

From Thinking the Last God of Thought  
to the Poetic God without End :  
Between Heidegger's *das denkende  
Dichten* (thinking poetry) & Celan's *das  
Gedicht dem Anderen* (poetics of  
alterity)

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« God is dead [*Gott ist tot!*] ! God remains dead [*Gott bleibt  
tot!*] !<sup>1</sup> » — so echoes the parable proffered by Nietzsche of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Frederick Nietzsche, « Der tolle Mensch [the Madman] », from Book III, no 125 of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* [*The Gay Science*], in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, Viking Press, New York, 1954, p. 95-96 [henceforth, *Nietzsche, DFW*] : « Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly, “ I seek God [*ich suche Gott*] ! I seek God [*Gott*] ! ” As many of those who do not believe in God [*an Gott glaubten*] were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Why, did he get lost ? said one. Did he lose his way like a child ? said another. Or is he hiding ? Is he afraid of us ? Has he gone on a voyage ? Or emigrated ? Thus they yelled and laughed. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. “ Whither is God ? ” [*Wohin ist Gott*] ? he cried. “ I will tell you. *We have killed him* — you and I ! [*Wir haben ihn getödtet — ihr und ich !*]. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this ? How could we drink up the sea ? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon ? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun ? Whither is it moving now ? Whither are we moving ? Away from all suns ? Are we not plunging continually ? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions ? Is there still any up or down ? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing ? Do we not feel the breath of empty space ? Has it not become colder ? Is not night continually closing in on us ? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning ? Do we not hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God [*Gott*] ? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine [*göttlichen*] decomposition ? Gods, too, decompose [*auch Götter*]

madman in section no 125 of the *Gay Science*. It concatenates incessantly in our midst, piercing the eyes of both thinkers and poets alike. Is it still possible to imagine God from within such concatenations in thought and poetry ? Do such modalities need to undergo any transformation to allow for a *rapprochement* with God, the god or the gods ? Moreover, how is thinking to be thought and poetry envisioned in the time, place and circumstance of such overwhelming demise ? These stand as our *guiding* questions.

To rise again from the ashes of such *deicide* is to return to confront the razed limits of the limitless. But along the path of such a return, the question arises whether it is possible for language, *de facto* delimited, to contain such a pronouncement over the limitless ? Moreover, is it possible for those endowed with language to delimit spatial and temporal origins of the Without End, the Limitless ? What is the genre (i.e. thinking, poetry or some third language) that might act as such a container to that which overflows containment ?

Such *grounding* questions will hover over the *guiding* questions of our *problématique*. These reflections are a boundary crossing of thought and poetry. A veritable passing over and through boundaries wherein thought and poetry once reigned over a ground of origins [*ab-grund*] or derived from « being adrift » [*être en dérive*]<sup>2</sup>. Our intention is to unveil comparative aspects of each origin, even when absence stands as presence. Our search is for what provides the foundation for thought and poetry as well as the time, place and circumstance of such a *rapprochement*.

However, to ground this *problématique*, a preliminary reflection on the correlation of Religion and Philosophy is in order. One index that always points to a wellspring of boundary crossing possibilities is Jewish mystical thinking. Already nascent within 16<sup>th</sup> century Lurianic Kabbalah, there is a response to the Nietzschean *deicide* with which we opened this investigation. It is intimately linked to this grounding question of *container* and *contained vis-à-vis* language as delimitation of the limitless. The creative

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*verwesen*]. God is dead [*Gott ist tot*] ! God remains dead [*Gott bleibt tot*] ! And we have killed him [*Und wir haben ihn getötet*] ! ” »

<sup>2</sup> See Emmanuel Lévinas, « Les Dommages causés par le feu », in *Lectures Talmudiques*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1977, p. 156. *Ibid.*, [tr. A. Aronowicz], Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1994, p. 182 [henceforth, Lévinas, *DCF* ; French pagination/English pagination].

consciousness which gives rise to both thinking and poetry dwells within the archetypal creativity that creates the worlds we inhabit. To correlate Religion and Philosophy, two such worlds of consciousness will be considered as they stand in shining opposition : *Olam ha-Akudim* [World of Bands] and *Olam ha-Tikkun* [World of Restoration]<sup>3</sup>. The former is the realm wherein the sparseness of words is able to contain a fecundity of expression ; whereas the latter is the realm wherein a plethora of words is able to express a sparseness of ideas. Poetry is represented by the *Olam ha-Akudim*, akin to youth and *naïveté*, whereas the Law is represented by the *Olam ha-Tikkun*, akin to a maturation whereby there is a loss of *naïveté*. The dialectic of these two realms echoes the correlation of Religion and Philosophy. It hovers over a grounding of the ground [*ab-grund*] while deriving existence from « being adrift » [*être en dérive*]<sup>4</sup>. Allowing this dialectical tension to remain un-synthesized is a pathmark Jewish Thinking, especially within its mystical branches. An attunement to this correlation as a lens will recur throughout the present investigation.

