

# Deconstruction and Philosophy

The Texts of  
Jacques Derrida

*Edited by John Sallis*

## Notes

1. "Le retrait de la métaphore," in *Poésie* (Fall 1978); "The *Retrait* of Metaphor," trans. F. Gasdner et al., *Enclitic* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1978): 5–33.
2. See his "Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
3. I have "dealt with" the question of strategy more fully in a number of other places. See, for instance, "Style and Strategy at the Limits of Philosophy: Heidegger and Derrida," *The Monist* 63, no. 4 (October 1980): 494–511, and "Difference and the Problem of Strategy," in *Derrida and Differance*, ed. D. C. Wood and R. Bernasconi (Warwick: Parousia Press, 1985), pp. 93–106.
4. Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), pp. 17–18; *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 16–17.
5. Jacques Derrida, "Signature Événement Contexte," in *Marges* (see note 4), Fr. pp. 365–93; Eng. pp. 307–30.
6. See, for example, "Violence et métaphysique" in *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), pp. 117–228; *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 79–195, on Levinas; "Living On / Border Lines," in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), "on" Blanchot (and others).
7. Archibald Macleish, "Voyage West," in his *Collected Poems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
8. Jacques Derrida, *La Carte postale: De Socrate à Freud et au-delà* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), p. 25.
9. I make no attempt to connect Austin's "sea-change" to either San Seriffe or to Macleish's "open ocean."
10. At the risk of seeming to celebrate the victory of metonymy over thought, I might add that the "Martini" possibility led me to thinking about Italian philosophers, and thence to Benedetto Croce's *What Is Living and What Is Dead in Hegel's Philosophy*, and to smile at the marvelous ease with which one might be able to draw that distinction in some less problematic space.
11. *La Carte postale*, p. 19.
12. See *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), p. 40; *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Ch. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 25.
13. "Linguistique et grammatologie" in *De la grammatologie*, Fr. p. 108; Eng. p. 73.
14. See Derrida's "ce dangereux supplément . . ." (on Rousseau) in *De la grammatologie*.
15. Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Paris: Minuit, 1972); *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
16. The paper by Rodolphe Gasché, for all its many virtues, might seem to confirm such a judgment.
17. "Violence et métaphysique" (see note 6 above), Fr. p. 118; Eng. p. 80.

## Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand

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Jacques Derrida

Translated by John P. Leavey, Jr.

I must begin with some precautions. They all come down to asking your pardon and indulgence for what in particular touches on the form and the status of this "lecture," this reading, on all the presuppositions I ask you to take account of. In effect, I presuppose the reading of a brief and modest essay published under the title "*Geschlecht*: sexual difference, ontological difference." This essay, published and translated more than a year ago,<sup>1</sup> began some work I have taken up again only this year in the course of a seminar I am giving in Paris under the title "Philosophical Nationality and Nationalism." For lack of time I can reconstitute neither the introductory article entitled "*Geschlecht*" (it treats of the motif of sexual difference in a course almost contemporary with *Sein und Zeit*), nor all the developments that form, in my seminar on "Philosophical Nationality and Nationalism," the contextual landscape of the reflections I shall present to you today. Nevertheless I shall strive to make the presentation of these few reflections, still preliminary, as intelligible and independent of all these invisible contexts as possible. Another precaution, another call for your pardon and indulgence: for lack of time, I shall present only a part, or rather several fragments, at times a bit discontinuous, of the work I am following this year in the slow rhythm of a seminar engaged in a difficult reading, one that I would like to be as meticulous and careful as possible, of certain Heidegger texts, notably *Was heisst Denken?* and above all the lecture on *Trakt* in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*.

I want to thank John Leavey very warmly for the invaluable and decisive aid he gave me, once more, in the translation and the presentation of this unfinished work.

We are going to speak then of Heidegger.  
We are also going to speak of monstrosity.

We are going to speak of the word "*Geschlecht*." I am not going to translate it for the moment. Doubtless I shall translate it at no moment. But you know that, according to the contexts that come to determine this word, it can be translated by sex, race, species, genus, gender, stock, family, generation or genealogy, community. In the seminar on "Philosophical Nationality and Nationalism," before studying certain texts of Marx, Quinet, Michelet, Toqueville, Wittgenstein, Adorno, Hannah Arendt, we had encountered the word *Geschlecht* in a very sketchy reading of Fichte: ". . . *was an Geistigkeit und Freiheit dieser Geistigkeit glaubt, und die ewige Fortbildung dieser Geistigkeit durch Freiheit will, das, wo es auch geboren sei und in welcher Sprache es rede, ist unsers Geschlechts, es gehört uns an und es wird sich zu uns tun*" (seventh of the *Discourses to the German Nation [Reden an die Deutsche Nation]*).<sup>2</sup> The French translation neglects to translate the word *Geschlecht*, no doubt because the translation was done during or just after the war, I think, by S. Jankelevitch, and under conditions that made the word "race" particularly dangerous and moreover not pertinent for translating Fichte. But what does Fichte mean when he develops in this way what he calls then his fundamental principle (*Grundsatz*), to wit, that of a circle (*Kreis*) or an alliance (*Bund*), of an engagement (we had spoken much of this engagement in the seminar's preceding sessions) that constitutes precisely belonging to "our *Geschlecht*"? All those who believe in spirituality and the freedom of that spirit, all those who want the eternal and progressive formation of this spirituality through freedom (*die ewige Fortbildung*): and if Fichte is "nationalistic," in a sense rather enigmatic so that we can speak of it here very quickly, he is so as a *progressive*, a republican, and a cosmopolitist; one of the themes of the seminar I am currently working on concerns just the paradoxical but regular association of nationalism with a cosmopolitanism and with a humanism), they all are part of our *Geschlecht*, they all belong to us and have to do business with us, wherever they are born or whatever tongue [*langue*] they speak. So this *Geschlecht* is not determined by birth, native soil, or race, has nothing to do with the natural or even the linguistic, at least in the usual sense of this term, for we were able to recognize in Fichte a kind of claim of the idiom, of the idiom of the German idiom. Certain citizens, German by birth, remain strangers to this idiom of the idiom; certain non-Germans can attain it since, engaging themselves in this circle or this alliance of spiritual freedom and its infinite progress, they would belong to "our *Geschlecht*." The sole analytic and unimpeachable determination of "*Geschlecht*" in this context is the "we," the belonging to the "we" who are speaking at this moment, at the moment when Fichte addresses himself to this supposed but still

to be constituted community, a community that *stricto sensu* is neither political, nor racial, nor linguistic, but that can receive his allocution, his address, or his apostrophe (*Rede an . . .*), and can think with him, can say "we" in some language and from whatever birthplace. *Geschlecht* is an ensemble, a gathering together (one could say *Versammlung*), an organic community in a nonnatural but spiritual sense, that believes in the infinite progress of the spirit through freedom. So it is an infinite "we," a "we" that announces itself to itself from the infinity of a *τέλος* of freedom and spirituality, and that promises, engages, or allies itself according to the circle (*Kreis, Bund*) of this infinite will. How is "*Geschlecht*" to be translated under these conditions? Fichte uses a word that *already* has in his language a vast wealth of semantic determinations, and he speaks *German*. Despite what he says: anyone, in whatever language he or she speaks, "*ist unsers Geschlechts*," he says this in German, and this *Geschlecht* is an essential *Deutschheit*. Even if the word "*Geschlecht*" has rigorous content only from out of the "we" instituted by that very address, it also includes connotations indispensable to the minimal intelligibility of discourse, and these connotations belong irreducibly to German, to a German more essential than all the phenomena of empiric Germanness, but to some German. All these connoted senses are copresent in the use of the word "*Geschlecht*," they virtually appear in that use, but no sense is fully satisfying. How is one to translate? One can recoil before the risk and omit the word, as the French translator did. One can also judge the word so open and undetermined by the concept it designates, to wit, a "we" as spiritual freedom engaged toward the infinity of its progress, that the omission of this word does not lose much. The "we" finally comes down to the humanity of man, to the teleological essence of a humanity that is announced *par excellence* in *Deutschheit*. "*Menschengeschlecht*" is often said for "*genre humain*," "humankind," "human species," "human race." In the Heidegger text we shall be concerned with in a few minutes, the French translators sometimes speak of *genre humain* for *Geschlecht* and sometimes very simply of species.

For here the question is nothing less, I venture to say, than the problem of man, of man's humanity, and of humanism. But situated where language no longer lets itself be effaced. Already for Fichte, it is not the same thing to say the "humanity" of man and *Menschlichkeit*. When he says "*ist unsers Geschlechts*," he is thinking of *Menschlichkeit* and not of *Humanität* of Latin ancestry. The fourth *Discourse . . .* is by far consonant with those Heidegger texts to come on Latinness. Fichte distinguishes the dead language "cut off from the living root"<sup>3</sup> and the living language animated by an inspiring breath. When a language,

from its first phonemes, arises from the common and uninterrupted life of a people whose intuitions that language continues to espouse, the invasion of a foreign people changes nothing; the intruders can rise only up to this primordial language, unless one day they can assimilate the intuitions of the *Stammvolk*, of the people-stock for whom these intuitions are inseparable from the language: “. . . und so bilden nicht sie die Sprache, sondern die Sprache bildet sie,”<sup>4</sup> they do not form the language, the language forms them. Conversely, when a people adopts another language [*langue*] developed in the designation of suprasensible things, without however totally handing itself over to the influence of this foreign language, the sensible language [*langage*] is not altered by this event. In all peoples, Fichte notes, children learn that part of the language turned toward sensible things as if the signs for those things were arbitrary (*willkürlich*). The children must reconstitute the past development of the national language. But in this sensible sphere (*in diesem sinnlichen Umkreise*), each sign (*Zeichen*) can become altogether clear thanks to vision or the immediate contact with the designated or signified thing (*Bezeichnen*). Here I stress the sign (*Zeichen*), for in a moment we shall come to the sign as monstrosity. In this passage Fichte uses the word *Geschlecht* in the narrow sense of generation: “At most, the result of this would be that the first generation (*das erste Geschlecht*) of a people which thus changed its language would be compelled when adults/men (*Männer*) to go back to the years of childhood.”<sup>5</sup>

Here Fichte is bent on distinguishing *Humanität* and *Menschlichkeit*. For a German these words of Latin origin (*Humanität*, *Popularität*, *Liberalität*) resound as if they were void of sense, even if they appear sublime and make etymology something of interest [*rendent curieux d'étymologie*]. Besides, it's the same in the Latin or neo-Latin peoples who know nothing of the etymology and believe these words belong to their maternal tongue (*Muttersprache*). But say *Menschlichkeit* to a German, you would be understood without any other historical explanation (*ohne weitere historische Erklärung*). Besides, it is useless to state that a man is a man and to speak of the *Menschlichkeit* of a man about whom one knows very well that he is not an ape or a savage beast. A Roman would not have responded in that way, Fichte believes, because if, for the German, *Menschheit* or *Menschlichkeit* always remains a sensible concept (*ein sinnlicher Begriff*), for the Roman *humanitas* had become the symbol (*Sinnbilde*) of a suprasensible (*übersinnlichen*) idea. From their origins, the Germans, they too, have joined together concrete intuitions in an intellectual concept of humanity, always opposed to animality; and one would surely be wrong to see in the intuitive relation they preserve with *Menschheit* a sign of inferiority with respect

to the Romans. Nevertheless, the artificial introduction of words of foreign origin, singularly Roman, into the German tongue risks debasing the moral level of their own way of thinking (*ihre sittliche Denkart . . . herunterstimmen*). But there is concerning language [*langage*], image, and symbol (*Sinnbild*) an “ineradicable nature” of the “national imagination (*Nationaleinbildungskraft*).”<sup>6</sup>

This schematic recall seemed necessary to me for two reasons. On the one hand, in order to underline the difficulty of translating this sensible, critical, and sensitive [*névralgique*] word *Geschlecht*; on the other hand, in order to indicate its irreducible bond to the question of humanity versus animality, and of a humanity whose name, as the bond of the name to the “thing,” if one can say that, remains as problematic as that of the language in which the name is written. What does one say when one says *Menschheit*, *Humanitas*, *Humanität*, *mankind*, etc., or when one says *Geschlecht* or *Menschengeschlecht*? Is one saying the same thing? I also recall in passing the criticism Marx addressed in *The German Ideology* to the socialist Grun whose nationalism appealed, according to Marx's ironic expression, to a “human nationality” better represented by the Germans (socialists) than by the other socialists (French, American, or Belgian).

