

The (Techno-)Poetical Rescue

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ABSTRACT This essay examines the notion of “poetical rescue” in Heidegger, which derives from Heidegger’s commentary on Hölderlin’s lines from “Patmos,” “Yet where danger is, grows also that which rescues.” Heidegger’s remarks on the two-faced essence of technology draw on these lines, characterizing the enframing as both the danger and the possibility of saving. The turn from danger to rescue depends on the possibility of a poetic revealing, which has been overshadowed, even disallowed, by the dominant revealing in modernity—namely, *das Gestell*. To free the possibility of the poetic revealing and the rescue spreading from it, humans, as Heidegger remarks, need to learn to become mortals. To be mortal means here being “capable of death as death”—that is, becoming attentive to the nothingness pulsing in every moment. The rescue Heidegger explores is thus the freeing of the experience proper to being mortal in the midst of a revealing that orders all that exists into the ready availability of a standing-reserve.

KEYWORDS mortality; poetical; rescue; revealing; technology

Mit dem Seyn und seiner Wahrheit muss immer wieder angefangen werden. /
 For, with regard to beyng and truth, the beginning must be made ever and again.
 (Heidegger 2003, 17; Heidegger 2012, 16)

1. REVEALING THE RESCUE

Along the way of his thought, Heidegger several times turns to the lines about danger and rescue from Hölderlin's "Patmos": "Yet where danger is, grows also that which rescues."¹ This gnomic saying, indicating the enigmatic hinge between danger and rescue, comes to mark, in Heidegger's diagnosis concerning the particulars of the oblivion of Being in the global techno-informational capital, an opening toward the possibility of transformation. In "The Question Concerning Technology," this evocation of danger and rescue receives an extensive elaboration in the context of his attempt to let go of metaphysical thought as a prelude to reflecting on the essence of technology and preliminary thinking toward a possible transformation within its sway throughout contemporary reality. At stake is the possibility of a revealing that would release experience from the pervasive and formative hold of calculative rationality. The kernel of the problem is that calculative thought is not confined to the domain of representation, to human intellection and action, but becomes instilled in the very momentum of historical unfolding, according to which what arises is allotted its essence. And this essence materializes as intrinsically available to, even necessarily entailing, a calculative and ordering grasp.

What is most notable about how Heidegger expands on the lines from Hölderlin's hymn is that danger, and that which provides the possibility of rescue, do not form an opposition or involve negation, but manifest the two faces of the same event, namely the essence of technology, which Heidegger terms "the enframing" (*das Gestell*). The enframing specifies the manner in which Being occurs, giving itself in a withdrawal that reveals (*das Entbergen*) beings through a dynamic spatio-temporal complex of relatedness unfurling as a matrix of availability to calculation, ordering and processing. To understand the dynamics between *die Gefahr* and *das Rettende* it is expedient to pay close attention to the word *das Entbergen*, used by Heidegger to indicate the manner in which Being brings forth what comes to exist. The transitive verb *bergen* holds two primary meanings: 1) to rescue, save, recover, salvage, and 2) to hide, to shelter. Its second meaning evokes the verb *verbergen*, most often translated in Heidegger's texts with the English term "to conceal." Thus, the term *das Entbergen* resonates the entire complex

1. "Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch" (Hölderlin 1970, 379–85).

play of un/concealment (*Un/Verborgenheit*) within the aletheic sense of truth Heidegger invokes throughout his works. It is worth noting that all through “The Question Concerning Technology” Heidegger uses the verbal substantive *das Entbergen*, probably in order to echo the equivocal play of *Sein* as both a verb and a substantive. This form is also meant to keep thinking attentive to the continual need of collapsing the subject–predicate distinction with regard to *das Entbergen*: “revealing” is neither simply an activity, an action, expressible through a verb, nor something substantive that could be designated through a noun or labeled with a name. In other words, *das Entbergen* eschews the grammar of the subject(ivity) and the syntax of predication. Most important, it calls into question the philosophical, and scientific, penchant for propositional statements.

Das Entbergen constitutes Heidegger’s constant reminder that thinking cannot remain bound to statements or propositional accounts, and that the locus of truth is not the culturally “sanctified” grammatical-logical form of assertion. For Heidegger, truth in the aletheic sense of un/concealment not only evades capture in assertions, but also opens its proper tonality and expanse only through the hinting resonance of poetic saying. Poetic saying pointedly does not yield meaning the way assertions or propositions do—that is, by capturing or pinpointing their meaning by rendering syntax transparent, if not invisible. Instead, in a hinting gesture, poetic saying frees open its words, foregrounding—not eliminating or covering—silences and junctures between words, and giving unforeseeable reach to their resonance. Rather than grasping and holding onto the distillable and repeatable statements provided by assertions, thinking, in the sense of *Besinnung* sought by Heidegger, is to transpire always in a unique way by attending first of all to how each time thought finds itself underway, undergoing the unprethinkable and non-repeatable resonance of poetic wording afforded by the event’s one-time disposition. If philosophical and scientific thought proceeds by grasping the comprehensible and retainable (calculable?) outcome of the event, it is the non-repeatable moment of thinking’s “underway” that matter in poetic thought: it is its unforeseeable contour and tonality that thinking strives to outline and keep resonant in its response. Simply put, if, as Heidegger proposes, the matter for thinking is Being (*das Sein* or *das Seyn*), then what matters, where Being “speaks,” is indeed the non-repeatable, one-time contour of each moment or while [*die Weile*]. The truth of Being un-shelters (*ent-bergen*) as the once (*das Einst*) of its non-repeatable instant. The challenge for poetic thinking as *die Besinnung* comes from the repeatable nature of language and knowledge, in whose pursuit it is precisely the singular relief of every moment that is