Regarding this tension between *Olam ha-Akudim* [World of Stripes] and *Olam ha-Tikkun* [World of Restoration], much insight is to be gleaned from a tangential remark of Jewish Thinker, Emmanuel Lévinas. Granted that Lévinas rallies against the dangers of mysticism and *extasis*, we will draw on the following methodological remark and extrapolate it for the purposes of correlating Philosophy and Religion in general. In relation to this dialectical tension between worlds which parallels the dichotomy of *Halakhah* [way of the Law] and *Aggadah* [way of the Lore], Lévinas explains how this tension is endemic to Philosophy (i.e. *Aggadah*) in its correlation to Religion (i.e. *Halakhah*). Remarking on this seeming tangential correlation within a Talmudic elucidation, Lévinas remarks :

I do not regret having brought together philosophy and religion in my preceding sentence [re : *Halakhah* and *Aggada*]. Philosophy for me derives [*dérive*] from religion. It is called into being by a

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<sup>3</sup> See Hayyim Vital, « B'Olam ha-Akudim », *Derush no 2*, in *Sha'ar ha-Haqdamot. Qol Qitvai ha-Ari*, Jerusalem, 1988, p. 56a-60b. *Ibid.*, « B'Olam ha-Nequdim b'Tikkun Rishon », *Derush no 2*, dans *Sha'ar ha-Haqdamot. Qol Qitvai ha-Ari*, Jerusalem, 1988, p. 76a-78a.

<sup>4</sup> See Lévinas, *DCF*, p. 156-182.

religion adrift, and probably religion is always adrift [*est en dérive*]<sup>5</sup>.

Let us listen further to what it means to be adrift. When something is adrift, like a boat, it is not anchored at bay or stabilized at a shore. Rather, any attempt to anchor or steer its path is counter-productive to the directionality of its overwhelming flow. Yet, only when unmoored Religion meanders along its path can it provide Philosophy with the *factual* material from which its inquiry might begin. The brilliant play on the word *dérivée* — which literally means to alter a path upon the riverbed's course — stems from a realization that Philosophy only exists insofar as it derives from [*dérivée de*] Religion, which itself is intrinsically « adrift » [*est en dérive*]<sup>6</sup>. To exist adrift is to meander, akin to the movements that typify exile. Our extrapolation of Lévinas' comment might then set the stage for this present investigation's comparison, as well as further reflection upon wandering and exile.

The dialectal tension intrinsic to our comparison rests between a thinking poetics of the *Denker* and a poetic en-thinking or alterity of the *Dichter*. Both the thinker, Martin Heidegger, and the poet, Paul Celan, each carve out a unique path to address and redress this dialectic. What is remarkable about the seeming disparity between Heidegger and Celan, on the one hand, is the degree to which the thinker cannot restrain from entering into the poetic realm, while on the other hand, the poet straddles the precipice of thinking without being enveloped by it. Withdrawal and refusal as well as exile become two key gestures that both the thinker and the poet draw upon to redress the tension so as to envision anew, from within the dialectical poles of Philosophy and Religion.

The task of Heidegger as *Denker* in *Contributions to Philosophy* is to recover the guiding-thread of the guiding question that shapes Western Philosophy<sup>7</sup>. This is a recovery from Platonic and Cartesian identity-thinking whereby « identity becomes the

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<sup>5</sup> Lévinas, *DCF*, p. 156-182.

<sup>6</sup> See Alain Rey, s.v. « dériver », *Le Robert. Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Française*, tome 1, Paris, 1992, p. 1047b : « Détourner un cours d'eau de son lit » (to divert the course or flow of water from the riverbed).

<sup>7</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, [tr. P. Emad & K. Maly], Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1999, p. 138 [henceforth, Heidegger, *CPFE*].

essential determination of a being as such<sup>8</sup> ». When « thinking becomes I-Think<sup>9</sup> » in so « fore-grasping and unifying, thinking then posits the unity of what it encounters. Thus thinking lets what it encounters be encountered as a being. This is how a being becomes an object and ontology is flattened<sup>10</sup> ». The cloud of identity-thinking which obscures the guiding question of Western Philosophy further obstructs the light of its guiding-thread. This clouding occurs when knowing as self-knowing is the utmost identity. As such a being is at the same time able to condition every other objectness in its manner of knowing. What is other to the « I » then is itself determined as manifest spirit. Ultimately identity is lifted up into the absoluteness of indifference, as opposed to mere emptiness<sup>11</sup>. It is the emptiness, however, that is sought by the thinker, first and foremost *vis-à-vis* the term, « God. »

The guiding-thread of this pathmark to inceptual thinking is clarified by way of the Hölderlin/Kierkegaard/Nietzsche triad proffered by Heidegger in *Contributions to Philosophy*. The remark of the *Denker* here on this idiosyncratic triad is telling, in that « these three, who each in his own way, in the end suffered profoundly the uprooting to which Western History is being driven and who at the same time intimated their gods most intimately — that these three had to depart from the brilliance of their days prematurely<sup>12</sup> ». In intimating their god most intimately, this triad composed of two thinkers and one poet, take leave of their living luminescence before their time has come to its end. What is remarkable here is how Heidegger first of all effectively sees no distinction between thinker and poet — each is of equal influence within the given triad. To be a thinker of truth like Nietzsche, one must enter this triad by way of already having made the turn [*kehre*] away from philosophical thought towards poetry. It is in first turning to poetry that one is then attuned to the last moment of philosophy. Moreover, the existence of each of those who « intimate their gods most intimately<sup>13</sup> » are all profoundly marked

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<sup>8</sup> See Heidegger, *CPFE*, p. 139.

<sup>9</sup> Heidegger, *CPFE*, p. 139.

<sup>10</sup> Heidegger, *CPFE*, p. 139.

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, *CPFE*, p. 139.