In the letter addressed in November 1945 to the Academic Rectorate of Albert-Ludwig University, Heidegger explains his own attitude during the Nazi period. He had thought, he said, that he would be able to distinguish between the national and nationalism, that is, between the national and a biologicist and racist ideology: “I thought that Hitler, after taking responsibility in 1933 for the whole people, would venture to extricate himself from the Party and its doctrine, and that the whole would meet on the terrain of a renovation and a gathering together with a view to a responsibility for the West. This conviction was an error that I recognized from the events of 30 June 1934. I, of course, had intervened in 1933 to say yes to the national and the social (and not to nationalism) and not to the intellectual and metaphysical grounds on which the biologism of the Party doctrine rested, because the social and the national, as I saw them, were not essentially tied to a biologicist and racist ideology.”<sup>7</sup> The condemnation of biologism and racism, as of the whole ideological discourse of Rosenberg, inspires numerous Heidegger texts, whether it be the Discourse of the Rectorate or the courses on Hölderlin and Nietzsche, whether it be also the question of technology, always put in perspective against the utilization of knowledge for technical and utilitarian ends, against the Nazis' professionalization and their making university knowledge profitable. I shall not reopen today the dossier of Heidegger's “politics.” I have done that in other semi-

nars, and we have today a rather large number of texts available for deciphering the classic and henceforth a bit academic dimensions of this problem. But all that I shall now attempt will keep an indirect relation to another, perhaps less visible, dimension of the same drama. Today, I shall begin then by speaking of that monstrosity I announced a few moments ago. This will be another detour through the question of man (*Mensch* or *homo*) and of the “we” that gives its enigmatic content to a *Geschlecht*.

Why “monster”? Not in order to make the thing pathetic, nor because we are always near some monstrous *Unheimlichkeit* when we are prowling around the nationalist thing and the thing named *Geschlecht*. What is *un monstre*? You know the polysemic gamut of this word, the uses one can make of it, for example concerning norms and forms, species and genus/gender: thus concerning *Geschlecht*. I shall begin by privileging here another course [*direction*]. It goes in the direction, the *sens*, of a less known sense, since in French *la monstre* (a changing of gender, sex, or *Geschlecht*) has the poetico-musical sense of a diagram that *shows* [*montre*] in a piece of music the number of verses and the number of syllables assigned to the poet. *Monstrer* is *montrer* (to show or demonstrate), and *une monstre* is *une montre* (a watch). I am already settled in the untranslatable idiom of my language, for I certainly intend to speak to you about translation. *La monstre*, then, prescribes the divisions of a line of verse for a melody. *Le monstre* or *la monstre* is what shows in order to warn or put on guard. In the past *la montre*, in French, was written *la monstre*.

I chose this melo-poetic example because the monster I am going to speak to you about comes from a well-known poem of Hölderlin, “Mnemosyne,” that Heidegger often contemplates, interrogates, and interprets. In the second of its three versions, the one that Heidegger cites in *Was heisst Denken?* one reads the famous stanza:

Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos,  
Schmerzlos sind wir, und haben fast  
Die Sprache in der Fremde verloren.<sup>8</sup>

Among the three French translations of this poem, there is the one by the translators of *Was heisst Denken?*, Aloys Becker and Gérard Granel. Translating Hölderlin in Heidegger, this translation uses the word *monstre* (for *Zeichen*), in a style that had first seemed to me a bit mannered and gallicizing, but which on reflection seemed to me in any case to give occasion for thought.

Nous sommes un monstre privé de sens  
Nous sommes hors douleur  
Et nous avons perdu  
Presque la langue à l'étranger.<sup>9</sup>

We are a “monster” void of sense  
We are outside sorrow  
And have nearly lost  
Our tongue in foreign lands.

Leaving aside the allusion to the tongue lost in foreign lands, which would lead me back too quickly to the seminar on nationality, I want to stress first the “we, ‘monster.’” We are a monster, and singular, a sign that shows and warns, but all the more singular since, showing, signifying, designating, this sign is void of sense (*deutungslos*). It says itself void of sense, simply and doubly monster, this “we”: we are sign—showing, informing, warning, pointing as sign toward, but in truth toward nothing, a sign out of the way [*à l'écart*], in a gapped relation to the sign [*en écart par rapport au signe*], display [*montre*] that deviates from the display or monstration, a monster that shows [*montre*] nothing. This gap of the sign to itself and to its so-called normal function, isn't it already a monstrosity of monstrosity [*monstrosité*], a monstrosity of monstration? And that is we, we inasmuch as we have nearly lost our tongue in foreign lands, perhaps in a translation. But this we, the monster, is it man?

The translation of *Zeichen* by *monstre* has a triple virtue. It recalls a motif at work ever since *Sein und Zeit*: the bond between *Zeichen* and *zeigen* or *Aufzeigung*, between the sign and monstration. Paragraph 17 (*Verweisung und Zeichen*) analyzed the *Zeigen eines Zeichens*, the showing of the sign, and lightly touches in passing the question of the fetish. In *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, *Zeichen* and *Zeigen* are linked with *Sagen*, more precisely with the High German idiom *Sagan*: “‘Sagan’ heisst: *zeigen, erscheinen-, sehen- und hören-lassen*.”<sup>10</sup> Farther on: “To name the said (*die Sage*) we employ an old word, well warranted but no longer in use: *die Zeige (la monstre)*”<sup>11</sup> (word underlined by Heidegger who has moreover just cited Trakl, to whom we shall return in a few minutes). The second virtue of the French translation by “*monstre*” has value only in the Latin idiom, since the translation stresses this gap concerning the normality of the sign, of a sign that for once is not what it should be, shows or signifies nothing, shows the *pas de sens*, no-sense, and announces the loss of the tongue. The third virtue of this translation poses

the question of man. I omit here a long development that seems necessary to me on what deeply binds a certain humanism, a certain nationalism, and a certain Europocentric universalism, and I hastily move toward the interpretation of "Mnemosyne" by Heidegger. The "we" of "*Ein Zeichen sind wir*," is it indeed a "we men"? Numerous indications would give one the thought that the response of the poem remains rather ambiguous. If "we" were "we men," this humanity would be determined in a way justly rather monstrous, apart from the norm, and notably from the humanist norm. But Heidegger's interpretation that prepares and gives access to this Hölderlin citation says something about man, and then too about *Geschlecht*, about the *Geschlecht* and the word "*Geschlecht*" that still awaits us in the text on Trakl, in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*.

The hand will be the (monstrous) sign [*le monstre*], the proper of man as (monstrous) sign, in the sense of *Zeichen*. "The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes—and not just things: the hand extends itself, and receives its own welcome in the hand of the other. The hand keeps. The hand carries. The hand designs and signs, presumably because man is a (monstrous) sign (*Die Hand zeichnet, vermutlich weil der Mensch ein Zeichen ist*)."<sup>12</sup>

This seminar of 1951–52 is later than the "Letter on Humanism" that withdraws the question of being from the metaphysical or ontotheological horizon of classic humanism: *Dasein* is not the *homo* of this humanism. So we are not going to suspect Heidegger of simply falling back into that humanism there. On the other hand, the date and the thematic of this passage accord it to that thought of the gift, of giving, and of the *es gibt* that overflows without reversing the anterior formation of the question of the sense of Being.

(In order to situate more precisely what one could call here the thought of the hand, but just as well the hand of thought, of a thought of the human *Geschlecht*, of a thought claiming to be nonmetaphysical, let us remark that this develops itself in one moment of the seminar [Recapitulations and Transitions from the First to the Second Hour]<sup>13</sup> that repeats the question of the teaching of thought, in particular in the university, as the place of sciences and technics. It is in this passage that I cut out, so to speak, the form and the passage of the hand: the hand of Heidegger. The issue of *L'Herne* in which I published "*Geschlecht I*" bore on its cover a photograph of Heidegger showing him, a studied and significant choice, holding his pen with both hands above a manuscript. Even if he never used it, Nietzsche was the first thinker of the West to have a typewriter, whose photograph we know. Heidegger himself could write only with the pen, with the hand of a craftsman and

not a mechanic, as the text in which we are going to become interested prescribes. Since then I have studied all the published photographs of Heidegger, especially in an album bought at Freiburg when I had given a lecture there on Heidegger in 1979. The play and the theater of hands in that album would merit a whole seminar. If I did not forgo that, I would stress the deliberately craftsman-like staging of the hand play, of the monstration and demonstration that is exhibited there, whether it be a matter of the handling [*maintenance*] of the pen, of the maneuver of the cane that shows rather than supports, or of the water bucket near the fountain. The demonstration of hands is as gripping in the accompaniment of the discourse. On the cover of the catalog, the only thing that overflows the frame, that of the window but also of the photo, is Heidegger's hand.)

The hand is monstrosity [*monstrosité*], the proper of man as the being of monstration. This distinguishes him from every other *Geschlecht*, and above all from the ape.

The hand cannot be spoken about without speaking of technics.