obliterated or sacrificed. This is why, from the perspective of Being, “The destining of revealing [*Entbergen*] is in itself not just any danger, but *the* danger” (Heidegger 1993, 331).

If what exists comes to be revealed entirely in the mode of enframing, whose power disallows or disqualifies in advance any other mode of disclosing, then the danger would be consummate. “Where enframing holds sway [*das Ge-stell waltet*], regulating and securing of the standing-reserve mark all revealing. They no longer even let their own fundamental characteristic appear, namely, this revealing as such” (Heidegger 1993, 332–3). As the essence of technology, the enframing endangers not simply what it reveals as the standing-reserve or a stockpile (*der Bestand*) of resources, that is, beings and relations, but the revealing itself. To clarify Heidegger’s point about masking the fundamental momentum (*der Grundzug*) of revealing, it is necessary to look at the term *das Entbergen* again, this time focusing on the prefix *ent-*, which, in its double play, indicates the movement of disclosing or unsheltering but also resonates as the beginning of the sheltering intimated in the root *bergen*. The tension coded in the prefix hints, therefore, at the complex momentum of what Heidegger terms *das Entbergen*, which either safeguards the sheltering against total exposure and susceptibility to machination (*die Machenschaft*), or precisely exposes everything as available to calculation and informational processing. In the first modality, *das Entbergen* not only does not remove the sheltering, in order to render completely unconcealed and available, but reveals in a manner that not only harbors what comes to be disclosed but, in fact, brings its essence into proper openness. It is in this sense that the root *bergen* appears in a strong correlation with the verb *retten*, which Heidegger glosses in the following way: “To rescue [*retten*] is to fetch something home into its essence, in order to bring the essence for the first time into its proper appearing” (Heidegger 1993, 333). Holding open the hyphen in *das Ent-bergen* brings forth the sustaining tension in un-sheltering, the tension which should not be removed from view and disqualified as de facto non-existent or unreal, as it happens in revealing as the enframing. In this way, Heidegger’s use of *Entbergen* in the context of the enframing brings into focus the possible turn between rendering available and disposable in the *Gestell* and letting free into essencing.

In the protocol from the seminar discussion of his lecture “Time and Being,” Heidegger uses the image of the Janus head to describe the double station of the enframing with regard to Being and its transformation into the *Ereignis* (the appropriative event). “It [the enframing] can be understood as a kind of continuation of the will to will, thus as an extreme formation

of Being. At the same time, however, it is a first form of the event itself" (Heidegger 2002b, 53). The fact that the enframing points in two directions at once is already inscribed in and dictated by the momentum of the un-sheltering proper to the revealing understood as *das Ent-bergen*. What may appear, especially in the translation into English, as an unmotivated move in which Heidegger, citing the Hölderlin lines about danger and rescue, inserts into the revealing as enframing, seemingly arbitrarily, the possibility of saving, in fact finds its prompt in the momentum proper to the *Entbergen*. "Thus the essential unfolding of technology harbors in itself what we least suspect, the possible rise of that which rescues" (Heidegger 1993, 337).

True to his questioning of metaphysical thought, Heidegger thinks here on the level of Being rather than beings, so that at issue in the potential salvage is, first of all, the revealing itself, and to be more precise, the momentum of the revealing. That momentum, while still at work in the enframing, is threatened specifically by how the essence of technology brings what exists to a stand, ordering it for availability and processing. "The essential unfolding of technology threatens revealing, threatens it with the possibility that all revealing will be consumed in ordering and that everything will present itself only in the unconcealment of the standing-reserve [*Bestand*]" (Heidegger 1993, 339). What leads to the ordering of beings into a stockpile of resources always at the ready is the unchecked momentum of revealing turning into utter disclosure, which ultimately renders everything numerically available to calculative thought. The drive to reveal, through successful processing and manipulation of beings, covers over the momentum of sheltering (*bergen*), guiding the event's unfolding. It results in the elimination of the tension implicit in the German prefix *ent-*, the tension which indicates what is most of the essence of revealing (of the event), namely, un-sheltering as the dis-covering of the proper way of sheltering. Enframing can thus mute the very possibility of rescue still resonant in sheltering proper to revealing (*das Entbergen*). To counter this drive, thought needs to be mindful of the fact that, in rendering *das Entbergen* as unsheltering into English, the prefix "un-" does not mean the removal of all sheltering as a total, uninhibited exposure, which denudes and renders beings fully accessible and available. Instead, it emphasizes the dis-discovery of the proper way of sheltering—that is, of finding how to harbor the spatio-temporal essence of beings. The term *das Entbergen* enacts the tension between full disclosure into an all-embracing availability and the possibility of dis-covering how to shelter what is of essence—that is, of Being as event: its non-repeatable, one-time disposition. If the resonance lent to *das Entbergen* (unsheltering)

by Heidegger's careful weaving together of German terms is neglected, then the entire momentum of the "revealing", and thus of Heidegger's idiomatic questioning of the essence of technology, is misdirected, if not entirely lost.