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, *CPFE*, p. 142-143.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, *CPFE*, p. 12.

by withdrawal, refusal and by exile. Such thinking poetics can only take place in exile. Just as such a thinking poetics takes place in exile, so in turn, is this reflective of an intimated withdrawal of their god most intimately.

The investigation at hand is drawing upon this spatial, temporal and circumstantial insight that exile reveals and its affect on thought and poetry. As *Denker*, Heidegger goes one step further. Although we began our remarks by the call « to rise again from the ashes of *deicide* » — Nietzsche's death toll for the god of Western Civilization — this thinker was the last one of the Hölderlin/Kierkegaard/Nietzsche triad. There is an obscured guiding thread intrinsic to Heidegger's own thinking amidst the ashes by way of this triad. This guiding-thread of the guiding-question, in the moment of recovery is betrayed in an inauthentic reading of the *Dichter* — « the one who poeticized the furthest ahead<sup>14</sup> ». Only by returning to the *first*, the one who intimated god most intimately — the poet to whom « Holy names are lacking » [*es fehlen hielige Namen*]<sup>15</sup> — is it possible to come to terms with the ashen thought of the *last*. For the *Denker*, it is this one, « the *last* which not only needs the longest fore-running but also itself is not the ceasing, but the deepest beginning, which reaches out the furthest and catches up with itself with the greatest difficulty<sup>16</sup> ».

Confronting this last moment — i.e. the death of God through poetic eyes — allows for the possibility of a *rapprochement* with this lost relation to « God » and the « Holy. » Yet there inheres a real difficulty in confronting the *deicide* of Nietzschean thought by way of thinking. Here Heidegger understands the limits of thinking.

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<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, *CPFE*, p. 143. Regarding this recovery of betrayal in an inauthentic reading of the *Dichter*, Hölderlin, it is evident that Heidegger's elucidations while brilliant are rife with a refusal to acknowledge the biblical echoes in Hölderlin and its derivative consciousness of « the Holy » form the Judeo-Christian tradition. As such it « [...] calls attention to a major flaw in Heideggerian studies : an unwillingness to acknowledge the vital role that Hebraism has played in Western notions of the “ the holy ” and of transcendence ». See David H. Hirsch. « Martin Heidegger and Pagan Gods, », in *The Deconstruction of Literature : Criticism after Auschwitz*, Brown University Press, New England, 1991, p. 93 [henceforth, Hirsch, *MHPG*].

<sup>15</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, [tr. K. Hoeller], Humanity Books, New York, 2000, p. 30-31. Therein Hölderlin's poem, « Heimkunft/an die Verwandten » [Homecoming/To Kindred Ones] is reproduced in full.

<sup>16</sup> See Heidegger, *CPFE*, p 285.

Faced with the inability of Western thought to catch up with its « deepest beginnings, » a deeper dwelling is sought as it resides in the poetic thought of Hölderlin, even when read inauthentically. This triad in effect revolves as an inextricable link between poetry and thinking. In ungrounding Nietzsche's parable to forge a clearing along the path of thinking, it is no longer possible for the *poesis* of « the one who poeticized the furthest ahead » to guide authentically. While seeking the « possibility of a new transcendence unrelated to the Judeo-Christian tradition », Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin is inauthentic and thus obfuscates the path it seeks to illumine. To sublimate the « vital role that Hebraism played in Western notions of “ the holy ” and of transcendence<sup>17</sup> », effaces the pathmarks of the *poesis* at hand. In this regard, it is the poet Celan's reading of « the one who poeticized the furthest ahead » that must serve as the guide towards the deviation [*Um-wege*] from this errant path [*Wege*].

Despite these severe limitations, the *Denker* brings into focus the problem with *conceptual* thinking is that it falls into the trap of identity-thinking whereby « the end is unceasing *etcetera* from which the beginning and long since the last as the most inceptual has withdrawn<sup>18</sup> ». The *inceptual* thinking now being proffered the *Denker* reveals in concealing, grounds in passing over :

God no longer appears either in the « personal » or in the « lived experience » of the masses but solely in the « space » of being itself — a space which is held to abground.<sup>19</sup>

All the while « standing in the remotest remoteness to the passing of god<sup>20</sup> », one must re-orient and prepare anew for the « colliding of god and man in the midpoint of being<sup>21</sup> ». It is this existential collision — later developed into a gathering of the fourfold<sup>22</sup> — that stands for the *Denker* as the task of thinking.

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<sup>17</sup> See Hirsch, *MHPG*, p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> Hirsch, *MHPG*, p. 293.

<sup>19</sup> Hirsch, *MHPG*, p. 293.

<sup>20</sup> Hirsch, *MHPG*, p. 293.

<sup>21</sup> Hirsch, *MHPG*, p. 293.

<sup>22</sup> See Martin Heidegger, « Building Dwelling Thinking », in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, [tr. A. Hofstadter], Perennial Library, New York, 1971, p. 158-159 [henceforth, Heidegger, *BDT*].