Heidegger just recalled that the problem of university teaching resulted from the fact that the sciences belong to the essence of technics: not to technics, but to the essence of technics. Technics remains plunged in a fog for which no one is responsible, neither science, nor the scientists, nor man in general. Simply what gives rise the most to thinking (*das Bedenklichste*) is that *we* do not yet think. Who, we? All of us, Heidegger specifies, including him who speaks here and even him the very first (*der Sprecher mit einbegriffen, er sogar zuerst*). To be the first among those who do not yet think—is that to think more or less the "not yet" of what gives rise the most to thinking, to wit, that we do not yet think? The first, here, the one who speaks and shows himself in speaking thus, designating himself in the third person, *der Sprecher*, is he the first because he already thinks that we do not yet think and already says so? Or indeed is he the first not yet to think, then the last to think already that we do not yet think, which would not nonetheless prevent him from speaking in order to be the first to say this? I leave these questions that would merit long developments on the auto-situation of this speaking that claims to teach while speaking of teaching and claims to think what is learning and first of all learning to think. "That is why," Heidegger continues, "we are here attempting to learn thinking (*Darum versuchen wir hier, das Denken zu lernen*)."<sup>14</sup> But what is learning, in French *apprendre*? The response, untranslatable in its literalness, passes through a very subtle craft work, a work of the hand and of the pen among the words *entsprechen, Entsprechung, zusprechen, Zuspruch*. Let me, instead of translating, roughly summarize: to learn,

*apprendre*, is to relate what we are doing to a correspondence (*Entsprechung*) in us with the essential (*wesenhaft*). To illustrate this accord with the essence, here is the traditional example of philosophical didactics, that of the joiner, of the apprentice joiner. Heidegger chooses the word *Schreiner* rather than *Tischler*, for he intends to speak of an apprentice joiner (*Schreinerlehrling*) who works on a cabinet (*Schrein*). Now he will say later that "Perhaps thinking, too, is just something like building a cabinet (*wie das Bauen an einem Schrein*)."<sup>15</sup> The apprentice cabinetmaker learns not only to use tools, not only to familiarize himself with the use, the utility, the toolness [*outilité*] of things for making. If he is a "true cabinetmaker (*ein echter Schreiner*)," he inclines [*se porte*] or relates himself to the different ways of the wood itself, accords himself with the forms that sleep in the wood as it enters man's dwelling (*in das Wohnen des Menschen*). The true joiner accords himself with the hidden plenitude of the wood's essence, and not with the tool and the use value. But with the hidden plenitude insofar as it enters the inhabited place (I stress here this value of *place* or *site* for reasons that will appear later), and inhabited by *man*. There is no craft, *métier*, of the joiner without this correspondence between the essence of the wood and the essence of man as the being who inhabits. In German *métier* is said *Handwerk*, work of the hand, handiwork, handling, if not maneuver. When the French must translate *Handwerk* by *métier*, perhaps that is legitimate and cannot be avoided, but it is a bad maneuver, a poor craft of translation, because in it the hand is lost. And reintroduced in that translation is what Heidegger wants to avoid, the service rendered, utility, the office, the *ministerium*, from which, I believe, the word *métier* comes. *Handwerk*, the noble *métier*, is a manual *métier* that is not ordered, like any other profession, to public use or interest or in pursuit of profit. This noble *métier*, as *Handwerk*, will also be that of the thinker or the teacher who teaches thinking (the teacher is not necessarily the professor of philosophy). Without this accord with the essence of the wood, itself accorded to man's dwelling, the activity would be empty. It would remain just activity (*Beschäftigung*) oriented by trade (*Geschäft*), commerce, and the taste for profit. Implicit, the hierarchizing and the evaluation are no less clear: on the one hand, but also above, towards the best, handiwork (*Handwerk*) guided by the essence of the human dwelling, by the wood of the hut [*la hûte*] rather than by the metal or glass of the cities; on the other hand, but also below, the activity that cuts the hand off from the essential, useful activity, utilitarianism guided by capital. To be sure, as Heidegger recognizes, the inauthentic can always contaminate the authentic, the authentic cabinetmaker can become a furniture dealer for "large stores" (supermarkets), the artisan

of the dwelling or habitat can become the international corporation named, I think, "Habitat." The hand is in danger. Always: "All handiwork (*Handwerk*), all human dealings (*Handeln*) are constantly in that danger. The writing of poetry (*Das Dichten*) is no more exempt from it than is thinking (*das Denken*)."<sup>16</sup> The analogy is double: between *Dichten* and *Denken* on the one hand, but also, on the other, between the two, poetry and thought, and the authentic handiwork (*Handwerk*). To think is a handiwork, says Heidegger explicitly. He says it without any dodge and without even that "perhaps (*vielleicht*)" that had moderated the analogy of thought with the manufacture of the cabinet that is "perhaps" like thought. Here, without analogy and without "perhaps," Heidegger declares: "At any rate, it [thinking, *das Denken*] is a handiwork (*Es ist jedenfalls ein Hand-Werk*, a word of the hand, in two words)."<sup>17</sup>

This does not mean that one is thinking *with* one's hands, as is said in English and French that one speaks *with* one's hands when one's discourse is accompanied with voluble gestures, or that one thinks *with* one's feet, *avec ses pieds*, when one is, as French has it, *bête comme ses pieds*, too stupid for words. What does Heidegger mean then, and why does he choose here the hand, whereas elsewhere he more readily accords thought to light or to *Lichtung*, one would say to the eye, or else to hearing and the voice?

Three remarks to prepare a response here.

(1) I have chosen this text in order to introduce a reading of *Geschlecht*. In this text Heidegger in effect binds thinking, and not only philosophy, to a thought or to a situation of the body (*Leib*), the body of man and of human being (*Menschheit*). That will permit us to glimpse a dimension of *Geschlecht* as sex or sexual difference apropos what is said or not said [*tu*] about the hand. Thinking is not cerebral or disincarnate; the relation to the essence of being is a certain *manner* of *Dasein* as *Leib*. (I take the liberty to refer to what I said on this subject in the first article on *Geschlecht*.)

(2) Heidegger privileges the hand when, speaking of the relations between thought and the craft of teaching, he distinguishes between the current profession (an activity, *Beschäftigung*, oriented by useful service [*service utile*] and the pursuit of profit, *Geschäft*), and on the other hand, the authentic *Hand-Werk*. Now to define the *Hand-Werk*, which is not a profession, one must think *Werk*, work, but also *Hand* and *Handeln* that cannot be translated by "dealings" or "*agir*." The hand must be thought. But the hand cannot be thought as a thing, a being, even less an object. The hand thinks before being thought; it is thought, a thought, thinking [*la pensée*].

(3) My third remark will be more narrowly tied to a classic treatment of Heidegger's "politics" in the national-socialist context. In all his self-justifications after the war, Heidegger presents his discourse on the essence of technics as a protest, an act of *resistance* barely disguised *against*: (a) the professionalization of university studies to which the Nazis and their official ideologues have surrendered themselves. Heidegger recalls this concerning his *Rectorate Discourse* that in effect is raised against the professionalization that is also a technologization of studies. (b) the submission of the national-socialist philosophy to the dominion and imperatives of technical productivity. The meditation on the authentic *Hand-Werk* also has the sense of an artisanal protest against the hand's effacement or debasement in the industrial automation of modern mechanization. This strategy has, one suspects, equivocal effects: it opens up to an archaistic reaction toward the rustic artisan class and denounces business or capital, notions whose associations then are well known. In addition, with the division of labor, what is called "intellectual work" is what implicitly finds itself thus discredited.

Having said this, I want to underscore again the idiomaticity in what Heidegger says to us about the hand: "*Mit der Hand hat es eine eigene Bewandnis.*"<sup>18</sup> With the hand one is dealing with a thing entirely particular, one's own, proper, singular. *Une chose à part* (a thing apart), as the French translation says while running the risk of letting one think of a separate thing, of a separate substance, as Descartes said of the hand that it was a part of the body, to be sure, but was endowed with such independence that it could also be considered as a complete substance apart and almost separable. Heidegger does not say in this sense that the hand is a thing apart. In that the hand has any proper or particular of its own (*eigene*), it is not a part of the organic body, as the common representation (*gewöhnliche Vorstellung*) claims and against which Heidegger invites us to think.

The hand's being (*das Wesen der Hand*) does not let itself be determined as a bodily organ of gripping (*als ein leibliches Greiforgan*). It is not an organic part of the body intended [*destinée*] for grasping, taking hold [*prendre*], indeed for scratching, let us add even for catching on [*prendre*], comprehending, conceiving, if one passes from *Greif* to *begreifen* and to *Begriff*. Heidegger could not not let the thing say itself, and one can follow here, I have tried to do it elsewhere, the whole problematic of the philosophical "metaphor," in particular in Hegel, who presents the *Begriff* as the intellectual or intelligible structure "relieving" (*aufhebend*) the sensible act of grasping, *begreifen*, of comprehending by taking hold of, by laying one's hands on, mastering and manipulating. If

there is a thought of the hand or a hand of thought, as Heidegger gives us to think, it is not of the order of conceptual grasping. Rather this thought of the hand belongs to the essence of the *gift*, of a giving that would give, if this is possible, without taking hold of anything. If the hand is also, no one can deny this, an organ for gripping (*Greiforgan*), that is not its essence, is not the hand's essence in the human being. This critique of organicism and biologism also has the political destination I spoke of a moment ago. But does that suffice to justify this critique?

Here in effect occurs a sentence that at bottom seems to me Heidegger's most significant, symptomatic, and seriously dogmatic. Dogmatic also means metaphysical, coming under one of those "common representations" that risk compromising the whole force and necessity of the discourse right here. This sentence in sum comes down to distinguishing the human *Geschlecht*, our *Geschlecht*, and the animal *Geschlecht*, called "animal." I think, and I have often thought I must underscore this, that the manner, lateral or central, in which a thinker or scientist spoke of the said "animalness" constituted a decisive symptom concerning the essential axiomatic of the given discourse. No more than anybody else, classic or modern, does Heidegger seem to me here to "escape this rule when he writes: "Apes, for example [my emphasis, J.D.], have organs that can grasp, but they have no hand (*Greiforgane besitzt z. B. der Affe, aber er hat keine Hand*)."<sup>19</sup>

Dogmatic in its form, this traditional statement presupposes an empiric or positive knowledge whose titles, proofs, and signs are never shown [*montrés*]. Like most of those who, as philosophers or persons of good sense, speak of animality, Heidegger takes no account of a certain "zoological knowledge" that accumulates, is differentiated, and becomes more refined concerning what is brought together under this so general and confused word animality. He does not criticize it and does not even examine the sorts of presuppositions, metaphysical or otherwise, it can harbor. This nonknowing raised to a tranquil knowing, then exhibited as essential proposition about the essence of an ape's prehensile organs, an ape that would have no hand, this is not only, in its form, a kind of empirico-dogmatic ἀπαξ λεγόμενον misled or misleading in the middle of a discourse keeping itself to the height of the most demanding thought, beyond philosophy and science. In its very content, this proposition marks the text's essential scene, marks it with a humanism that wanted certainly to be nonmetaphysical—Heidegger underscores this in the following paragraph—but with a humanism that, between a human *Geschlecht* one wants to withdraw from the biologicistic determination (for the reasons I just stated) and an animality one encloses in its organico-



biologic programs, inscribes not *some* differences but an absolute oppositional limit. Elsewhere I have tried to show that, as every opposition does, this absolute oppositional limit effaces the differences and leads back, following the most resistant metaphysico-dialectic tradition, to the homogeneous. What Heidegger says of the ape without hand—and then, as we are going to see, without thinking, language, gift—is not only dogmatic in its form because Heidegger knows nothing about this and wants to know nothing, has no doubt studied neither the zoologists (even were it to criticize them)<sup>20</sup> nor the apes in the Black Forest. It is serious because what he says traces a system of limits within which everything he says of man's hand takes on sense and value. Since such a delimitation is problematic, the name of man, his *Geschlecht*, becomes problematic itself. For it names what has the hand, and so thinking, speech or language, and openness to the gift.