The rescue Heidegger invokes in citing Hölderlin. It needs a hint that would let this secreted momentum of sheltering come forth and open as a "more primally granted revealing that could bring that which rescues into its shining-forth in the midst of danger" (Heidegger 1993, 339). Such a hint, Heidegger proposes, can perhaps come from art, when art is not perceived or judged aesthetically, but experienced as the poetical (*das Dichterische*) that "thoroughly pervades every art, every essential unfolding into the beautiful" (Heidegger 1993, 340). The poetical matters because it harbors an alternate momentum of revealing, one in which sparing and sheltering, as Heidegger explains in "Poetically Man Dwells," inform the *metron* disclosive of dwelling. In this sense, "poetry [*Dichtung*] first of all lets dwelling be dwelling" (Heidegger 1971, 213). At stake is whether existence will be meted out, spanned and inhabited as mortal, or whether it will be enframed overall into available and disposable standing-reserve. The poetical can hint at a possible path of rescue from the exclusive dominion of the enframing specifically by keeping to, and meting out, the momentum of sheltering essential to revealing. What is sheltered does not submit to technical measuring or become subject to counting and reckoning. At the very least, the poetical halts for a while the machinating drive of the enframing, pausing and suspending it into the hyphen spanning and holding open the momentum of *Ent-bergen*.

2. THE CRYPTIC HINTS OF RESCUE

In Heidegger's thought, it is indeed the poetical that pre-scribes the possibility of "that which rescues" (*das Rettende*). It is not by accident, then, that the notion of "rescue" or "saving" (*die Rettung*) enters Heidegger's thought in tandem with the essence of technology, by way of poetry and the already mentioned emblematic quotation from Hölderlin's "Patmos." Rather, it is a hint, perhaps *the* hint, that rescue is "in essence"—that is, with regard to Being—*poetical*. To be precise, it is, Janus-like, techno-poetical, spanning the tension between mortality and technological power. That is why it is in the context of the (techno-)poetical and mortality that one can place the notorious and cryptic remark from the interview in *Der Spiegel* that "Only a god can save us" ("*Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten*") (Heidegger 2000b, 652–83). The broader context for considering this comment can come from other similarly cryptic and deliberately provocative remarks that mark the way of Heidegger's thought. For those familiar with a range of texts

by Heidegger, there is no doubt that on occasion he likes to provoke the audience, especially in public lectures and appearances or in university courses, and does so through gnomic and ambiguous pronouncements, which he often phrases in ways that appear deliberately to court misunderstanding or even elicit outright opposition. And the more provocative and seemingly self-evident the statement appears, the more momentous and needful of questioning the issue it paradoxically signals. What I mean by “courting misinterpretation” is that Heidegger is fond of hinting at the issue by concealing its complexity and nuance in the ostensible transparency—the “public face”—of statements which often are so glaring in their generalization as to seem patently false, as though prompting inattention or rejection. It is as though Heidegger were deliberately provoking public opinion, which he so strenuously and repeatedly critiques. In other words, it is as if he were asking for a “bad press,” which would sensationalize and turn into a headline some of his observations—for instance, remarks such as “Science does not think” or “Science’s knowledge, which is compelling within its own sphere, the sphere of objects, already had annihilated things as things long before the atom bomb exploded” (Heidegger 1971, 168). These two seemingly accusatory comments about science can all too readily be misread as too dismissive of scientific thought or exaggerating its negative influence, and this kind of quick misinterpretation can easily overshadow their genuine barb: the need to examine how, broadly understood, calculative thought (*rechnendes Denken*) has come to dominate and shape all avenues of existence—today, perhaps most notably, through algorithmic processing.

Such blunt statements seem to be made by Heidegger with a metaphorical wink: that is, with a dose of irony, which his frequently ponderous manner, especially heavy in English translation, makes readers miss all too often. Perhaps such highly charged remarks are made “in jest” in the etymological sense of the word, which takes us back to the Latin *gestus* and its plural *gesta*. In other words, these aphoristic comments could be read as gestures of thinking, complex and ironic hints, exhibiting a simple, perhaps even deliberately simplified, surface. Too obvious in their appearance, they tend to provoke a knee-jerk reaction, even the charge of obtuseness. They appear to invite the audience to quickly read into them interpretations reigning in the public sphere and to react in the manner of *das Man*, of the eponymous “They” from *Being and Time*—that is, to retort as “one” generally would. While they provocatively fly in the face of common beliefs (*doxa*), their para-doxical sting, if discovered, upsets all the more. And if the enframing (*das Gestell*) is all about the totalizing or globalizing setting,

setting up and pre-setting of everything that exists, then the *upset* is precisely what such remarks intend. These gestures encapsulate the play of un/concealment, calling into question the apparent veracity and self-evidence of propositional language that pervade and motivate our culture.²