Yet to think thought in truth is a daunting, if not elusive task for the *Denker*. For in thinking poetically is the task of « the one who poeticized furthest ahead<sup>23</sup> ». Such a path is demarcated by Heidegger's elucidation of Hölderlin, revealing the truth that « [...] to be a poet in destitute time means : to attend, singing to the trace of the fugitive gods<sup>24</sup>. The *Denker* must inevitably make the turn [*kehre*] so as to envision once again the :

[...] lightning of being which has reached its characteristic shape as the realm of Western Metaphysics in its self-completion. Hölderlin's thinking poetry has had a share in giving it shape to this realm of poetic thinking.<sup>25</sup>

Again, it is the poet whose poetic statements in their ownmost saying provide the guidance (albeit veiled) along the path of thinking. For the *Denker* already realizes that « the poetic character of thinking is still veiled over... but poetry that thinks is in truth the topology of being<sup>26</sup> ». Once attuned to the power of a thinking poetry, a more poetic thinking is then possible. It is precisely such an attunement being delimited here with the « last god ». Given the lack of attunement to our being-towards-death [*Sein-zum-Tode*]<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Heidegger, *CPFE*, p. 143.

<sup>24</sup> See Martin Heidegger, « What are Poets For », in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, [tr. A. Hofstadter], Perennial Library, New York, 1971, p. 94 [henceforth, Heidegger, *WAPF*].

<sup>25</sup> See Heidegger, *WAPF*, p. 95.

<sup>26</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, Pfullingen, Neske, 1947, p. 22-23. Heidegger, « The Thinker as Poet », in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. [tr. A. Hofstadter], Perennial Library, New York, 1971, p. 12. [Henceforth, Heidegger, *TTAP* ; German pagination/English Pagination].

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger contrasts the lapses in and out of inauthenticity as regards both *being-toward-the-end* and *being-toward-death*. In *Sein und Zeit*, the thinker attempts to recover through its everyday evasion the existential reality of being-toward-death : « Factically, Da-sein maintains itself initially and for the most part in an inauthentic being-towards-death. How is the ontological possibility of an authentic being-toward-death to be characterized “ objectively ”, if, in the end, Da-sein is never authentically related to its end, or if this authentic being must remain concealed from others in accordance with its meaning ? Is not the project of the existential possibility of such a questionable existentiell potentiality-of-being a fantastical undertaking ? What is needed for such a project to get beyond a merely poetizing, arbitrary construction ? Does Da-sein itself provide directives for this project ? Can the grounds for its phenomenal justification be taken from Da-sein itself ? Can our analysis of Da-sein up to now give us any prescriptions for the ontological task we have now formulated,

« [...] how are we then ever going to be primed for the rare hint of the last god ?<sup>28</sup> » The welling up of meaning — both un-possessive and of non-identity that takes place in Enowning [*Ereignis*] — is crucial to understanding this « last god ». In passing over all the way into and through, this un-possessive owning has no appropriable content. Whereas the identity of « God » has seen its demise in its overwhelming appropriation and distortion of content, the un-possessive owning of the « last god » begins by being emptied of any such appropriable content. In this sense, the « last god » passes over both identity and concept, towards the true emptiness that it is meant to be. This emptiness, however has been stuffed with an overflow of appropriable content that in no way reveals this truth of this term. Rather this filling only obscures the majesty of this emptiness.

Part of the radical recovery in and through the « last god » is a relinquishing any owning of this god in terms of form or content. Its meaning is experienced both in and of its passing through. Such a refusal to owning by way of appropriable content is what Heidegger terms, Enowning [*Ereignis*]. This experience of god is the *last* insofar as it marks the primordially eternal moment *before* the coming of Being from its origin in be-ing. Yet again here we have Heidegger's unique attempt in coming to terms with the Christian notion of the *parousia*. What is at stake in these earlier, idiosyncratic readings by Heidegger of the *parousia* is how this temporal index enopens to « just what is different in the Christian experience of life<sup>29</sup> ». Whereas its Jewish-Greek meaning (i.e. Septuagint) deals with the « advent of the Lord at the Day of Judgement, » in late Judaism, *parousia* means « the advent of the Messiah as God's representative<sup>30</sup> ». What Heidegger's re-reading of the *First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians* in his 1920-21 lecture seeks to elucidate then is why the Christian meaning of *parousia* means the second coming of the Messiah who has already

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so that what we have before us can be kept on a secure path ? » See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, [tr. J. Stambaugh], SUNY Press, New York, 1996, p. 240.

<sup>28</sup> See Heidegger, *CPFE*, p. 285.

<sup>29</sup> See Martin Heidegger, « Einleitung in die Phänomenologie des Religiösen (lectures 1920-21) », in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 60 : *Phänomenologie des Religiösen Lebens*, ed. Jung, [draft tr. Graeme Nicholson], Regehly & Strube, Frankfurt a. M., Klostermann Verlag, 1995, p. 11 [henceforth, Heidegger, *EPR*].

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, *EPR*, p. 11.

appeared. Moreover, of what consequence is this second coming of the already appeared to an authentic experience of existence for *Dasein* ? These early reflections of the *Denker* from 1920-21 demarcate a *philosophème* to which he will return, but with a transformed attunement.