Man's hand then will be a thing apart not as separable organ but because it is different, dissimilar (*verschieden*) from all prehensile organs (paws, claws, talons); man's hand is far from these in an infinite way (*unendlich*) through the abyss of its being (*durch einen Abgrund des Wesens*). This abyss is speech and thought. "Only a being who can speak, that is, think, can have the hand and can be handy (*in der Handhabung*) in achieving works of handicraft (*Nur ein Wesen, das spricht, d. h. denkt, kann die Hand haben und in der Handhabung Werke der Hand vollbringen*)." Man's hand is thought ever since thought, but thought is thought ever since speaking or language. That is the order Heidegger opposes to metaphysics: "Only when man speaks, does he think—not the other way around, as metaphysics still believes (*Doch nur insofern der Mensch spricht, denkt er; nicht umgekehrt, wie die Metaphysik es noch meint*)."<sup>21</sup>

The essential moment of this meditation opens onto what I shall call the hand's double *vocation*. I use the word vocation to recall that, in its destination (*Bestimmung*), the hand holds on to speaking. This vocation is double, but gathered together or crossed in the same hand: to show [*montrer*] or point out (*zeigen, Zeichen*) and to give or give itself, in a word the *monstrality* [*monstrosité*] of the gift or of what gives itself.

But the work of the hand (*das Werk der Hand*) is richer than we commonly imagine [*meinen*: we believe, have the opinion]. The hand does not only grasp and catch (*greift und fängt nicht nur*), or push and pull. The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes [*reicht und empfängt*: the German consonances must be heard: *greift, fängt/reicht, empfängt*—and not just things: the hand extends itself, and receives its own welcome in the hand of the other. The hand holds (*hält*). The hand carries (*trägt*).<sup>22</sup>

This passage from the transitive gift, if such can be said, to the gift of what gives *itself*, which gives itself as being-able-to-give, which gives the gift, this passage from the hand that gives something to the hand that gives *itself* is evidently decisive. We find again a passage of the same type or the same structure in the following sentence: not only does man's hand point out and show, but man is himself a sign, a monstrous sign [*un monstre*], what begins the citation and the interpretation of "Mnemosyne," on the following page.

The hand designs and signs (*zeichnet*), presumably because man is a (monstrous) sign (*ein Zeichen ist*). Two hands fold into one [*faltensich*: also, join together], a gesture meant to carry man into the great simplicity [*Einfalt*; I am not sure of comprehending this sentence that plays on *sich falten* and *Einfalt*; whether it be a matter of prayer or of more common gestures, what matters above all is that the hands can touch each other as such, in auto-affection, even at the touch of the other's hand in the gift of the hand; this implies that the hands can also *show themselves*]. The hand is all this, and this is the true hand work (*das eigentliche Hand-Werk*). Everything is rooted here that is commonly known as handicraft (*Handwerk*), and commonly we go no further. But the hand's gestures [*Gebärden*: a word worked over very much by Heidegger in other texts too] run everywhere through language [or through the tongue], in their most perfect purity precisely when man speaks by being silent. And only when man speaks, does he think—not the other way around, as metaphysics still believes. Every motion of the hand in every one of its works carries itself (*sich trägt*) through the element of thinking, every bearing of the hand bears itself (*gebärdet sich*) in that element. All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking. Therefore, thinking (*das Denken*) itself is man's simplest, and for that reason hardest, *Hand-Werk*, if it would be properly accomplished (*eigens*).<sup>23</sup>

The nerve of the argument seems to me reducible to the assured opposition of *giving* and *taking*: man's hand *gives and gives itself, gives and is given*, like thought or like what gives itself to be thought and what we do not yet think, whereas the organ of the ape or of man as a simple animal, indeed as an *animal rationale*, can only *take hold of, grasp, lay hands on the thing*. The organ can *only* take hold of and manipulate the thing insofar as, in any case, it does not have to deal with the thing *as such*, does not let the thing be what it is in its essence. The organ has no access to the essence of the being [*étant*] *as such* (see *Gesamtausgabe* 29/30, p. 290). For lack of time I must refer to a seminar already of long standing in which we had been able to problematize this opposition between

giving and taking, or two ways of *taking*, human and animal; only the human would be granted the possibility of giving. Nothing is less assured than the distinction between *giving* and *taking*, at once in the Indo-European languages we speak (here I am referring to a famous text of Benveniste, "Gift and Exchange in the Indo-European Vocabulary," in *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. M. E. Meek [Coral Gables: Univ. of Miami Press, 1971]) and in the experience of an economy—symbolic or imaginary, conscious or unconscious, all these values remaining precisely to be reelaborated from the precariousness of that opposition of the gift and of the grip, of the gift that presents and the gift that grips or holds or takes back, of the gift that does good and of the gift that does bad, of the present [*cadeau*] and of the poison (*gift/Gift* or *φάρμακον*, etc.).

For lack of time I shall not analyze any more the immense role the hand or the word *Hand* more or less directly plays in the whole Heideggerian conceptuality since *Sein und Zeit*, notably in the determination of presence according to the mode of *Vorhandenheit* or *Zuhandenheit*. The first is translated more or less well in French by "*étant subsistant*" and better in English by "presence-at-hand"; the second by "*être disponible*," as "being available" like a tool or implement, and better, since the English can keep the hand, by "ready-to-hand," "readiness-to-hand." *Dasein* is neither *vorhanden* nor *zuhanden*. Its mode of presence is otherwise, but it must indeed have the hand in order to relate itself to the other modes of presence.

The question posed by *Sein und Zeit* (§ 15) gathers together the greatest force of its economy in the German idiom and in that idiom in the Heideggerian idiom: is or is not *Vorhandenheit* founded (*fundiert*) on *Zuhandenheit*? Literally: what is the relation to the hand that founds the other in the relation of *Dasein* to the Being of beings that it is not (*Vorhandensein* and *Zuhandensein*)? What hand founds the other? The hand that is related to the thing as maneuverable tool or the hand as relation to the thing as subsisting and independent object? Here I cannot reconstitute either the stake of this question decisive for the whole strategy of *Sein und Zeit*, or Heidegger's original course for deconstructing the classical order of foundation (the end of § 15). But as this whole passage is also an analysis of *Handeln*, of the action or the practice as a gesture of the hand in its relation to sight, and thus a placement in a new perspective of what is called the *πρόξις/θεωρία* opposition, let us recall that for Heidegger "practical" behavior" is not "athoretical."<sup>24</sup> And I am only going to cite some lines in order to draw out two guiding threads:

The Greeks had an appropriate term for "Things": *πράγματα*—that is to say, that which one has to do with (*zu tun*) in one's concerned dealings (*im besorgenden Umgang*) (*πρόξις*). But ontologically, the specifically "pragmatic" character of the *πράγματα* is just what the Greeks left in obscurity (*im Dunkeln*) [in sum the Greeks were beginning to leave *Zuhandenheit* of the tool in obscurity to the benefit of *Vorhandenheit* of the subsisting object: one could say that they were inaugurating the whole classical ontology while leaving a hand in the dark, while leaving a hand to bring umbrage to the other, while substituting, in a violent hierarchizing, one hand experience for another]; they thought of these "proximally" as "mere Things (*blasse Dinge*)."<sup>25</sup> We call those entities which we encounter in concern (*im Besorgen*) "equipment (*Zeug*)."<sup>25</sup> In our dealings [in common life, *im Umgang*, in daily and social surroundings] we come across equipment for writing, sewing, working, transportation, measurement [I cite a very inadequate translation for *Schreibzeug*, *Nähzeug*, *Werk-*, *Fahr-*, *Messzeug*]. The kind of Being which equipment (*Zeug*) possesses must be exhibited. The clue for doing this lies in our first defining [*Umgrenzung*: delimiting] what makes an item of equipment—namely, its equipmentality (*Zeughaftigkeit*).<sup>25</sup>

This mode of being will be precisely *Zuhandenheit* (*readiness-to-hand*). And Heidegger begins, in order to speak about it in the following paragraph, by taking up the examples that he has in a way near at hand: the writing desk (*Schreibzeug*), pen (*Feder*), ink (*Tinte*), paper (*Papier*), what is happily called *le sous-main* in French, the blotting pad (*Unterlage*), the table, lamp, furniture, and, his eyes looking up a bit above his hands writing, the windows, doors, the room.

Here now are the two threads I would like to draw, by hand, from this text, in order to make them guiding threads, clues, or in order to sew and write also a bit in my manner.

(1) The first concerns *πρόξις* and *πράγματα*. I had already written all this when John Sallis, whom I want to thank for this, drew my attention to a much later passage of Heidegger. It punctuates in a gripping way this long maneuver that makes of the *path of thinking* and of the question of the sense of Being a long and continuous meditation of/on the hand. Heidegger always says of thought that it is a path, on the way (*Unterwegs*); but on the way, on the march, the thinker is unceasingly occupied with a thought of the hand. Long after *Sein und Zeit*, which does not speak *thematically* of the hand while analyzing *Vorhanden-* and *Zuhandenheit*, but ten years before *Was heisst Denken?* which thematizes these, there is that seminar on Parmenides that, in 1942–43, takes up

again the meditation on *πράγμα* and *πράξις*. Although the German word *Handlung* is not the literal translation of *πράγμα*, it just touches, if one comprehends well, it meets “the primordially essential being of *πράγμα* (*das ursprünglich wesentliche Wesen von πράγμα*),” since these *πράγματα* present themselves, as “*Vorhandenen*” and “*Zuhandenen*,” in the domain of the hand (*im Bereich der “Hand”*).<sup>26</sup> All the motifs of *Was heisst Denken?* are already in place. Only the being that, like man, “has” speech (*Wort*, *μῦθος*, *λόγος*) can and must have the hand thanks to which prayer can occur, but also murder, the salute or wave of the hand, and thanks, the oath and the sign (*Wink*), *Handwerk* in general. I underscore for reasons that will appear later the allusion to *Handschlag* (the handshake or what is called “shaking on it” with the hand [*dans la main*]) that “grounds,” Heidegger says, the alliance, the accord, the engagement (*Bund*). The hand comes to its essence (*west*) only in the movement of truth, in the double movement of what hides and causes to go out of its reserve (*Verbergung/Entbergung*). Moreover, the whole seminar is devoted to the history of truth (*ἀλήθεια*, *λήθη*, *λαθόν*, *λαθές*). When he says already, in this same passage, that the animal has no hand, that a hand can never upsurge out of a paw or claws, but only from speech, Heidegger specifies that “man ‘has’ no hands,” but that *the* “hand occupies, in order to have in hand, man’s essence (*Der Mensch ‘hat’ nicht Hände, sondern die Hand hat das Wesen des Menschen inne*).”<sup>27</sup>

