehbare überschlagende, Wagner-Schopenhauerische Kunstmysterienreligionsschwärmerei! [...] Am meisten ärgert mich seine Impietät gegen seine eigentliche Mutter, die ihn an ihren Brüsten gesäugt hat: die Philologie.²⁰

In *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche maintains that the ideal tragedy arises from the conflict between the Apollinian principle of individuation and the more primeval integrative force of the Dionysian. Though these two concepts are introduced as aesthetic categories, their role is not restricted to the realm of art. Nietzsche conceives them rather as universal aesthetic principles that underlie all reality in accordance with the central tenet of his book, “dass nur als ein aesthetisches Phänomen das Dasein und die Welt gerechtfertigt erscheint [...]” (KSA 1, 152). The Apollinian, like the sun god from

whom it derives its name, is the principle of light, clarity, delineation; it governs the visual arts of sculpture, architecture, and painting as well as the narrative aspect of poetry and drama. The Dionysian, on the other hand, is primarily associated with music, the least corporeal art form not to mention the most emotive, passionate, and irrational. Its defining experience remains one of intoxication (*Rausch*), whereas the Apollinian creates the illusory perception of a dream. Beyond their narrower artistic domains, these two “*Kunsttriebe*” (KSA 1, 31) dictate their laws to nature such that the Apollinian perpetuates the metaphysical illusion of individuation while the destructive intensity of the Dionysian shatters this illusion to reveal the brute reality of existence that is often better left concealed. The tragic view of life, however, constantly confronts this harsh underlying reality as the true and original font of existence. The deeper meaning of tragedy consists in the hero’s attempt to gain insight if not access to the original Dionysian condition in which “der Bann der Individuation zersprengt wird und der Weg zu den Müttern des Sein’s, zu dem innersten Kern der Dinge offen liegt” (KSA 1, 103). Representative tragic heroes such as Prometheus and Oedipus are but “Masken jenes ursprünglichen Helden Dionysus [...]” (KSA 1, 71), all of whom suffer under the individuating tendency of existence. Much as the mythical Dionysus was torn to pieces by the Titans, thereby succumbing to the law of individuation, the tragic hero similarly finds his intact state of being put into question if not jeopardy by the mere fact of existing in a world that is removed from a primordial state of being or *Urzustand*. This return to the well-springs of being²¹ again finds its mythical parallel in the fate of Dionysus, who becomes reborn through Demeter and thus overcomes his Apollinian destruction. For

Nietzsche, the hero of Greek tragedy is therefore not an individual in the modern Hegelian sense; that is, one who defines himself against others and strives for self-realization. As direct descendents and indeed embodiments of Dionysus, figures such as Prometheus, Oedipus, and presumably his own Empedocles do not strive to develop their individual natures, but rather seek to regain the lost cosmic unity that lurks behind terrestrial existence. This process ultimately calls for them to surrender their individuality as the principal cause for their misfortune, suffering, and punishment by the gods. Nietzsche summarizes his argument as follows:

In den angeführten Anschauungen haben wir bereits alle Bestandtheile einer tiefsinnigen und pessimistischen Weltbetrachtung und zugleich damit die *Mysterienlehre der Tragödie* zusammen: die Grunderkenntnis von der Einheit alles Vorhandenen, die Betrachtung der Individuation als des Urgrundes des Uebels, die Kunst als die freudige Hoffnung, dass der Bann der Individuation zu zerbrechen sei, als die Ahnung einer wiederhergestellten Einheit. — (KSA 1, 73)

This insight into the tragic sense of existence is not solely exemplified in Greek tragedy through the competing forces of the Apollinian and Dionysian. Nietzsche also grounds his theory in the Semitic myth of the Fall, which Western—or as he here calls it, Aryan—civilization has tended to interpret along Promethean lines:

Das, was die arische Vorstellung auszeichnet, ist die erhabene Ansicht von der *activen Sünde* als der eigentlich prometheischen Tugend: womit zugleich der ethische Untergrund der pessimistischen Tragödie gefunden ist, als die *Rechtfertigung* des menschlichen Uebels, und zwar sowohl der menschlichen Schuld als des dadurch verwirkten Leidens [...]. Bei dem heroischen Drange des Einzelnen ins Allgemeine, bei dem Versuche über den Bann der

Individuation hinauszuschreiten und das *eine* Weltwesen selbst sein zu wollen, erleidet er an sich den in den Dingen verborgenen Urwiderspruch d.h. er frevelt und leidet. (KSA I, 69f.)

Man's act of hubris/sin casts him into a world of individuation, severing him from his original state of unity with the gods.

Nietzsche holds basically the same view in *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen* (1873), an unfinished writing that examines the problem of tragic existence from the standpoint of the Presocratics. In connection with Heraclitus, for instance, he argues that an initial crime of hubris is responsible for individuation, cosmic pollution, and guilt. His words could just as well be a summary of Empedocles'

Purifications:

Ist jetzt nicht der ganze Weltprozeß ein Bestrafungsakt der Hybris? Die Vielheit das Resultat eines Frevels? Die Verwandlung des Reinen in das Unreine Folge der Ungerechtigkeit? Wird jetzt nicht die Schuld in den Kern der Dinge verlegt, und somit zwar die Welt des Werdens und der Individuen von ihr entlastet, aber zugleich ihre Folgen zu tragen immer von Neuem wieder verurtheilt? (KSA I, 830)

More important for Nietzsche's point is Anaximander, an early Presocratic whose only surviving fragment reads (in Nietzsche's own translation)²²:

Woher die Dinge ihre Entstehung haben, dahin müssen sie auch zu Grunde gehen, nach der Nothwendigkeit; denn sie müssen Buße zahlen und für ihre Ungerechtigkeiten gerichtet werden, gemäß der Ordnung der Zeit. (KSA I, 818)

Nietzsche comments as follows:

Es mag nicht logisch sein, ist aber jedenfalls recht menschlich, und überdies recht im Stile des früher geschilderten philosophischen Springens, jetzt mit Anaximander alles Werden wie eine strafwürdige Emancipation vom ewigen Sein anzusehn, als ein Unrecht, das mit dem Untergange zu büßen ist. Alles, was einmal geworden ist, vergeht auch wieder, ob wir nun dabei an das Menschenleben oder an das Wasser oder an Warm und Kalt denken: überall, wo bestimmte Eigenschaften wahrzunehmen sind, dürfen wir auf den Untergang dieser Eigenschaften, nach einem ungeheuren Erfahrungs-Beweis, prophezeien. Nie kann also ein Wesen, das bestimmte Eigenschaften besitzt und aus ihnen besteht, Ursprung und Princip der Dinge sein [....] (KSA I, 819)

In other words, Nietzsche sees in certain Presocratic cosmogonies such as that of Heraclitus and Anaximander more than just a physical explanation of the world. He locates, rather, an underlying ethical problem—“das Knäuel des tiefsinnigen ethischen Problems” (KSA I, 820)—in which anthropomorphic notions of guilt and retribution become projected onto the cosmos. According to this more ethical perspective, there is a primal cosmic guilt for which all creation—things that have arisen or become rather than just *are*—must pay penalty. All creatures owe their existence to some source besides themselves and thus bear a constant debt toward whatever power created them, a debt that revolves around the very question of being. One might call this an ontological debt. No human can be held accountable for his birth, nor is humankind as a whole responsible for its origin. In Heidegger’s terms, we are “thrown” into the world and thereby delivered into the facticity of existence. Nietzsche, speaking with—and possibly only through—the Presocratics, views this problem as one of being and becoming. Being is eternal and immutable, a pure and remote presence, whereas the world of becoming

undergoes constant change. In this perpetual flux resides an inherent injustice, for all created things but must eventually perish, whether they deserve to or not. Hence, not only is existence a debt that we owe to our creator; it is furthermore riddled with guilt and punishment. The notion of becoming, Nietzsche insists, carries with it a primordial guilt which must somehow be expiated. And it would seem that death functions as the ultimate form of atonement for the injustice of existence:

Aus dieser Welt des Unrechtes, des frechen Abfalls von der Ureinheit der Dinge flüchtete Anaximander in eine metaphysische Burg, aus der hinausgelehnt er jetzt den Blick weit umher rollen läßt, um endlich, nach nachdenklichem Schweigen, an alle Wesen die Frage zu richten: Was ist euer Dasein werth? Und wenn es nichts werth ist, wozu seid ihr da? Durch eure Schuld, merke ich, weilt ihr in dieser Existenz. Mit dem Tode werdet ihr sie büßen müssen." (KSA 1, 820)

Though Nietzsche fails to include Empedocles in his investigation of Presocratic guilt, he still does not ignore the precedent that Anaximander set:

Wir glauben es gerne der Überlieferung, daß er in besonders ehrwürdiger Kleidung einhergieng und einen wahrhaft tragischen Stolz in seinen Gebärden und Lebensgewohnheiten zeigte. Er lebte, wie er schrieb; er sprach so feierlich als er sich kleidete, er erhob die Hand und setzte den Fuß, als ob dieses Dasein eine Tragödie sei, in der er, als Held, mitzuspielen geboren sei. In all dem war er das große Vorbild des Empedokles. (KSA 1, 820f.)

All of Nietzsche's reflections on tragedy, whether from a Dionysian/Apollinian, Biblical or Presocratic perspective, bring to mind the guilt of Hölderlin's Empedokles, who falls from grace with the gods to dwell in a world of one-sidedness, discord, and

fragmentation—in short, a world of individuation. The character description of Empedokles in Hölderlin’s “Frankfurter Plan” clearly lays out the conflict between his ideally intact nature and the disruptive forces around him. He despises all forms of specialization (“alles sehr bestimmten Geschäftts”) and remains “ein Todtfeind aller einseitigen Existenz” (StA 4, 145). His desire to exist “im großen Akkord mit allem Lebendigen” is thwarted by the fact that he lives in an age of individuation, in which he becomes bound to the law of succession (“ans Gesez der Succession”). Empedokles can be considered a tragic figure in Nietzsche’s sense; that is, one who has fallen from an original state of being (whether as Dionysus, Prometheus, etc.) and suffers in an (Apollinian) world of particular beings or in a Presocratic world of becoming. His meditated death forms the ultimate attempt to regain his lost condition of wholeness, as Hölderlin’s already familiar words from the planned fourth act illustrate: “Nun reift sein Entschluß, der längst in ihm dämmerte, durch freiwilligen Tod sich mit der unendlichen Natur zu vereinen” (StA 4. 147).

Nietzsche, too, drew up a number of plans and sketches for an *Empedokles* drama. In the fall of 1870 or perhaps the early winter of 1870-71, he recorded in an octavo notebook three sketches, the first of which outlines three acts:

Act I. E[mpedokles] stürzt den Pan, der ihm die Antwort verweigert. Er fühlt sich geächtet.

Die Agrigentiner wollen ihn zum König wählen, unerhörte Ehren. Er erkennt den Wahn der Religion, nach langem Kampfe.

Die Krone wird ihm von der schönsten Frau dargebracht.

II. Furchtbare Pest, er bereitet große Schauspiele, dionysische Bacchanale, die Kunst offenbart sich als Prophetin des Menschenwehs. Das Weib als die Natur.

III. Er beschließt bei einer Leichenfeier das Volk zu vernichten, um es von der Qual zu befreien. Die Überlebenden der Pest sind ihm noch bemitleidenswerther.

Bei dem Pantempel. "Der große Pan ist todt."

(KSA 7, 125)

These last words, which Nietzsche quotes from Plutarch,²³ are also found in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Here the context is clearly the death of tragedy:

Mit dem Tode der griechischen Tragödie dagegen entstand eine ungeheure, überall tief empfundene Leere; wie einmal griechische Schiffer zu Zeiten des Tiberius an einem einsamen Eiland den erschütterten Schrei hörten "der große Pan ist todt": so klang es jetzt wie ein schmerzlicher Klage-ton durch die hellenische Welt: "die Tragödie ist todt! Die Poesie selbst ist mit ihr verloren gegangen!" (KSA 1, 75)

It thus seems strange that Empedokles, the most tragic figure among the Presocratics according to Nietzsche's notes, should put an end to the reign of Pan, who might be considered the very representative of tragedy in its raw Dionysian form as chorus; that is, without the Apollinian component of dialogue. As Nietzsche demonstrates in his book, the origin of tragedy lies in the early Hellenistic satyr plays which consisted of chorus, music, dance—in a word, revelry. The satyr himself was "der dionysische Choreut" (KSA 1, 55) who embodied the brute force of nature and gave expression to the primordial urges of man, shattering any illusion of culture that the civic-minded Greeks brought with them into the theater. The chorus in these early stages of tragedy functioned

as a wall that sealed out all vestiges of civilization and created its own aesthetic space, much like Schiller claimed in his preface to *Die Braut der Messina*. In contrast to Schiller, however, Nietzsche asserts that the autonomy of the tragic performance does not constitute an ideal aesthetic realm, but cuts deeper into the fabric of existence:

Die Sphäre der Poesie liegt nicht ausserhalb der Welt, als eine phantastische Unmöglichkeit eines Dichtershirns: sie will das gerade Gegentheil sein, der ungeschminkte Ausdruck der Wahrheit und muss eben deshalb den lügenhaften Aufputz jener vermeinten Wirklichkeit des Culturmenschen von sich werfen.
(KSA 1, 58)

The conflict between tragedy/poetry and culture is an ongoing one. The modern age has created the figure of the shepherd and the idyll of the pastoral as an antidote or civilized alternative to the untamed satyr and his Dionysian mode of articulation, the tragic chorus. Though Nietzsche never directly says as much, Pan can be viewed as a kind of supreme specimen among satyrs: whereas these are lesser deities, multitudinous and diverse, Pan is a singular and representative god. The antagonism between the satyr and the man of culture as laid out in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* appears then to find a more concrete illustration in the rivalry of Empedokles with Pan. Unfortunately, due to the provisional nature of Nietzsche's notes, this conflict is barely developed. All that can be said based on the above-cited outline to his planned *Empedokles* tragedy is that Nietzsche obviously conceived of some form of contest if not showdown between Empedokles and Pan, the outcome of which remains the death of the latter, and perhaps by extension the death of tragedy. The line from Plutarch "Der große Pan ist todt" signifies here as in *Die*

Geburt der Tragödie the end of tragedy, of the Dionysian principle, of the basic tragic sense of life. The precise role of Empedokles in this process remains impossible to determine. Despite his seeming victory over Pan, a presumed spokesman for Dionysus or the satyr chorus (like these, Pan is associated with wild music), Empedokles nevertheless seems to embrace the Dionysian: “[...] er bereitet große Schauspiele, dionysische Bacchanale [...]” A subsequent sketch from the same notebook however depicts him as more of a *Culturmensch*:

Empedokles, der durch alle Stufen, Religion Kunst Wissenschaft getrieben wird und die letzte auflösend gegen sich selbst richtet.

Aus der Religion durch die Erkenntniß daß sie Trug ist.

Jetzt Lust am künstlerischen Scheine, daraus durch das erkannte Weltleiden getrieben. Das Weib als die Natur.

Jetzt betrachtet er als Anatom das Weltleiden, wird Tyrann, der Religion und Kunst benutzt, und verhärtet sich immer mehr. Er beschließt Vernichtung des Volks, weil er dessen Unheilbarkeit erkannt hat. Das Volk, um den Krater versammelt: er wird wahnsinnig und verkündet vor seinem Verschwinden die Wahrheit der Wiedergeburt. Ein Freund stirbt mit ihm. (KSA 7, 126)

Here Empedokles displays anything but a penchant for the Dionysian. He is rather a man of art and science, one who prefers Apollinian deception (“Trug”) and illusion (“Schein”) over the crude reality of Dionysian existence, with its intoxication, frenzy, and violence. His “Lust am künstlerischen Scheine” recalls the words from *Die Geburt der Tragödie*: “[...] und man möchte selbst Apollo als das herrliche Götterbild des principii individuationis bezeichnen, aus dessen Gebärden und Blicken die ganze Lust und Weisheit des ‘Scheines’, sammt seiner Schönheit, zu uns spräche” (KSA 1, 28).

Empedokles' status as king of Acragas is also anti-Dionysian insofar as it implies individuation, specifically a separation from the people through socio-politically defined roles. In the Dionysian state of revelry, all differences in rank, character, and even subjectivity break down such that: "Jetzt [...] fühlt sich Jeder mit seinem Nächsten nicht nur vereinigt, versöhnt, verschmolzen, sondern eins, als ob der Schleier der Maya zerrissen wäre und nur noch in Fetzen vor dem geheimnisvollen Ur-Einen herumflattere" (KSA 1, 31f.). Such is not the case with Empedokles, who is forced to destroy his people so as to spare them a slow and agonizing death from the plague. Here Nietzsche is clearly taking up an incident in Diogenes (cf. VII, sec. 70), according to whom an epidemic caused by the vapors of a local river threatened to destroy the population not of Acragas, but of another city, Selinuntia. Empedokles saved the populace by single-handedly diverting two nearby rivers into the problem one, thereby flushing it of its contamination. Why Nietzsche felt the need to depart from the account in Diogenes and have his Empedokles resort to the drastic measure of wholesale destruction is again a question which only allows for conjecture. Perhaps the answer has to do with the very issue of death. According to both fragments, Empedokles seeks to spare his people prolonged suffering from pestilence, yet for some reason he instead asserts his own death in the crater of Mount Etna while the crowd looks on and a friend, presumably Pausanias, follows in his footsteps. This sudden transition from genocidal to individual annihilation seems destined to remain a riddle, as Nietzsche provides no real motive nor indicates any higher justification for his hero's grand act of suicide. He only suggests, taking up a central doctrine of Empedocles, that "the truth of reincarnation" enters into the matter.

Empedokles' death and perhaps that of his stricken people is hence not final or *unüberholbar* in Heidegger's sense. As such death is not existentially grounded, but constitutes one of the many transcendent gateways to a new existence. This at any rate seems to be the upshot of his self-sacrifice as expressed in this particular series of notes written sometime between September 1870 and January 1871.²⁴

A quarto notebook used from the winter of 1870-71 to the fall of 1872 contains eight further sketches to an *Empedokles* drama. Here one finds a more detailed exposition of the tragedy and hence more solid ground for interpretation. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that these are only conceptual blueprints and, unlike Hölderlin's "Frankfurter Plan" or even Heidegger's ontological outline of existence, lack a supplementary testimony. A discussion of these preliminary *Empedokles* plans and a more conclusive assessment of Nietzsche's project will be found in the still forthcoming analysis of *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

The first two notes share a number of common elements with the previous ones listed above. Pan, the plague, a nameless heroine, and the Apollinian principle all recur in the following:

8[30]

Griechisches Erinnerungsfest. Zeichen des Verfalls. Ausbruch der Pest.
Der Homerrhapsode. Empedokles erscheint als Gott, um zu heilen.

Die Ansteckung durch Furcht und Mitleid. Gegenmittel die Tragödie. Als eine Nebenperson stirbt, will die Heldin zu ihm. Empedokles hält sie entflammt zurück, sie erglüht für ihn. Empedokles schaudert vor der Natur.

Ausbreitung der Pest.

Letzter Festtag — Opfer des Pan am Aetna. Empedokles prüft Pan und zertrümmert ihn. Das Volk flüchtet. Die Heldin bleibt. Empedokles im Übermaß des Mitleids will sterben. Er geht in den Schlund und ruft noch “Fliehe!” — Sie: Empedokles! und folgt ihm. Ein Thier rettet sich zu ihnen. Lava um sie herum.

8[31]

Aus einem apollinischen Gott wird ein todessüchtiger Mensch.
 Aus der Stärke seiner pessimistischen Erkenntniß wird er böse.
 Im hervorbrechenden Übermaß des Mitleides erträgt er das Dasein nicht mehr.

Er kann die Stadt nicht heilen, weil sie von der griechischen Art abgefallen ist.

Er will sie radikal heilen, nämlich vernichten, hier aber rettet sie ihre griechische Art.

In seiner Göttlichkeit will er helfen.

Als mitleidiger Mensch will er vernichten.

Als Dämon vernichtet er sich selbst.

Immer leidenschaftlicher wird Empedokles.

(KSA 7, 233f.)

The first point to be noted is that the contagion brought about by the plague consists of fear and pity, while the potential cure lies in tragedy. This rather strange twist on Aristotle, according to whom the tragic plot *incited* these two emotions rather than eliminated them (cf. *Poetics*, 49b), seems symptomatic of Nietzsche’s unconventional view of tragedy, which is in turn typical of his unceasing effort to “reverse” (*umkehren*) the validity of whatever he opposes, be it Christian values, Platonism, simple truisms and phrases, etc. Heidegger has commented on this practice at length and even described Nietzsche’s entire thought as “ein ständiges Umkehren.”²⁵ The fact that Empedokles wishes to die “im Übermaß des Mitleids” is perhaps a further critique of the Aristotelian

notion of pity, but again, there is too little text—both in Nietzsche and Aristotle—upon which to base anything more than a tentative thesis. Even the more explicit line from the last sketch of this series, “Furcht und Mitleid verboten” (KSA 7, 236), fails to cast significant light on this question with regard to Aristotelian aesthetics. In fact, Nietzsche’s general view on the function of tragedy is not at all apparent in the fragments. It only seems clear that he in some fashion seeks to overturn or at least rethink the tragic tradition, a task that he however carried out more effectively in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.

Here one finds a more forward critique of the aesthetic tradition that followed in Aristotle’s wake. According to Nietzsche, this tradition has especially emphasized (perhaps overemphasized) the function of pity, fear, and catharsis. It may be helpful to recall in this context Aristotle’s celebrated definition of tragedy “as the imitation of an action [...] with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish, its catharsis of such emotions.”²⁶ The notion of catharsis has been interpreted along vastly different lines through the centuries, yet two principal views hold sway. The most favored interpretation is a quasi-medical one, in which catharsis functions as a purging of precisely the emotions, pity and fear, that the tragic incidents aroused in the first place. Pity and fear, then, exert a homeopathic affect on the audience; that is, the very incitement of such emotions brings about their purgation. The second dominant interpretation, propounded by such tragedians as Corneille, Dacier, and Dryden, takes a moralistic or didactic stance: the audience learns through catharsis to steer clear of those passions that lead to the tragic hero’s downfall. Catharsis in this sense curbs rather than

cleanses emotions, and the process is a spiritually uplifting rather than a physiological one. Nietzsche however insists that these tragic effects of moral edification and/or purgation do nothing to further our understanding of tragedy as a purely aesthetic phenomenon:

Noch nie, seit Aristoteles, ist eine Erklärung der tragischen Wirkung gegeben worden, aus der auf künstlerische Zustände, auf eine aesthetische Thätigkeit der Zuhörer geschlossen werden dürfte. Bald soll Mitleid und Furchtsamkeit durch die ernstesten Vorgänge zu einer erleichternden Entladung gedrängt werden, bald sollen wir uns bei dem Sieg guter und edler Principien, bei der Aufopferung des Helden im Sinne einer sittlichen Weltbetrachtung erhoben und begeistert fühlen; und so gewiss ich glaube, dass für zahlreiche Menschen gerade das und nur das die Wirkung der Tragödie ist, so deutlich ergibt sich daraus, dass diese alle, sammt ihren interpretierenden Aesthetikern, von der Tragödie als einer höchsten *Kunst* nichts erfahren haben.