One might suppose at first the basic stance towards the *parousia* would be to await it, and that Christian hope would be one special case of that. But this would be entirely wrong ! Never through a mere analysis of the consciousness of a future event would we come upon the meaning of the *parousia* in its relationship to ourselves. The structure of Christian hope — which in truth is nothing but a « meaning-relationship » towards the *parousia* — is radically different from all awaiting. Time and seasons (5 : 1, always mentioned together) present a particular problem for explication. If the « When » were grasped as belonging to an « objective » time that we represent, it would not be understood in its primordial sense. Nor does it belong to the time of « factual life » in the fallen, average non-Christian sense. Paul does not tell them of a « when », because such an expression would not be adequate to what needed saying ; it would not suffice.<sup>31</sup>

The answer that Paul gives to the question about « When ? » of the *parousia* is therefore a challenge, to keep awake and to be sober. Here is a pointed allusion to enthusiasm, against the restless curiosity of those who pursue such questions as the « When ? » of the *parousia*, and who speculate about it. They fuss about the « When » and the « What », how it will be objectively ; they take no authentic personal interest in it. They remain stuck in what is wordly.<sup>32</sup>

As Heidegger searches to recover the pre-Christian content of basic theological concepts like « hope, » there comes the gesture of refusal. This refusal is intimately linked to the exile of God by the gods. Whereas an *end* is only that closing moment when a being has torn itself away from truth, the *last* withdraws from the bounds of ineptual thinking itself, allowing the possibility of hope to remain. Refusal of identity-thinking is the first moment in the course of this withdrawal. It is that moment yearning to be recovered by way of temporal attunement, whereby :

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<sup>31</sup> Heidegger, *EPR*, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Heidegger, *EPR*, p. 15.

[r]efusal is the highest nobility of gifting and the basic thrust of self-sheltering-concealing, revelation [*Offenbarkeit*] of which makes up the originary essential sway of the truth of be-ing. Only thus does be-ing become estranging itself, the stillness of the passing of the last god.<sup>33</sup>

These reflections of the *Denker* upon the *first God* and the *last god* provide a critical response to the proclamation of Nietzsche's parable. Could such a response open again the possibility of a deeper reflection upon Religion within the realm of Philosophy? The terms of engagement in Heidegger's discourse, however, early on take one step away from the broader concepts of Philosophy and Religion, to rather demarcate a less universal *niche*, that of Phenomenology and Theology<sup>34</sup>. When philosophy is working through its ontological faculty, it opens itself to the possibility of being « employed by theology as a corrective », insofar as theology can be co-directive of the « factual with respect to the facticity of faith<sup>35</sup> ». Phenomenology is merely the procedure whereby *Dasein* is able to recover the prior moment of faith's facticity<sup>36</sup>. The primary direction or derivation of existence from faith's facticity is possible through the co-direction of ontology. Such ontological co-direction allows for the existential dimension of faith to arise out of it and to present itself within it<sup>37</sup>. Heidegger distills this grounding within the correlation of Phenomenology and Theology in the following way :

Philosophy is the possible, formally indirect ontological corrective of the ontic and, in particular, of the pre-Christian content of basic theological concepts. But philosophy can be what it is without functioning factically as this corrective.<sup>38</sup>

The process of recovery appears to be one whereby the ontic is transformed into the ontological, or in more general terms, one whereby Philosophy recovers Religion. The world through the eyes

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<sup>33</sup> See Heidegger, *CPFE*, p. 285.

<sup>34</sup> Based on a lecture in Tübingen from March 9, 1927 and Marburg to February 14, 1928.

<sup>35</sup> See Martin Heidegger, « Phenomenology and Theology (1927) », in *Pathmarks*, [ed. W. McNeill], Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 1998, p. 53 [henceforth, Heidegger, *P&T*].

<sup>36</sup> See Heidegger, *P&T*, p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, *P&T*, p. 52.

<sup>38</sup> Heidegger, *P&T*, p. 53.

of this *Denker* is seen as one awaiting transformation ultimately into its ontological fulfillment. Any experience that precedes the Christian, is deemed ontic and would appear to be unrealized insofar as being is concerned. These then are the reflections of the *Denker*, preoccupied with the possibility of recovering the moment not only where Western Philosophy lapsed into identity-thinking, but also correcting that last moment before Christianity lapsed into what has become its weakening pseudo-ontology.

Along this path then it is possible to see how in relentlessly seeking out this pre-Christian content of basic theological concepts that the concepts themselves are effaced by the time of his later turn [*kehre*]. As regards the grounding of our *problématique*, it is also instructive to take note of the « Addition to the Pointers, » wherein this remarkable shift into poetics from Theology and Phenomenology is becoming more apparent :

Poetic saying is « Dasein », existence. This word, « Dasein », is used here in the traditional metaphysical sense. It signifies : presence.

Poetic thinking is being in the presence of... and for the god. Presence means : simple willingness that wills nothing, counts on no successful outcome. Being in the presence of... : purely letting the god's presence be said.<sup>39</sup>

An earlier pre-Christian aroma of presencing that arises out of, and presents itself within the theological overflow, here returns from within the ontic into the ontological realm. However the site of this return that presences is now possible within a poetic thinking. The development of Heidegger's thinking from the time of this early essay betrays the growing inadequacy of the categories of Philosophy and Religion in general, as well as Phenomenology and Theology in particular. This unrelenting search for ontological origins negates by necessity the correlation of Hebraism and Hellenism upon which Western thinking is founded. If this negation is embraced by the *Denker*, then the authenticity of this path representation of a poetics of the holy remains in question.

This shift or sharp turn [*Kehre*] in his thinking towards poetics is most apparent in hybrid works that attempt to unearth the poetic within thinking. The prelude and reprise of « The Thinker as Poet »

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<sup>39</sup> Heidegger, *P&T*, p. 61.

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[*Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*] (1947), for instance, are comprised of two terse stanzas, which then open to a series of ten further fragments. These fragmented stanzas are then followed by a commentary, reflective of an inner thinking concealed within the revealed poem itself. Consider the refusal to submit to conventional categories of genre within this first section of his hybrid work, *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* :

Wenn das frühe Morgenlicht still über den Bergen  
wächst...