(2) The second thread leads back to writing. If man’s hand is what it is since speech or the word (*das Wort*), the most immediate, the most primordial manifestation of this origin will be the hand’s gesture for making the word manifest, to wit, handwriting, manuscripture (*Hand-schrift*), that shows [*montre*] and inscribes the word for the gaze. “The word as drawn [or inscribed: *ingezeichnete*] and such that it shows itself thus to the gaze (*und so dem Blick sich zeigende*) is the written word, that is, writing (*d. h. die Schrift*). But the word as writing is handwriting (*Das Wort als die Schrift aber ist die Handschrift*).” Instead of handwriting, let us say rather manuscripture, for, don’t forget, the writing of the typewriter against which Heidegger is going to raise an implacable indictment is also a handwriting. In the brief “‘history’ of the art of writing (*‘Geschichte’ der Art des Schreibens*)” he sketches in a paragraph, Heidegger sees the fundamental motif of a “destruction of the word” or of speech (*Zerstörung des Wortes*). Typographic mechanization destroys this unity of the word, this integral identity, this proper integrity of the spoken word that writing manuscripts, at once because it appears closer to the voice or body proper and because it ties together the letters, conserves and gathers together. I stress this motif of gathering together for reasons that will also appear in a moment. The typewriter tends to

destroy the word: the typewriter “tears (*entreisst*) writing from the essential domain of the hand, that is, of the word,” of speech. The “typed” word is only a copy (*Abschrift*), and Heidegger recalls that first moment of the typewriter when a typed letter offended the rules of etiquette. Today, the manuscripted letter is what seems culpable: it slows down reading and seems outmoded. The manuscripted letter obstructs what Heidegger considers a veritable degradation of the word by the machine. The machine “degrades (*degradiert*)” the word or the speech it reduces to a simple means of transport (*Verkehrsmittel*), to the instrument of commerce and communication. Furthermore, the machine offers the advantage, for those who wish for this degradation, of dissimulating manuscripted writing and “character.” “In typewriting, all men resemble one another,” concludes Heidegger.<sup>28</sup>

The paths according to which the denunciation of the typewriter increased and specified itself would have to be followed closely (I cannot do that here).<sup>29</sup> Finally, the typewriter would dissimulate the very essence of the writing gesture and of writing (“*Die Schreibmaschine verhüllt das Wesen des Schreibens und der Schrift*”). This dissimulation or this veiling is also a movement of withdrawal or subtraction (the words *entziehen*, *Entzug* often recur in this passage). And if in this withdrawal [*retrait*] the typewriter becomes “*zeichenlos*,” without sign, un-signifying, a-signifying,<sup>30</sup> that is because it loses the hand; in any case it threatens what in the hand holds speech safe [*garde la parole*] or holds safe for speech the relation of Being to man and of man to beings. “The hand handles”: *Die Hand handelt*. The essential co-belonging (*Wesenszusammengehörigkeit*) of the hand and speech, man’s essential distinction, manifests itself in this, that the hand manifests, precisely, what is hidden (*die Hand Verborgenes entbirgt*). And the hand does this precisely, in its relation to speaking, by showing [*montrant*] and by writing, by pointing to, signs that show, or rather by giving to these signs or these “*monstres*” forms called writing (“*sie zeigt und zeigend zeichnet und zeichnend die zeigenden Zeichen zu Gebilden bildet. Diese Gebilde heissen nach dem ‘Verbum’ γράφειν die γράμματα*”). This implies that, as Heidegger expressly says, writing in its essential source is manuscripture (“*Die Schrift ist in ihrer Wesensherkunft die Hand-schrift*”). And I shall add—what Heidegger does not say but which seems to me even more decisive—manuscripture *immediately* bound to speech, that is, more probably the *system of phonetic writing*, unless what gathers together *Wort*, *zeigen*, and *Zeichen* does not always necessarily pass through the voice and unless the speech Heidegger speaks of here is essentially distinct from all *θωπή*. The distinction would be strange enough to warrant emphasizing; now Heidegger does not breathe a word of this. He insists, on the

contrary, on the essential and primordial co-belonging of *Sein*, *Wort*, λέγειν, λόγος, *Lese*, *Schrift* as *Hand-schrift*. Moreover, this co-belonging that gathers them together stems from the movement of the very gathering together Heidegger always reads, here as elsewhere, in λέγειν and *lesen* (“das Lesen”, d. h. *Sammeln* . . .).<sup>31</sup> This motif of gathering together (*Versammlung*) governs the meditation of *Geschlecht* in the text on Trakl that I shall evoke very briefly in a few minutes. Here, the protest against the typewriter also belongs—this is a matter of course—to an interpretation of technology [*technique*], to an interpretation of politics starting from technology. Just as *Was heisst Denken?* will name Marx a few pages after treating of the hand, so this seminar of 1942–43 situates Lenin and “Leninism” (the name Stalin gave to this metaphysics). Heidegger recalls the word of Lenin: “Bolshevism is the power of the Soviet + electrification.”<sup>32</sup> When he was writing that, Germany was just entering into war with Russia and with the United States (it is not spared either in this seminar), but there was not yet the electric typewriter.

This apparently positive evaluation of handwriting does not exclude, on the contrary, a devaluation of writing in general. This devaluation takes on sense within this general interpretation of the art of writing as the increasing destruction of the word or of speech. The typewriter is only a modern aggravation of the evil. This evil comes not only through writing but also through literature. Just before the citation of “Mnemosyne,” *Was heisst Denken?* advances two trenchant affirmations: (1) Socrates is “the purest thinker of the West. This is why he wrote nothing (*der reinste Denker des Abendlandes. Deshalb hat er nichts geschrieben*).”<sup>33</sup> He knew how to hold himself in the wind and in the withdrawing movement of what gives itself to be thought (*in den Zugwind dieses Zuges*). In another passage, which also treats of this withdrawal (*Zug des Entziehens*), Heidegger again distinguishes man from animal, this time from the migratory birds. In the very first pages of *Was heisst Denken?* before citing “Mnemosyne” for the first time, he writes: “Once we are drawn into the withdrawal (*Zug des Entziehens*), we are—but completely otherwise than the migratory birds—drawing toward what draws, attracts us by its withdrawal.”<sup>34</sup> The choice of example here (an example omitted in the English translation) stems from the German idiom: “migratory birds” is said *Zugvögel* in German. We, men, we are in the drawing (*trait, Zug*) of this withdrawal [*retrait*], *nur ganz anders als die Zugvögel*. (2) Second trenchant affirmation: thought declines the moment one begins to write, *on coming out of* [au sortir de] thought, *in escaping* [en sortant de] thought in order to take shelter

from it, as from the wind. This is the moment when thought entered literature (*Das Denken ging in die Literatur ein*).<sup>35</sup> Sheltered from thought, this entry into writing and literature (in the broad sense of this word) would have decided the destiny of Western science as much *qua doctrina* of the Middle Ages (teaching, discipline, *Lehre*) as *qua* the science of Modern Times. This is naturally a matter of what constructs the dominant concept of discipline, teaching, and the university. So one sees being organized around the hand and speech, with a very strong coherence, all the traits whose incessant recurrence I have elsewhere recalled under the name logocentrism. Whatever the lateral or marginal motifs that simultaneously work (over) logocentrism, I would like to suggest that it dominates a certain and very continuous discourse of Heidegger, and does so from the repetition of the question of Being’s sense, the destruction of classic ontology, the existential analytic redistributing the (existential and categorial) relations among *Dasein*, *Vorhandensein*, and *Zuhandensein*.

The economy imposed on me for this discourse prohibits me from going beyond this first reference marking [*repérage*] in the Heideggerian interpretation of the hand. In order to bind better, in a more differentiated coherence, what I am saying here to what I said elsewhere about Heidegger, notably in “*Ousia and Grammé*,” one would have to reread a certain page of “The Anaximander Fragment,” that is, of a text that also names “Mnemosyne” and in the context of which “*Ousia and Grammé*” can be unfolded. This page recalls that in *χρεών*, which is generally translated by “necessity,” there speaks ἡ χεῖρ, the hand: “*χρῶμαι* means: I handle, I bring my hand to something (*ich be-handle etwas*).”<sup>36</sup> The rest of the paragraph, too difficult to translate since it handles so closely the German idiom (*in die Hand geben, einhändigen, aushändigen*: to hand back to its rightful owner, then to hand over, to give up, *überlassen*), withdraws the participle *χρεών* from the values of constraint and obligation (*Zwang, Müssen*) and at the same time withdraws from these values the word *Brauch* by which Heidegger proposes to translate τὸ *χρεών* and which means, in everyday German, “need.” So it is not necessary to think the hand starting from “need.” In French *der Brauch* is translated by *le maintien*, which, besides indeed some drawbacks or false senses, exploits the chance of a double allusion: to the hand and to the now, the *maintenant*, that preoccupy the specific concern of this text. If *Brauchen* translates well, as Heidegger says, the *χρεών* that permits thinking the present in its presence (*das Anwesende in seinem Anwesen*), if it names a trace (*Spur*) that disappears in the history of Being as that history unfolds itself as Western metaphysics, if

*der Brauch* is indeed “the gathering (*Versammlung*): ὁ λόγος,”<sup>37</sup> then, before all hand technics, all surgery [*chirurgie*], the hand does not have no hand in this, it is already implicated [*la main n’y est pas pour rien*].

The hand of the man, of man *as such*: no doubt you have remarked that Heidegger does not only think the hand as a very singular thing that would rightfully belong only to man, he always thinks the hand *in the singular*, as if man did not have two hands but, this monster, one single hand. Not one single organ in the middle of the body, just as the Cyclops has one single eye in the middle of the forehead, even though this representation, which leaves something to be desired, also gives rise to thought. No, *the* hand of man, this signifies that we are no longer dealing with prehensile organs or instrumentalizable members that *some* hands are. Apes have prehensile organs that resemble hands, the man of the typewriter and of technics in general uses two hands. But the man that speaks and the man that writes with the hand, as one says; isn’t he the monster with a single hand? Thus, when Heidegger writes: “*Der Mensch ‘hat’ nicht Hände, sondern die Hand hat das Wesen des Menschen inne*”: “Man ‘has’ no hands, but the hand occupies, in order to have in hand, man’s essence,” this supplementary precision does not just concern, as we saw in the first instance, the structure of “having,” a word Heidegger places in quotation marks and whose relation he proposes to invert; it concerns the difference between the plural and the singular: *nicht Hände, sondern die Hand*. What comes to man through λόγος or speech (*das Wort*) can be only one single hand. Hands, that is already or still the organic or technical dissipation [*dispersion*]. So one will not be surprised faced with the absence of all allusion, for example in the Kantian style, to the play of difference between right and left, to the mirror, or to the pair of gloves. This difference cannot be *sensible*. For my part, having already treated in my manner of the pair of shoes, of the left foot and the right foot in Heidegger, I shall not go any further today on this path. I shall content myself with two remarks. On the one hand, the sole sentence in which Heidegger, to my knowledge, names man’s hands in the plural seems to concern precisely the moment of prayer, or in any case the gesture in which the two hands join together (*sich falten*) to make themselves only one in simplicity (*Einfalt*). Gathering together (*Versammlung*) is always what Heidegger privileges. On the other hand, nothing is ever said of the caress or of desire. Does one make love, does man make love, with the hand or with the hands? And what about sexual differences in this regard? Heidegger’s protest can be imagined: this question is derivative; what you call desire or love presupposes the coming [*avènement*] of *the* hand since speech, and

as soon as I alluded to the hand that gives, gives itself, promises, lets go, gives up, hands over, and engages in the alliance or oath, you have at your disposal everything you need to think what you commonly call making love, caressing, or even desiring. Perhaps, but why not say it?