(KSA 1, 142)²⁷

Nietzsche therefore posits an Apollinian and Dionysian “Erregung des Zuhörers” (KSA 1, 141) against the prevailing medical and ethical theories of his day. In so doing, he brings to light yet another important aspect of Hellenistic culture that the philological method was hitherto unable to penetrate. Not only does Nietzsche believe that he has discovered the true function of the tragic chorus in his book; he furthermore claims to have reinstated the role of the aesthetic spectator: “So ist mit der Wiedergeburt der Tragödie auch der *aesthetische Zuhörer* wieder geboren, an dessen Stelle bisher in den Theaterräumen ein seltsames Quidproquo, mit halb moralischen und halb gelehrten Ansprüchen, zu sitzen pflegte, der ‘Kritiker’” (KSA 1, 143). With this principally aesthetic insight into the essence of tragedy and its ideal spectator, Nietzsche proved once

again that he was more than a professor of classical philology. Here the philosopher begins to show, as do the aesthetic theorist and aspiring tragedian.

In conceiving his tragedy Nietzsche clearly appropriated certain elements from Hölderlin's dramatic project, although most of the critical literature has overlooked if not outright dismissed this connection. Curt Paul Janz for instance, who otherwise unearths a wealth of source material that Nietzsche drew upon throughout his life, notes "überraschenderweise überhaupt keine Beziehung"²⁸ between the two *Empedokles* projects. David Farrell Krell has recently attempted to rectify this—to borrow Janz's own term—"surprisingly" predominant deficit in Nietzsche scholarship. Krell's words, which echo my own thoughts, will serve to guide the following analysis of the *Empedokles* sketches: "Why insist on the conjunction of Nietzsche and Hölderlin here? Because I am convinced that Curt Paul Janz and others have woefully underestimated the impact of Nietzsche's reading of Hölderlin's *Der Tod des Empedokles*."²⁹

Nietzsche's sentence "Empedokles schaudert vor der Natur" strikes the reader as a deliberate nod at Hölderlin's lines from both the ode and first draft of the play: "Schaudernde[s] Verlangen" (StA 1, 240; StA 4, 80). The fact that with Nietzsche Empedokles "shudders" before the general presence of nature, rather than specifically upon Etna (as in Hölderlin's ode) or in the volcano's shadow (as in the drama) does not necessarily constitute a discrepancy between the two conceptions. For Hölderlin, Etna and nature are, if not synonymous, then correlative in a Platonic sense: the idea of nature manifests itself in the particular of the volcano, which is distinguished by the natural element of fire. Empedokles' "shuddering desire" to end his existence in volcanic flame

signifies in other words a return to the heart of nature. The fact that in the second of the above two plans (8[31]) Nietzsche's Empedokles originally appears as an Apollinian god only to become "ein todessüchtiger Mensch" also parallels the development of Hölderlin's tragic figure. As suggested earlier, the Empedokles of Hölderlin's project, especially of the "Frankfurter Plan", is bound to an individuated existence. His longing for totality leads him to embrace nature, whose original intactness he however fails to find in a world of strife and fragmentation. He must therefore take a more radical step—indeed, *the* most radical step—and embrace death as the only means to attain cosmic unity. His dissolution in the flaming lava of Etna thus remains a literal and at the same time highly symbolic act of fusion with nature and the elements. Hölderlin's Empedokles of course accomplishes this goal alone, while Nietzsche's figure perishes together with a companion; in this cluster of notes with a heroine, earlier with a male friend. (Strangely enough, even an animal is involved in the one case.) Though Empedokles' partners in death are not named here, subsequent sketches make their identities apparent: Corinna and Pausanias. The former carries on the role of Panthea, displaying both spiritual and amorous devotion toward Empedokles (cf. fragment 8[37], KSA 1, 236f.). She too is an attested historical figure (though not in Diogenes), a Boeotian poetess who was said to have instructed Pindar and even defeated him in a poetry contest.³⁰ Pausanias of course bears the name given him by tradition, a tradition rooted in Diogenes and one to which Nietzsche and Hölderlin, in this respect at least, both adhered.

Another parallel, this one of a conceptual and structural nature, between the two *Empedokles* dramas becomes apparent in the following two sketches:

1. Akt: Einzugsscene
2. Akt: Verehrung und Einrichtung der Feste. Königskrone abgeschlagen.
3. Akt: die Spiele
4. Akt: Ausbreitung der Pest. Der Todesplan. Bakchisches Rasen der Bevölkerung
5. Akt: Pan am Aetna

Er ist frei von Furcht und Mitleid, bis zur That der Heldin.

Im 4. Akt steigert sich das Mitleid. Der Todesplan.

Im 5. Ist er glücklich, als er das Volk gerettet weiß. Widerspruch: sein Plan ist mißlungen, der Tod erscheint als das größere Unheil als die Pest.

Das Volk verehrt ihn immer höher, bis zum Pan.

(KSA 7, 234f.)

Like Hölderlin's "Frankfurter Plan", these preliminary outlines call for a five-act tragedy with the hero's decision to die situated in the fourth. "Der Todesplan" of Empedokles recalls his predecessor's resolve upon death at the corresponding moment in the drama: "Nun reift sein Entschluß, der längst schon in ihm dämmerte, durch freiwilligen Tod sich mit der unendlichen Natur zu vereinen" (StA 4, 147). Yet the motivation differs considerably in the two cases: Hölderlin's character of course longs to rejoin infinite nature while the death wish of Nietzsche's Empedokles seems linked with the widespread pestilence and his growing pity for its victims. Indeed, one wonders whether his "death plan" is not intended as some sort of sacrifice for the salvation of his people, which might explain the so-called "Widerspruch" indicated in the fifth act: "[...] sein Plan ist mißlungen, der Tod erscheint als das größere Unheil als die Pest." Again, as often occurs when interpreting Nietzsche's schematic notes, few definitive conclusions can be drawn.

One does, however, notice that the Empedokles of these fragments shows a greater attachment to his people than does Hölderlin's hero in any of the drafts except perhaps the third. In nearly all of the sketches, Nietzsche's Empedokles participates in the activities of the *polis*, particularly in the tragic and poetic contests that tend to create a Dionysian atmosphere throughout Acragas. He is after all the ruler of the city, whereas Hölderlin's figure takes on the role of a social outcast who, in part through his own doing, in part through the connivance of the more powerful archon and priest, has all but been forced into exile. In the "Frankfurter Plan", the only stage of the project to depict the climactic death scene, only a handful of followers gather at the crater of Etna "um Laid zu tragen, und den Tod des großen Mannes zu feiern" (StA 4, 148). Nietzsche's Empedokles on the other hand, perhaps because he is willing to die for his people rather than for some more lofty ideal, enjoys a more popular status, as the second of the above fragments illustrates: "Das Volk verehrt ihn immer höher [...]"

In the final dramatic sketch from this notebook, Nietzsche fleshes out the five acts that he previously outlined in somewhat skeletal fashion. Of all the dramatic fragments, this is the only one to run over a page,³¹ which still makes it less than half the length of Hölderlin's "Frankfurter Plan". Due to this factor of length, it need not be cited here in its entirety. As it is, it offers a limited number of fresh insights into Nietzsche's project but chiefly details what had been sketched out earlier in the most cursory and condensed form. Nevertheless, some important points emerge from this fragment.

In the third act, during the city-wide tragic festivals, Empedokles again proclaims his doctrine of reincarnation (cf. the previous group of sketches in KSA 1, 126), yet this

time long before he stands at the crater's rim. Following this pronouncement the people honor him "als Gott Dionysus" (KSA 1, 236), which marks a complete transformation from his earlier status as an Apollinian god in the second fragment of this cluster. Empedokles-Dionysus has now become a truly tragic figure, who no longer shows any traces of an individuated Apollinian existence. He is, rather, filled with "Vernichtungslust" (KSA 1, 236), and this Dionysian bent toward (self-)destruction only increases by the fifth act, the outline of which is cited here:

Empedokles unter den Schülern.

Nachtfeier.

Mystische Mitleidsrede. Vernichtung des Daseinstriebs, Tod des Pan.

Flucht des Volks.

Zwei Lavaströme, sie können nicht entrinnen!

Empedokles und Corinna. Empedokles fühlt sich als Mörder, unendlicher Strafe werth, er hofft eine Wiedergeburt des Sühnetodes. Dies treibt ihn in den Aetna.

Er will Korinna retten. Ein Thier kommt zu ihnen. Korinna stirbt mit ihm.

"Flieht Dionysos vor Ariadne?"

(KSA 7, 237)

This is the first indication of Empedokles' resolve to die in the sketch. In contrast to the five-act schemes discussed above, both of which fix the "Todesplan" in the fourth act, this final sketch of the series gives no hint of death until the very end of the planned drama. And death here takes on the function "des Sühnetodes", a notion that evokes both Hölderlin's play, especially the first draft, and the cosmogony of Empedocles. Just as in the original *Katharmoi*, this more modern Empedokles "fühlt sich als Mörder, unendlicher Strafe werth [...]" Though Nietzsche does not specify that this feeling

stems from a primal act of bloodshed, his curious and otherwise inexplicable inclusion of an animal at the end of this and previous fragments might be linked with the Empedoclean prohibition of consuming meat. (It does not seem out of place here to observe that Nietzsche himself tended toward vegetarianism.) All of these aspects directly pick up on the ideas presented in the *Purifications* and to a some extent in *Der Tod des Empedokles*. Most importantly, however, Nietzsche finally provides a motive for his hero's death: "[...] er hofft eine Wiedergeburt des Sühnetodes. Dies treibt ihn in den Aetna." This is the only sketch that makes any mention of atonement, yet it is not entirely clear what precise crime Empedokles seeks to expiate. Again, it seems unlikely that the primordial transgression of murder, which figures so strongly in the *Purifications*, plays a significant role in the conception of Nietzsche's drama. His preoccupations up until this point have been with different themes, most of which relate to fundamental questions of tragedy. Moreover, he has shown little faithfulness to the original doctrines of Empedocles and instead used the Presocratic philosopher as a means to communicate his own views. The Empedokles that one encounters in these dramatic plans has little if anything to do with the actual Empedocles who composed *On Nature* and *Purifications* or for that matter with the reconstructed Empedocles, part fact, part fiction, that appears in Diogenes Laertius. He will in effect be only further transformed in a later project of Nietzsche and lose all vestiges of the historical philosopher, poet, and magus. His still pending transformation from a representative figure of tragedy to the grand prophet of self-overcoming and eternal recurrence might indeed be summed up in the famous words from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* that heralded the *Zarathustra* project

in 1882: "*Incipit tragoedia*" (KSA 3, 571). Only this tragedy actually began as early as 1871, in unpublished notes revolving around the tragic figure of Empedokles.

Notes to Chapter Six

¹ I borrow this expression from both the thesis and title of David Farrell Krell's book *Postponements: Woman, Sensuality, and Death in Nietzsche* (Bloomington, 1986). Krell, whose readings of Nietzsche are as interesting as his interpretations of Heidegger, discusses the former's *Empedokles* plans from 1870-71 and their "postponement" to the *Zarathustra* project of the 1880's. He also does not ignore the influence of Hölderlin's *Der Tod des Empedokles* upon Nietzsche. For my own discussion of this important link between Hölderlin and Nietzsche, I cannot but defer to Krell, though most of my ideas were formed independently. Rather than continually footnote Krell's observations, I refer the reader in advance to especially the second and third chapters of *Postponements*, 33-69. Krell has also published a book the first part of which offers an at times straight-forward, at times deviant—or deliberately "lunatic"—analysis of Hölderlin's *Der Tod des Empedokles*. See *Lunar Voices: Of Tragedy, Poetry, Fiction, and Thought* (Chicago and London, 1995), esp. 3-51. I have however profited little from this rather rhapsodic study.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke*, 6th ed., vol. 4, ed. Karl Schlechta (München, 1969) 98. Heidegger has also mentioned this letter in a lecture course on Hölderlin's "Andenken", yet dispels the common notion that Nietzsche and Hölderlin bear any significant connection to one another. Compare the following remark: "Vollends irreführend ist die neuerdings in die Mode gekommene Zusammenstellung von Hölderlin und Nietzsche, trotzdem gerade Nietzsche und zwar schon als siebenzehnjähriger Gymnasiast Hölderlin erkannt und als seinen 'Lieblingsdichter' ausgezeichnet hat. Dies geschah in der Form eines Schulaufsatzes im Jahre 1861, aus einer Zeit, als Hölderlin bei den Deutschen fast ganz vergessen war" (GA 52, 78). The logic of this statement is apparent only if one realizes Heidegger's peculiar understanding of Hölderlin's and Nietzsche's place within the history of being. While the former comes close to thinking being through his poetic "worthhafte Stiftung des Seins", the latter remains entangled in metaphysics and thus remains oblivious to the *Seinsfrage*. Another reading of Heidegger's remark might take the word "neuerdings" as its cue and seek a historical-political rather a *seinsgeschichtlich* explanation. Heidegger's lecture from the winter of 1941/42 took place at the height of Nazi rule. Their facile appropriation of, above all, Hölderlin and Nietzsche as quintessential Teutonic authors could easily be the basis of Heidegger's oblique observation.

³ Nietzsche, *Werke*, vol. 4, 96.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁵ Cited in Curt Paul Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche Biographie*, vol. 1 (München, 1978) 80.

⁶ Cited in *ibid.*, 254.

⁷ It can now be found in *Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, II.1 (Berlin/New York, 1982) 75-167. This collection of Nietzsche's philological writings from 1867-1873

also contains two other articles on Diogenes published in *Rheinisches Museum*: “Analecta Laertiana” and “Beiträge zur Quellenkunde und Kritik des Laertius Diogenes”. See *ibid.*, 169-190 and 191-245.

⁸ See Janz, vol. 1, 191.

⁹ See *Pythian 2*, 72. In most of the extant manuscripts, this phrase contains a key participle, μαθων, which tends to alter if not undercut the urgency and pithiness of the imperative. The original text reads γενοι οιος εστι μαθων, which can be translated along the lines of: “Become such a person as you have learned to be.” For further details concerning Nietzsche’s appropriation of Pindar, see Derek Collins, “On the Aesthetics of the Deceiving Self in Nietzsche, Pindar, Theognis,” *Nietzsche-Studien* 26 (1997): 276-99. In the following, I generally adhere to Collins’ view that Nietzsche applies Pindar’s verse to his own notion of self-construction and self-aestheticization. I have no room, however, to discuss the necessary aspect of self-deception associated with this process. For this and further information about Pindar’s ode, the reader is referred to Collins. Also of interest is Jaspers’ brief discussion of Pindar’s saying within Nietzsche’s work. See Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: Einführung in das Verständnis seines Philosophierens* (Berlin/Leipzig, 1936) 133ff., esp. 136f.

¹⁰ In a note from the fall of 1876 Nietzsche also comments on the imperative: “‘Werde der, der du bist’: das ist ein Zuruf, welcher *immer* nur bei wenigen Menschen erlaubt, aber bei den allerwenigsten dieser Wenigen überflüssig ist” (KSA 8, 340).

¹¹ ειναι, the verb “to be”, exists only in the present and future tense; for all other tenses—pasts and perfects—γιγνεσθαι (“to become”) is used. This grammatical problem is perhaps symptomatic of the entire issue of being and becoming in ancient Greek and subsequent Western philosophy. This conflict may be said to culminate in, of all people, Nietzsche and Heidegger. Whereas the former asserts the primacy of *Werden* throughout his writings, the latter of course never relents from his pursuit of *Sein*. Compare for instance the following statement by Nietzsche from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*: “Wir Deutsche sind Hegelianer, auch wenn es nie einen Hegel gegeben hätte, insofern wir (im Gegensatz zu allen Lateinern) dem Werden, der Entwicklung instinktiv einen tieferen Sinn und reicheren Werth zumessen als dem, was ‘ist’ — wir glauben kaum an die Bedeutung des Begriffs ‘Sein’ [...] (KSA 3, 599).

¹² See StA 5, 390.

¹³ Cited in Janz, vol. 1, 227.

¹⁴ In a letter dated April 15th, 1868 Nietzsche describes his areas of specialty to the editor of the philological journal *Literarisches Centralblatt*: “Das Gebiet, in dem ich glaube, leidlich bewandert zu sein, ist das einer Quellenkunde und Methodik der griechischen Literaturgeschichte, um außerdem noch einige Namen zu nennen, die mir näherstehen, so mögen hier außer Hesiod noch Plato, Theognis, samt den Elegikern, Demokrit, Epikur, Laertius Diogenes, Stobäus, Suidas, Athenäus eine Stelle finden.” Cited in Janz, vol. 1, 238.

¹⁵ He announced this course for the *Wintersemester* of 1869-70, his second term at the University. Whether he actually held his lecture during this period cannot be determined. It is known however that he did so in *Sommersemester* 1872, WS 1875-76, and SS 1876. See *Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* II.4, *Vorlesungsaufzeichnungen, (WS 1871/72-WS 1874/75)*, ed. Colli/Montinari (Berlin/New York, 1995) 207ff.

¹⁶ For his explanation of this unorthodox grouping, see *ibid.*, 214.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 318.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 320f. One may choose to note some biographical irony in these attested manners of death. Nietzsche's maternal grandmother, Wilhelmine Oehler, died after having broken a rib on November 3rd, 1876. (See Janz, vol. I, 747.) Nietzsche also had a travel companion in Italy, Albert Brenner, who suffered from a serious lung problem and reportedly left Rome for Sicily in order to follow in the footsteps of Empedocles. As Malwida von Meysenbug, a close friend of Nietzsche and Brenner, writes to the former with regard to the latter on January 12th, 1876: "Ich fand ihn moralisch und physisch so krank, daß es mir gewissenlos schien, ihn einsam, ohne Rat, nach Catania ziehn zu lassen, da es klar war, daß er Absichten hatte, das Ende des Empedokles zu suchen. So beredete ich ihn, in Rom vorerst zu bleiben [...]" (Cited in Janz, vol. I, 685). Brenner eventually died in Basel on May 17th, 1878 at the age of twenty-one. During his death struggle in the hospital, his cries of pain reportedly rang through the neighboring streets (cf. Janz, vol. I, 798).

¹⁹ A brief note from 1875 makes an interesting connection between Faust, Hölderlin, and Empedokles, yet only further obscures the above problem: "Stelle über Faust / Hölderlin / Schluß Empedokles" (KSA 8, 9). One possible interpretation of this memo would be that Nietzsche was working on the conclusion of an *Empedokles* drama and sought to integrate a quote from *Faust* as well as aspects from Hölderlin. However, given the fact that there is no proof of his ever having progressed beyond initial sketches of an *Empedokles* drama, this thesis can only be tentative.

²⁰ Cited in Janz, vol. I, 511f. Ritschl's judgement is actually quite benign compared to, for instance, the scathing critique of the much younger philologist Ulrich von Wilamowitz. For a convenient summary of this Nietzsche-Wilamowitz debate, see Janz, vol. I, 463ff.

²¹ In contrast to his later thought, the early Nietzsche tends to assert the primacy of being over becoming, which is in large part due to the influence of Schopenhauer. For example, in his third *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung, Schopenhauer als Erzieher* (1874), he writes from the perspective of the so-called *heroische* or *Schopenhauerische Mensch*: "Dieses ewige Werden ist ein lügnisches Puppenspiel, über welchem der Mensch sich selbts vergisst, die eigentliche Zerstreuung, die das Individuum nach allen Winden auseinanderstreut, das endlose Spiel der Albernheit, welches das grosse Kind Zeit vor uns und mit uns spielt [...]. Im Werden ist Alles hohl, betrügerisch, flach und unserer Verachtung würdig; das Räthsel,

welches der Mensch lösen soll, kann er nur aus dem Sein lösen, im So- und nicht Anderssein, im Unvergänglichen" (KSA I, 374f.).

²² Heidegger has also written an essay on Anaximander's fragment, an almost word for word analysis of the Greek, in which he presents his own—typically idiocratic—suggestions for translation against Nietzsche's and the now standard one by Diels. See "Der Spruch des Anaximander," in *Holzwege*, GA 5, 321-73.

²³ Plutarch, *de defectu oracularum* (*The Obsolescence of Oracles*), XVII, in *Moralia V* (Loeb Classical Library) (London, 1936) 350-438.

²⁴ The one fragment from this notebook that I have not cited above seems of little importance for my discussion. For the sake of completeness I will nevertheless include it here marginally : "Das Weib in der Theatervorstellung, stürzt heraus und sieht den Geliebten niedersinken. Sie will zu ihm, Empedokles hält sie zurück und entdeckt seine Liebe zu ihr. Sie giebt nach, der Sterbende spricht, Empedokles entsetzt sich vor der ihm offenbarten Natur" (KSA 7, 125).

²⁵ See the section entitled "Der Aufbau des 'Hauptwerks' / Nietzsches Denkweise als Umkehren" in Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, 5th ed. (Pfullingen, 1989) 33-44, for the above quote: 38. Somewhat out of character, Heidegger remarks on a critical note: "Nietzsches Verfahren der Umkehrung geht zuweilen bis zur bewußten Sucht, wenn nicht gar Geschmacklosigkeit" (ibid., 39).

²⁶ *Poetics*, 49b, 27f. Cited in: *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York, 1941) 1460.

²⁷ A later remark from *Die Götzen-Dämmerung* (1889) further demonstrates Nietzsche's anti-Aristotelian and self-fancied Dionysian "Begriff des tragischen Gefühls", the purpose of which remains: "Nicht um von Schrecken und Mitleiden loszukommen, nicht um sich von einem gefährlichen Affekt durch dessen vehemente Entladung zu reinigen — so verstand es Aristoteles — : sondern um, über Schrecken und Mitleid hinaus, die ewige Lust des Werdens *selbst zu sein*, — jene Lust, die auch noch die *Lust am Vernichten* in sich schliesst [...] (KSA 6, 160). He repeats these words in his revaluation of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* in *Ecce homo* (cf. KSA 6, 312).