Die Verdüsterung der Welt erreicht nie das Licht des  
Seyns.

Wir kommen für die Götter zu spät und zu früh  
für das Seyn. Dessen angefangenes Gedicht ist der  
Mensch.

Auf einen Stern zugehen, nur dieses.

Denken ist die Einschränkung auf einen Gedanken,  
der einst wie Stern am Himmel der Welt stehen  
bleibt.

When the early morning light quietly  
Grows above the mountains...

The world's darkening never reaches  
to the light of Being.

We are too late for the gods and too early  
for Being. Being's poem, Just begun, is man.

To head toward a star — this only.

To think is to confine yourself to a  
single thought that one day stands  
still like a star in the world's sky.<sup>40</sup>

Such a refusal of genre, apparent even in section no 257 of *Contributions*, bespeaks a withdrawal from thinking proper, yet through this negation only entering the realm of poetry in a fragmented way. Is it possible to deem such seemingly shorthand thinking as poetry ? Or is there a certain *poesis* dwelling within the refusal of such thinking in truth, as it resists even poetry *per se* ?

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<sup>40</sup> See Heidegger, *TTAP*, p. 6-7/p. 4.

As the thinker in truth inevitably makes the turn [*kehre*] towards poetry, then is it possible to realize what poets are for. Only poets are capable of envisioning the truths which cannot be contained by the concept-boundedness of thought. Whether the search for ontological origins can escape its own concept-boundedness the non-thinking of the Being of beings remains a question. It is precisely this multiplicity which concepts cannot contain that is liberated within the realm of words. Words, to the poet, still offer the possible to resist conceptualisation. It is thus in the constellation of the poem that words are welcomed to find their dwelling place.

But to truly enter into the realm of the poetic, it is the *Dichter*, Paul Celan, to whom we must in truth turn. It is this *Dichter* who considers the act of a *poesis* that crosses over, bordering on the subversive, to be the task at hand. The subversion stems from a Jewish poet writing out of the catastrophe within the memory evoked by the German language. The palette of this *Dichter* is the catastrophic memory dwelling within the German language as well as its symbolic forms, whose highest poetics is realized by Hölderlin. Yet even Hölderlin's *poesis* is in need of recovery from the inauthentic elucidations of the *Denker* who purges them of their ground. The resistance of the *Denker* to read any consciousness of « the Holy » in Hölderlin as emanating from the Judeo-Christian tradition remains the ultimate errancy on the part of Heidegger. This « unwillingness to acknowledge the vital role that Hebraism has played in Western notions of the “ the holy ” and of transcendence<sup>41</sup> » seriously compromises this *Denker*'s elucidations of the renowned German *Dichter*.

The authentic response, however, dwells in the *poesis* of another German *Dichter*, Paul Celan. Consider his poems, « Todtnauberg » or « Tübingen, Jänner » — so often the site of reflections and speculations<sup>42</sup>. These poems are but an example of a

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<sup>41</sup> See Hirsch, *MHPG*, p. 93.

<sup>42</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe offers an alternate, experiential French translation of these poems, « Todtnauberg », alongside Celan's other poetic meditation on place, « Tübingen, Jänner ». While Lacoue-Labarthe's elucidations of these two works remains an important contribution to a poetic attunement of Celan, much remains to be done. Aside from poems of place and memory, there are numerous poems of Celan's which are poetic responses to Hölderlin's poems. One glaring example is « Andenken », a poem of Hölderlin's elucidated by Heidegger, which finds a poetic response from Celan, entitled, « Andenken ». The elucidation at hand, however, slightly opposes Lacoue-Labarthe, who

precise, reflective response<sup>43</sup> of one *Dichter* within another, deviating from along the path of the *Denker*. There is even the response of one *Dichter* within another that is so intimate so as to name the new poem as an extension of the old. This is the case with Hölderlin's epic « Andenken » which concatenates in Celan's « Andenken. » With Hölderlin's wind that blows the seeking mariner upon his path, it is its memory that sustains the alienation of the journey and measures out the task of the poet :

Der Nordost wehet,  
Der liebste unter den Winden  
Mir, weil er feurigen Geist  
Und gute Fahrte verheisset den Schiffern...  
  
Noch denket das mir wohl und wie  
Die breiten Gipfel neiget  
  
Der Ulmwald, über die Mühl',  
Im Hofe aber wächst ein Feigenbaum...  
  
Ausgehst der Strom. Es nehmet aber

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believes « these poems to be untranslatable, including within their own language, and indeed, for this reason, invulnerable to commentary. They necessarily escape interpretation ; they forbid it ». See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poetry as Experience*, [tr. A. Tarnowski], Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1986, p. 13 [henceforth, Lacoue-Labarthe, *PaE*].