(This last remark should serve for me as a transition, if I had the time, toward this word, this mark “*Geschlecht*” that we should now [*maintenant*] follow in another text. I shall not give this part of my lecture [*conférence*], which should have been titled “*Geschlecht III*” and whose (typed) manuscript has been photocopied and distributed to some of you so that discussion of it might be possible. I shall confine myself then, if you would kindly grant me a few minutes more, to a very cursory sketch.)

I just said “the word ‘*Geschlecht*’”: that is because I am not so sure it has a determinable and unifiable referent. I am not so sure one can speak of *Geschlecht* beyond the word “*Geschlecht*”—which then is found necessarily cited, between quotation marks, mentioned rather than used. Next, I leave the word in German. As I have already said, no word, no word for word will suffice to translate this word that gathers in its idiomatic value stock, race, family, species, genus/gender, generation, sex. Then, after saying the word “*Geschlecht*,” I amended or corrected myself: the “mark ‘*Geschlecht*,’” I clarified. For the theme of my analysis would come down to a sort of composition or decomposition that affects, precisely, the unity of this word. Perhaps it is no longer a word. Perhaps one must begin by gaining access to it from its disarticulation or its decomposition, in other words, its formation, its information, its deformations or transformations, its translations, the genealogy of its body unified starting from or according to the dividing and the sharing of the words’ morsels. We are going then to concern ourselves with the *Geschlecht* of *Geschlecht*, with its genealogy or its generation. But this genealogical composition of “*Geschlecht*” will be inseparable, in the text of Heidegger I should interrogate now [*maintenant*], from the decomposition of human *Geschlecht*, from the decomposition of man.

One year after *Was heisst Denken?* in 1953, Heidegger published “Die Sprache im Gedicht” in *Merkur* under the title “Georg Trakl,” with a subtitle that so to speak will not change when the text will be taken up again in 1959 in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*: “Eine Erörterung seines Gedichtes.” All these titles are already practically untranslatable. I will nevertheless have recourse, rather frequently, to the invaluable translation published by Jean Beaufret and Wolfgang Brokmeier in the

*Nouvelle Revue Française*, today collected in *Acheminement vers la parole*.<sup>38</sup> At each step the risk of thought remains intimately engaged in the tongue, the idiom, and translation. I salute the daring venture that constituted, in its very discretion, such a translation. Our debt here goes toward a gift that gives much more than what is called a French version. Each time I will have to diverge from it, that will be without the least intention of evaluating, even less of amending, that version. Rather, we shall have to multiply the drafts, harass the German word, and analyze it according to several waves of touches, caresses, or strokes. A translation, in the usual sense of what is published under this name, cannot indulge itself in this. But we, on the contrary, have the duty to do this each time the calculus of word for word, one word for another, that is, the conventional ideal of translation, will be defied. It would be moreover legitimate, apparently trivial, but in truth essential to take this text on Trakl for a situation (*Erörterung*) of what we are calling translation. At the heart of this situation, of this place or site (*Ort*), *Geschlecht*, the word or the mark. For the composition and the decomposition of this mark, the labor of Heidegger in his tongue, his hand and artisan writing, his *Hand-Werk*, these are what the existing translations (the French and, I suppose, the English) tend fatally to efface.

Before any other preliminary, I jump suddenly to the middle of the text, in order to throw light as from a first flash on the site that interests me. On two occasions, in the first and the third parts, Heidegger declares that the word "*Geschlecht*" has in German, "in our tongue" (it is always a question of "we"), a multitude of significations. But this singular multitude must gather itself together in some manner. In *Was heisst Denken?* a bit after the passage on the hand, Heidegger protests more than once against one-track thinking or the one-track path. While recalling here that *Geschlecht* is open to a kind of polysemy, he heads, before and after all, toward a certain unity that gathers this multiplicity. This unity is not an identity, but guards the simplicity of the same, even in the form of the fold. Heidegger wants this primordial simplicity to give rise to thought beyond all etymological derivation, at least according to the strictly philosophical sense of etymology.

(1) The first passage<sup>39</sup> cites the next to last stanza of the poem "Autumn Soul (*Herbstseele*).<sup>39</sup> I read it in its French translation that will pose some problems for us later on:

Bientôt fuient poisson et gibier.  
Ame bleue, obscur voyage  
Départ de l'Autre, de l'Aimé  
Le soir change sens et image [*Sinn und Bild*].

Soon fish and game slip away.  
Blue soul, dark wandering  
Soon parted us from loved ones, others.  
Evening changes sense and image.

Heidegger connects: "The travelers who follow the stranger find themselves immediately separated from 'Loved Ones' (*von Lieben*) who are for them 'Others' (*die für sie 'Andere' sind*). The 'Others,' let us understand the ruined stock of man."

What is translated in that way is "*der Schlag der verwesten Gestalt des Menschen*." "*Schlag*" means several things in German. In the literal sense, as the dictionary would say, it is *blow* [coup] with all the associable significations; but in the figurative sense, says the dictionary, it is also race or species, the stock [*la souche*] (the word chosen by the French translators). Heidegger's meditation will let itself be guided by this relation between *Schlag* (at once as blow and as stock) and *Geschlecht*. *Der Schlag der verwesten Gestalt des Menschen* implies a *Verwesen* in the sense of what is "decomposed," if it is literally understood according to the usual code of bodily decay, but also in another sense of the corruption of being or essence (*Wesen*) that Heidegger is not going to stop retracing and recalling. Here he opens a paragraph that begins with "*Unsere Sprache*": "Our language calls (*nenn*: names] humanity (*Menschenwesen*) having received the imprint of a striking (*das aus einem Schlag geprägte*) and in this striking struck with/as species determination [*und in diesen Schlag verschlagene*: and in effect *verschlagen* means commonly to specify, separate, cast adrift, partition, board-up, distinguish, differentiate], our language calls humanity . . . '*Geschlecht*.'" The word is between quotation marks. I am going up to the end of this paragraph whose context would have to be reconstituted later: "The word [*Geschlecht*, then] signifies the human species (*Menschengeschlecht*) in the sense of humanity (*Menschheit*) as well as the species in the sense of tribes, stocks, and families, all that struck again [*dies alles wiederum geprägt*: struck in the sense of what receives the imprint, the τύπος, the typical mark] with the generic duality of the sexes (*in das Zwiefache der Geschlechter*)."<sup>39</sup> *Dualité générique des sexes* is in French a risky translation. Heidegger, it is true, does speak this time of the *sexual* difference that comes again, in a second blow (*wiederum geprägt*), to strike (also in the sense that one says in French and English to strike coins) the *Geschlecht* in all the senses just enumerated. My questions will later be concentrated on this second blow. But Heidegger does not say "generic duality." And as to the word *das Zwiefache*, the double, the dual, the dual alliance, it carries the whole enigma of the text that plays itself out

between, on the one hand, *das Zwiefache*, a certain duplicity, a certain fold of sexual difference or *Geschlecht*, and, on the other hand, *die Zwietracht der Geschlechter*, the duality of sexes as dissension, war, disagreement, opposition, the duel of violence, and of declared hostilities.

(2) The second passage will be taken from the third part<sup>40</sup> in the course of a passage that will have indeed displaced things: “‘One’ [in quotation marks and italics in the German text: “*das ‘Ein’*”] in the words ‘One race’ [*im Wort ‘Ein Geschlecht’*: citation of a verse by Trakl; this time the French translators chose, without apparent or satisfactory justification, to translate *Geschlecht* by “race”] does not mean ‘one’ in place of ‘two’ (*meint nicht ‘eins’ statt ‘zwei’*). *One* does not signify either the indifference of an insipid uniformity [*das Einerlei einer faden Gleichheit*: on this point I take the liberty of referring to the first part of my essay entitled “*Geschlecht*”]. The words ‘One race’ (*das Wort ‘Ein Geschlecht’*) name here no biologically determinable state of things (*nennst hier keinen biologischen Tatbestand*), neither ‘unisexuality’ (*weder die ‘Eingeschlechtlichkeit’*) nor the ‘undifferentiation of the sexes’ (*noch die ‘Gleichgeschlechtlichkeit’*). In the *One* underlined [by Trakl] (*In dem betonten ‘Ein Geschlecht’*) does the unity take shelter, the unity that, starting from the matching azure of the spiritual night, reunites (*einigt*). [The “matching azure” is incomprehensible as long as one has not recognized, as I try to do in the rest of the talk I shall not give, the symphonic or synchromatic reading of the blues or of the blue of the azured sky in Trakl’s poems, and as long as one has not recognized that the French translators are translating by “*appareillant* (matching)” the word *versammelnd*: gathering, collecting in the same or the “similar (*pareil*)” of what is not identical.] The word [by implication, the word *Ein* in *Ein Geschlecht*] speaks from out of the song (*Das Wort spricht aus dem Lied*) in which is sung the land of the decline [or of the setting or of the Occident: *worin das Land des Abends gesungen wird*]. Consequently, the word ‘*Geschlecht*’ keeps here the multiple fullness of signification (*mehrfältige Bedeutung*) we have already mentioned. ‘*Geschlecht*’ first names the historical race, man, humanity (*das geschichtliche Geschlecht des Menschen, die Menschheit*) in the difference that separates it from the rest of the living (plant and animal) (*im Unterschied zum übrigen Lebendigen [Pflanze und Tier]*). The word ‘*Geschlecht*’ next names as well the generations [*Geschlechter*, in the plural: the word *Geschlecht* names the *Geschlechter!*], tribes, stocks, families of this human species (*Stämme, Sippen, Familien dieses Menschengeschlechtes*). The word ‘*Geschlecht*’ names at the same time, across all these distinctions [*überall*: throughout; Heidegger does not specify “all these distinctions” that the French translation introduces by analogy with the first definition, but no matter], the gener-

ic splitting in two [*die Zwiefalt der Geschlechter*: the French translation here does not name the sexuality nonetheless evident, whereas above it translated *Zweifache der Geschlechter* by “*dualité générique des sexes* (generic duality of the sexes)”].”

So Heidegger has just recalled that *Geschlecht* names, surnames, *at the same time* (zugleich) sexual difference, in addition to all the other senses. And he opens the following paragraph with the word *Schlag*, that the French translation renders by *frappe*, striking, which presents a double drawback. On the one hand, the translation lacks the recall of the Trakl verse whose word *Flügel Schlag* is accurately translated by “wingbeat.” On the other hand, in using two different words, *coup* (beat) and *frappe* (striking), to translate the same word *Schlag*, the translation effaces what authorizes Heidegger to recall the affinity between *Schlag* and *Geschlecht* in the two verses he is in the process of reading. Such affinity supports the whole demonstration. These verses are extracted from a poem entitled “Occidental Song” (*Abendländisches Lied*). Another is titled “The Occident” (*Abendland*), and the decline of the Occident, *as Occident*, is at the center of this meditation.