Another thought-provoking aphoristic remark pertinent to this discussion of cryptic hints comes from Heidegger's private notes, published under the collective moniker of *The Black Notebooks*: "The modern systems of total dictatorship stem from Judeo-Christian monotheism."³ While this assertion has provoked some ire but little sustained discussion, let me draw attention here to the fact that Heidegger is not commenting on monotheistic faiths or religions, but rather draws attention to the notions of power and sovereignty which, originating from the monotheistic idea of "God," have come to shape Western/European civilization and politics. The unwritten referent here may be Carl Schmitt's political theology, and its conception of sovereignty and state power. To address this remark adequately and develop its philosophical significance in the context of Heidegger's work, one would need an extensive discussion of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as theo-logo-centrism, and in particular his persistent critique of power (*die Macht*), dominion/mastery (*die Herrschaft*), and violence (*die Gewalt*)—and, especially, of how they are all imbricated with the analysis of *Machenschaft* (machination) and of the enframing as the essence of technology. Perhaps what most calls for patient exploration is the uncharacteristic use of the verb *entstammen*—and not verbs related to origin (*der Ursprung*) or provenance (*die Herkunft*), which populate Heidegger's remarks on the history of philosophy—together with what kind of web of relations and influences this verb implies with regard to how power flows through and manifests itself in the enframing as the determining paradigm of revealing in modernity.

Returning to the enigmatic statement that "Only a god can still save us," it needs to be remembered that Heidegger makes this as part of his answer to the questions from the interviewer about whether an individual human being—or, for that matter, philosophy as such—can influence the web of fateful circumstances in which humanity and the world find themselves in the second half of the 20th century. Heidegger's answer, importantly,

2. It should be noted that it seems quite likely that in these aphoristic remarks Heidegger is striving to emulate, not always or necessarily successfully, Nietzsche's deliberately provocative wit.

3. "*Die modernen Systeme der totalen Diktatur entstammen dem jüdisch-christlichen Monotheismus*" (Heidegger 2017, 438).

does not even consider the question of the individual and his/her potential actions, as his comments point out that philosophy has already been replaced by science, and especially cybernetics, in providing those types of answers or solutions. However, such solutions cannot even address the question on the level that would be required for genuine questioning. Heidegger's responses in the interview recall his extended discussion of our expectations of, and the intended use of, philosophy in the 1935 *Introduction to Metaphysics*:

It is entirely correct and completely in order to say, "You can't do anything with philosophy." The only mistake is to believe that with this, the judgment concerning philosophy is at an end. For a little epilogue arises in the form of a counter-question: even if we can't do anything with it, may not philosophy in the end do something *with us*, provided that we engage ourselves with it? Let that suffice for us as an explication of what philosophy is not. (Heidegger 2000a, 13)

Philosophy is use-less, or better, use-free, when it comes to the demand for immediate, practical solutions arising in the face of social dilemmas or political expediencies. Therefore, it can only be misjudged from the perspective of instrumental use. In this regard, Heidegger echoes Nietzsche, observing that "All essential questioning in philosophy necessarily remains untimely, and this is because philosophy either projects far beyond its own time or else binds its time back to this time's earlier and inceptive past" (Heidegger 2000a, 9). Nevertheless philosophy can do something *to us*, perhaps transform us, or let us change, so that the manner in which the questions are even approached becomes radically—from their very roots—altered.

In 1935, the not so implicit context is the expectation of practical value and political usefulness demanded from philosophy by pragmatically oriented culture, and yet in particular by dictatorial political systems: most likely that of Nazi Germany, but perhaps also that of the Soviet Union. Heidegger makes this context unmistakable by commenting on what he describes as the "excessive demand" placed on philosophy to provide a foundation for historical existence: "One says, for example, that because metaphysics did not contribute to preparing the revolution, it must be rejected" (Heidegger 2000a, 11). The "revolution" is that of the coming to power of National Socialism in 1933, which Heidegger himself welcomed at the time. By the time of the *Der Spiegel* interview, the socio-political context is that of global techno-capital and its overbearing universal challenge of effectiveness, productivity and sheer informational availability and manipulability, which

finds its contemporaneous expression in the quickly accelerating sway of cybernetics. Heidegger indicates that the so called “useful” or “practical” answers might come from the sciences, in particular informational sciences. Yet at issue is not only finding answers, or rather solutions, to already visible problems or crises, but also, and rather, transforming the way of questioning and thinking which would be required to truly face up to our historical circumstances. Here one can recall the already mentioned quip from “The Question Concerning Technology”: “Science does not think.” Sciences count, account, recount—all implied in the German term *das Rechnen* which Heidegger uses to describe the dominant thinking in modernity, and which English translations render as “calculative thought.” The scientific manner of thinking is a broadly understood ac-counting, which counts/relies on already accepted and vetted, highly controlled (i.e., accountable via proofs) models of representing, understanding, grasping and manipulating. This is what Heidegger means by *rechnendes Denken*: calculative, reckoning, ac-counting thought. The sciences can only think in this ac-countable manner. This accountability speaks both to the pinnacle of their amazing achievements and to the intrinsic limits of what they can reckon with. The ac-counting and ac-countable thought does not think, at least not in the manner that Heidegger strives to open up for thinking: namely, *die Besinnung*. Worse, affirming its own standards as the only ac-countable, and thus real, true and “objective” approach, scientific thought denies legitimacy, whether explicitly or implicitly, to any other way of thinking and the status of reality to other ways of revealing. To echo Heidegger’s quotation of Max Planck: the real is only that which can be measured.