<sup>43</sup> The encounter between *Denker* and *Dichter*, according to Lacoue-Labarthe, may also be « fragility itself » leading to a break off of dialogue. The historical encounter took place in the summer of 1967 as Celan went to visit to Heidegger in his writing chalet or hut [*Hütte*], the thinker's refuge in the Black Forest, see Lacoue-Labarthe, *PaE*, p. 34. Yet Lacoue-Labarthe's insistence on a deeper *Denken-Dichtung* correlation is crucial for the investigation at hand : « It would be an understatement to say Celan had read Heidegger. Celan's poetry goes far beyond even an unreserved recognition of Heidegger ; I think one can assert that it is, in its entirety, a dialogue with Heidegger's thought. And essentially with the part of this thought that was a dialogue with Hölderlin's poetry. » Without Heidegger's commentary on Hölderlin, remarks Lacoue-Labarthe, much of Celan's response might remain incomprehensible. Moreover, it is crucial to realize the primacy of Heidegger's thinking in amplifying of Hölderlin's poetic belief : « [...] in the possibility that the god this word announced or prophesied might come. This, even though Heidegger maintained until the end, up through the last interviews granted to *Der Spiegel*, that is was also necessary to expect, and prepare for, the definitive decline or in-advent of the god ». See Lacoue-Labarthe, *PaE*, p. 33. Cf. Robert Gibbs, « Reading Heidegger : Destruction, Thinking, Return », in *Tainted Readings : Antisemitism and Cultural Heroes*, [ed. Nancy A. Horowitz], Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1994, p. 157-172 [henceforth, Gibbs, *RHDTR*].

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Und giebt Gedächtniss die See,  
Und die Lieb' auch heftet fleissige Augen.  
Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter.

The northeast blows,  
Of the winds the dearest  
To me, because a fiery spirit  
And a good voyage it promises to mariners...

Still I remember this well, and how  
The broad treetops of the elm wood  
Lean over the mill,  
But in the courtyard a fig-tree growing. ...

The river flows out. But it is  
The sea that takes and gives memory,  
And love too fixes attentive eyes  
But what remains is founded by the poets.<sup>44</sup>

Flowing seamlessly from this « Andenken » of Hölderlin, is the wave of Celan's « Andenken ». This poetic response of Celan is to take up the calling of memory's remains founded again by the poet. While Celan's « Andenken » journeys along this by-path that recalls the *poesis* dwelling at the origin of thinking [*an-denken*] marked by Hölderlin, it is nourished by the clouds of exile from the memory of Eden :

Feigengenährt sei das Herz,  
darin sich die Stunde besinnt  
auf das Mandelauge des Toten.  
Feigengenährt,

Schroff, im Anhauch des Meers,  
die gescheiterte  
Stirne,  
die Klippenschwester.

Und um dein Weisshaar vermehrt  
das vlies  
der sömmernden Wolke.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See Frederich Hölderlin, « Andenken », in *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry : Martin Heidegger*, [tr. K. Hoeller], Humanity Books, New York, 2000, p. 103-105.

<sup>45</sup> See Celan, *SPP*, p. 66-67. I have consulted with Felstiner's translation and used it as the basis of my own translation.

Heart fignourished,  
wherein an hour thinks back  
on the deadman's almond-eye.  
Fignourished.  
Steep, in the seawind's breath,  
the marooned  
forehead,  
the cliff-sister.

And full-blown by your white hair  
the fleece  
of the grazing cloud.

The intimacy of this poetic response stands in the sharpest contradistinction to Heidegger's hybrid call to : « To head toward a star — this only », Celan's *poesis* stands at the site of this very star — remembering the moment before thinking — in its ownmost in his own poem. An apparently hypostatic icon for the thinker is still able to yield its multiplicity as a living memory of myriads as the symbol for the poet's task.

The singularity of the thinker and his thought could not be more clear, for :

Denken ist die Einschränkung auf einen Gedanken,  
der einst wie Stern am Himmel der Welt stehen  
bleibt.

To think is to confine yourself to a  
single thought that one day stands  
still like a star in the world's sky. <sup>46</sup>

Yet, for the poet reality is one of withdrawal from such singularity by way of a revealed concealment. This poetic path is one that negates confinement to a single thought. Such a confinement to a single thought — the hypostasis of the constellation — bespeaks the larger movement towards this ontological recovery of Being. When a solitary thought is privileged above others in its standing, « [s]till like a star in the world's sky », the possibility of beings' plurality is arrested and effaced. In a contrast of the sharpest terms, consider how the poet sees the selfsame star :

Arnika, Augentrost, der  
Trunk aus dem Brunnen mit dem

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<sup>46</sup> See Heidegger, *TTAP*, p. 6-7/p. 4.

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Sternwürfel drauf,

Arnica, Eyebright, the  
drink from the well with the  
star-die on top,<sup>47</sup>

This star — perhaps adorning the spring itself<sup>48</sup> or seen from an intimate distance as the sky reflected upon the water — is envisioned through a perspective of multifarious reflectivity, not merely as *die Stern* but as « star-die on top » [*Sternwürfel drauf*]. While singular from its normally paired form as dice, even in its iconicity as a die, its diaphanous nature still resonates as a symbol. While this icon can serve the gods, it can also give way to the experience of beings within God's constellation. Even by way of the seeming singularity in which the thinker presents it, in approaching the thinker, Heidegger's hut, the poet again is open to see the limitless within such a delimitation. This moment of resemblance of the star to the die is intertwined with all ensouled creatures, including its surrounding vegetation. Seeing the breath of life in every creature, in this instance of the poem, is what gives the