O der Seele nachtlicher Flügelschlag:

O de l'âme nocturne coup d'aile:

O the soul's nocturnal wingbeat:<sup>41</sup>

After these two verses, colon [*deux points*] and two words plain and simple: “*Ein Geschlecht*.” “*Ein*”: the sole word that, in his whole oeuvre, Heidegger notes, Trakl will have underlined in this way. To underline is *betonen*. The word thus underlined (*Ein*) then will give the fundamental tone, the fundamental note (*Grundton*). But it is the *Grundton* of *Gedicht* and not of *Dichtung*, for Heidegger regularly distinguishes *Gedicht*, which always remains unspoken (*ungesprochene*), silent, from poems (*Dichtungen*), which themselves say and speak in proceeding from *Gedicht*. *Gedicht* is the silent source of written and spoken poems (*Dichtungen*) from which one must start in order to situate (*erörtern*) the site (*Ort*), the source, to wit, *Gedicht*. That is why Heidegger says of this “*Ein Geschlecht*” that it shelters the *Grundton* from which the *Gedicht* of this poet silences (*schweigt*) the secret (*Geheimnis*). So the paragraph beginning with *Der Schlag* can be warranted not only by a philological decomposition but by what happens in Trakl’s verse, his *Dichtung*: “The striking (*Der Schlag*) whose imprint gathers together such a splitting in two in a simplicity of the *one* race

(*der sie in die Einfalt des 'Einen Geschlechts' prägt*) and thus restores the stocks of the species (*die Sippen des Menschengeschlechtes*) and the species itself in the sweetness of the more serene infancy, that striking strikes (*eingeschlagen lässt*) the soul with an opening for the path of the 'blue springtime' [this is a citation of Trakl indicated by the quotation marks omitted in the French translation].<sup>42</sup>

Those then are the two passages, still separated from their context, two passages in which Heidegger thematizes at once the polysemy and the focal simplicity of "*Geschlecht*" in "our tongue." This tongue, which is ours, German, is also the tongue of "our *Geschlecht*," as Fichte would say, if *Geschlecht* also means family, generation, stock. Now what is written and played out with the writing of this word, *Geschlecht*, in our *Geschlecht* and in our tongue (*unsere Sprache*) is idiomatic enough in its possibilities to remain almost untranslatable. The affinity between *Schlag* and *Geschlecht* takes place and is thinkable only from this "*Sprache*." Not only from the German idiom I hesitate here to call a "national" idiom, but from the overdetermined idiom of a singular *Gedicht* and *Dichten*, here that or those of Trakl, which are moreover then overdetermined by the idiom of a *Denken*, the idiom that passes through the writing of Heidegger. Yes, I say *Dichten* and *Denken*, poetry and thought. You recall that for Heidegger *Dichten* and *Denken* are a work of the hand exposed to the same dangers as the handicraft (*Hand-Werk*) of the cabinetmaker. You also know that Heidegger never places philosophy and science on a level with thought and poetry. These last two, thought and poetry, although radically different, are relatives and parallels, parallels that cut across and breach each other, that cut each other in a place that is also a kind of signature (*Zeichnung*), the incision of a trait (*Riss*).<sup>43</sup> Philosophy, science, and technics are, so to speak, excluded from this parallelism.

What is one to think of this text? How is it to be read?

But will it be a matter again of a "lecture," in the French or English sense of the word? I am afraid and with you I hope that it is nothing of the kind. *On the one hand*, it is too late, and in place of continuing to read the one hundred or so pages I have devoted to this text on Trakl and whose first French version, incomplete and provisional, has been communicated to certain among you, I shall content myself with indicating in a few minutes their principal concern, inasmuch as that can be translated into a series of suspended or suspensive questions. I have grouped them, more or less artificially, around *five* foci. Now *on the other hand*, one of these foci concerns the concept of reading [*lecture*] that does not seem adequate, without being profoundly reelaborated, either for naming what Heidegger does in his *Gespräch*

with Trakl or in what he calls the authentic *Gespräch* or the *Zwiesprache* (two speaking) of one poet with another poet or of a thinker with a poet, or for naming what I am attempting or what interests me in this *explication with (Auseinandersetzung)* this text here of Heidegger.

My most constant concern is evidently the "mark" "*Geschlecht*" and what in that mark *remarks* the mark, the striking, the impression, a certain writing as *Schlag*, *Prägung*, and so on. This *re-mark* seems to me to maintain an essential relation to what, a bit arbitrarily, I place in the first place among the five foci of questioning:

(1) Of man and animality (the text on Trakl also proposes a thinking of the difference between animality and humanity), of the difference between two sexual differences, of difference, of the relation between the 1 and the 2, and of divisibility in general. At the focus of this focus, the mark *Geschlecht* in its polysemy (species or sex) and in its dissemination.

(2) Another focus of questioning concerns just what Heidegger says of polysemy and that I want to distinguish from dissemination. On several occasions, Heidegger shows himself receptive to what could be called a "good" polysemy, that of poetic language and of the "great poet." This polysemy has to let itself be *gathered* into a "higher" univocity and into the oneness of a harmony (*Einklang*). Heidegger thus comes to valorize for once a "*Sicherheit*" of the poetic rigor, thus stretched by the force of the gathering together. And he opposes this "security (*Sicherheit*)" both to the errance of mediocre poets that hand themselves over to bad polysemy—the one that does not let itself be gathered into a *Gedicht* or into a unique site (*Ort*)—and to the univocity of exactitude (*Exaktheit*) in techno-science. This motif appears to me at once traditional (properly Aristotelian), dogmatic in its form, and symptomatically contradictory to other Heideggerian motifs. For I never "criticize" Heidegger without recalling that that can be done from other places in his own text. His text could not be homogeneous and is written with two hands, at least.

(3) That question, which I title then *polysemy and dissemination*, communicates with another focus in which several *questions of method* cross. What is Heidegger doing? How does he "operate" and according to what ways, *óδοί*, that are not yet or already no more *methods*? What is Heidegger's step [*le pas*] on this path; what is his rhythm in this text that explicitly pronounces itself on the essence of *ἑσθμός*; and what is also his *manner*, his *Hand-Werk* of writing? These questions beyond-or-across-method [*outré-méthode*] are also questions of the relation this Heidegger text (and the text I am writing in my turn) maintains with



what is called hermeneutics, interpretation or exegesis, literary criticism, rhetoric or poetics, but also with all the bodies of knowledge [*savoirs*] of the human or social sciences (history, psychoanalysis, sociology, political science, and so on). Two oppositions or distinctions, two couples of concepts support the Heideggerian argumentation—and I am questioning them in my turn. There is, *on the one hand*, the distinction between *Gedicht* and *Dichtung*. *Gedicht* (an untranslatable word, once more) is, in its place, what gathers together all the *Dichtungen* (the poems) of a poet. This gathering together is not that of a complete corpus, of the *œuvres complètes*, but a unique source that is not presented in any part of any poem. This gathering is the site of origin, the place from which and toward which the poems come and go according to a “rhythm.” Not elsewhere, not some other thing, and yet not to be confused with the poems insofar as they say (*sagen*) something, *Gedicht* is “unspoken (*ungesprochene*).” What Heidegger wants to indicate, to announce rather than show, is the unique Site (*Ort*) of this *Gedicht*. That is why Heidegger presents his text as an *Erörterung*, that is to say, according to the reawakened literalness of this word, a situation that localizes the unique site or the proper place of *Gedicht* from which the poems of Trakl sing. Whence, *on the other hand*, a second distinction between the *Erörterung* of *Gedicht* and an *Erläuterung* (clarification, elucidation, explication) of poems (*Dichtungen*) themselves, from which one must indeed start. I pay particular attention then to all the difficulties that result from this double starting point and from what Heidegger calls “*Wechselbezug*,” the relation of reciprocity or exchange between situation (*Erörterung*) and elucidation (*Erläuterung*).<sup>44</sup> Does this *Wechselbezug* coincide with what is called the hermeneutic circle? And how does Heidegger practice or play, *in his manner*, this *Wechselbezug*?

(4) This last formulation, which always aims at Heidegger’s *manner* or, as one can also say in French and English, with another connotation, his manners, no more lets itself be separated, no more than the hand according to Heidegger, from bringing the tongue into play, its *mise en œuvre*. Here then from a certain maneuver of writing. This maneuver of writing always resorts in its decisive moments to a resource that is idiomatic, in other words, untranslatable, if one trusts in the common concept of translation. This resource, overdetermined by the idiom of Trakl and by Heidegger’s, is not only the resource of German, but most often of an idiom of the Old High German idiom. In my manner, that is, following the injunctions and the economy of other idioms, I retrace and remark all these recourses by Heidegger to Old

German, each time he begins by saying: in our tongue (*in unsere Sprache*); such a word signifies originally (*bedeutet ursprünglich*). Here, in this quick overview, I can only give the list of words, of morsels of words, or of sentences near which I mark a slightly longer stop.

(a) First, naturally, there is the word “*Geschlecht*” and all its *Geschlecht*, all its family, its roots, its offshoots, legitimate or not. Heidegger convokes them all and gives to each its role. There is *Schlag*, *einschlagen*, *verschlagen* (to separate, partition), *zerschlagen* (to break, smash, dismantle), *auseinanderschlagen* (to separate while striking one another), and so on. In place of displaying here again the whole Heideggerian maneuver and the one to which he binds us, I shall cite, as a sign of thanks, a paragraph that David Krell devotes in English to this word in chapter 11 of his book *Intimations of Mortality* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), the manuscript of which he was kind enough, after the publication of my first article on *Geschlecht*, to send me. The chapter is titled “Strokes of Love and Death,” and I have extracted this:

“Strokes of love and death”: *Schlag der Liebe, Schlag des Todes*. What do the words *Schlag, schlagen* mean? Hermann Paul’s *Deutsches Wörterbuch* lists six principal areas of meaning for *der Schlag*; for the verb *schlagen* it cites six “proper” senses and ten “distant” meanings. Deriving from the Old High German and Gothic *slahan* (from which the English word “slay” also derives) and related to the modern German word *schlachten*, “to slaughter,” *schlagen* means to strike a blow, to hit or beat. A *Schlag* may be the stroke of a hand, of midnight, or of the brain; the beating of wings or of a heart. *Schlagen* may be done with a hammer or a fist. God does it through his angels and his plagues; a nightingale does it with his song. One of the most prevalent senses of *schlagen* is to mint or stamp a coin. *Der Schlag* may therefore mean a particular coinage, imprint, or type; a horse dealer might refer to *einem guten Schlag Pferde*. It is by virtue of this sense that *Schlag* forms the root of a word that is very important for Trakl, *das Geschlecht*. Paul lists three principal meanings for *Geschlecht* (Old High German *gislahiti*). First, it translates the Latin word *genus*, being equivalent to *Gattung*: *das Geschlecht* is a group of people who share a common ancestry, especially if they constitute a part of the hereditary nobility. Of course, if the ancestry is traced back far enough we may speak of *des menschliche Geschlecht*, “humankind.” Second, *das Geschlecht* may mean one generation of men and women who die to make way for a succeeding generation. Third, there are male and female *Geschlechter*, and *Geschlecht* becomes the root of many words for the

things males and females have and do for the sake of the first two meanings: *Geschlechts-glied* or *-teil*, the genitals; *-trieb*, the sex drive; *-verkehr*, sexual intercourse; and so on.