In the context of the provocative and aphoristic observations discussed above, it is not surprising that the phrase “Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten” became the title of the entire interview, even overshadowing it, and entered the public sphere as a newspaper headline. Perhaps in a way it was meant to do just that, in order all the more eloquently to call into question—even if only for those few caring to entertain such ruminations—the ease with which the public sphere generates predictable (mis)interpretations and produces decisive, if not apodictic, “judgments.” The fact that Heidegger refers to “a god” using an indefinite article hints at an alternative to any messianic scenario relying on onto-theological categories, especially those involving power, violence, or (re)making. To an attentive ear, this way of phrasing implies an acknowledgement that the god/gods Heidegger invokes is/are not about power, or the possibility of intervention from “beyond”—as if from outside of history. On the contrary, god(s), called for in the context of the fourfold and the poetical, undercut(s) the notion of power (*die Macht*)

or calculative thought as a form of machination (*die Machenschaft*), and can perhaps provide a rescue from the situation the interviewer is asking about. More important, it signals that the rescue (*die Rettung*) not only cannot rely on power, but in fact necessitates a sustained critique of power and a persistent search for an alternative to the flows of power dominant within the ontotheological parameters of techno-capital. Within the ontotheological dynamic of power, the statement that “only a god can save us” would inevitably imply an impotence and lack of power on the side of “us,” the humans, and thus entail the need for another form of power or agency. Yet Heidegger makes clear that the rescue in question is not about power, and not up to (any) power: be it human, technological, scientific or otherwise. It is, instead, about release from both empowering and overpowering, as well as about a concomitant freeing from understanding the dynamic of rescue in terms of agency, action, or intervention.

3. THE POETICAL RELEASE TO MORTALITY

If the poetical un-sheltering discussed in “The Question Concerning Technology” provides some path-marks for understanding “that which rescues” (*das Rettende*), then Heidegger’s mention of a god (any god? but not God?) sends us to the fourfold and the spanning between mortals and gods in play therein. It is in the context of this crossing, overlaid with the spanning of earth and sky, that mortals can learn to be mortal, as Heidegger observes in “The Thing”:

The mortals are human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death.... As the shrine of Nothing, death harbors within itself the presencing of Being [*das Wesende des Seins*]. As the shrine of Nothing, death is the shelter of Being. We now call mortals mortals—not because their earthly life comes to an end, but because they are capable of death as death [*Tod als Tod vermögen*]. Mortals are who they are, as mortals, present in the shelter of Being. They are the essencing relation [*das wesende Verhältnis*] to Being as Being.

Metaphysics, by contrast, thinks of man as *animal*, as a living being (*Lebewesen*). Even when *ratio* pervades *animalitas*, man’s being remains defined by life and life-experience. Rational living being must first *become* mortals (Heidegger 1971, 176).

Mortality is not given as a characteristic—for instance, as the impending death/end of any living being—for then any and all living beings would be considered mortal. If human beings have experienced and understood

themselves in terms of life, as living beings endowed with reason (*zoon logon echon*)—meaning, in later parlance, as rational animals (*animal rationale*)—they have to let themselves become mortal in the specific sense amplified by Heidegger. As living beings, for instance as rational animals, humans understand death primarily as the end of life, as *das Ableben* (in the terminology of *Being and Time*), with requisite funeral rites and mourning. In Heidegger, mortality (*die Sterblichkeit*) does not span, however, a relation to (the end of) life, but rather to Being, and specifically to the Nothing continually pulsating in Being. The relation to life and its end (*das Ableben*) is enveloped and possible within the mortal relation to Being—that is, within death as the “shrine of nothingness.”

This relation to Being-as-nothingness is nothing other than Da-sein, the “to be t/here” as the futural orientation of the unfolding play of the time-space of the event. The capacity to die is not the end of life, but instead the continual capacity (*das Vermögen*) to experience (*das Er-fahren*: traverse or travel) the span of the Nothing pulsing in Being, and thus making possible the experience of Being in each moment of life. As Heidegger explains in *The Event*, mortals die, and do so continually, in every moment of their life, only as long as they remain alive.

Death essentially occurs not when someone is dead, but when the departure into the steadfastness of Da-sein attains its consummation. Therefore death also does not occur when someone “dies,” if dying is merely the extinguishing of “life.”... Death “is” rare and concealed. It is often no less prevented and deformed by dying than by sheer living. Death is the purest nearness of the human being to being (and thus to “nothingness.”) (Heidegger 2013a, 165)

In Heidegger, death in its idiomatic sense is never an end, but describes the interlacing of Being and nothingness that can come into the open only as long as one remains alive. Death has “the abyssal, departure-like, event-related essence [*das abgründende, abschiedlich ereignishafte Wesen*]” (Heidegger 2013a, 165).