²⁸ Janz, vol. I, 389.

²⁹ Krell, *Lunar Voices*, 5.

³⁰ See Janz, vol. I, 390.

³¹ A later fragment written in prose proves to be somewhat longer and marks perhaps Nietzsche's attempt to transform his play into a narrative genre, perhaps even into a novel à la *Hyperion*. The piece contains none of the themes raised in the dramatic sketches, and remains completely descriptive rather than conceptual in nature. Empedokles does not appear, though Pausanias and Corinna are mentioned. If it

were not for the fact that these latter two names occur, the reader would be hard pressed to discern any connection to the *Empedokles* project. See KSA 7, 269-71.

Chapter Seven

Death in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* Project and Other Writings

Der Tod soll selbst in einen Akt des *Lebens*, d.h. des Mehr-als-Lebens, das das Leben übersieht und beherrscht, verwandelt werden.

-Jaspers, *Nietzsche*

The incipient tragedy announced at the close of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* is not meant to be that of Empedokles, but of Zarathustra, the titular hero of Nietzsche's conceptually and stylistically most unique work *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Nevertheless, this book, which was written in the years 1883-85, can be considered an extension of the *Empedokles* project from the early 1870's for several reasons. First of all, with regard to form, *Also sprach Zarathustra* remains a curious mixture of philosophy, poetry, and drama. Not only does Nietzsche pick up on the Presocratic tradition of philosophizing in a poetic and doctrinal manner, but he also creates a diverse cast of characters whose verbal and physical interactions with one another lend a certain dramatic quality to the text. Moreover, posthumously published notes from this period reveal that Nietzsche still toyed with the idea of writing a play, this time however around a new figure named Zarathustra. Despite the fact that Zarathustra owes his name to the ancient Persian philosopher better known as Zoroaster, the two have little else in common. Nietzsche modeled his creation rather on Hölderlin's tragic hero, as the numerous similarities between *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Der Tod des Empedokles* demonstrate. The most essential parallel between the two works concerns the notion of death, which both

characters come to regard as a summation of life and which both furthermore carry out—at least according to working sketches—in the mouth of a volcano.

Countless interpreters have endeavored to answer the question, first formulated as such by Heidegger: “Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?”¹ If there is any consensus on the issue of Zarathustra’s identity and function it is that he shares practically no kinship with his namesake Zoroaster, the founder of a pre-Islamic religion in which the conflicting principles of good and evil, as embodied in the spirits Ormazd and Ahriman, dominate the world. Nietzsche, whose entire philosophy remains, like the title of one of his works, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, has in effect undermined any alliance between the two Zarathustras, the one an historical prophet of good and evil, the other a fictionalized herald of the *Übermensch*:

Man hat mich nicht gefragt, man hätte mich fragen sollen, was gerade in meinem Munde, im Munde des ersten Immoralisten, der Name *Zarathustra* bedeutet: denn was die ungeheure Einzigkeit jenes Persers in der Geschichte ausmacht, ist gerade dazu das Gegentheil. Zarathustra hat zuerst im Kampf des Guten und Bösen das eigentliche Rad im Getriebe der Dinge gesehen, — die Übersetzung der Moral in’s Metaphysische, als Kraft, Ursache, Zweck an sich, ist *sein* Werk. Zarathustra *schuf* diesen verhängnisvollen Irrthum, die Moral: folglich muss er auch der erste sein, der ihn *erkennt* [...] Die Selbstüberwindung der Moral aus Wahrhaftigkeit, die Selbstüberwindung des Moralisten in seinen Gegensatz — in *mich* — das bedeutet in meinem Munde der Name Zarathustra.

(*Ecce homo*, KSA, 6, 367)

As has been observed in light of this passage, “*Nietzsches Zarathustra ist [...] ein Anti-Zoroaster.*”² Nietzsche in other words deliberately uses Zoroaster as a foil, reversing his role as religious moralist into that of a heathen immoralist who thinks beyond the ethical

categories of good and evil. Zarathustra thus takes on precisely the opposite function of his predecessor. One might choose to regard this reversal as an example of what Heidegger means by Nietzsche's obsessive "Verfahren der Umkehrung". However, a more important question to bear in mind is whether Nietzsche takes similar liberties with Zarathustra's more immediate and influential forerunner: Empedokles.

The very title of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, which derives from the closing refrain of the protagonist's speeches, points more to the Presocratics than to Zoroaster. As Curt Paul Janz has argued, the formula "Also sprach ..." can be regarded as a translation of "ταδε" or "ωδε λεγει ...", which are common opening lines to Presocratic writings.³ According to an eminent authority on the Presocratics, Hermann Diels, the original sayings of Heraclitus probably followed this protocol and began with "Also sprach Herakleitos," a fact that Nietzsche could not have ignored. Diels even goes so far as to claim that Nietzsche's "Also sprach Zarathustra' ist der jüngste Sproß dieser vielgepflegten Gattung [...]"⁴ Beyond the title of the book, Nietzsche further entitles individual sections, many of which consist of Zarathustra's discourses on diverse topics such as war and neighborly love. For the most part these all begin with "Von" plus the appropriate definite article, for example "Vom Kriege und Kriegsvolke", "Von der Nächstenliebe", etc. Janz maintains that these titles draw on "[...] die vielen Titel von Abhandlungen der nachsokratischen Philosophie, die alle lauten: περι του." While this claim is certainly true, it ought to be noted that also *Presocratic* texts on cosmogony tend to be called by convention περι φυσικης or *Von der Natur*. A number of fragments by Empedocles have of course been grouped under this name as have those of Heraclitus. In

summing up his observations, Janz does not remain enmeshed in titles and other stylistic conventions but looks to the fundamental character of Zarathustra. And in the process he comes to the following conclusions:

Hier leuchtet wohl am stärksten die Erinnerung an den legendenumwobenen Arzt, Wanderprediger und Philosophen Empedokles auf, von dem große Teile eines — auch Nietzsche bekannten — Lehrgedichtes in Hexametern erhalten sind. Wenn Empedokles auch nicht den Titel zu Nietzsches Werk hergab, so schwebt doch diese vorsokratische Gestalt in den Nietzscheschen Impressionen mit, mitsamt seiner Hinterlassenschaft: der unentflechtbaren Mischung von Naturwissenschaft, ionischer Naturphilosophie und pythagoreisch-eleatischem Mystizismus.⁵

Here Janz speaks solely of the historical Empedocles; his earlier assertion that Hölderlin's Empedokles had absolutely no impact on Nietzsche's dramatic fragments is a familiar erroneous thesis. The fact that he still fails to acknowledge any relation between Hölderlin's drama and the next phase of Nietzsche's *Empedokles* project, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, is another oversight that stands in need of correction.

Zarathustra bears a far greater resemblance to Empedokles the tragic hero than to Empedocles the Presocratic philosopher (upon whom Hölderlin himself based only minimal aspects of his drama). Like the former, he is a prophet whose untimely preachings meet with the intolerance of resentful priests and mean-spirited villagers, which results in his self-imposed exile to heights above the common herd. The mountainous landscape that Nietzsche depicts seems in fact more reminiscent of Hölderlin's "Gegend am Aetna" (StA 4, 47) than the ostensible setting of a Middle Eastern desert. In their banishment, both Empedokles and Zarathustra are joined by a

few loyal disciples, with whom they discuss the present ills and future ideal of humanity. Beyond this general scope of plot, Nietzsche took over numerous details from Hölderlin's drama. Vivetta Vivarelli's article "Empedokles und Zarathustra: Verschwendeter Reichtum und Wollust am Untergang"⁶ traces a number of parallels between *Der Tod des Empedokles* and *Also sprach Zarathustra*. As Vivarelli points out, Nietzsche alludes to Christoph Schwab's 1846 edition of *Der Tod des Empedokles*, in which the hero of the play rejects the people's plea for him to become king as follows: "Es ist die Zeit der Könige nicht mehr."⁷ Zarathustra, typically far more antagonistic toward society than Empedokles, expands upon his precursor's words: "Es ist die Zeit der Könige nicht mehr; was sich heute Volk heisst, verdient keine Könige" (KSA 4, 263). Such a direct appropriation would seem to confirm Vivarelli's conjecture that Nietzsche may have reread Hölderlin's drama while composing *Zarathustra*, perhaps in order to crystallize certain concepts and work out final details. Yet the theme of death would seem to be the principal motivation for Nietzsche's return to the original *Empedokles* text. As Vivarelli observes: "Eine Erklärung des Beweggrundes, aus dem Nietzsche den *Empedokles* in den Jahren 1882/83 wieder gelesen haben könnte, möchte sich gerade im Thema des schönen und freien Todes finden."⁸ Despite this claim, death is not the main focus of Vivarelli's article but constitutes only one of several motifs that she examines in *Zarathustra* and *Empedokles*. Readers in search of such motifs, especially with regard to language and imagery, are referred to her article, which is largely a compilation of quotes drawn from both texts and juxtaposed for the sake of comparison. In the following I will address parallels that Vivarelli either overlooks or underemphasizes. These chiefly

concern death in the published *Also sprach Zarathustra* as well as in the posthumous notes accompanying this project.

The broader concept behind the figure of Zarathustra recalls the unifying role that Hölderlin ascribed to his character in the “Frankfurter Plan” and “Grund zum Empedokles”. As Nietzsche states retrospectively in *Ecce homo*: “[...] in ihm [Zarathustra] sind alle Gegensätze zu einer neuen Einheit gebunden” (*Ecce homo*, KSA 6, 343). In the work proper, Zarathustra’s function as conciliator becomes especially apparent in the section entitled “Von der Erlösung”. Here one finds an obvious allusion to Hölderlin, not, however, to *Der Tod des Empedokles* but to the so-called *Scheltrede* of *Hyperion*. Zarathustra’s condemnation of his contemporaries echoes, almost to the letter, Hyperion’s invective against German philistinism:

“Wahrlich, meine Freunde, ich wandle unter den Menschen wie unter den Bruchstücken und Gliedmaassen von Menschen.!

Diess ist meinem Auge das Fürchterliche, dass ich den Menschen zertrümmert finde und zerstreuet wie über ein Schlachtfeld und Schlächterfeld hin.

Und flüchtet mein Auge vom Jetzt zum Ehemals: es findet immer das Gleiche: Bruchstücke und grause Zufälle—aber keine Menschen!⁹

(KSA 4, 178f.)

One of Zarathustra’s many goals is to overcome this human fragmentation and, like Empedokles (Hyperion’s extreme idealism prevents him from effecting any change), reintroduce some sort of harmony into the world: “Und das ist all mein Dichten und Trachten, dass ich in Eins dichte und zusammentrage, was Bruchstück ist und Räthsel

und grauser Zufall” (KSA 4, 179). There is even some indication that this reconciliation or redemption (“Versöhnung” and “Erlösung” are recurring words in this section) is motivated by a primordial guilt as in Hölderlin’s drama:

“Keine That kann vernichtet werden: wie könnte sie durch die Strafe ungethan werden! Diess, diess ist das Ewige an der Strafe ‘Dasein’, dass das Dasein auch ewig wieder That und Schuld sein muss!” (KSA 4, 181)

In contrast to Empedokles, Zarathustra finds no need to sacrifice himself in a volcano in order to reconcile the guilt and strife of existence—at least not in the version of *Also sprach Zarathustra* that one reads today. Yet posthumously published notes from the summer of 1883 reveal that Nietzsche contemplated the same fate for Zarathustra as for Empedokles. At this point he had finished writing the first two parts of the book (Part I appeared in April, Part II in August) and now apparently considered adopting a dramatic form for the third, as the following three sketches indicate:

10[45]

I Act. Die Versuchungen. Er hält sich nicht für reif. (Ausgewähltes Volk)
Einsamkeit aus Scham vor sich

II Act. Zarathustra incognito dem “großen Mittag” beiwohnend
Wird erkannt

III Act. Katastrophe: alle fallen ab nach *seiner* Rede.
Er stirbt vor Schmerz.

IV Act. Leichenfeier
“Wir tödteten ihn”
überredet die Gründe

10[46]

Zu D). Er weigert sich. Endlich durch die Kinderchöre in Thränen.

Ein Narr!

2 Könige führen den Esel.

Zu 2) Als der Zug nicht weiß, wohin sich wenden, kommen die Gesandten aus der Peststadt. Entscheidung. Wie im *Wald*. Feuer auf dem Markte symbol<ische> Reinigung.

Vernichtung der *Großstadt* das Ende

ich will die *Frommen* verführen.

10[47]

Zarathustra auf den Ruinen einer Kirche sitzend Act 4

der Mildeste muß der Härteste werden — und daran zu Grunde gehen.

Mild gegen den Menschen, hart um des Übermenschen willen

Collision.

anscheinende *Schwäche*.

er prophezeit ihnen: die Lehre der Widerkehr ist das Zeichen.

Er vergißt sich und lehrt aus dem *Übermenschen* heraus die Widerkehr:

der Übermensch *hält sie aus* und züchtigt damit.

Bei der Rückkehr aus der Vision stirbt er daran.

(KSA 10, 377f.)

Given the fact that Zarathustra dies in the third act of this plan and that his obsequies take place in the fourth, it would seem that Nietzsche had no intention of composing a full five-act tragedy as he did in his *Empedokles* project. And the additional fact that Zarathustra dies from grief or heartbreak rather than through a more assertive act of sacrifice remains another departure from the earlier fragments. His death, ultimately caused by the people (“Wir tödteten ihn”), is characterized by passivity and thus forms the precise contrast to the self-destructive, Dionysian bent that Empedokles displays in the manuscripts from 1870-72. Nor does one find any mention of Etna or volcanic flame in these sketches. Nevertheless, Nietzsche shares with Hölderlin the view of fire as a

purifying and regenerative force; that is, as a form of “cartharsis” in its original, non-Aristotelian sense. The outbreak of fire in the marketplace consumes and presumably cleanses the pest-ridden city, much as the fiery end of Empedokles, who speaks of “dem reinigenden Tode” (StA 4, 65), signifies a purgation and perhaps a phoenix-like rebirth. This notion of renewal is implied in Zarathustra’s doctrine of recurrence, which he prophesies while seated upon the ruins of a church, a scene symbolizing the death of religion. Nietzsche’s concept of eternal recurrence, a central theme in the still unwritten Part III, figures as early as the *Empedokles* project, where the hero proclaims “die Wahrheit der Wiedergeburt” (KSA 7, 126) immediately before his plunge into the volcano. This doctrine of palingenesis has of course Pythagorean-Empedoclean roots and figures strongly in the *Purifications*. It even receives passing mention in Hölderlin’s drama, most explicitly in the words of Pausanias: “[...] es kehret alles wieder” (StA 4, 133), words that anticipate the “ewige Wiederkehr” of Zarathustra here in the fragments and later in Part III of the published work.

Another four-act sketch from the summer of 1883 proves more reminiscent of the *Empedokles* plans from ten years earlier:

- I Act. Zarathustra unter Thieren. Die Höhle.
Das Kind mit dem Spiegel. (Es ist Zeit!)
Die verschiedenen Anfragen, sich steigernd. Zuletzt verführen ihn die Kinder mit Gesang.
- 2 Act. Die Stadt, Ausbruch der Pest. Aufzug Zarathustra’s, Heilung des Weibes. Frühling.
- 3 Act. Mittag und Ewigkeit.
- 4. Act. Die Schiffer.

Scene am Vulkan, Zarathustra *unter Kindern sterbend*.
 Todtenfeier.

Vorzeichen.

zu 3.) Zarathustra sah und hörte nichts, er war entzückt.

Dann schrittweise zurück in das furchtbarste Wissen. Die Empörung der Jünger, Fortgehen der Liebsten, Zarathustra sucht sie zu halten. Die Schlange züngelt nach ihm. Er widerruft, Übermaß des Mitleidens, der Adler flieht. Jetzt die Scene des Weibes, an dem wieder die Pest ausbricht. Aus Mitleid tödtet er. Er umarmt den Leichnam.

Darauf das Schiff und die Erscheinung am Vulkan. "Zarathustra geht zur Hölle? Oder will er nun die Unterwelt erlösen?" — So verbreitet sich das Gerücht, er sei auch der Böse.

Letzte Scene am Vulkan. Volle Seligkeit. Vergessen. Vision des Weibes (oder des Kindes mit dem Spiegel) Die Jünger schauen in das tiefe Grab. (Oder *Zarathustra unter Kindern an Tempelresten*.)

Die größte aller Todtenfeiern macht den Schluß. Goldener Sarg in den Vulkan gestürzt.

(KSA 10, 444f.)

With Zarathustra's death scene now moved to a volcano, Nietzsche falls back on the Empedocles tradition, although he does not completely follow all the details found in Hölderlin and Diogenes. Zarathustra dies not *in* the volcano itself, which here remains nameless, but upon its slopes or at the edge of its summit crater. In contrast to his both literal and figurative forerunners, he does not race forward into death, but instead succumbs to some fatal weakness (his cause of death is not entirely clear) only then to take the post mortem plunge into the volcano, his body encased in a golden sarcophagus. His end, while ceremonious and triumphant, lacks the resoluteness that his predecessors displayed in the face of finitude. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that Nietzsche

ascribed central importance to these final moments of Zarathustra throughout the conceptual drafts. Here he writes in the superlative: “Die größte aller Todtenfeiern macht den Schluß.” Other notes too numerous to cite (some dozen in all), show that he intended to entitle one of the chapters “Die Todtenfeier”, a heading that never made it into the completed work. Indeed, Zarathustra does not give in to the “Versuchung des Selbstmordes” (KSA 10, 480) in the published version, but, after periods of melancholy and despair at the state of present mankind, he eventually experiences a revitalization of his powers and leaves the gloom of his cave for the bright midday sun, a recurring symbol of the promising future in which man as we know him will be overcome (*überwunden*) by the overman or *Über-mensch*. The closing words of Part IV testify to his renewed vigor and passion: “Also sprach Zarathustra und verliess seine Höhle, glühend und stark, wie eine Morgensonne, die aus dunklen Bergen kommt” (KSA 4, 408).

It apparently took Nietzsche several years to arrive at this optimistic ending, for during the course of his work on the *Zarathustra* project from 1882-85 he deliberated a number of different fates for his character, all of which result in distinct manners of death. As mentioned above, his notes from the summer of 1883 depict a mysterious and gentle end upon an equally mysterious and gentle volcano, one that bears no specific name nor shows any signs of dangerous activity (lava, flame, etc). In later sketches, the volcano disappears altogether and Zarathustra’s death no longer occurs in connection with this Empedoclean landmark.¹⁰

In sketches from the autumn of 1883, Nietzsche attributes the cause of his figure’s death to pity, thereby taking up a crucial idea from his earlier *Empedokles* plans.

Zarathustra becomes overwhelmed by pity for the principal female figure, Pana (a possible throwback to the Panthea of Hölderlin's drama or to the Pan of Nietzsche's project), who for reasons not to be divined from the fragments has intentions of killing him:

16 [38]

Als er Pana erräth, stirbt Zarathustra vor Mitleid mit ihrem Mitleid.

16 [42]

Zuerst wenden sich Alle von Zarathustra ab (dies *schrittweise zu schildern!*). Zarathustra entzückt, merkt nichts. Pana will ihn tödten. *Im Augenblick, wo sie den Dolch führt, versteht Zarathustra alles und stirbt am Schmerz über dieses Mitleiden. Dies ist deutlich zu machen!*

(KSA 10, 512f.)

Nietzsche's notion of pity here and elsewhere in *Also sprach Zarathustra* seems to have little to do with the Aristotle's tragic effect of *ελεος*. It is more closely related to the Christian virtue of commiseration, which Nietzsche criticized in his later thinking as one of the chief obstacles to be overcome in his attempt to reevaluate all values. Pity only succeeds in lowering one to the level of the object that one pities: by sympathizing with a suffering human one cannot help but identify with that person to some degree. Just like the Greek *συμ-πάσχω*, the German *mit-leiden* literally means "to suffer with/together" and hence implies a certain identification between sufferer and sympathizer. Such an attitude is fatal for the vitality of a culture, as it reduces the *Pathos der Distanz* that separates the handful of noble individuals, the productive *Kulturträger*, from the afflicted masses, who can either inhibit cultural growth or serve it as raw material, i.e. as slaves,

cannon fodder, etc. This aristocratic view is necessarily a ruthless one, but then again the very act of creation is at bottom harsh and merciless. As Zarathustra states: “Alle Schaffenden aber sind hart—” (KSA 4, 116) and must remain so if they expect to create anything new as opposed to merely perpetuating the status quo. Perhaps this crisis in creativity is what contributed for Nietzsche to the death of God, Who died from the very same ailment as Zarathustra in the above fragments: “Gott ist todt; an seinem Mitleid mit den Menschen ist Gott gestorben” (KSA 4, 115). Zarathustra must avoid falling into the same emotional snare if he hopes to overcome himself and eventually usher in a higher type of human, the so-called *Übermensch*. Hence his rejection of pity and his affirmation of the creative act in Part II of the book: “So seid mir gewarnt vor dem Mitleiden [...] Merket aber auch diess Wort: alle grosse Liebe ist noch über all ihrem Mitleiden: denn sie will das Geliebte noch — schaffen!” (KSA 4, 116). The next time that Pana intends to kill him in the fragments, Zarathustra does not give in to pity, but exhibits precisely the opposite reaction: he breaks out into peels of laughter. And his subsequent death occurs not on a volcano, but atop a rock or cliff: “[Zarathustra] Steigt lachend aufwärts auf den Fels: aber dort angekommen stirbt er glücklich” (KSA 10, 594).

In these notes from 1883 Nietzsche is following up on a central section from the already published Part I of his book: Zarathustra’s speech “Vom freien Tode”. This passage contains *in nuce* Zarathustra’s (and presumably Nietzsche’s own) view on death as the ultimate possibility of self-overcoming, and here numerous parallels to the thanatology of *Der Tod des Empedokles* and *Sein und Zeit* become apparent. From

Hölderlin Nietzsche takes up key ideas and images pertaining to death while he provides Heidegger with a further basis for the development of such essential notions as an authentic and contrasting inauthentic *Sein zum Tode*. Nietzsche's impact on Heidegger seems particularly evident in their common conceptions of finitude as freedom, whether as Zarathustra's proclamation of free death (*freier Tod*) or as Heidegger's ontological realization of freedom unto death (*Freiheit zum Tode*). In the end, a string of influences can be discerned linking Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, all of whom regard death as the most extreme potentiator of existence and each of whose principal figures—Empedokles, Zarathustra, and the philosophical protagonist Dasein—capitalize on the existential possibility of their finitude through either a literal or figurative process of *Vorlaufen*.