(b) There is next the noun *Ort*. When Heidegger recalls, from the first page, that this word “Originally . . . signifies (*Ursprünglich bedeutet*)” the point of the spear (*die Spitze des Speers*), that is before everything (and there is much to say on this “before everything”) to insist on its value of gathering. Everything *concur*s and converges toward the point (*in ihr läuft alles zusammen*). The site is always the site of gathering, the gathering, *das Versammelnde*. This definition of site, besides implying the recourse to an “original signification” in a determined language, governs the whole course of *Erörterung*, the privilege granted to oneness and to indivisibility in situating *Gedicht* and what Heidegger calls a “great poet,” great insofar as he is related to that oneness of gathering and resists the forces of dissemination or dislocation.<sup>45</sup> Naturally, I would multiply the questions around this value of gathering.

(c) There is next the idiomatic and untranslatable opposition between *geistig* and *geistlich* that plays a determinant role. This opposition authorizes withdrawing the *Gedicht* or the “site” of Trakl both from what is gathered together by Heidegger under the title of *the* “western metaphysics” and of its Platonic tradition distinguishing between the “sensible” material and the “intelligible” spiritual (*αἰσθητόν/νόητον*) and from the Christian opposition between the spiritual and the temporal. Heidegger again refers to the “original signification (*ursprüngliche Bedeutung*)” of the word “Geist (*gheis*): to be lifted up, transported outside of oneself, like a flame (*aufgebracht, entsetzt, ausser sich sein*).<sup>46</sup> It is a matter of the ambivalence of the fire or the flame of the spirit, which is at once the Good and the Evil.

(d) There is again the word *fremd* that does not signify the foreign, in the Latin sense of what is outside of, extra, *extraneus*, but properly (*eigentlich*), according to the High German, *fram*: forward toward elsewhere, in the act of making one’s own path . . . , to the encounter of what in advance lies in store (“*anderswohin vorwärts, unterwegs nach . . . , dem Voraufbehaltenen entgegen*”). This allows saying that the Stranger does not wander [*erre*], but has a destination (“*es irrt nicht, bar jeder Bestimmung, ratlos umher*”),<sup>47</sup> the Stranger is not without destination.

(e) There is furthermore the word *Wahnsinn* that does not signify, as one thinks, the dream of the insane. Since *Wahn* is led back to the High German *wana* that signifies *ohne, sans, without*, the “*Wahnsinnige*,” the demented is the one who remains *without* the sense of Others.

It is of another sense, and *Sinnan* “*bedeutet ursprünglich*,” originally signifies, “*reisen, streben nach . . . , eine Richtung einschlagen*,” to travel, to strive toward, to carve open with a blow a direction. Heidegger invokes the “Indo-European root *sent, set*” that signifies *Weg, path*.<sup>48</sup> Here things get worse, since it is the very sense of the word *sense* that appears untranslatable, tied to an idiom. And then this value of sense is what, governing nonetheless the traditional concept of translation, suddenly finds itself rooted in one single tongue or family or *Geschlecht* of tongues, outside of which it loses its original sense.

If the “situation (*Erörterung*)” of *Gedicht* is thus found to depend in its decisive moments on recourse to the idiom of *Geschlecht* or to the *Geschlecht* of the idiom, how is one to think the relation between the unspoken of *Gedicht* and its belonging, the appropriation of its very silence, to one tongue and to one *Geschlecht*? This question concerns not only the German *Geschlecht* and the German tongue, but also those that seem recognized in the Occident, in Occidental man, since this whole “situation” is preoccupied, I shall say in English/French, with concern for the place, the site, the path, and the destination of the Occident. This brings me to the fifth focus. I multiply the foci in order to “de-countrify [*dépaysier*]” a bit an atmosphere perhaps a bit too much “in one country [*paysante*]”; I do not say countrified [*paysanne*], even were it for Trakl . . .

(5) What comes to *Geschlecht* as its decomposition (*Verwesung*), its corruption, is a *second blow* that comes to strike the sexual difference and to transform it into dissension, war, savage opposition. The primordial sexual difference is tender, gentle, peaceful; when that difference is struck down by a “curse” (*Fluch*, a word of Trakl taken up and interpreted by Heidegger), the duality or the duplicity of the two becomes unleashed, indeed bestial, opposition.<sup>49</sup> This schema, which I reduce here to its most summary expression, Heidegger claims, despite all the appearances and signs of which he is well aware, is neither Platonic nor Christian. This schema would come under neither metaphysical theology nor ecclesial theology. But the primordially (pre-Platonic, pre-metaphysical, or pre-Christian) to which Heidegger recalls us and in which he situates the proper site of Trakl *has no other content and even no other language* than that of Platonism and Christianity. This primordially is simply that starting from which things like metaphysics and Christianity are possible and thinkable. But what constitutes their arch-morning origin and their ultra-Occidental horizon is nothing other than this hollow of a repetition, in the strongest and most unusual sense of this term. And the form or the “logic” of this repetition is not only readable in this text on Trakl, but in everything

that, since *Sein und Zeit*, analyzes the structures of *Dasein*, the *Verfall*, the *Ruf*, care (*Sorge*), and regulates this relation of the “most primordial” according to what is less so, notably Christianity. In this text, the argumentation (especially for demonstrating that Trakl is not a Christian poet) takes some particularly laborious and at times very simplistic forms—which I cannot reconstitute in this schema. Just as Heidegger requires a unique and gathering site for Trakl’s *Gedicht*, he must presuppose that there is one single site, unique and univocal, for THE metaphysics and THE Christianity. But does this gathering take place? Has it a place, a unity of place? That is the question I shall leave suspended thus, just before the *chute*. In French one sometimes calls the end of a text *chute*. One also says, in place of *chute*, the *envoi*.

## Notes

The following abbreviations are used in the references in the notes:

- AN Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*; see note 2.  
 AP Martin Heidegger, *Acheminement vers la parole*; see note 38.  
 RN Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Reden an die Deutsche Nation*; see note 2.  
 US Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*; see note 10.  
 WD Martin Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken?*; see note 8.  
 WT Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*; see note 12.

1. Jacques Derrida, “Geschlecht: sexual difference, ontological difference,” *Research in Phenomenology* 13 (1983): 65–83.

2. *Reden an die Deutsche Nation* (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, n.d.), p. 121—hereafter RN; *Addresses to the German Nation*, ed. George Armstrong Kelly (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 108—hereafter AN: “whoever believes in spirituality and in the freedom of this spirituality, and who wills the eternal development of this spirituality by freedom, wherever he may have been born and whatever language he speaks, is of our blood; he is one of us, and will come over to our side.”

3. RN 65; AN 55.

4. RN 63; AN 53.

5. RN 64; AN 54.

6. RN 65–66; AN 55–56.

7. Letter of Heidegger to Academic Rectorate of Albert-Ludwig University.

8. *Was heisst Denken?* 3d ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1971), p. 52—hereafter

WD.

9. *Qu’appelle-t-on penser?* trans. Aloys Becker and Gérard Granel (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), p. 92.

10. *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), p. 252—hereafter US.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

12. WD 51; *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 16—hereafter WT.

13. WD 48ff.; WT 12ff.

14. WD 49; WT 14.

15. WD 50; WT 16.

16. WD 50; WT 14–15.

17. WD 50–51; WT 16.

18. WD 51; WT 16.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Elsewhere I shall study, as closely as possible, the developments Heidegger devoted to animality in *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik* (1929–30) (*Gesamtausgabe*, vols. 29–30 [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1983], part 2, chap. 4). Without any essential discontinuity, these developments seem to me to constitute the base of those I am interrogating here, whether it be a question of (1) the classic gesture that consists in considering zoology as a regional science faced with presupposing the essence of animality in general—what Heidegger proposes then to describe without the aid of this scientific knowledge (see § 45); (2) the thesis according to which “*Das Tier ist weltarm*,” a thesis median between the two others (“*der Stein ist weltlos*” and “*der Mensch ist weltbildend*”)—a greatly muddled analysis in the course of which Heidegger has much trouble, it seems to me, determining poverty, being-poor (*Armsein*), and lack (*Entbehren*) as essential traits foreign to the empiric determination of differences of degrees (p. 287), and explaining the original mode of this having-without-having of the animal that has and does not have world (“*Das Haben und Nichthaben von Welt*” [§ 50]); (3) the phenomeno-ontological modality of the *als*, the animal not having access to the being *as (als)* being [*étant comme étant*] (p. 290ff.). This last distinction would push one to specify that the difference between man and animal corresponds less to the opposition between being-able-to-give and being-able-to-take than to the opposition between *two ways* of taking or giving: one, man’s, is giving and taking *as such*, of the being or the present *as such*; the other, the animal’s, would be neither giving nor taking *as such*.

21. WD 51; WT 16.

22. *Ibid.*

23. WD 51; WT 16–17.

24. *Sein und Zeit*, 9th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1960), p. 69; trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 99.

25. *Sein und Zeit*, p. 68; *Being and Time*, pp. 96–97.

26. *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 54, *Parmenides* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1982), p. 118.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 118–19.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 124ff.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

33. WD 52; WT 17.

34. WD 5; WT 9.

35. WD 52; WT 18.

36. *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1950), p. 337; trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi, *Early Greek Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975, 1984), p. 51.

37. *Holzwege*, p. 340; *Early Greek Thinking*, pp. 54–55.

38. *Nouvelle Revue Française* 6, no. 61 (1958): 52–75, 213–36; *Acheminement vers la parole* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), pp. 39–83—hereafter AP. Perhaps you will be surprised to see me citing a French translation of Heidegger in a lecture given in

English. I am doing so for two reasons. On the one hand, in order not to efface the constraints or the chances of the idiom in which I myself work, teach, read, or write. What you hear right this moment is the translation of a text I first wrote in French. On the other hand, I thought that Heidegger's text could be still more accessible, could gain some supplementary readability by reaching us thus through a third ear; the explication (*Auseinandersetzung*) with one tongue extra can refine our translation (*Übersetzung*) of the text that is called "original." I just spoke of the ear of the other as a third ear. That was not only to multiply to excess the examples of pairs (feet, hands, ears, eyes, breasts, and so on) and all the problems they should pose to Heidegger. It is also to underscore that one can write on the typewriter, as I have done, with three hands among three tongues. I knew I would have to speak in English the text I was writing in French on another I was reading in German.

39. *US* 49–50; *AP* 53.

40. *US* 78; *AP* 80.

41. *US* 77; *AP* 79.

42. *US* 78–79; *AP* 80.

43. *US* 196.

44. *US* 37–38.

45. *US* 37.

46. *US* 60.

47. *US* 41.

48. *US* 53.

49. *US* 50.

## Notes on Contributors

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