Dying is thus carried or borne out, as a steadfast if momentary nearness to Being, Being disclosed through interlacing with nothingness and “borne” by its continual pulsing. The nearness to Being comes as the steadfastness (*die Inständigkeit*) of Da-sein—that is, as the holding out in relation to nothingness which, through its abyssal sense of parting and leave-taking (*der Abschied*), extends proximity to Being. As *Contributions to Philosophy* indicates, the experience of the abyssal ground (*der Abgrund*) of Being through being-toward-death and nihilation has nothing to do with nihilism

or a philosophy of death (Heidegger 2012, 224) and, instead, everything to do with what might be called the originative jointure of Being and nothingness: “What purely and simply is not nothing [*nicht nichts*] is a being. Nothingness [*Das Nichts*] itself, however, is being” (Heidegger 2013a, 103). What brings Being to the fore and its clearing into the open is precisely the nihilation of the Nothing, which irrupts into Da-sein through anxiety, whose “breath quivers perpetually through Dasein” (Heidegger 1993, 106). Death marks the futural temporality of Da-sein as the carrying out—in the manner of steadfastness—of the obscured way in which nothingness contours Being.⁴ It is, in the formulation from GA 73, “*Das reine einstig-einzige Da*” (Heidegger 2013b, 734): that is, “The pure once ever singular *Da*.” This unique sense of “this only one time” marking the *Da* as the site of the clearing of Being is carried out as mortal being-toward-death, as the possibility of not being, instantiated through Being held out into the Nothing (*Hineingehaltenheit in das Nichts*) (Heidegger 1993, 106). It is this experience, the traversal of the jointure of Being and the Nothing, which makes possible a freeing relation to mortality. Asking in *Winke I und II* when death is closest and most purely in relation to mortals, Heidegger answers: “In the *liveliest* living, because there for the moment [literally, the blink of an eye], a proper dying away may stay in the expropriation.”⁵ Mortality is thus not pre-given or set, as though in the *Gestell*, but “upset,” singularly afforded by each moment, by its non-repeatable eventuation, to be carried out not simply by continuing to live but through open attentiveness to the (possibility of) dying and the pulsing of the Nothing in each moment. That is why human living beings need to *become* mortal, and do so anew with each moment. One could add that in a way, mortals need to “practice” being mortal.

Mortality is therefore nothing other than the rescue of death, and thus a release of the rescuing force of undergoing the momentary pulse of nothingness with each moment. Heidegger makes this clear in the most recent, penultimate volume of *The Black Notebooks*:

Rescue is only when it is sufficiently granted mortals in all their doings [literally: their doing and letting] to undergo dying with regard to each other....

4. Siegbert Gebert draws a parallel between the nihilation (*Nichtung*) of the Nothing and death: “Genau dasselbe ergibt sich nun auch vom Tod her. Auch in ihm verbirgt sich die ‘wesenhafte Zugehörigkeit des Nicht zum Sein’” (Gebert 2016, 23).

5. “*Wann ist uns Sterblichen der Tod am nächsten nah und rein? Im lebendsten Leben, da es in Augen-Blicken ein eigentliches Ersterben in die Enteignis bleiben darf*” (Heidegger 2020, 63).

Dying the death in living: undergoing dying into the pure dis-owning toward the one-ing one, which shelters all, secures all.⁶

To experience Being in its momentum of nothingness necessitates “dying away” into the disappropriation (*Enteignis*) that marks the impetus, the proper of the Event (*das Ereignis*). As Heidegger repeatedly remarks, the proper (*eigen*) of the *Ereignis* is *die Enteignis*. Not what arises and unfolds as beings in the clearing cast open of the Event but the radical disowning and emptying, marked as *ersterben*. “*Sterblich Tun als Be-fügung in die Enteignis*” (Heidegger 2020, 67). “Mortal doing as joining into the disowning.” Hyphenating *Be-fügung*, Heidegger emphasizes the movement of fitting and conforming to the disappropriation proper to the Event. In other words, mortal doing is not any action or deed *per se*, but finding a way, perhaps a wavelength, to follow along with the expropriation, with the “dying away” indicative of the pulsing nothingness as the momentum most proper (*eigen*) to Being.

Rescue or saving does not save from death as the approaching end of life, but instead frees *into* dying—that is, into the continual capacity to undergo dying as traversing the span of the *Ent-eignis* and nothingness, and doing so singularly in each instant. I render *ersterben* (to die away, to die) here as “to undergo dying,” to play up the momentary span traversed, experienced, risked or ventured ever and again. While *Ableben* names death as the end of life, pointing to its limit as the horizon of existence, *Sterben* is emphatically not a limit, but the instituting or establishing (*Stiftung*) of the disowning/expropriation on Earth: “*sondern die Stiftung der Enteignis in die Erde*” (Heidegger 2020, 154). In other words, death as experienced by mortals founds on Earth the shelter of the Nothing, and thus the sheltering, also in the sense of *Entbergen*, of Being. What mortals endure in this manner is related to language, to the difficult task of allowing words to resound with what Heidegger describes as the stillest or quietest saying: “Death as the intimate gratitude of dying is the quietest saying—the sounding of rest—the rhythm of the Event.”⁷ The rhythm of the Event is meted out not by statements or assertions, not by what can be captured, expressed, rendered available, or calculated, of beings, but by the quietest and stillest saying associated with the ability to shelter the instantaneity of nothingness and expropriation in *this* only and sole moment that is ever given to be. It calls