Zarathustra's discourse on free death begins as follows:

Viele sterben zu spät, und Einige sterben zu früh. Noch klingt fremd die
Lehre: "stirb zur rechten Zeit!"
Stirb zur rechten Zeit: also lehrt es Zarathustra.
(KSA 4, 93)

The formulation of Zarathustra's maxim recalls the exemplary death "zur rechten Zeit" (StA 4, 65) that Empedokles describes to Pausanias in the first draft of Hölderlin's play. It also expresses Heidegger's demand on authentic Dasein. As *sich-vorweg-sein*, the charter of Dasein's being is such that it constantly projects itself forward, never once falling behind itself by settling into a static or ossified state. This forward trajectory continues even in the face of finitude: Dasein "runs ahead" into death—or less literally

“anticipates” its perpetual imminency—as the supreme possibility of a self-determined existence. For Heidegger, the “right time” for Dasein to give up its existence occurs at that moment when it finds itself unable to move onward and shatter its already attained states of being. And though Heidegger never employs the precise term “zur rechten Zeit”, he still relies on words of Nietzsche in summing up Dasein’s forward-running/anticipatory conduct toward finitude:

Das Vorlaufen erschließt der Existenz als äußerste Möglichkeit die Selbstaufgabe und zerbricht so jede Versteifung auf die je erreichte Existenz. Das Dasein behütet sich, vorlaufend, davor, hinter sich selbst und das verstandene Seinkönnen zurückzufallen und “für seine Siege zu alt zu werden” (Nietzsche). (SZ, 264)

As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, Heidegger’s reference is both parenthetical and paraphrastic. He gives only the vague source “Nietzsche”, a name that he cites twice elsewhere in *Sein und Zeit* with somewhat more bibliographic detail. One will however note here an allusion to Zarathustra’s speech “Vom freien Tode”, which is replete with metaphors that serve to illustrate the proper moment for death. Heidegger chooses to paraphrase only one of several such metaphors, highlighted below:

Wer ein Ziel hat und einen Erben, der will den Tod zur rechten Zeit für Ziel und Erben.

Und aus Ehrfurcht vor Ziel und Erben wird er keine dürren Kränze mehr im Heiligthum des Lebens aufhängen.

Wahrlich, nicht will ich den Seildrehern gleichen: sie ziehen ihren Faden in die Länge und gehen dabei selber immer rückwärts.

Mancher wird auch für seine Wahrheiten und Siege zu alt, ein zahnloser Mund hat nicht mehr das Recht zu jeder Wahrheit.

Und Jeder, der Ruhm haben will, muss sich bei Zeiten von der Ehre verabschieden und die schwere Kunst üben, zur rechten Zeit zu — gehn.
(KSA 4, 94)

For Nietzsche as for Heidegger, the “right time” to die occurs at that point in existence when one is no longer able to push the limits of possibility. This is an idea related to Zarathustra’s major doctrine of self-overcoming, according to which the ideal human — the future *Übermensch* anticipated throughout the work — engages in a continual process of becoming, forever surpassing his previous accomplishments. Just as Dasein, in its *sich-vorweg-sein* and *Vorlaufen*, is prevented from falling behind itself and its potentiality, the *Übermensch* similarly keeps one step ahead of himself so as never to lapse into stasis—or worse, to regress like the rope-makers, who are forced to move backwards by the very nature of their craft. With the imperative “Stirb zur rechten Zeit!”, Nietzsche/Zarathustra thus intends to say the following: rather than linger in a halting stage of development, one should instead carry out what may be the most supreme act of self-overcoming: an affirmation of death while still in one’s prime.

This is one perspective that can be taken on the issue of death “at the right time”. As Jaspers has indicated in his *Nietzsche* book, which rivals Heidegger’s own in terms of thematic scope,¹¹ Zarathustra’s dictum “Stirb zur rechten Zeit!” is, on the one hand, directed at

[...] Menschen, die recht gelebt haben. Wann ist für sie die “rechte Zeit”? Wenn das Schaffen sein Ende erreicht hat [...] wenn der Mensch noch selbst da ist, um Abschied nehmen zu können; wenn Krankheit und Alter nicht nur da sind, sondern ein sinnerfülltes “schaffendes” Leben unmöglich machen.¹²

According to Jaspers, there is an inherent indeterminacy in this notion of dying at the right time, an indeterminacy that serves to account for individuals in determinate situations. (And one that incidentally has nothing to do with Heidegger's notion on *Unbestimmtheit*.) As an existential code, the right time to die is relative to a particular existence and thus cannot dictate a universal determinacy to all those that uphold it. It must remain the most general of precepts if it is to have any validity or—better yet—effect. Jaspers expresses this problem in the following passage which picks up on the one cited above:

Das aber ist, wenn der Zeitpunkt tatsächlich bestimmt werden sollte, entweder nur in allgemeinsten, unbestimmten Wendungen zu sagen — deren Anwendung im Einzelfall, wenn sie argumentierend vollzogen würde, wohl das Ergebnis hätte, daß es stets noch nicht oder jederzeit schon die rechte Zeit sei, nämlich je nach der Art meiner selbst oder dessen, der den Sinn des jeweiligen Lebens wertend dem Einzelnen gegenüber mit Sympathie oder Antipathie abschätzt. Oder die Frage nach der "rechten Zeit" würde in eine äußere, brutalisierende Feststellbarkeit verwandelt. Oder es wird die Forderung, den Augenblick des Todes frei entscheiden zu sollen, durch die Forderung unterbaut, so zu leben, daß man zu dieser Entscheidung *fähig* sei [...]¹³

Yet not everyone is capable of determining this moment for himself. For those that lead an unfulfilled existence, death remains a sudden and brutal fact that strikes from without. With respect to people of this kind there is, strictly speaking, no proper moment to die, for they have never properly lived. Jaspers cites in this context Zarathustra's condemnation of the superfluous masses: "Freilich, wer nie zur rechten Zeit lebt, wie sollte der je zur rechten Zeit sterben? Möchte er doch nie geboren sein! — Also rathe ich

den Überflüssigen” (KSA 4, 93).¹⁴ This negative perspective remains as present in Zarathustra’s speech as the more creative, life-promoting one that lends individual determinacy to the all too general imperative “Stirb zur rechten Zeit!”.

Zarathustra’s critique of the superfluous who outlive rather than overcome themselves is made rhetorically manifest throughout his oration. A number of examples, one of which Heidegger appropriates to describe Dasein’s being-unto-death, have been given above. Yet Zarathustra becomes only more vehement, his metaphors more hyperbolic and provocative:

Man muss aufhören, sich essen zu lassen, wenn man am besten schmeckt;
das wissen Die, welche lange geliebt werden wollen.

Saure Äpfel giebt es freilich, deren Loos will, dass sie bis auf den letzten
Tag des Herbstes warten: und zugleich werden sie reif, gelb und runzelig.
[...]

Mancher wird nie süß, er fault im Sommer schon. Feigheit ist es, die ihn
an seinem Ast festhält.

Viel zu Viele leben und viel zu lange hängen sie an ihren Ästen. Möchte
ein Sturm kommen, der all diess Faule und Wurmfressne vom Baume schüttelt!

Möchten Prediger kommen des *schnellen* Todes! Das wären mir die
rechten Stürme und Schüttler an Lebensbäumen! Aber ich höre nur den
langsamen Tod predigen und Geduld mit allem “Irdischen”.

(KSA 4, 94)

Through this imagery of ripe and rotten fruit Nietzsche draws a dichotomy between two possible modes of conduct toward finitude. Here he takes up an important aspect of Hölderlin’s drama, in the first draft of which Empedokles condemns the religious/metaphysical view of death sanctioned by Hermokrates the High Priest.

Empedokles, who in his haste to die finds himself harassed by Hermokrates and the populace of Agracas, even delivers to his adversaries the key words that Zarathustra unleashes at the end his invective: “Sterbt langsamen Tods [...]” (StA 4, 31).

Empedokles thus takes on the role of a “Prediger [...] des *schnellen* Todes” insofar as he attempts to shake the multitude out of its complacent attitude toward death. Like the metaphorical fruit that, according to Zarathustra, clings to the branch long past its time of maturity, the people of Acragas seek to extend their lease on life and postpone a confrontation with mortality. Such is not the case with Empedokles, who relies on a remarkably similar image in describing his impending death: “Heute ist mein Herbsttag und es fällt die Frucht / Von selbst” (StA 4, 65).¹⁵ Another organic metaphor that Empedokles uses to convey his idea of the “right time” to die runs as follows: “Oft schläft, wie edles Saamenkorn, / Das Herz der Sterblichen in todter Schaale, / Bis ihre Zeit gekommen ist [...]” (StA 4, 67). This association of a ripened fruit with a timely death is not particular to Hölderlin and Nietzsche but can be found in other works dealing with the problem of human finitude. In *Der Ackermann und der Tod*, one of the first works in this tradition, the character of Death argues along the same lines with the Ploughman, who mourns the premature passing of his wife: “[...] zeitige Äpfel fallen gerne in den Kot; überreife Birnen fallen gerne in die Pfütze.”¹⁶ Here, too, a conflict of viewpoints is presented. On the one hand, the Ploughman holds fast to existence and refuses to accept death, the personification of which he curses for all eternity: “Drum will ich ohne Ende schreien: Ihr, Tod, Euch sei geflucht!”¹⁷ Death, on the other hand, repeatedly makes a case for its necessary presence in the midst of life. Like Zarathustra,

he calls for mortals to die at the height of their powers, beyond which time it is too late to lead a full existence: “‘Am besten zu sterben, wenn am besten zu leben.’ Der ist nicht wohl gestorben, der zu sterben begehret hat; er hat zu lange gelebet, der Uns um Sterben angerufen hat.”¹⁸ Heidegger, whose citation from this medieval text has been discussed in an earlier chapter, also examines the problem of end or fulfillment (*Vollendung*) using an organic model. His approach is of course a phenomenological one, whereas his more poetically inclined predecessors are operating with tropes that need have no direct bearing on reality. Perhaps this scientific, non-metaphorical perspective is what ultimately leads Heidegger to reject as a valid comparison the example of the fruit:

Mit der Reife vollendet sich die Frucht. Ist denn aber der Tod, zu dem das Dasein gelangt, eine Vollendung in diesem Sinne? Das Dasein hat zwar mit seinem Tode seinen “Lauf vollendet”. Hat es damit auch notwendig seine spezifischen Möglichkeiten erschöpft? Werden sie ihm vielmehr nicht gerade genommen? Auch “unvollendetes” Dasein endet. Andererseits braucht das Dasein so wenig erst mit seinem Tod zur Reife zu kommen, daß es diese vor dem Ende schon überschritten haben kann. Zumeist endet es in der Unvollendung oder aber zerfallen und verbraucht.

(SZ, 244)

Heidegger’s subsequent analysis of authentic versus inauthentic *Sein zum Tode* also has its precedent in Johannes von Tepl, Hölderlin, and Nietzsche. All of these authors distinguish two opposing attitudes toward finitude: one that fully acknowledges the imminency of death throughout existence and one that postpones or altogether evades the issue of mortality. Heidegger has of course developed this distinction in terms of *Vorlaufen* and *Flucht*, two notions that suggest movement, the one in the direction toward

death, the other away from it. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche presents this problem through an assortment of images, the most consistent of which is an extended metaphor of fruit ripening on a tree. In an aphorism from an earlier work, *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten*, published in 1880, Nietzsche designates these two modes of conduct as *freiwilliger/vernünftiger* and *unfreiwilliger/natürlicher Tod*. An involuntary or natural death is one that ensues not through the individual's volition, but through the inexorable course of nature. Eventually, of course, everyone dies and most people die of natural causes that set in well beyond the prime of life. In describing this phenomenon of a natural death, Nietzsche does not altogether abandon the organic metaphor that plays a central role in *Zarathustra*: "Der natürliche Tod ist der von aller Vernunft unabhängige, der eigentlich *unvernünftige* Tod, bei dem die erbärmliche Substanz der Schale darüber entscheidet, wie lange der Kern bestehen soll oder nicht [...] (KSA 2, 632f). Instead of waiting for an outside force to decide upon his fate while his existence only becomes ever more stagnant and prolonged, the individual is expected to take the initiative and choose death over debility. Such a voluntary (*freiwillig-*) death is a rational one because it is willed counter to nature, resulting from human resolve rather than from the natural and inevitable order of things. Nietzsche sums up these two conducts toward finitude by posing the following rhetorical question, this time opting for a different metaphor, indeed a highly inorganic one: "Was ist vernünftiger, die Maschine stillzustellen, wenn das Werk, das man von ihr verlangte , ausgeführt ist, — oder sie laufen zu lassen, bis sie von selber stille steht, das heisst, bis sie verdorben ist?" (KSA 2, 632).

The notion of *freiwilliger Tod* prefigures that of *freier Tod* in both name and concept. Death is free because it is willed by the individual, or in Zarathustra's words: "Meinen Tod lobe ich euch, den freien Tod, der mir kommt, weil ich will" (KSA 4, 94). That is, death is not something that simply befalls Zarathustra as an extraneous event beyond his control. Rather than let nature or the physical laws of the body determine one's final moment, Zarathustra insists that the decision instead be placed in the hands of the individual. As a self-overcomer, Zarathustra is master of his existence, which means that he is also master of his death. The self-overcomer shapes his life such that he never regresses or stagnates, but continually transcends himself toward whatever goal may loom before him: the consummate work of art, the stylization of character, the perfection of existence, etc. Eventually even transcendence has its limits and it is then that death, paradoxically, becomes the only existential possibility for further growth. This idea is borne out by the following statement from Zarathustra's speech, in which Nietzsche uses language suggestive of Hölderlin's "In freiem Tod" (StA 4, 139) and Heidegger's "*Freiheit zum Tode*" (SZ, 266): "Frei zum Tode und frei im Tode, ein heiliger Neinsager, wenn es nicht Zeit mehr ist zum Ja: also versteht er [der Mann] sich auf Tod und Leben" (KSA 4, 95). In other words, one's affirmation of life inevitably turns into a negation, a negation necessitated by the aporia of a static existence. The only way to break out of such an existential stasis is to cultivate a free relation to death and embrace this freedom when life no longer holds the liberation that results from self-overcoming.

The practical implications of free death remain, however, difficult to imagine. Is one truly expected to die of his own free will upon having lived to the fullest? And what

precise or concrete actions does free death require such a determined individual to undertake? In an earlier work, Nietzsche indicates that he does in fact advocate death at one's own hand ("Selbsttödtung") as was practiced by "[...] Häupter der griechischen Philosophie und die wackersten römischen Patrioten [...]" (KSA 2, 85), though he appears to suggest this more in light of modern Christian efforts to keep a weak and dying person alive at all costs. Nonetheless, given Nietzsche's life-long assertion of ancient ideals, particularly his later attempt at a transvaluation of Platonic-Christian values, it would seem likely that Nietzsche did in part seek to reinstate the classical ideal of suicide. Jaspers for one interprets the notion of *freiwilliger/vernünftiger Tod* as an act of *Selbstmord*, and he links Nietzsche to a thanatological tradition that culminated with the Stoics. According to Jaspers, Nietzsche praised a voluntary death over a natural one throughout his writings and, like the Stoics, tended to view suicide as an expression of the greatness in man, as the mastery of reason and volition over the natural laws of the body.¹⁹ A brief examination of the role of suicide in antiquity may help to illumine the implications of *freiwilliger Tod* and *freier Tod*, especially as they relate to Zarathustra's programmatic speech.

Socrates, whose voluntary death Walther Kaufmann suspects underlies Nietzsche's notion of *freier Tod*,²⁰ remains perhaps the most famous figure of antiquity to die at his own hands. Of course the absolute freedom of his death is put in question by the fact that he was condemned by Athens and thus forced to act as his own executioner. Yet it is important to recall that Socrates had the choice of exile or imprisonment but in the end elected death over the two. This decision seems symptomatic of the widespread

practice of suicide in the classical world, a practice that, in the words of one notable scholar on the subject, had its “golden age” in ancient Greece and Rome.²¹ What Socrates says about his self-inflicted death in the *Apology* probably only echoes the views of Plato, who, though he tends to disapprove of suicide, allows for exceptions under certain circumstances. In the *Phaedo* (61b-62d) and the *Laws* (873cd) Plato maintains that it is wrong for one to take his life, for this remains an affair of the gods, who are responsible for our existence and therefore also for our deaths. This argument resembles of course that of Christianity, according to which the *ens creatum* ought not arrogate to itself the business of the divine Creator. In contrast to the absolute nature of this Christian law, Plato concedes that “[...] suicide is permissible at the command of the state (the case of Socrates), if one is under the oppression [...] of incurable pain, or if one is faced helplessly with intolerable shame.”²² Suicide on these grounds remains more a civic privilege or duty than an exercise of individual freedom, whereas a suicide committed for reasons not sanctioned by the state constitutes a punishable offense. (Which is not as paradoxical as it may seem, for one could be refused, like Ajax almost was, proper burial rites.)

The Cynics and especially the Stoics tended toward a less civic-minded view of suicide, which they essentially equated with freedom from external constraints, whether as imposed by the body, society, politics, etc. Suicide in this sense functions as a necessary *εξαγωγή* or egress from the compulsions of life. Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius are the principal Stoics to have reflected on suicide, though it should be

noted that their philosophies differ significantly on this issue. A brief summary of their opinions may serve to bring out further parallels to Nietzsche.

Seneca, who himself committed suicide in accordance with his ideal, practically extols a self-inflicted death as the affirmation of freedom. In his *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, especially the seventieth letter, he not only lauds the liberating act of suicide but even condemns those who oppose it. For Seneca, the important thing is not how long, but how well, one lives, and ideally one should entertain the notion of suicide long before it becomes an absolute necessity. The true Stoic thus continually reckons with the prospect of death and does not hesitate to act upon this calculated moment of freedom. Zarathustra's command "Stirb zur rechten Zeit!" finds its equivalent in Seneca's statement that "one will live as long as he ought, not as long as he can."²³ Moreover, such an opportune death functions as a crowning achievement of life, an act that sums up existence and makes it complete, as in Zarathustra's notion of "de[m] vollbringenden Tod" (KSA 4, 93) or Heidegger's concept of *Ganzseinkönnen*. Seneca expresses this idea in his seventy-seventh letter, for instance in the following line: "At whatever point you leave life, if you leave it in the right way, it is a whole."²⁴ The conclusion of this letter offers perhaps the best summation of his ideas on death, which he in turn regards as a summation of the good life: "As it is with a play, so it is with life—what matters is not how long the acting lasts, but how good it is. It is not important at what point you stop. Stop wherever you will—only make sure that you round it off with a good ending."²⁵

Epictetus is less concerned with the individual's assertion of death if only because he assigns little importance to one's physical fate, emphasizing in its place the human

spirit or intellect. Thus, he only seems to condone suicide in extreme cases of affliction, advocating instead indifference and fortitude—true stoic virtues—in the face of physical suffering. Still, Epictetus is given to contradiction with regard to the issue of death. He defended, for instance, Cato of Utica’s suicide and even insisted that the philosopher should submit to death before shaving off his beard. More important with relation to Nietzsche, as well as to Hölderlin and Heidegger, is his reproach of those who cling fast to life. The critical and sarcastic edge of the following fragment seems in fact reminiscent of a typical aphorism by Nietzsche:

Wenn ein Jüngling stirbt, so klagt er über die Götter, wenn ein Greis unter den Beschwerden des Alters leidet, so klagt er ebenfalls, dass er, statt nun Ruhe zu haben, noch geplagt wird. Aber wenn der Tod herannaht, will er doch noch leben und schickt zum Arzt und bittet ihn, er möge sich ja recht Mühe geben. Wunderliche Menschen, die weder leben noch sterben wollen! (frag. 95. III, 20, 6).²⁶

More interesting however is a fragment in which Epictetus draws a comparison between death and a harvest, thereby bringing to mind the organic metaphors that Nietzsche and others employ to express the right/ripe moment to die: “Wie es die Bestimmung der Aehre ist, reif und geerntet zu werden, so ist’s die Bestimmung des Menschen, zu sterben. Da wir aber dieselben sind, die geerntet werden und sich dessen bewusst sind, so jammern wir (als geschähe uns etwas Besonderes).”²⁷

It is difficult to determine the precise view of Marcus Aurelius toward death, as he only drops sporadic and often contradictory hints throughout his *Meditations*. Though

it would be an exaggeration to say that he advocates suicide like Seneca, he nevertheless sees its necessity in adverse circumstances and even quotes Epictetus in this regard:

Wie du gelebt haben möchtest, wenn du schon abgeschieden wärest, so kannst du schon hier auf Erden leben. Sollten dir die Menschen das aber unmöglich machen, dann scheid wirklich aus dem Leben, doch in der Überzeugung, daß du nichts Schlimmes erleidest. Wenn es raucht, macht man sich aus dem Staube.²⁸

This last sentence stems from Epictetus with whom Marcus basically agrees that suicide offers a way out of hardship, which does not necessarily mean that it is an act committed out of weakness or inferiority. Suicide rather is characterized by the virtues of moderation, simplicity, and freedom. Furthermore, it is not effected rashly such that it all at once interrupts the course of life; on the contrary, suicide remains a meditated plan of action and forms the culmination of a well-lived existence. When faced with a no-win situation one can either fight against the odds and risk losing dignity or take the more Stoic way out. In other words: “Oder scheid überhaupt aus dem Leben, aber nicht im Zorn, sondern ohne viel Umstände, aus freiem Entschluß und mit frommen Gedanken. Dann hast du wenigstens das Eine in deinem Leben erreicht: so zu sterben.”²⁹

Despite the obvious similarities between the Stoic and Zarathustrian ideal of death as freedom, some important differences cannot be ignored. The Stoic notion of freedom implies a liberation *from* constraint, whether physical suffering, spiritual confinement, or any form of existential adversity. Yet it is important to distinguish two modes of freedom: freedom *from* and freedom *unto* something. Whereas the Stoics seem to stress

the former, departing from one's deprivation of freedom as the impetus for suicide, Nietzsche, like Heidegger, tends to adopt a more unqualitative view of death as a freedom *unto* or a possibility *toward* self-realization—regardless of one's degree of existential enslavement. The difference between the two perspectives is hence one of emphasis. Another crucial distinction having to do with emphasis lies in the expressions *freier Tod* and *Freitod*. The latter term, a compound, is of course a common euphemism for *Selbstmord*, which like the the Latinate “sui-cide” (*sui caedere*) literally means a “killing of the self”. The non-compound *freier Tod* on the other hand underscores the aspect of freedom rather than that of death, which as an adjective it now modifies and in a fashion determines. Unlike the Stoic notion of *Freitod* or suicide, Zarathustra's pronouncement of *freier Tod* or “free death” perhaps then ought to be understood not as an actual and definitive killing of the self but as a projected end meant to further the freedom of existence and increase the potential of life.³⁰ Free death in this sense results as a consequence of one's entire mode of existence and denotes more a life-long attitude than a singular act of suicide. As a long-term conduct toward finitude, *freier Tod* thus resembles Heidegger's notion of *Sein zum Tode/Freiheit zum Tode*.

There are indeed indications of this view elsewhere in Nietzsche's work, particularly in the following excerpt from an aphorism in *Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche*:

Wie man stirbt, ist gleichgültig. — Die ganze Art, wie ein Mensch während seines vollen Lebens, seiner blühenden Kraft an den Tod denkt, ist freilich sehr sprechend und zeugnissgebend für Das, was man seinen Charakter nennt; aber

die Stunde des Sterbens selber, seine Haltung auf dem Todtenbette ist fast gleichgültig dafür. (KSA 2, 411)

Like Heidegger, Nietzsche here treats death as a basic phenomenon of life, emphasizing not the final confrontation with one's dying hour but the many years leading up to it. Even if he speaks in terms of "an den Tod denken", thereby going against Heidegger's rejection of any reflective conduct toward death (cf. SZ, 261), Nietzsche is nevertheless principally concerned with the effect of finitude on one's existence or, in this case, character. And in another aphorism—simply entitled "Tod"—from the subsequent publication *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten*, he alludes to the existential potential that death as a horizon of possibility creates and defines: "Durch die sichere Aussicht auf den Tod könnte jedem Leben ein köstlicher, wohlriechender Tropfen von Leichtsinn beigemischt sein [...]" (KSA 2, 695). Surely Nietzsche's most revealing statement on death comes from *Die Götzen-Dämmerung*. In the following lengthy but crucial passage he retains the notions of freedom and timeliness that figure prominently in *Also sprach Zarathustra* not to mention *Sein und Zeit*:

Der Tod, aus freien Stücken gewählt, der Tod zur rechten Zeit, mit Helle und Freudigkeit, inmitten von Kindern und Zeugen vollzogen: so dass ein wirkliches Abschiednehmen noch möglich ist, wo Der *noch da ist*, der sich verabschiedet, insgleichen ein wirkliches Abschätzen des Erreichten und Gewollten, eine *Summirung* des Lebens — Alles im Gegensatz zu der erbärmlichen und schauerhaften Komödie, die das Christenthum mit der Sterbestunde getrieben hat. Man soll es dem Christenthume nie vergessen, dass es die Schwäche des Sterbenden zu Gewissens-Nothzucht, dass es die Art des Todes selbst zu Werth-Urtheilen über Mensch und Vergangenheit gemissbraucht hat! [...] Nur ist der Tod unter den verächtlichsten Bedingungen, ein unfreier

Tod, ein Tod zur *unrechten* Zeit, ein Feiglings-Tod. Man sollte, aus Liebe zum *Leben* —, den Tod anders wollen, frei, bewusst, ohne Zufall, ohne Überfall [...] (KSA 6, 134f.)

Nietzsche's thoughts on death, whether formulated polemically as above or metaphorically as in Zarathustra's speech "Vom freien Tode", clearly anticipate Heidegger's ontological analysis in *Sein und Zeit*. Both interpret finitude as a fundamental freedom and potentiating factor of existence. For Heidegger, death functions as an eminent existential possibility, enabling Dasein to achieve a complete and authentic being. Nietzsche, for his part, proposes a "yes-saying" not only to life, but also to death, its "summation" or supreme fulfillment. Such an affirmation is, strictly speaking, a negation, for it leads to the demise of the individual. Hence the paradox that the *Ja-sager* inevitably becomes a *Nein-sager*, a paradox reminiscent of Heidegger's attempt to convert the negativity of death into a supreme possibility of existence.

Nietzsche's affinity to Heidegger becomes even more apparent in his use of the latter's ostensibly original coinage *Freiheit zum Tode*. In a posthumously published outline from the summer of 1882 (that is, during the initial stages of his *Zarathustra* project), Nietzsche records the following: "Die Krankheit, Verhalten zu ihr, Freiheit zum Tode" (KSA 10, 21). With this remark, he appears to be alluding to the constant state of infirmity that tormented his existence from the mid-1870s onward. It is clear from letters that due to his intense physical suffering Nietzsche became accustomed to the perpetually imminent prospect of death and many of the ideas in *Zarathustra* concerning finitude no doubt reflect this existential/biographical fact. A letter to Peter Gast from September

11th, 1879 proves particularly interesting in this regard as the issue of his ill health becomes compounded with that of his age. Being at the end of his thirty-fifth year, Nietzsche finds himself at the traditional mid-point of life and reflects upon this matter as Dante did before him in the opening lines of the *Inferno*:

Ich bin am Ende des fünfunddreißigsten Lebensjahres; die "Mitte des Lebens", sagte man anderthalb Jahrtausende lang von dieser Zeit; Dante hatte seine Vision und spricht in den ersten Worten seines Gedichts davon. Nun bin ich in der Mitte des Lebens so "vom Tod umgeben", daß er mich stündlich fassen kann; bei der Art meines Leidens muß ich an einen *plötzlichen* Tod, durch Krämpfe, denken (obwohl ich einen langsamen klarsinnigen, bei dem man noch mit seinen Freunden reden kann, hundertmal vorziehen würde, selbst wenn es schmerzhafter wäre).³¹

This last parenthetical remark indicates that Nietzsche perhaps sensed his inability to live up to the Zarathustrian ideal of a timely death. He further hints at the difficulty of dying at the right time in a letter (dated February 21st, 1883) written on the occasion of Wagner's passing: "[...] es ist schwer, zur rechten Zeit zu sterben."³² There is no need to dwell on or overinterpret this discrepancy between biographical reality and philosophic ideal. Nietzsche of course experienced anything but the opportune death that his mouthpiece Zarathustra urges upon the individual; nor was his end by any means the clear-minded (*klarsinnig*-) one that he envisioned in the letter above. Like Hölderlin, he died after years of relatively tranquil insanity, unaware of his true identity and presumably of the implications that his notion of free death carried.

More striking is the fact that even Zarathustra, Nietzsche's grand promoter of free death, fails to follow through with the imperative: "Stirb zur rechten Zeit!" By the end

of Part IV Zarathustra is still alive, indeed revitalized after several bouts with sickness and melancholy. This deferral of death constitutes a major problem in the overall conception of the *Empedokles/Zarathustra* project insofar as the main character now refuses to end his life in the timely manner of Empedokles, whether in that of Hölderlin's tragic figure or of Nietzsche's own re-creation.³³ In his *Zarathustra* sketches, Nietzsche intended his Empedoclean character to die by the end of the drama, either in the crater of a volcano or through some other form of "Untergang". This word, which forms a central motif in the published *Also sprach Zarathustra*, never quite takes on the meaning of a literal downgoing into volcanic depths as seems for instance the case in *Der Tod des Empedokles*. Here, in all three drafts, an implicit connection is made between Empedokles' figurative downfall and his literal plunge into Etna. The words "untergehen" and "Untergang" appear several times (cf. esp. StA 4, 7) as do such related terms as "Fall", "fallen", "hinabgehen", etc. Zarathustra's "Untergang" consists however in the simple fact that he descends from his refuge in the mountains to share his wisdom with mankind. Nietzsche also plays with the idea that every *Überwindung* or *Übergang* necessitates an *Untergang*, as illustrated by the tightrope-walker's symbolic fall in the preface of the work. Yet Zarathustra's downgoing does not lead to such an end in the course of Parts I-IV, despite occasional melancholic yearnings for death and his impassioned speech "Vom freien Tode". Nevertheless, Nietzsche was obviously torn between letting his character live on in a reaffirmed existence as prophet of the *Übermensch* and having him suffer a fatal *Untergang* after all. A note for a planned fifth

part of *Also sprach Zarathustra* depicts a voluntary (*freiwillig*-) death, as had been Nietzsche's intent from the beginning of the project:

NB. — er bewegte und schloß wieder die Lippen und blickte wie Einer, der noch etwas zu sagen hat und zögert es zu sagen. Und es dünkte denen, Welche ihm zusahen, daß sein Gesicht dabei leise erröthet sei. Dies dauerte eine kleine Weile; dann aber, mit Einem Male, schüttelte er den Kopf, schloß freiwillig die Augen — und starb. —

Also geschah, daß Zarathustra untergieng.

(KSA 11, 468)

The similarities between *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Sein und Zeit* mainly have to do with ideas, which is not surprising given their difference in genre. While *Zarathustra* generally ranks as a work of philosophy, it transcends this categorization in that it integrates poetic, dramatic, and Biblical elements into its structure and style. Given its rhetoric, cast of characters, motifs, tropes, etc., Nietzsche's book can be read not only as a philosophic but also literary text, which is certainly not the case with *Sein und Zeit*. For formal parallels with *Also sprach Zarathustra* one is better served by examining *Der Tod des Empedokles*, the work that fascinated Nietzsche as a youth and obviously continued to exert an influence on him during the various stages of his *Empedokles/Zarathustra* project. The foregoing analysis has elucidated several such parallels and further ones are discussed in the oft-cited article by Vivetta Vivarelli. In sum, one might draw the following comparative conclusions between *Zarathustra* and *Empedokles* with regard to their respective attitudes toward death.

Zarathustra's notion of finitude as the culmination of a bountiful existence leads him to adopt vocabulary that conveys jubilation rather than the solemnity that Christianity and other religions have brought to bear on death:

Wichtig nehmen Alle das Sterben: aber noch ist der Tod kein Fest. Noch erlernten die Menschen nicht, wie man die schönsten Feste weiht.

Den vollbringenden Tod zeige ich euch, der den Lebenden ein Stachel und ein Gelöbniss wird.

Seinen Tod stirbt der Vollbringende, siegreich, umringt von Hoffenden und Gelobenden.

Also sollte man sterben lernen; und es sollte kein Fest geben, wo ein solcher Sterbender nicht der Lebenden Schwüre weihte! (KSA 4, 93)

Zarathustra's outlook here resembles that of Empedokles in Hölderlin's drama, whose imminent end remains more a cause for celebration than mourning. In the second draft of the play, both Pausanias and Panthea describe the circumstances surrounding their master's death as "festlich" (see StA 4, 117), while in the third version Manes gives Empedokles the following advice: "[...] ehre doch dein Fest, Umkränze dir dein Haupt, und schmük es aus [...]" (StA 4, 135). This coronation of garlands can be said to signify Empedokles' triumphant affirmation of death, as it evokes the image of the laurel crown, the traditional symbol of victory. Nietzsche, not blind to details of this sort, has managed to integrate several such minor aspects and motifs from Hölderlin's tragedy into *Also sprach Zarathustra*. The symbolic garland forms but one example.³⁴ Throughout the book Zarathustra wears a crown, at one point an "Epheukranz[-]" (KSA 4, 160), at another a "Rosenkranz-Krone" (KSA 4, 368). And although in the course of *Zarathustra* Nietzsche never explicitly links this emblem of victory with the ceremony of death, a

note from the same fragment in which “Freiheit zum Tode” is mentioned, attests to Nietzsche’s intended revaluation of human finitude: “Der Tod umzugestalten als Mittel des Sieges und Triumphes” (KSA 10, 21). Death functions as a triumph because it culminates or “crowns” a life of plenitude, a life in which one continually overcomes himself, forever heightening his existence and potentiality-to-be. This process goes on right up until the ultimate act of self-overcoming, which for Empedokles as for Zarathustra amounts to a free and opportune death. Both figures speak in remarkably similar terms of *der freie Tod* and of death *zu rechter Zeit*, which can only lead one to believe that Nietzsche appropriated these ideas directly from Hölderlin’s drama. Even Nietzsche’s more well-known notions of eternal recurrence and the overman are anticipated in the play. As previously mentioned, Pausanias utters the Zarathustrian words “[...] es kehret alles wieder” (StA 4, 133), while Empedokles comes to view himself as a self-overcomer in the face of death, which he, like Zarathustra, triumphantly embraces as a summation of life: “O darum ward das Leben dir so leicht / Daß du des Überwinders Freuden all / In Einer vollen That am Ende fändest?” (StA 4, 80).

Notes to Chapter Seven

¹ See the published lecture by Heidegger from 1953 “Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?”, in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 7th ed. (Pfullingen, 1994) 97-122. See also the recent article which bears the title of Heidegger’s guiding question: Günter Wohlfart, “Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?”, *Nietzsche-Studien* 26 (1997): 319-30. There exists of course a plethora of further interpretations under a host of titles, and this is hardly the place to give them adequate mention. Only select studies relevant to the topic of death will be dealt with here.

² Wohlfart, 324.

³ Janz, vol. 2, 223.

⁴ See H. Diels, *Herakleitos von Ephesos* (Berlin, 1909), xiv. Quoted in Wohlfart, 319. Wohlfart probes further into the possibility that Zarathustra is Nietzsche’s “portrait” of Heraclitus. This connection has long been recognized in Nietzsche scholarship and the reader will find useful references in Wohlfart’s article.

⁵ Janz, vol. 2, 224.

⁶ Vivetta Vivarelli, “Empedokles und Zarathustra: Verschwendeter Reichtum und Wollust am Untergang,” *Nietzsche-Studien* 18 (1989): 509-36.

⁷ Vivarelli, 519. Beißner also mentions this connection in his *Empedokles* edition. (See StA 4, 348.) It ought to be noted that his text varies slightly from Schwab’s: “Diß ist die Zeit der Könige nicht mehr” (StA 4, 62).

⁸ Vivarelli, 526.

⁹ Compare the following excerpt from Hyperion’s critique: “Es ist ein hartes Wort und dennoch sag’ ichs, weil es Wahrheit ist: ich kann kein Volk mir denken, das zerrißner wäre, wie die Deutschen, Handwerker siehst du, aber keine Menschen, Denker, aber keine Menschen, Herrn und Knechte, Jungen und gesetzte Leute, aber keine Menschen — ist das nicht, wie ein Schlachtfeld, wo Hände und Arme und alle Glieder zerstückelt untereinander liegen, indessen das vergoßne Lebensblut im Sande zerrinnt?” (StA 3, 153).

¹⁰ In the second part of the published version there is still mention of a nameless “Feuerberg” which, like Etna, lies on an island and continuously spews smoke. Zarathustra in fact enters the caverns of this volcano and confronts a Cerebus-like “Feuerhund”. See KSA 4, 167ff.

¹¹ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: Einführung in das Verständnis seines Philosophierens* (Berlin/Leipzig, 1936). Jaspers’ book, though only about half the length of Heidegger’s, examines even more facets of Nietzsche’s philosophy through its multi-perspectival approach. One such facet is death, a theme that Heidegger utterly ignores in his two-volume study. Jaspers remains in fact the only figure within the

thanatological tradition from Hölderlin to Heidegger that openly discusses the issue of death in the work of a predecessor. His insights are therefore valuable and deserve at least passing notice.

¹² Ibid., 287.

¹³ Ibid., 288.

¹⁴ For Jaspers partial citation of this passage, see *ibid.*

¹⁵ This parallel imagery of fruit has been discussed by Vivetta Vivarelli, 524ff.

¹⁶ Johannes von Tepl, 37.

¹⁷ Johannes von Tepl, 7.

¹⁸ Ibid., 23.

¹⁹ Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, 286f.

²⁰ Walther Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. (Princeton, 1974) 402. Kaufmann contends that Zarathustra's speech opposes Socrates' free death with that of Jesus, who died not at the right time but "zu früh" (KSA 4, 95).

²¹ "Man ist in Versuchung, von einem goldenen Zeitalter des Selbstmordes zu sprechen, und zwar in Attika. Denn hier war es, wo der Selbstmord in gewissem Sinne sogar legalisiert wurde." Rudolf Hirzel, "Der Selbstmord," in *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, vol. 11, ed. Albrecht Dieterich (Leipzig, 1908) 244. In my discussion of suicide in antiquity I rely on this lengthy three-part article as well as on the chapter "Suicide" in J.M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1969) 233-55.

²² Rist, 236. Rist goes on to remark that: "These reasons are, in fact, the ones commonly invoked by most Greeks who speak of suicide, and they are mentioned by historical as well as fictional characters as providing grounds for their acts of self-destruction. What Plato is trying to forbid is suicide from mere indolence or from fear of facing the ordinary hardships of life" (*ibid.*).

²³ Quoted in Rist, 247.

²⁴ Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic*, trans. Robin Campbell (London, 1969) 125.

²⁵ Ibid., 130.

²⁶ Quoted in the classic study by Adolf Bonhöffer, *Die Ethik des Stoikers Epictet, Anhang: Exkurse über einige Wichtige Punkte der stoischen Ethik* (Stuttgart, 1894) 27.

²⁷ Ibid., 28.

²⁸ *Med.*, 5.29. Quoted in: *Selbstbetrachtungen*, 12th ed., trans. Wilhelm Capelle (Stuttgart, 1973) 63f.

²⁹ *Med.*, 10.8 or *ibid.*, 141.

³⁰ Elsewhere I have attempted to interpret free death as a rhetorical device in connection with Zarathustra's more famous doctrine of eternal recurrence. See Ireton, 416ff.

³¹ Nietzsche, *Werke*, vol. 4, 1156f.

³² Nietzsche, *Briefwechsel, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* III/1, ed. Giorgio Colli andazzino Montinari (Berlin/New York, 1981) 335.

³³ To some extent, David Ferrell Krell discusses these postponements of Zarathustra's death, though more in light of the two other themes, woman and sensuality, that distinguish his book. See especially the chapter "Pana" in Krell, *Postponements: Woman, Sensuality, and Death in Nietzsche*, 53-69.

³⁴ Another detail that has eluded scholarship (i.e. Vivarelli) concerns the staff that Empedokles and Zarathustra bear. While Hölderlin mentions Empedokles' "Stab" (StA 4, 15) only once, Nietzsche transforms this commonplace object into a central motif with symbolic function. Zarathustra's staff, which he receives as a gift from his disciples, has a golden grip with the emblem of a snake encircling the sun, an obvious symbol of the eternal recurrence. See esp. KSA 4, 97.

Chapter Eight

Concluding Remarks: The Existential Grounding of Death within the Larger Framework of Intellectual History

Throughout *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger stresses that ontology must have an ontic fundament for it to have any relevance to Dasein's *Existenz*. His search for this factual-existenziell basis leads him to the authentic comportment of *vorlaufende Entschlossenheit* which he at one point calls "ein faktisches Ideal des Daseins" (SZ, 310). In contrast to existenzial-ontological interpretation, which makes no value judgements and hence forgoes positing ideals, ontic-existenziell attestation cannot but look to an exemplary mode of conduct to maintain its own validity. Heidegger's elaboration of a forerunning, guilt-based resoluteness not only provides a concrete fundament for his ontological blueprint but would seem to be further founded on the guilt-ridden Empedokles, who resolutely foreruns his death in the crater of Mount Etna. Additional corroboration of this factual ideal of Dasein can be found in Zarathustra's discourse on a free and opportune death, which he ultimately fails to assert but nevertheless inwardly anticipates.

Heidegger's views on death have however deeper roots than the German eighteenth and nineteenth century. While I believe that Hölderlin and Nietzsche furnished Heidegger with crucial ideas for his analytic, especially the notions of *Vorlaufen in den Tod*, *vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*, and *Freiheit zum Tode*, they are by no means the only identifiable sources that contributed to the most (in)famous and influential section of *Sein und Zeit*. Indeed, the profound impact of Heidegger's analytic of death on twentieth-century philosophy is matched by its own indebtedness to a theological heritage that extends as far back as the New Testament. In the following I

will briefly map out this Christian thanatological tradition in an effort to reveal a broader context in which Heidegger can be situated. I will also discuss the two most important non-theological precursors, apart from Hölderlin and Nietzsche, to the thanatology developed in *Sein und Zeit*: Rilke and Jaspers. Finally, I will attempt to provide an explanation for the increased existential awareness of death in the modern age, a phenomenon that has been noted by a number of cultural historians to whose theories I will add my own. All of these expansions on my immediate topic—the existential grounding of death in Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger—form an appropriate conclusion to the thesis insofar as they apply its findings to the general humanistic tradition in which we all are engaged. My concluding remarks thus do not so much “close up” (*con-cludere*) the case made in the dissertation as address its broader implications, thereby opening the way to further contexts and inquiries.