6. “*Rettung ist nur, wo die Zureichung gewahrt wird, in der die Sterblichen zu einander in ihr Tun und Lassen ersterben.... Sterben der Tod ins Leben: ersterben in die reine Enteignis zum einenden Einen, das Alles birgt, Alles gewahrt*” (Heidegger 2020, 52).

7. “*Der Tod als der innige Dank des Sterbens ist die stillste Sage—das Läuten der Ruhe—der Rhythmus des Ereignisses*” (Heidegger 2020, 53).

for a listening and a saying calibrated to the rhythm of the Event: one that coming to words, un-saying, begins to say (*Ent-sagen*) quietly. As Heidegger remarks: “*Die Sprache eigentlich: das Reichtum der Enteignis*” (Heidegger 2020, 143). “Language appropriately: the richness of expropriation.” What is language’s ownmost, correlated to the rhythm of the Event, comes to pass in the quietest manner as the wealth of expropriation: dis-owning of the proper, of meaning, grasp, articulation, possession, etc.

This is why “a god” can perhaps rescue “us” not by any power, but possibly by showing, through the crossing that holds mortals and gods vis-à-vis each other, the momentary span of mortality, the beat of *Ersterben*. It is as if, opposite to mortals, a passing god, without the necessity of power or doing anything, prompts the sheltering of Being proper by freeing the mortal relation to Being as the Nothing (*das Nichts*). In other words, a god’s hint “acts” by providing the foil for mortals to experience their existence in terms of mortality. In “Why Poets?,” where Heidegger once again quotes the lines from “Patmos” about danger and rescue, his commentary emphasizes the necessity of a turn in the essence of mortals: “*Die Rettung muss dort kommen, wo es sich mit den Sterblichen in ihrem Wesen wendet*” (Heidegger 1977, 298). “Salvation must come where it turns with mortals in their essence” (Heidegger 2002a, 222, modified). This site, the “where” of the turn, must be dared or ventured. It is opened and marked by the hyphen in Da-sein, as the point where the manner of comportment and its attunement to Being pivots on the Nothing: how mortals turn toward Being, how they stand in and with-stand Da-sein, carries out, perhaps even transforms, their “essence,” meaning how they come to exist in each moment.

Throughout his writings, Heidegger amplifies the resonance of the German *Rettung* (rescue, salvation) as, on the one hand, a sheltering (*das Bergen*) and, on the other, as a freeing (*das Befreien*), as well as a protecting and a preserving (*das Bewahren*). All three German terms appear in dictionaries as synonyms of *Rettung*, which means that Heidegger simply gives a hand to the German language, highlighting and augmenting the undertones of how *das Rettende*—that which rescues or saves—disposes and tones Da-sein. It is important to note that in Heidegger’s texts, for certain, *das Befreien*, *das Bewahren* and *das Bergen* place the emphasis on “rescued” in the sense of being freed and protected. In other words, the salvation which, in Heidegger, resonates in tandem with Hölderlin, is not a rescue *from* anything, but a freeing, opening and sheltering *of*. The rescue discussed in “The Question Concerning Technology” is therefore never simply an escape from the essence of technology since, as Heidegger makes clear in his comments on the Janus-like positioning of the enframing, it

is precisely the essence of technology that harbors “that which rescues”: namely, the modality of *Entbergen*, which reveals while sheltering and sparing. It is not by opposing or removing the enframing, but within the *Ent-bergen* as enframing, that the sheltering (*das Bergen*) which stirs the entire revealing needs to be let open and freed.

The most thought-provoking aspect of the rescue suggested by Heidegger is that the sheltering at issue in the question of the essence of technology is directly and ineluctably tied to mortality. The rescue consists—paradoxically, in relation to common opinion about the dangers of technology or the quest for the prolongation of life—in the freeing of mortality: one could say, in the freeing *into* being mortal. Counter to salvation narratives or messianic scenarios in which what is at issue is a redeeming of, or freedom from, life on Earth and the burden of mortality, for Heidegger, the rescue finds its place *in* mortality: it frees up being mortal so that the rescue comes from the poetical “meting out” of mortality. In numerous essays, this poetical “measure” of human dwelling comes not only to be counter-posed to technical forms of measuring and revealing, which end up disclosing everything into a standing-reserve, but also to envelop and inflect those techno-scientific modes and means of measuring. The poetical is the measure specifically afforded by mortality, the measure befitting mortals. It is a measure that frees and lets be, instead of principally grasping and ordering. It is thus a measure that grants the breadth of possibilities, that enables to be, rather than attempting to take control and establish dominion over beings. Unlike calculative thought, mortality is not ac-countable. Yet, although it cannot be measured or “counted” in such a manner, it can be held open, traversing the interlacing of Being and the Nothing in *Besinnung*. Differently put, openness and attentiveness to mortality can be poetically undergone. This is why language and wording become the center of attention in Heidegger’s work, with this already so from the early lectures and *Being and Time* on, and then also quite explicitly in his numerous later discussions of language, words and poetry.