I. Primal Christianity

In a lengthy footnote containing references to existentially oriented views of death, Heidegger mentions a strain of Christian theology that begins with Paul and extends to Calvin: “Die in der christlichen ausgearbeitete Anthropologie hat immer schon—von *Paulus* an bis zu *Calvins* *meditatio futurae vitae*—bei der Interpretation des ‘Lebens’ den Tod mitgesehen” (SZ, 249n). Again, as often with his acknowledgements Heidegger succeeds in covering up his sources as much as he divulges them. In this case he leaves out the theologian who most clearly anticipates the ontological analysis of

death in *Sein und Zeit* and who, along with Hölderlin and Nietzsche, ranks among the most untimely figures of the nineteenth century: Søren Kierkegaard.¹ My discussion of death within this Christian tradition will focus on those figures that exhibit the greatest presence in Heidegger's analytic: Paul, Luther, and Kierkegaard.²

First, however, it is worth addressing the general role of theology in Heidegger's thought. For some it may seem surprising that a twentieth-century philosopher like Heidegger, whose *Sein und Zeit* is often considered the work of an atheist, should be deeply indebted to the Christian theological tradition. Yet Heidegger's entire intellectual background is more a religious than philosophical one. In a recently published letter to his former student Karl Löwith, he in fact stated that he was at heart not a philosopher but a Christian theologian³, or as John van Buren comments: "[...] that is, one whose *logos*, language, arises out of his own factual Christian heritage and returns to it."⁴ Van Buren, probably the best authority on the early Heidegger, has outlined three main phases of the future philosopher's theological development: Catholic Neo-Scholasticism (1909-1913), Neo-Neo-Scholasticism (1913-1916) and finally Protestantism and Mysticism (beginning in 1917).⁵ This latter stage further led to what Heidegger dubbed *freier Protestantismus*, which he adopted as his personal religion after a life previously devoted to Catholicism (and during which, from 1909 to 1911, he even studied to become a priest). His conversion was necessitated by the conviction that Catholic Scholasticism obscured the essence of Christianity by introducing classical—i.e. Aristotelian and Neoplatonic—science into religion. As a result, Christian existence has become reified by science and metaphysics when it should instead be guided by more primordial experiences such as

one's personal relation to God and the accompanying phenomena of care, anxiety, conscience, and death. Heidegger thus looks to those thinkers that have predated, eluded or outright protested (hence the predominance of Protestant theologians) the systematization of Christianity. These primarily include Paul, Augustine, medieval mystics such as Meister Eckehart, Luther, Pascal, and Kierkegaard, all of whom Heidegger reckons to the nearly lost tradition of *Urchristentum*. In the face of established church dogma, which has assumed scientific-metaphysical theories in its interpretation of the Divine, primal Christianity abandons such theorizing for a more original, existential experience of God. Whereas medieval scholasticism, through its adoption of Hellenistic philosophy, conceives of God as a supreme being (*summum ens*) to Whom one relates through contemplation, primal Christianity as based on the New Testament accentuates the hidden God (*Deus absconditus*) Who can only be known through faith. Luther in particular has criticized theological speculation as an attempt to justify the existence of God—that is, as a metaphysical theodicy. He instead focused on the more original, unmediated aspects of God, namely His suffering and crucifixion. Similarly, for Heidegger, “Theologie ist nicht spekulative Gotteserkenntnis” (GA 9, 59) but “die Wissenschaft des Glaubens” (GA 9, 55) while faith in turn is “das existierende Verhältnis zum Gekreuzigten” (GA 9, 55). This more devout as opposed to speculative attitude distinguishes what one might call existential from metaphysical theology. It is a strand of theology that began with Paul, who not only affirms the primacy of faith over knowledge but also tends to regard death as an integral aspect of existence rather than as a gateway to transcendence.

Paul's thanatological meditations may in part be motivated by the existential-biographical fact that he had several brushes with death throughout his lifetime. As he himself states in his second letter to the Corinthians, he suffered countless imprisonments and beatings, was exposed to innumerable dangers from both natural and human forces; in short was "often near death" (2 Cor. 11:23). Whether or not these experiences play any significant role in his general outlook, there can be no doubt that Paul remains preoccupied with the question of death. The following thoughts from his first letter to the Corinthians demonstrate the existential relevance of death given the hypothetical denial of an afterlife:

If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? Why am I in peril every hour? I protest, brethren, by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." (1 Cor. 15:29ff.)

Paul senses here the perpetual threat to existence that death, from an ontological perspective, poses. To speak with Heidegger, his end looms as a certain but indeterminate possibility, all of which makes living a constant peril and dying a daily likelihood. Furthermore, if there is no resurrection, life consequently becomes heightened, and, as in the saying from Isaiah 22.13 that he loosely quotes, one should take advantage of every moment as if it were the last. This *carpe diem*-like attitude recalls Nietzsche, who in various aphorisms points to the increased potential that death as a non-transcendent horizon of possibility creates and defines. A further parallel to

Nietzsche and Hölderlin can be found in Paul's words that Christ died "at the right time" (Rom. 5:6).⁶ Perhaps Paul's most famous line—also a variation on lines from the Old Testament (Hos. 13.14)—"O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55) appears in an early poem of Hölderlin entitled "Die Unsterblichkeit der Seele" as "Wo ist dein Stachel, Tod?" (StA 1, 32, 33). Interestingly, Paul's answer to this question is: "The sting of death is sin [...]," which of course raises the complex of guilt/sin and its connection with death in *Der Tod des Empedokles* and *Sein und Zeit*. There is no room here to deal with this relation, especially since sin remains one of the most profound and central aspects of theological inquiry from Paul to Kierkegaard. For now it need only be noted that Paul views death as an inevitable consequence of sin (see for instance Rom. 6)—not only because those who commit sin forfeit an eternal life with Christ but also for the more "historical" reason that Adam's original sin ushered into the world the consciousness of death and would later motivate Christ's act of sacrifice. (Kierkegaard in particular grapples with this problem of original sin in *The Concept of Anxiety*.)

For now the important parallels concern the presence of death in the midst of existence. Aside from the passage quoted above, Paul speaks of our "[...] dying, and behold we live [...]" (2 Cor. 6:9), yet more noteworthy are his words: "For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Cor. 4:11-12). Even if the identity of "you" seems unclear, the rest of this statement describes an obvious *Sein zum Tode* in which death does not occur at the end of life, abruptly signaling its cessation. According to Paul, death instead remains a constant companion

of existence, internally “at work” within us all the while we go about our daily affairs. Paul in other words internalizes death much as Heidegger does by taking a non-metaphysical perspective and postulating an existenzial *Sein zum Tode* in place of a static *zu-Ende-sein*. Indeed, Heidegger’s affinity to Paul with respect to the problem of death is apparent in a note from the appendix to the 1923 lecture course *Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität)*. Here Heidegger also invokes Kierkegaard, thereby drawing a connection between two millennia of primal Christianity:

Vgl. vor allem Paulus: Herrlichkeit des Χριστος als des Erlösers;
Verstoßung der Menschheit in Elend und Tod! Der Tod Christi—das Problem!
Überhaupt Toderfahrung; Tod—Leben—Dasein (Kierkegaard). (GA 63, 111)

Before Kierkegaard can be discussed, some attention must be given to another primal Christian whose views on death anticipate Heidegger’s own. Martin Luther, who sought a *destructio* of Aristotelian Scholasticism in order to recover the original experience of Christianity (much like Heidegger intended a *Destruktion* of Western metaphysics as a concealment of being), has described death in terms remarkably similar to those found in *Sein und Zeit*. In fact, Heidegger, not known for his acknowledgement of influences, recorded two quotations by Luther on a sheet of paper that bears the heading “Motto und zugleich dankbare Anzeige der Quelle” (GA 61, 182). The more important of the two references is to Luther’s *Commentary on Genesis*, specifically of 2:17, the verse in which God threatens Adam with death should he eat of the tree of knowledge. Heidegger cites here the line “Statim enim ab utero matris mori incipimus”

(“Right from our mother’s womb we begin to die”), which of course anticipates the verses from *Der Ackermann und der Tod* that appear in *Sein und Zeit* (cf. SZ, 245). Even more crucial are the words of Luther, found on the same page of his *Commentary*, that Heidegger does not mention in his “grateful” acknowledgement: “Paul says: ‘daily we die’ [...] [Life] is nothing else than a perpetual running ahead toward death” (“perpetuus cursus ad mortem”).⁷ This notion of a *cursus ad mortem* may well be the direct source of *Vorlaufen in den Tod*, as John van Buren speculates, yet Hölderlin’s more conceptual—rather than strictly lexical—contribution certainly cannot be dismissed. A more in-depth study of Luther’s *Commentary* might shed further light on this central notion of forerunning one’s death and its connection to both Heidegger and Hölderlin. For now, the influence of Luther can only be suggested rather than fully explored.

Kierkegaard, who like Luther criticized the Church establishment for its lack of New Testament religiosity (see his *The Attack upon “Christendom”* from 1854-55) has expressed his ideas on death most concisely in two works: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* and *At a Graveside*. The former, written in 1846 as a lengthy follow-up to his *Philosophical Fragments* (1844), is generally considered Kierkegaard’s major work, the one in which he defines his existence-based philosophy against the reigning Hegelianism of his day. Yet death plays only a minor role in this voluminous book, which deals with a number of topics in the course of its six hundred pages. The brief and relatively unknown *At a Graveside*, on the other hand, one of Kierkegaard’s *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions* from 1845, deals specifically with the question of death and reveals far more illuminating parallels to the analytic of *Sein und Zeit*.

In Part Two of the *Postscript*, in a chapter entitled “Becoming Subjective”, Kierkegaard discusses not so much death per se as the more processual notion of “*das Sterben*.”⁸ His attempt to lay hold of this question resembles Heidegger’s interpretive dilemma in *Sein und Zeit*, a dilemma that arises from the preclusive nature of death:

Diese Schwierigkeit kann auch so ausgedrückt werden: ob es so ist, daß der Lebende sich überhaupt nicht dem Tode nähern kann, weil er ihm experimentierend nicht genügend nahe kommen kann, ohne in komischer Weise ein Opfer seines Experiments zu werden; und wenn er ihn erfährt, nicht gegenhalten kann und nicht aus der Erfahrung lernt, weil er sich selbst nicht aus der Erfahrung zurücknehmen und später davon Nutzen haben kann, sondern in der Erfahrung steckenbleibt.⁹

Kierkegaard insists that in order to “experience” death one must integrate it into existence and thereby come to understand its consequences for life. In the course of his relatively brief discussion he interprets three facets of death that prefigure Heidegger’s later endeavor: uncertainty, ownness, and anticipation. His notion of uncertainty means that death can strike at any time and that one must therefore constantly reckon with the likelihood of dying. Such an openness toward death brings about a heightened awareness of existence such that “ich es mir deutlich mache, ob ich etwas anfangen, was anzufangen wert wäre, falls der Tod morgen käme [...]”¹⁰ Formally speaking, Kierkegaard’s “uncertainty” does not correspond to Heidegger’s term *Gewißheit* but resembles rather that of *Unbestimmtheit*. For Heidegger, death occurs with certainty while its moment of actualization remains indefinite. The fact that Kierkegaard instead speaks of “Ungewißheit” in no way compromises his relation to Heidegger, for he has essentially

the same idea in mind: the imprecise timing of death prompts one to structure his existence as if it were continually near an end, in this manner squandering as little of life as possible. A further connection to Heidegger, though again not with respect to precise terminology, is the extreme individual aspect of death. Kierkegaard maintains that the uncertainty of dying is not a general or world-historical (and hence Hegelian) phenomenon but, as the title of his chapter indicates, a subjective one: “Aber das, daß *ich* sterbe, ist für mich gar nicht so etwas im allgemeinen; für andere ist das, daß ich sterbe, so etwas.”¹¹ This strict personal relevance of death recalls the ownmost quality that Heidegger ascribes to human finitude. In both cases, the uncertain/indeterminate prospect of dying has an individualizing function, whether with Kierkegaard in the form of subjectivity or with Heidegger as selfhood. The most significant parallel concerns the basic attitude of anticipation, which is the only stance that one can take toward death without converting it into actuality. Here Kierkegaard’s argument resembles that of Heidegger, though again their respective vocabulary differs: “So müßte ich denn fragen, ob es überhaupt eine Vorstellung vom Tode geben kann; ob er antizipiert werden und vorwegnehmend (*anticipando*) in einer Vorstellung vom Tode erlebt werden kann; oder ob er erst ist, wenn er wirklich ist.”¹²

In his *Postscript* Kierkegaard only intends to raise these thantological questions rather than definitively answer them. His discourse *At a Graveside* is however a more sustained treatment of death, one in which he formulates his thoughts in a more elaborate and decisive fashion. Numerous similarities can be noted between this short writing and

Sein und Zeit, not only with respect to ideas, as in the *Postscript*, but to the very formulations as well.

As one of *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*, Kierkegaard's *At a Graveside* takes as its premise a burial for an anonymous citizen only to depart into a meditation subtitled "Die Entscheidung des Todes".¹³ Kierkegaard distinguishes two fundamental attitudes toward death that roughly correspond to Heidegger's authentic and inauthentic modes of *Sein zum Tode*: *Ernst* and *Stimmung*. This conceptual approximation finds a more immediate correspondence on the level of language. Using terms that point straight to Heidegger, Kierkegaard asserts that when in earnestness the individual reflects on "seinen eignen Tod", while when affected by mood he becomes a mere "Zeuge [...] beim Tode eines andern [...]"¹⁴ Such an outside witness has no existential awareness of his own mortality and hence remains blind to the decisiveness of death—"die Entscheidung des Todes"—that forms the true topic of Kierkegaard's imagined speech. In the case of the earnest individual, however, death takes on meaning for life, including from the very moment of birth,¹⁵ which leads Kierkegaard to adopt an inverse perspective much like Heidegger does in his existential attempt to interpret human finitude. Death thus acquires a "rückwirkende Kraft"¹⁶, which is to say that it becomes integrated into existence, undergoing a kind of rebound-like effect off its common conception as a final frontier at the end of life. This retroactive force of death charges existence with possibility, spurring one to live to the fullest. Kierkegaard quotes Paul on this point, yet again reverses the perspective so as to obtain even greater existential potential:

Denn der Tod in dem Ernst gibt Lebenskraft wie nichts andres, er macht wach wie nichts andres. Den sinnlichen Menschen bringt der Tod dahin zu sagen: "Laßt uns essen und trinken, wir sterben doch morgen;" aber dies ist die feige Lebenslust der Sinnlichkeit, jene verächtliche Ordnung der Dinge, da man lebt um zu essen und zu trinken, nicht ißt und trinkt um zu leben.¹⁷

Despite this critical remark, which perhaps in part alludes to Paul's pagan lifestyle before his conversion to the way of Christ, Kierkegaard still follows a Christian line of thought that, as Heidegger indicates in his footnote (SZ, 249n), tends to view death as a phenomenon of life. Yet in typical obscurantist fashion Heidegger refers only to the Christian anthropological tradition from Paul to Calvin, leaving out the most influential and modern link in this heritage. In another reference to scripture, Kierkegaard carries on a tradition of a different sort, a more secular and symbolic one that has been seen in such works as *Der Ackermann und der Tod*, *Der Tod des Empedokles*, and *Also sprach Zarathustra*. An extended metaphor loosely based on Matthew 3:10, illustrates "die Nichtbestimmbarkeit des Todes"¹⁸, a term that resembles Heidegger's *Unbestimmtheit* only in appearance:

So versteht denn der Ernst das Gleiche vom Tode, daß er nicht bestimmbar sei durch die Ungleichheit, daß kein Alter, und keine Umstände und kein Lebensverhältnis wider ihn sichern, aber alsdann versteht es der Ernste auf andre Art und versteht sich selbst. Siehe, es ist schon die Axt dem Baum an die Wurzel gelegt, jeder Baum, der nicht gute Frucht bringt, soll umgehauen werden—nein, jeder Baum soll umgehauen werden, auch der, welcher gute Frucht bringt. Das Gewisse ist, die Axt liegt an der Wurzel des Baums; ob du gleich nicht bemerkst, daß der Tod über dein Grab geht und daß die Axt sich bewegt, die Ungewißheit besteht dennoch jeden Augenblick, das Ungewißsein,

wann der Hieb fällt—und der Baum. Wenn er aber gefallen ist, so ist es entschieden, ob der Baum gute Frucht gebracht oder faule Frucht.¹⁹

In contrast to Heidegger's notion of *Unbestimmtheit*, which overlaps more closely in meaning with "uncertainty"/*Ungewißheit* as used in both the *Postscript* and here in *At a Graveside*, Kierkegaard's above claim that death is *unbestimmbar* does not imply an indeterminacy with respect to time but rather an impossibility to be swayed by circumstance. Death in other words cannot be influenced, beseeched or prevailed upon by anyone, regardless of their special situation—age, social status, religiousness, etc.—in life. It is this "influential" as opposed to "determinate" sense of *bestimmen* that Kierkegaard intends, as in the related word *umstimmen*. In German one might convey Kierkegaard's point by saying: "der Tod kann nicht bestimmt/umgestimmt werden." As an inexorable and immovable force, death creates absolute equality, for it can strike anyone at any time. In the metaphorical language of the above passage, every tree will eventually be felled, yet exactly when the axe will strike remains forever uncertain. And only when this final moment eventually comes around is the quality of one's existence determined, which seems to contrast with other opinions expressed through this organic image, particularly Nietzsche's, who accords more freedom to the individual's ability to decide upon either an opportune or protracted course of death. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard's message seems similar enough to that of Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger: rather than cowardly hang on to life ("feige am Leben häng[en]"²⁰) one should instead cultivate a relation to death as a potentiating "Ansporn im Leben"²¹.

The reflections on death outlined above are indicative of the primal Christian tendency toward an existential as opposed to metaphysical theology. Whereas New Testament revivalists such as Paul, Luther, and Kierkegaard emphasize the individual's faith in a hidden and crucified God, the Hellenized Christianity of Scholasticism conceives of a supreme Deity that can only be known through abstract contemplation. These two strands of Christian tradition have in effect developed contrasting views of human finitude based on their respective notions of the Divine. Medieval Scholasticism has succeeded in separating life from death through its dualistic paradigm of physical/metaphysical, immanence/transcendence, *Diesseits/Jenseits*, etc. As a metaphysical reality, death has no function for life but is instead deferred to an afterlife, signaling the end of terrestrial existence and the beginning of spiritual transcendence. It thus forms a singular point in time and remains an event that befalls the individual from without. In primal Christianity death becomes internalized much like one's relation to God is a personal, inward one grounded in faith. As an interior phenomenon of existence, death makes itself known throughout life rather than all at once upon its conclusion.

Symptomatic of this split in thanatology are the conceptions of time particular to each of the two traditions. According to Heidegger in an unpublished lecture from the winter semester of 1920/21 entitled *Einführung in die Phänomenologie der Religion*,²² Paul thinks in terms of an authentic "kairological" time while Old Testament and medieval Christianity remain bound to the inauthentic chronological time of Judaism and Aristotelianism. In his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul speaks of the *καιρος* which has

been translated by Luther as *der Augenblick*, a literal blink of the eye. The *kairos* is precisely such a brief moment in which the Second Coming will one day abruptly occur, and as Heidegger interprets the concept in his early Freiburg lectures, this moment has an inherent futural tendency. The original Christians lived in constant anticipation of the *kairos* and structured their existence around it so as not to be caught off guard should the Second Coming unexpectedly arrive. For Paul there simply was no predictable time of occurrence: “But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:1f.). Judeo-Christian prophecy and eschatology, on the other hand, have sought to calculate such momentous events on a religious calendar of sorts (to speak with Paul, according to “the times and the seasons”), and the fact that Scholasticism later adopted Aristotle’s objective concept of time only reinforces the chronological mindset of established Christianity. When theorized on a time-scale, things become fixed and objectified, therefore stripped of possibility. Given their kairological sense of time, primal Christians have a more open, anticipatory attitude toward their future, specifically toward the Second Coming of Christ.

Although Heidegger never explicitly makes this connection, the kairological aspect of death seems obvious. Because the Second Coming can occur at any time, one must constantly strive to perfect his existence and live each moment as if it were his last, for only in this manner is one guaranteed a passage to the Kingdom of God. The briefest lapse into complacency can lead to a forfeiture of salvation should it happen to coincide with the *kairos*. In the words of Paul: “When people say, ‘There is peace and security,’

then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape” (1 Thess. 5:3). To put it in Kierkegaard’s terms, such an anticipation of an uncertain end has a retroactive effect: existence inevitably becomes heightened as a consequence of a perpetually anticipated moment. The fact that death forms an integral part of life in primal Christian thinkers like Paul, Luther, Kierkegaard—and one ought to include in this tradition the early Heidegger as well—would appear to be a direct consequence of their kairological notion of time. Death is not a fixed point on a chronological scale, as in the metaphysical view, but a futural possibility that promotes rather than simply terminates existence.

II. Rilke and Jaspers

According to Sartre, the “[...] attempt to *recover* death was not originally the feat of philosophers but that of poets like Rilke or novelists like Malraux [...]. It was left to Heidegger to give a philosophical form to this humanization of death.”²³ Despite the fact that Sartre overlooks a deeper tradition in his claim, the importance of Rilke for *Sein und Zeit* cannot be denied. Heidegger in fact was reported to say that his own philosophical ideas were expressed poetically in the *Duino Elegies*.²⁴ Although with this statement Heidegger does not necessarily concede an influence, he nonetheless hints at a profound connection which for the present can only be examined on a preliminary basis.

Much like his preoccupation with Hölderlin and Nietzsche, Heidegger has dealt with Rilke solely in his later thought, to be precise, in a privately held lecture from 1946

commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the poet's death. This address, published in 1950 as "Wozu Dichter?", takes its title from Hölderlin's elegy "Brod und Wein" ("[...] und wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?") and furthermore treats Rilke much in the way that Heidegger's university lectures approach Hölderlin: as a poet of existence if not being. A crucial difference, however, lies in the fact that whereas Heidegger fails to even broach the topic of death in Hölderlin's work, he does—albeit briefly—elect to discuss this question in Rilke. Here he refers not to Rilke's poetry but to his correspondence. The first of two cited letters recalls section 48 of *Sein und Zeit*, in which Heidegger, attempting an existenzial definition of death, relies on the image of the moon to illustrate the notion of *Ausstand* (cf. SZ, 241). Using his own lunar model, Rilke similarly seeks to grasp being in its entirety: "[...] wie der Mond, so hat gewiß das Leben eine uns dauernd abgewendete Seite, die nicht sein Gegenteil ist, sondern seine Ergänzung zur Vollkommenheit, zur Vollzähligkeit, zu der wirklichen heilen und vollen Sphäre und Kugel des Seins" (GA 5, 302). From this same letter Heidegger quotes the implicit conclusion of Rilke's query: "Der angeführte Brief vom 6. Januar 1923 sagt, es gelte, 'das Wort "Tod" ohne Negation zu lesen'" (GA 5, 303). The second letter from November 13th, 1925 offers a seemingly more direct response: "Der Tod ist die uns abgekehrte, von uns unbeschiedene Seite des Lebens" (GA 5, 279). These remarks from the years during which Heidegger was gradually conceiving *Sein und Zeit* reflect the general aim of his *Todesanalytik*: to interpret death as an integral part of existence and as that which makes Dasein complete. Rilke's earlier views on death conveyed in such works as *Das Stunden-Buch* and *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* anticipate

more detailed aspects of Heidegger's analytic, including the notion of *eigener Tod* and an authentic versus inauthentic relation toward finitude.

The third part of *Das Stunden-Buch, Das Buch von der Armut und vom Tode* (1903), contrasts "der kleine Tod" with "[d]er große Tod".²⁵ The former type of death prevails in the cities, where people "sterben lange, sterben wie in Ketten"²⁶ and fail to realize—in both the cognitive and active sense—the potential that their finitude holds. Like others before him, Rilke draws on an organic image to illustrate this potential, here ignored by those that live in the modern city:

Dort ist der Tod. Nicht jener, dessen Größe
sie in der Kindheit wundersam gestreift, —
der kleine Tod, wie man ihn dort begreift;
ihr eigener hängt grün und ohne Süße
wie eine Frucht in ihnen, die nicht reift.²⁷

In theory, people carry their own personal death within them, which in the case of city-dwellers never becomes potentiated let alone actualized. Death, rather than being fully appropriated and brought to fruition, remains an unfulfilled possibility, in Rilke's language a perennially immature fruit that offers no sweetness. The details of this imagery form an interesting contrast to the metaphor of overripe fruit in Hölderlin and Nietzsche and further run counter to Heidegger's otherwise sound phenomenological observation that "Die unreife Frucht zum Beispiel geht ihrer Reife entgegen" (SZ, 243). In the mass society of modern cities this natural course of death has been arrested, which leads Rilke to make the following plea and subsequently reinforce the above image:

O Herr, gib jedem seinen eignen Tod.
 Das Sterben, das aus jenem Leben geht,
 darin er Liebe hatte, Sinn und Not.

Denn wir sind nur die Schale und das Blatt.
 Der große Tod, den jeder in sich hat,
 das ist die Frucht, um die sich alles dreht.²⁸

The first line of this passage echoes Heidegger's definition of death as ownmost possibility. Though Rilke's formulation lacks the superlative of Heidegger's apparently original coinage *eigens*[-], it carries the same implication of death as a personal and internal experience. Yet not everyone inwardly cultivates and takes possession of his death; most people in fact are alienated from their dying, as Rilke demonstrates in the following lines: "Denn dieses macht das Sterben fremd und schwer, / daß es nicht *unser* Tod ist; einer der uns endlich nimmt, nur weil wir keinen reifen."²⁹ Once more, he picks up on the notion of organic growth, of death as an interior potentiality that must be nurtured and gradually made one's own. An extended metaphor, in which the Lord is again entreated, carries on the earlier imagery:

Wir stehn in deinem Garten Jahr und Jahr
 und sind die Bäume, süßen Tod zu tragen;
 aber wir altern in den Erntetagen,
 und so wie Frauen, welche du geschlagen,
 sind wir verschlossen, schlecht und unfruchtbar.³⁰

In his novel *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, published in 1910 but begun as early as 1904, Rilke takes a similar view of death as an internal, fruitful

presence: “Früher wußte man (oder vielleicht man ahnte es), daß man den Tod *in sich* hatte wie die Frucht den Kern.”³¹ In a further parallel to *Das Stunden-Buch*, Rilke’s

protagonist Malte describes a fundamental shift in the human relation to finitude.

Whereas death was once an interior and individualized aspect of existence, it turned into a public phenomenon with the rise of mass society. Malte’s observations in the beginning pages of the novel focus on this modern estrangement from what was once a personal and inalienable experience. The most important thoughts as they relate to Heidegger are excerpted as follows:

Jetzt wird [...] gestorben. Natürlich fabrikmäßig. Bei so enormer Produktion ist der einzelne Tod nicht so gut ausgeführt, aber darauf kommt es auch nicht an. Die Masse macht es. Wer giebt heute noch etwas für einen gut ausgearbeiteten Tod? Niemand [...] der Wunsch, einen eigenen Tod zu haben wird immer seltener. Eine Weile noch, und er wird ebenso selten sein wie ein eigenes Leben.³²

Death in the modern urban age becomes an anonymous event, reminiscent of *das Man*’s inauthentic *Sein zum Tode*. Rilke even employs the passive voice (“wird [...] gestorben”) to illustrate the depersonalized nature of this recent development in human finitude.

People no longer actively assert their “own” deaths but passively undergo whatever end lies in store for them. In other words: “Man stirbt, wie es gerade kommt [...]”³³

Heidegger has of course interpreted precisely this notion of “man stirbt” in section 51 of *Sein und Zeit*. To recall his explication: “Das ‘man stirbt’ verbreitet die Meinung, der Tod treffe gleichsam das Man [...] Das ‘Sterben’ wird auf ein Vorkommnis nivelliert, das zwar das Dasein trifft, aber niemandem eigens zugehört” (SZ, 253). With Rilke, this

public form of death has become so externalized that it belongs less to the individual than to the specific disease from which he suffers. Moreover, due to the modern trend of people dying in hospitals rather than at home in their own beds, these larger institutions and those in their employ have largely taken over the once personal affair of death: “In den Sanatorien, wo ja so gern und mit so viel Dankbarkeit gestorben wird, stirbt man einen von den an der Anstalt angestellten Toden [...]”³⁴

This alienation from death is a recent development, one which arose in the wake of mass socialization. Rilke however also describes a time in which one related to finitude on a more individual, existential, even “authentic” level. Malte’s grandfather Christoph Detlev Brigge dies a personally distinctive death that has long dwelled within him as an inner potential. Over the course of more than a page Rilke describes Christoph Detlev’s death struggle, which drags on for days and terrorizes the entire village of Ulsgaard as if it had a will and existence all of its own. Rilke even goes so far as to say that calves refused to be born due to the intensity of the dying man’s cry, indeed that the church bell had found a terrible rival. Such an intensely unique death underscores the notion of *eigener Tod*, a term that Rilke employs in connection with those from a past era who, like Malte’s grandfather, were still able to experience such an individualized death: “Sie haben alle einen eigenen Tod gehabt.”³⁵ Christoph Detlev’s end is authentically his own because he has borne it within him his entire life such that it has gradually become a personal possession to which only he can lay claim. Rilke sums up this colossal death as follows:

Das war nicht der Tod irgendeines Wassersüchtigen, das war der böse, fürstliche Tod, den der Kammerherr sein ganzes Leben lang in sich getragen und aus sich genährt hatte [...]

Wie hätte der Kammerherr Brigge den angesehen, der von ihm verlangt hätte, er solle einen anderen Tod sterben als diesen. Er starb seinen schweren Tod.³⁶

Malte's perceptions on death in both modernity and its preceding age thus anticipate Heidegger's phenomenological insights in *Sein und Zeit*. Even their respective language shows a striking similarity, as is evident in the opposing notions of *eigener Tod* and *man stirbt*. The fact that Heidegger gives no credit with respect to either concept may indicate as much a genuine unfamiliarity with Rilke's novel as a conscious effort to pass over it. It is interesting to note that he cites Tolstoy's *Der Tod des Iwan Iljitsch* as an example of "man stirbt" (cf. SZ, 254n) yet ignores *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, which was, incidentally, influenced by Tolstoy's tale.³⁷

A contemporary that Heidegger does choose to cite among those who have interpreted death from an existential perspective is Karl Jaspers. Heidegger in fact stresses the value of Jaspers' first major work his own ontological investigation in *Sein und Zeit*:

Für die vorliegende Untersuchung ist *besonders* zu vergleichen: *K. Jaspers, Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* [...] *Jaspers* faßt den Tod am Leitfaden des von ihm herausgestellten Phänomens der "Grenzsituation", dessen fundamentale Bedeutung über aller Typologie der "Einstellungen" und "Weltbilder" liegt. (SZ, 249n)

Upon its appearance in 1919, Heidegger wrote a review of *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* which he sent to Jaspers in 1921 but did not decide to publish until 1973.³⁸ There can be no doubt that this book, in which Jaspers explores the fundamental structures of human existence, helped shape certain ideas of *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger indeed seems to express more indebtedness to Jaspers than to any other figure acknowledged in the various footnotes strewn—at times somewhat arbitrarily—throughout the book. As with Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, he cites Jaspers a total of three times, an interesting discrepancy considering that he profited much more from the former two figures even though he disregards their respective notions of death. His reception of Jaspers is however a different matter. Not only does he “*especially*” refer the reader to *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* in the passage cited above but furthermore tends not to dismiss the existential ideas contained in the work on account of their mere ontic-existenziell validity, as he readily does with other predecessors, particularly Kierkegaard.. The second of three footnotes to Jaspers attests to the deeper ontological core of *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*:

Hier wird das, “was der Mensch sei”, erfragt und bestimmt aus dem, was er wesenhaft sein kann [....] Daraus erhellt die grundsätzliche existenzial-ontologische Bedeutung der “Grenzsituationen”. Die philosophische Tendenz der “Psychologie der Weltanschauungen” wird völlig verkannt, wenn man sie lediglich als Nachschlagewerk für “Weltanschauungstypen” “verwendet”. (SZ, 302n)

Heidegger even makes use of Jaspers’ term “Grenzsituation” on two occasions, both times in connection with death. In the one case he sums up *Vorlaufen* as a conduct which

brings Dasein forward into certain yet indeterminate possibility, a possibility that “macht offenbar, daß dieses Seiende in die Unbestimmtheit seiner ‘Grenzsituation’ geworfen ist, zu der entschlossen, das Dasein sein eigentliches Ganzseinkönnen gewinnt” (SZ 308). A later remark about “die ursprüngliche ‘Grenzsituation’ des Seins zum Tode” (SZ, 349) further underpins the impact of Jaspers on Heidegger’s analytic of death. A brief discussion of Jaspers’ concept of “limit situation” and the role that death plays therein will help to illumine an important link between *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* and *Sein und Zeit*.³⁹

A *Grenzsituation* is a special situation in life that discloses the antinomic structure of the world and hence the instability, uncertainty, and relativity of human existence. In a limit situation one is confronted with an extreme existential predicament behind which one can discern no absolute meaning or find no metaphysical reassurance. One is thus thrown back upon his own individual existence and must somehow come to terms with the fact that “nichts Festes da ist, kein unzweifelbares Absolutes, kein Halt, der jeder Erfahrung und jedem Denken standhielte.”⁴⁰ The most crucial limit situations are *Kampf*, *Tod*, *Zufall*, and *Schuld*, which are antinomies of, respectively, *gegenseitige Hilfe*, *Leben*, *Sinn*, and *Entsündigungsbewußtsein*. Interestingly and perhaps not insignificantly, the notion of guilt appears here as it does in primal Christianity, especially in Kierkegaard. Indeed, Jaspers’ examination of this phenomenon relies heavily on Kierkegaard, whom he quotes at such length that he only succeeds in obscuring his own views on the matter, much in contrast to Heidegger’s tendency to obfuscate and appropriate his sources. Again, there is no room in the present context to discuss this particular limit situation, yet

it is clear that Jaspers, like Heidegger, ascribes a fundamental existential—rather than mere ethical, religious or psychological—function to guilt.

The more critical limit situation with respect to Heidegger is that of death. Jaspers' treatment is brief and deviates into pages of citations from Kierkegaard, Buddhist and Presocratic thought, and especially Goethe—again, the precise reverse of Heidegger's practice in *Sein und Zeit*.⁴¹ Nevertheless, like Heidegger and Kierkegaard, Jaspers emphasizes the fact that one can never actually experience his own death, for which reason it is necessary to focus on the *relation* to finitude, that is: “[...] dies ganz persönliche Verhalten zum Tode, die individuell erlebte Reaktion auf die Situation der Grenze des Todes.”⁴² Again, like Heidegger and in this case Rilke, what interests Jaspers is the “*einzigartige Beziehung des Menschen zu seinem eigenen Tod, unvergleichbar jeder allgemeinen oder besonderen Erfahrung vom Tode des anderen, des Nächsten.*”⁴³ Although Jaspers' conception of *eigener Tod* does not carry quite the intensity of Rilke's notion (at least not as evidenced in Christoph Detlev Brügge's grotesque death struggle) or the preeminence of Heidegger's superlative *eigenste Möglichkeit*, it nevertheless recurs often enough in formulation to be considered an integral aspect of the limit situation of death.

Jaspers outlines three basic reactions to this limit situation, the first of which is a Buddhist one. The cycle of reincarnation in Buddhism leads to a lack of absolute finitude, which for most people, given their fear of death, would be a source of consolation. The Buddhist however seeks release from these continual successions of terrestrial existence in which volition, passion, and other transitory sensations dominate

the spirit. The attitude of indifference or nihilism is one way of overcoming this constant strife, but the ultimate goal in attaining the eternal peace of nirvana is a final, definitive death from which there is no rebirth. As Jaspers summarizes: “Der Buddhist will den endgültigen Tod. Ob er ihn erreicht, darüber entscheidet sein Leben, dafür ist er verantwortlich, das ist der Sinn seines Daseins.”⁴⁴

An opposing view of death which embraces the eternal flux of existence rather than tries to escape it is found in Presocratic philosophy as well as in later Renaissance and Classical thinking indebted to this ancient tradition. In contrast to Buddhism, death in this line of thought offers the possibility not of eternal peace but of endless self-transformation. A dynamic process of becoming thus takes precedence over a serene state of being. Even the doctrine of reincarnation, a mainstay of Presocratic cosmogony and subsequent theories from Kepler to Goethe (the latter of whom Jaspers quotes over the course of three pages), is to be affirmed as the potential for an increased level of existence. Jaspers, citing a text on *Naturphilosophie*, suggests an intriguing if somewhat conflicting view of Empedocles as envisioned by Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and perhaps, by way of reception, Heidegger:

JOEL meint von den Propheten PYTHAGORAS und EMPEDOKLES: “Sie fühlen sich unendlich, sie können einfach an ihre kurze, enge, einmalige Existenz nicht glauben; ihr Selbstbewußtsein zeugt wider den Tod. Das übermenschliche Lebens- und Selbstgefühl zwingt zum Dogma der Wiedergeburten [....]”⁴⁵

Jaspers' point here is not that Presocratics such as Pythagoras and Empedocles overlook the importance of death; on the contrary, their overcoming of death through constant palingenesis intensifies life. Granted, there is an important element of transcendence in their philosophies, which is missing in Nietzsche, Heidegger, and to a certain extent Hölderlin. Yet this transcendence leads to ever higher planes of existence and thus remains more a form of *self*-transcendence as in Dasein's *sich-vorweg-sein* or the self-overcoming of both the *Übermensch* and "Überwinder" Empedokles. As Jaspers states, this time in his own words: "Es kommt darauf an, das Leben voll und reich zu leben, es zu steigern, dann wird es sich auch nach dem Tode weiter steigern."⁴⁶

The third and final stance toward death is that of Kierkegaard, who develops no specific doctrine of immortality, whether as a permanent nirvana-like state or an incessant cycle of transmutation. One finds in Kierkegaard rather "die intensivste Darstellung der subjektiven Innerlichkeit, der Bedeutung der subjektiven Beziehung zum Tode [...]"⁴⁷ As is typical of Jaspers in *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, he defers to the original words of his predecessors, here quoting lengthy passages from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, most of which have already been cited in my discussion of Kierkegaard above. It is this last of three attitudes, one characterized by uncertainty and anticipation, that directly points to Heidegger, whose own references to Jaspers expose yet another debt toward an already existing interpretation of death.

III. Death Within the Context of Modern Anthropology

Aside from the primal Christian tradition upon which Heidegger draws, all of the above views on death, whether properly dealt with in the body of this dissertation or merely suggested in the present conclusion, have arisen since the late eighteenth century and in the wake of what one might call a modern anthropology. This notion, which stems from Foucault and Heidegger himself, may help to explain the profound shift from a metaphysical to existential thanatology in the modern age of intellectual history. While most scholars consider this development to have resulted from the gradual loss of religious transcendence—to speak with Nietzsche, as a consequence of the death of God—there seems to be no attempt to ground this claim in concrete texts. With the aid of Foucault’s *Les mots et les choses* (published in English as *The Order of Things*) and the work that I suspect influenced it, Heidegger’s “Die Zeit des Weltbildes”, I will sketch out this relatively recent trend toward an ontological interpretation of death. In this manner I will add my own perspective—synthesized through Heidegger and Foucault—to the general consensus among scholars that the classical metaphysics of human finitude has been overtaken by a more anthropological view within the last two centuries. This theoretical approach ultimately serves to situate figures like Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger—as well as Tolstoy, Rilke, Jaspers, and others—within a modern humanization of death that culminates in *Sein und Zeit*.

Heidegger’s “Die Zeit des Weltbildes”⁴⁸ outlines three epochal systems of knowledge: the *ἐπιστήμη* of Greek antiquity, the *doctrina* or *scientia* of the Middle

Ages, and the *Wissenschaft* of the modern age. Heidegger however concentrates on our image of the world since Descartes, whose positing of the *cogito* has radically affected man's view of reality. Prior to this fundamental shift in thought, what Heidegger calls *das Seiende im Ganzen* was understood far differently. According to the *doctrina* of the Middle Ages, for instance, beings in their totality were conceived as an *ens creatum*, whereas the Greeks tended toward a more passive interpretation of the world, namely as "das Aufgehende und Sichöffnende" (GA 5, 90) in which they were but the perceivers or "Vernehmer des Seienden" (GA 5, 91). Modern man, because he defines himself rather than God or nature as the underlying substance of all things, that is as the *sub-jectum*, becomes an active agent and asserts his subjectivity upon the world. This new-found position leads man to view reality as subordinate to his perception and therefore to his will. According to Heidegger, man "represents" the world, a notion that is conveyed in German by *vor-stellen*. Heidegger exploits the spatial connotation of this word as an act of "placing in front", which is precisely what the Cartesian subject does when dealing with reality. *Vor-stellen* means in this sense: "[...] das vor sich hin und zu sich her Stellen" (GA 5, 92). Unlike the Greek notion of taking in the totality of beings as it opens itself up for perception, the modern view of the world consists of an active disposing over objective reality. In other words:

Vor-stellen bedeutet hier: das Vorhandene als ein Entgegenstehendes vor sich bringen, auf sich, den Vorstellenden zu, beziehen und in diesen Bezug zu sich als den maßgebenden Bereich zurückzuzwingen. Wo solches geschieht, setzt der Mensch über das Seiende sich ins Bild. (GA 5, 91)

This word, *Bild*, is of fundamental importance to the basic point of Heidegger's lecture. Whereas the Greeks interpreted the world as a presence that opens and reveals itself without human intervention and medieval thought reduced it to a creation of God, modern man thinks in terms of a *Weltbild*, which is to say that he conceives of *eine Welt als Bild*. *Bild* here is not to be taken literally as a kind of picture or framed image; Heidegger rather draws on the German idiom *über etwas im Bilde sein* ("to know or be informed about something") to demonstrate the intended meaning. This act of informing oneself about reality carries the following implications:

"Im Bilde sein", darin schwingt mit: das Bescheid-Wissen, das Gerüstetsein und sich darauf Einrichten. Wo die Welt zum Bild wird, ist das Seiende im Ganzen angesetzt als jenes, worauf der Mensch sich einrichtet, was er deshalb vor sich bringen und vor sich haben und somit in einem entschiedenen Sinne vor sich stellen will. (GA 5, 89)

Greek and medieval thinking lacked a *Weltbild* in the strict sense of the word, as the individual did not form the center of reality. For this reason, Heidegger maintains that one can only speak of a modern world-picture (*ein neuzeitliches Weltbild*) just as the similarly untranslatable *Weltanschauung* remains a product of—and is indeed only possible in—the modern age (cf. GA 5, 93f.). Hence, two significant events have occurred in the post-Cartesian era: the world has become a representation and man a subject that represents. The longer modern man comes to terms with his world by placing himself ever further into the center of this imagined *Weltbild*, whereby all entities begin to revolve around him, the more the original world-view turns into a human

perspective. And out of this self-centering on the part of man inevitably arises an anthropology.

Heidegger traces this rise of anthropology to the latter part of the eighteenth century. The primacy of the Cartesian subject has at this point firmly established itself in man's existence so that he now becomes the fixed center of all his pursuits. In Heidegger's words, "kämpft der Mensch um die Stellung, in der er dasjenige sein kann, das allem Seienden das Maß gibt und die Richtschnur zieht" (GA 5, 94). Not only do the human sciences increasingly revolve around man and his concerns but several new developments take shape. *Wissenschaft* emerges as the modern analogon of Greek *ἐπιστήμη* and medieval *scientia*, and it differs from these in both its object and method of inquiry, just as the dominant view of reality varied greatly with each age. Since every epistemological paradigm reflects the way that man perceives the world around him, modern knowledge or science (the German *Wissenschaft* covers of course both notions) is clearly anthropological in tendency and indeed prejudice. With its investigative spirit, science is characterized by *ein erkennendes Vorgehen*, which like *Vor-stellen* suggests an active role on the part of man in relation to his environment. Man, in other words, does not place himself at the center of reality only to complacently sit by and observe the flux of things; rather, he diligently shapes his world and thus asserts his will over beings.

On a more intellectual level, this modern anthropology creates value systems such as humanism. Heidegger in fact claims that, historically speaking, humanism is nothing more than "eine moralisch-ästhetische Anthropologie" (GA 5, 93) and can be more precisely defined as follows: "[...] jene philosophische Deutung des Menschen, die vom

Menschen aus und auf den Menschen zu das Seiende im Ganzen erklärt und abschätzt” (GA 5, 93). Although humanism has of course existed since the days of ancient Rome and a whole humanistic tradition has since been preserved up to our present day, Heidegger means here something other than the Classical *humanitas*, even if he fails to make this distinction all that explicit in “Die Zeit des Weltbildes”. One finds a more satisfying explanation in his “Brief über den Humanismus” from 1946. In this writing Heidegger discusses various forms of humanism, beginning with the Roman *humanitas* which is itself but a translation of the Greek παιδεία. Modern humanisms include the philosophies of Marx and Sartre, both of which are oriented toward human existence rather than transcendent ideals. Yet as Heidegger demonstrates in his “Humanismusbrief”, Sartre’s undertaking not only becomes entangled in anthropology but on a larger scale remains trapped within the metaphysics of Platonism. As a form of philosophical anthropology, humanism remains at bottom a metaphysics of presence that obscures rather than sheds light on Dasein’s primordial relation to being:

Der Humanismus fragt bei der Bestimmung der Menschlichkeit des Menschen nicht nur nicht nach dem Bezug des Seins zum Menschenwesen. Der Humanismus verhindert sogar diese Frage, da er sie auf Grund seiner Herkunft aus der Metaphysik weder kennt noch versteht. (GA 9, 321)

Heidegger’s critique of humanism is therefore caught up in his larger project of destroying and thereby surmounting metaphysics. His interest does not lie on man as a metaphysical subject but in man’s existence as it relates to being. In contrast to the common understanding of the term, “existence” for Heidegger indicates a state of

“standing out” (*ex-sistere*) into an opening, lighting or clearing of being (*Lichtung des Seins*), for which reason he often prefers to write *Ek-sistenz* so as to illustrate more effectively “das ekstatische Wohnen in der Nähe des Seins” (GA 9, 343). Man, then, is not the ultimate end of philosophy but a point of departure for fundamental ontology insofar as he forms a key to unlocking the mystery of being. As Dasein, man stands out as the *Da* of *Sein* and hence exists as more than a mere anthropological subject.⁴⁹ With Heidegger the modern age of anthropology initiated by Descartes has undergone a profound shift whereby man no longer occupies a central place in the world. Man dwells rather in the lighting of being.