The salvation in Heidegger is “mortal,” which means that it lies in the proleptic dying away (while living) into death (*ersterben*): that is, in how each moment of Being is carried out and singly endured in its pulsating nothingness. This is why Heidegger on numerous occasions speaks of the eschatology of Being (*das Seyn*), and the eschatology of each moment. The *eschaton* in those contexts does not point to the end of history, to the end of Being as the unfolding timeline, but to the ending point of each and every moment, to the fact that each instance is an *eschaton* in terms of the momentum of its being: as its inception unfolds already into its ending,

its being turns into the nothingness which has already been charting the momentum of Being. In this manner, each moment begins in ending and ends in inception (*der Anfang*). In this specific sense Being occurs as eschatologically ineptual: each moment ends beginning. It is for the sake of this always instantaneous eschatology of Being that what needs to be saved—provocatively counter to the modern obsession with saving and prolonging life?—is death in the sense of the capacity to die. The rescue comes from the openness to dying and the Nothing, understood as the attentive carrying out of the essential beginning that lasts as the last, the unique ultimate point, of each moment's ending.

The rescue is, in a manner of speaking, only secondarily about beings, whether human or non-human, living or non-living. If we ask *who* is to be saved or *what* is to be rescued, we already move within the realm of metaphysical thought, training our attention on beings and thus reinforcing the forgetting of Being. As always with Heidegger, the thinking begins with Being, not beings, whether mortals or divinities, sky or earth. At issue in the saving Heidegger invokes is the last, the *bare* essential of Being: the moment's ending (as) beginning. The English adjective "bare" should be appreciated here in its spectrum of significations: from plain and unadorned, as well as scant, meagre, and mere, to exposed, denuded, and stark. As Heidegger notes, his questioning is about the simple starkness of Being: about its ever non-repeatable *this only* "while," which he highlights by turning the German adjective *jeweilig* into the illustration of how any being exists as ever only "*Je Weilige*." This unadorned yet most difficult simplicity of each moment, traversed "mortally," is "that which rescues," freeing humans to their own way of being mortal. To drive this point home, Heidegger, in his initially unpublished manuscripts, especially in GA 73, turns the adverb *einst* (once) into two nominal forms: *das Einst* (the Once) and *das Einstige*. *Das Einst* is importantly not as an indication of the temporal location of a past or future moment, but as the naming of Being in the one-time emptying momentum of its own nothingness. As Heidegger suggests in GA 73, the notion of the singular and the unique is to be thought not in regard to beings, but instead from the Once and the One-time.⁸ That is why truth in Heidegger is not something constant, repeatable in instants of linear temporality, nor, by contrast, purportedly divorced from time, but in fact occurs properly always as one-time: "Die Wahr-heit ist das Einstige" (Heidegger 2013b, 758). Therefore, it occurs "properly" only

8. "Andenken—als das Denken an das Einstige- Einzige" (Heidegger 2013b, 751).

as its own one-time expropriation or disowning, which is why Heidegger writes in GA 73 about “*das Einstige Enteignis*” (Heidegger 2013b, 795–802).

To intimate this momentum of nothingness and *das Enteignis*, Heidegger turns to the archaic German noun *das Letze*, which the Grimm dictionary explains as 1) “ende, äusserstes, letztes” and 2) “abschied, fortgehen”:⁹ as at the same time, at once, departure and going forth (continuing). *Das Letze* thus names the “last(ing)” of the moment, its “eschatological” turn, whereby departure turns forward, becomes released into the inception (*der Anfang*)—departure not only continues, but lets begin. That is why Heidegger writes together about the inception and the *Letze*: “Anfang und Letze | Ereignis der Enteignis” (Heidegger 2013b, 924), about the “once of inception and departure” (“*Einst von Anfang und Letze*,” [Heidegger 2013b, 925]).¹⁰ The saving opens out of the paradoxical eschatological inceptuality of the moment: dying (with) each moment and undergoing its non-repeatable one time passing, mortals can begin to be mortal, each time anew, each time unforeseeably so. Mortality is what renders thinking ever and ever unforeseen (“*je und je Unvorhergesehene*” (Heidegger 2020, 55)), never repeated in its unprethinkable once. “That which rescues”—that is, frees—the mortal beat of Being, is the last(ing) of each moment, the end/beginning of its Once, the *Letze* of every instant. Because mortals can ever and again only be *this* moment, while parting into inception.

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10. I present two more quotations here to illustrate this momentum: “The suddenness of the turn of the expropriation into the beginning and departure” (“*Die jähe der Einkehr der Enteignis in den Anfang und die Letze*,” (Heidegger 2013b, 925)), and “The one-time of the departure—the going under—the distinctness of the release into the unspoken” (“*Das Einst der Letze—der Untergang—Schied des Lassens ins Ungesprochene*” (Heidegger 2013b, 925)).

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