These observations largely belong to Heidegger’s later thought during which he abandons his phenomenological examination of Dasein and gravitates toward a more nebulous and almost mystical questioning of being. This turn in thought, known as *die Kehre*, occurred shortly after *Sein und Zeit*, a work that focuses on Dasein in order to lay the necessary groundwork for an illumination of *Sein*.⁵⁰ Although Heidegger never says as much and probably would never admit it, his fundamental ontology of *Sein und Zeit* remains—at least on its ontic-existenziell level—an anthropology of sorts, as Husserl and others have pointed out. While Heidegger’s focus is not on the ontic human being per se but on man’s more ontological counterpart Dasein, he nevertheless explores such basic human phenomena as mood, anxiety, care, conscience, etc. Of course he approaches these phenomena from an ontological as opposed to an ontic-anthropological standpoint, yet there can be no doubt that Dasein and not being—at least not yet in the development of his thought—forms the object of his analyses. And the fact that death, one of the most

human experiences upon which all cultures have reflected, remains the cornerstone of his *Daseinsanalyse* would seem to betray the anthropological undercurrent of his existenzial-ontological project. Heidegger at this point thus stands at the crossroads of modern anthropology and a pure philosophy of being. After his *Kehre* of the early 1930s he turns his attention to Dasein's aspect of *Sein* rather than existence of *Da*, and it is no coincidence that he practically drops the problem of death, one of his principal concerns in *Sein und Zeit*.⁵¹ As will be seen in the following, Foucault not only posits a similar post-anthropological turn in cultural history but also emphasizes the central role of human finitude within the waning era of modern anthropology.

At one point in *The Order of Things*, Foucault seems to acknowledge or at least indirectly allude to Heidegger's self-set task of destroying the metaphysical-anthropological tradition in order to open a path for rethinking the question of being. Furthermore, Foucault suggests the difficulty of fully divorcing oneself from the anthropology that one seeks to overcome:

In order to awaken thought from such a sleep [...] in order to recall it to the possibilities of its earliest dawning, there is no other way than to destroy the anthropological "quadrilateral" in its very foundations. We know, in any case, that all efforts to think afresh are in fact directed at that obstacle: whether it is a matter of crossing the anthropological field, tearing ourselves free from it with the help of what it expresses, and rediscovering a purified ontology or a radical thought of being [...]"⁵²

The sleep that Foucault refers to in this context is "the anthropological sleep", which would appear to be related in content as well as metaphor to Heidegger's notion of

Seinsvergessenheit. Both concepts imply a negligence on the part of man to see beyond his subjective anthropological world, whether through two thousand years of forgetfulness imposed by metaphysics or, in the case of Foucault, due to the post-Classical, anthropocentric *episteme* that is barely two centuries old. Just as the Classical system of universal knowledge, based on representation, succeeded the Renaissance order of resemblances during the middle of the seventeenth century, yet another epochal break manifests itself around 1800 and initiates a new mode of thought.

Foucault situates the beginning of the Classical age at precisely that point in history in which Heidegger establishes the origin of *das neuzeitliche Weltbild*: around 1650, the time of Descartes. For Foucault, the Classical age orders knowledge as a form of representation, not unlike Heidegger's theory of *Vor-stellen*. Much as modern man in his subjectivity disposes over objective reality by placing it before him and subduing it to his consciousness and will, the Classical organization of branches of inquiry on spatialized grids and tables (the so-called *taxinomia universalis*) similarly constructs a network of material and potentially disposable knowledge. This general taxonomy becomes a fully fleshed-out representation of the world and as such a sort of *Weltbild*. That is, not a world-representation in the sense of an actual image of reality such as suggested by the double meaning of the Classical "faire 'tableau'"⁵³ or as previously expressed by Velasquez' *Las Meninas*. A representational *Weltbild*, rather, is to be understood according to Heidegger's corrective definition of a universal order of things presented (*gestellt*), tabulated, and thoroughly systematized around the human subject. The important difference however lies in the fact that with Foucault the subject of the

vor-, i.e. the beneficiary of this re-presenting act of *Vor-stellen*, is lacking in the Classical *episteme*. This is because the human subject has yet to assert its primacy in the eighteenth century. The taxonomic tables of knowledge are what become imbued with being (Foucault even speaks of a “[Classical] plenitude of being”)⁵⁴ and anything that falls outside of this tabulated space of representation simply does not exist. This void of knowledge includes man himself: “But there was no epistemological consciousness of man as such. The Classical *episteme* is articulated along lines that do not isolate, in any way, a specific domain proper to man.”⁵⁵ Another epochal break must occur before the Cartesian *cogito* begins to order things around itself and thereby bring objects of reality into its realm of perception and dominion. For the present, man is a non-entity and therefore not yet an object let alone a subject of knowledge in the Classical world.

A new era manifests itself at the close of the eighteenth century, an era that more fully corresponds to the anthropological arrangement of Heidegger’s *neuzeitliches Weltbild*. In this paradigm shift, Foucault notes a reorientation toward man not only in the fields of study that he has pursued throughout his analysis, but he also observes this anthropological mutation at work on a more overarching level. Kant’s positing of the transcendental subject for example, is a seminal event that goes hand in hand with this modern Anthropology, a word that Foucault often capitalizes as if it were a supreme force of its own—which it essentially is. An interesting reversal has taken place in the wake of Kant, the very one who claimed to have been jostled out of his “dogmatic slumber” by Hume and thereby awakened to the fact that metaphysics must be redefined beyond the parameters of Scholasticism. Now, under the title “The Anthropological

Sleep”, Foucault posits a new form of dogmatism, one that none other than Kant himself has helped to instigate through his fourth critical question from the *Logik*: “*Was ist der Mensch?*”⁵⁶ This rise of an anthropological prejudice from an alternately prejudiced world-view is described as follows:

Anthropology as an analytic of man has certainly played a constituent role in modern thought, since to a large extent we are still not free from it. It became necessary at the moment when representation lost the power to determine, on its own and in a single movement, the interplay of its syntheses and analyses. It was necessary for empirical syntheses to be performed elsewhere than within the sovereignty of the “I think”. They had to be required at precisely the point at which that sovereignty reached its limit, that is, in man’s finitude—a finitude that is as much that of consciousness as that of the living, speaking, labouring individual.⁵⁷

Finitude thus constitutes a defining aspect of the modern anthropology that arose at the turn from the eighteenth to nineteenth century. While it is clear that various types of finitude exist, Foucault still maintains that human finitude or death became an integral part of labor as conceived by Ricardo and later economists. Laboring man is under the constant “threat of death”⁵⁸ since he must continue to produce in order to subsist. Hence in the modern age of political economy “the prospect of death becomes proportionately more fearful as the necessary means of subsistence become more difficult of access [...]”⁵⁹ This economic predicament accompanies man throughout his projects so that: “The more man makes himself at home in the heart of the world, the further he advances in his possession of nature, the more strongly also does he feel the pressure of his finitude, and the closer he comes to his own death.”⁶⁰ In his life of labor man is

continually confronted with the possibility of death. Foucault even contends that a fusion of these two traditionally separate realms, life and death, occurs under the constraints of modern economics. His following statement about the nineteenth century echoes views already familiar from Heidegger and others: “Life and death will fit exactly one against the other, surface to surface, both immobilized and as it were reinforced by their reciprocal antagonism.”⁶¹

The implication of Foucault’s analysis is that death acquires a life-serving anthropological function much like the other objects of his investigation: philology, biology, and political economy. Foucault discovers human finitude through economics while Hölderlin, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Rilke, and Jaspers approach the problem of death from an existential angle. Yet two things need to be kept in mind. First of all, the notion of existence remains closely related to that of economics as is most apparent in the German word *Existenz*, which, Heideggerian etymologies aside, can mean one’s “livelihood” as much as his particular mode of being. Secondly, as Foucault points out, the shift in economics from Smith to Ricardo, from a Classical to an anthropological model, reveals to man that his physical existence is dependent upon his economic situation: “Eighteenth-century economics stood in relation to a mathesis as to a general science of all possible orders; nineteenth-century economics will be referred to an anthropology as to a discourse on man’s natural finitude.”⁶² There is thus an inherent connection between what are ordinarily considered two completely distinct realms. The almost utter lack of any—at least conscious—socio-political element in the thought of Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Hölderlin leads one to forget the basic fact that our modern

sense of death perhaps has deeper economic than ontological roots. Furthermore, what Foucault calls “anthropological finitude” does not solely originate in labor but underlies other representative disciplines as well, though perhaps not specifically as death. His chapter “The Analytic of Finitude” summarizes this modern awareness of man’s finite existence in the human sciences of life, labor, and language: biology, economy, and philology. And perhaps not coincidentally, in a later chapter dealing with the modern anthropological “Retreat and Return of the Origin”, he invokes the constellation that this dissertation has pursued all along:

[...] we find the experience of Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, in which the return is posited only in the extreme recession of the origin—in that region where the gods have turned away, where the desert is increasing, where the τεχνη has established the dominion of its will [...]⁶³

For Foucault, the retreat of the origin is yet another expression of anthropological finitude, however “at a more fundamental level: it is the insurmountable relation of man’s being with time.” In their search for the origins of our modern ills—whether through their respective notions of *der Fehl der Götter*, the cultural wasteland of nihilism, or the re-presenting (*vor-stellend-*) nature of technology—Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger thus close the post-Classical *episteme*. And it is their common conceptions of, if not death, then at least finitude that unite them at this historic juncture of epistemological mutations. As Foucault sums up: “Thus, by rediscovering finitude in its interrogation of the origin, modern thought closes the great quadrilateral it began to outline when the Western *episteme* broke up at the end of the eighteenth century [...]⁶⁴”

The ensuing age of Anthropology is now similarly drawing to a close. Man, according to Foucault may soon disappear as a locus of knowledge whereupon some new mode of thought will be established in his place. What this future order of knowledge will be remains impossible to say for certain, yet Foucault points to the “being of language” that has increasingly pervaded and defined literature in the twentieth century. Antonin Artaud and Raymond Roussel are important representatives of this emerging literature steeped in self-reflective questions of language, though Foucault already traces this tendency back to Nietzsche and Mallarmé. This cultural-historical movement from the existence of man to the being of language is precisely the reverse of the former shift from the Classical *episteme* to that of the modern age:

Ought we not rather to give up thinking of man, or, to be more strict, to think of this disappearance of man—and the ground of possibility of all the sciences of man—as closely as possible in connection with our concern for language?
Ought we not to admit that, since language is here once more, man will return to that serene non-existence in which he was formerly maintained by the imperious unity of Discourse?⁶⁵

In his later thinking, Heidegger also emphasizes the importance of language as that which discloses and in effect establishes being. Certain poets—foremost among them Hölderlin, Rilke, and Trakl—display this original understanding of language and their work remains a manifestation not of themselves as human subjects but of being. Such poets stand in the service of a greater power and are not to be read as individual authors with a specific message to impart. In a sense then, man becomes engulfed in the pure being of language which is to say, with Foucault, that he disappears. And with this

disappearance of man, that finite creature around whom the modern order of knowledge revolves, consequently fades the issue of his death.

Notes To Chapter Eight

¹ In his *Beiträge zur Philosophie* Heidegger singles out these three figures “[...] die je in ihrer Weise zuletzt die Entwurzelung am tiefsten durchlitten haben, der die abendländische Geschichte zugetrieben wird, und die zugleich ihre Götter am innigsten erahnt haben [...]” (GA 65, 204). He considers Hölderlin however as “der am weitesten Voraus-dichtende” of the three.

² John van Buren has to some extent pursued the role of death in primal Christianity, yet I will expand on his observations here, particularly with regard to Kierkegaard, whom he refers to only marginally. See van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 174ff.; and “Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther,” esp. 171.

³ Heidegger, “Drei Briefe Martin Heideggers an Karl Löwith,” in *Zur philosophischen Aktualität Heideggers*, vol. 2: *Im Gespräch der Zeit*, ed. Dietrich Papenfuss and Otto Pöggeler (Frankfurt a.M., 1990) 28f.

⁴ van Buren, “Martin Luther, Martin Heidegger,” 173.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁶ While Zarathustra preaches the ideal of death “zu rechter Zeit”, he actually claims of Christ: “Er starb zu früh; er selber hätte seine Lehre widerrufen, wäre er bis zu meinem Alter gekommen! Edel genug war er zum Widerrufen! (KSA 4, 95).

⁷ Cf. Martin Luther, *Werke (Kritische Gesamtausgabe)* 42 (Weimar, 1911) 146, lines 20ff. For this quote and its translation I am indebted to van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 175 and “Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther,” 171. Van Buren also unearths further comments of Luther on death, all of which are reminiscent of Heidegger. See *ibid.*

⁸ Since I have no access to the Gottsched-Schrempf translations that Heidegger read, I quote from the more recent German edition of Kierkegaard’s collected works: Sören Kierkegaard, *Abschließende unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift zu den Philosophischen Brocken*, trans. Hans Martin Junghans, in *Gesammelte Werke* 16th division, 1st part (Düsseldorf/Köln, 1957) 156.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 158f.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 157f.

¹² *Ibid.*, 158.

¹³ Kierkegaard, *An einem Grabe*, trans. Emanuel Hirsch, in *Gesammelte Werke*, 13th and 14th division, 179.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 175, 177.

¹⁵ Kierkegaard maintains that the thought of death “[...] einem jeden durch die Geburt zum Lehrer fürs ganze Leben bestellt ist [...]” (*ibid.*, 205).

¹⁶ Ibid., 200, 201, 203.

¹⁷ Ibid., 186.

¹⁸ Ibid., 195.

¹⁹ Ibid., 196.

²⁰ Ibid., 201.

²¹ Ibid., 203.

²² Since this lecture remains unpublished I rely on the discussion of scholars such as Pöggeler and van Buren, both of whom apparently have had access to student transcriptions. See Pöggeler, *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers*, 36ff.; and van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 190ff.

²³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 681, 682.

²⁴ See J.F. Angelloz, *Rainier Maria Rilke*. (Paris, 1936) 322: “On nous rapporta ce mot de Heidegger, lorsqu’il connut *Les élégies de Duino*: dans cette oeuvre Rilke exprime en langage poétique les mêmes idées que moi dans mes écrits.”

²⁵ Rainier Maria Rilke, *Werke I*, 347.

²⁶ Ibid., 346.

²⁷ Ibid., 347.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 348.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Rilke, *Werke VI*, 715,

³² Ibid., 713f.

³³ Ibid., 714.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 720.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Also worth noting is that Rilke originally planned a short study on Tolstoy for the conclusion of his novel. This fragmented piece deals with the fear of death—“Todesfurcht”—and refers to Tolstoy himself as “jener große Todesfürchtige”. However, since it was not published until 1962, Heidegger could not have known of its existence. See Rilke, “<Ursprünglicher Schluß der Aufzeichnungen: Tolstoj,>” in *ibid.*, 967-78.

³⁸ Martin Heidegger, “Anmerkungen zu Karl Jaspers’ *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*,” in *Karl Jaspers in der Diskussion*, ed. Hans Saner (München, 1973) 70-100. Heidegger also included this piece in the second edition of *Wegmarken*, GA 9, 1-44.

³⁹ Jaspers' inquiries into specific limit situations are themselves rather brief given the breadth of his book. In all they take up some twenty-five pages—much of which consists of quotes from other authors—out of approximately five hundred. In a sense, then, my cursory discussion does more justice to Jaspers than to Rilke and the primal Christians.

⁴⁰ Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, based on the 6th ed. (München, 1994) 229.

⁴¹ David Ferrell Krell similarly observes that “The relevance of Jaspers' account of death for Heidegger's *Being and Time* [...] is unmistakable; but Jaspers' eclectic account, replete with extended quotations from Buddhist religious texts, Goethe, and Kierkegaard, differs sharply from Heidegger's programmatic analysis.” Krell, *Intimations of Mortality*, 16.

⁴² Jaspers., 261.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 265.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Jaspers refers here to K. Joel's *Ursprung der Naturphilosophie aus dem Geiste der Mystik*.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 269.

⁴⁸ Originally presented as a lecture in 1938 under the title “Die Begründung des neuzeitlichen Weltbildes durch die Metaphysik”, this text was later published with addenda in *Holzwege* from 1950. See GA 5, 75-113.

⁴⁹ In contrast to his practice in *Sein und Zeit*, where he strictly adheres to the term “Dasein”, Heidegger is not adverse to using the more traditional concept of *der Mensch* in his later thinking.

⁵⁰ The question whether Heidegger's *Kehre* constitutes a true turn in his thought or whether it was already programmed into it is a source of much debate. Heidegger himself has confused scholars about the precise relation between being and particular beings in his later thought. This ambivalence is borne out in the contradictory and controversial lines from the 1943 postscript to *Was ist Metaphysik?* Here Heidegger writes: “[...] daß das Sein *wohl* west ohne das Seiende, daß niemals aber ein Seiendes ist ohne das Sein” (GA 9, 306). He later amended these words to what more corresponds to his earlier thought: “[...] daß das Sein *nie* west ohne das Seiende, daß niemals ein Seiendes ist ohne das Sein.” (In both cases my emphasis.)

⁵¹ One notes a gradual ebbing in the discussion of death after *Sein und Zeit*. While *Beiträge zur Philosophie* (1936) and *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1935) still stress the importance of death—but fail to pursue it in depth—only his later writings “Bauen, Wohnen, Denken” and “... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...” (both from 1951) even mention this once principal concern.

⁵² Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, 1973) 341f.

⁵³ Due to this double entendre I quote here from the original French edition: Foucault, *Les mot et les choses* (Paris, 1966) 322.

⁵⁴ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 72 and 207.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 341.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 340f.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 257.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 334.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 335.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 386.

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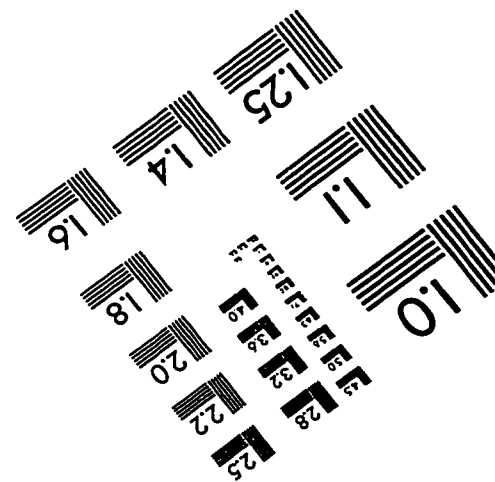
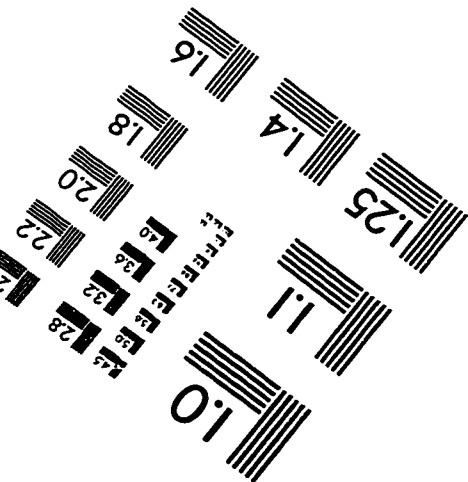
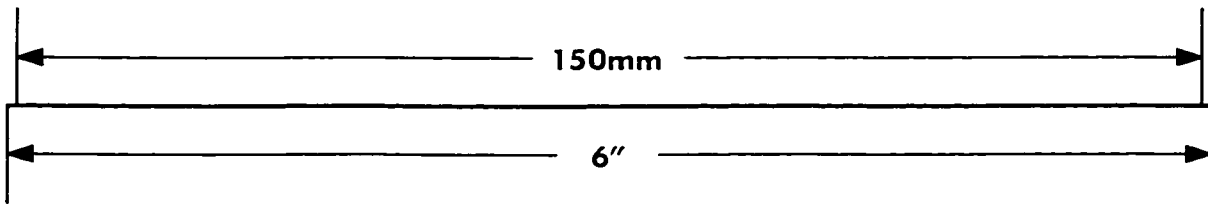
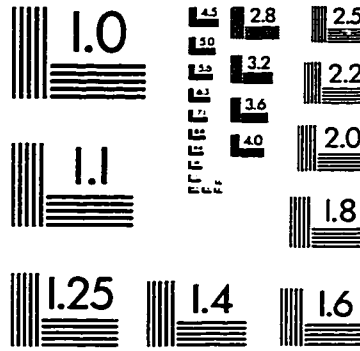
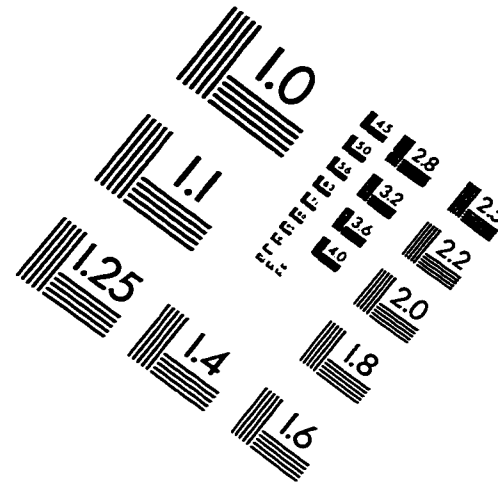
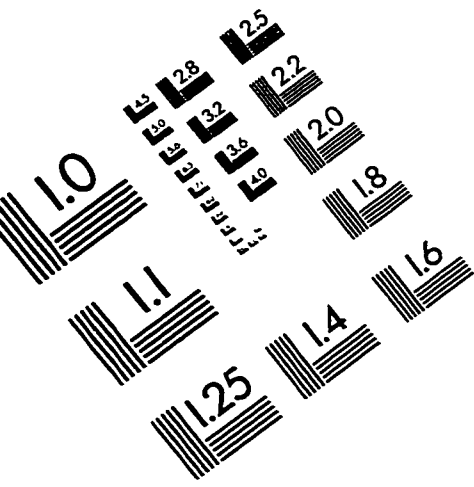
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