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<sup>47</sup> See Paul Celan, « Todtnauberg », in *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, [tr. J. Felstiner], W. W. Norton, New York, 2001, p. 314-315 [henceforth, Celan, *SPP*]. Lacoue-Labarthe makes the following remark regarding this motif, which does not take into account the primary correlation of Heidegger : « [...] the image of the spray of stars above the man drinking from the fountain, throwing back his head to the sky : dice thrown like the “ golden sickle ” abandoned by Hugo's “ harvester of eternal summer ”. And this of course could be a gesture toward Büchner's Lenz, the figure of the poet, of whom “ The Meridian ” recalls, “ Now and then he experienced a sense of uneasiness because he was not able to walk on his head ”, only to add, “ Whoever walks on his head, ladies and gentlemen, whoever walks on his head has heaven beneath him as an abyss ”. An echo, perhaps, of Hölderlin's strange proposition : “ Man kann auch in die Höhe *fallen*, so wie in die Tiefe ” (On can as well *fall* into the height as into depth). One could surely go very far in this direction, as in many another. But that is not what the poem says, if indeed it is still a poem. What the poem says is, first, a language : words. [...] What “ Todtnauberg ” speaks about, then, is this : the language in which Auschwitz was pronounced, and which pronounced Auschwitz. »

<sup>48</sup> Such is the speculative elucidation is proffered by Gadamer, who recognizes this star-shaped ornament as a good omen for the cast of fate. See H. G. Gadamer, « Under the Shadow of Nihilism », in *Hans-Georg Gadamer on education, poetry, and history : applied hermeneutics*, [ed. by D. Misgeld and G. Nicholson ; tr. by L. Schmidt and M. Reuss], SUNY Press, New York, 1992, p. 122 [henceforth, Gadamer, *EPHAH*].

impression of Celan's poetry as being *pneumatically* rather than *thematically* Jewish. Yet as the singularity of thought requiring a delimitation of the limitless persists, the poetic statement liberates an envisioning through the limitless constellation<sup>49</sup>. In the footsteps of the Psalmist, for the poet, the breath of every living word is a *mise-en-abîme éclatée*<sup>50</sup> or an exploded limitless refraction. Along this path of elucidation, Gadamer (Heidegger's student) offers a most compelling take on this promenade. This walking that treads over the « log-/paths in the high moor », is of the Stübenwasen : « [F]orest sward, unlevelled/orchis and orchis, singly », symbolizing the unlevelled path trodden by « thinkers or us who are thinking<sup>51</sup> ». This elucidation opens up the symbolic landscape, wherein every experience reveals its limitless shards adrift from the symbol itself. Unlike the rigid lexicons of Romantic poetry, wherein landscapes retain a fixed register of symbolic meanings, in Celan's poetry the symbol and the experience symbolizing it are intertwined in a web of intimate meaning within their own time. Through such intimacy, one is adrift in a seemingly limitless sea of meanings anchored in the temporality of their saying. The poem is a portal to this limitlessness, but not the infinite itself. The experience of the poem opens up to this possibility of an inner dialogue which thinking lacks. This poem « Todtnauberg » places before the reader the impossible possibility of the sign — *pardon*.

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<sup>49</sup> See Theodor W. Adorno, « Constellations », in *Negative Dialectics*, [tr. E. B. Ashton], Continuum, New York, 1973, p. 162 : « By themselves, constellations represent from without what the concept has cut away within : the “ more ” which the concept is equally desirous and incapable of being. By gathering around object of cognition, the concepts potentially determine the object's interior. They attain, in thinking, what was necessarily excised from thinking. » A most intriguing application of Adorno's thinking to Celan's poetics has been recently shared with me by Ian Balfour. In his draft monograph, Balfour compares the notion of truth from the perspective of both the critical thinker and the poet. A recollection of Adorno's allusions and fragmentary remarks would then suggest Celan as « writing the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz (but not only after Auschwitz), a poetry of silence, of muteness even, a writing of shadows with stones, a poetry in tropical motion no longer traversing the stable ground of meaning. »

<sup>50</sup> Mieke Bal, « Réfléchir la réflexion », in *Femmes Imaginaires : l'Ancien Testament au risque d'une narratologie critique*, Brèches, Québec, 1985, p. 199.

<sup>51</sup> See Gadamer, *EPHAAH*, p. 122.

The lost pathos of redemption possible in *pardon* that no thinker in the West has ever been able to say, especially Heidegger, concatenates through the poem's landscape of disappointment<sup>52</sup>. But this unforgivable<sup>53</sup> disappointment is not limited to the thinker,

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<sup>52</sup> The utter incompatibility of thinking with a poetics of alterity is expressed succinctly by Lacoue-Labarthe. See Lacoue-Labarthe, *PaE*, p. 38 : « That is why the poem also says, and says simply, the meaning of the encounter with Heidegger — this is, its disappointment. I suspected as much, but I confess that I was told this, by a friend, who had it on best authority ». To Heidegger the thinker — the German thinker — Celan the poet — the Jewish poet — came with a single yet precise entreaty : that the thinker who listened to poetry ; the same thinker who had compromised himself, however briefly and even in the least shameful way, with just what would result in Auschwitz ; the thinker who, however abundant his discussion with National Socialism, had observed total silence on Auschwitz, as history will recall ; that he say just a single word : a word about pain. From there, perhaps, all might be still possible. Not « life », which is always possible, which remained possible, as we know, even in Auschwitz, but existence, poetry, speech. Language. That is, relation to others.

<sup>53</sup> See Lacoue-Labarthe, *PaE*, p. 36-37. While this comment resists commentary, the present investigation seeks to delve into the task of elucidating the poetics and its response to thinking. At times Lacoue-Labarthe's over-reads Celan as the poet who forever writes his survival from the Holocaust through the German language, thereby eclipsing any further poetic possibilities. For a more balanced reading, cf. John Felstiner, *Paul Celan : Poet, Survivor, Jew*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995. Cf. Hirsch, *MHPG*, p. 80-97. Hirsch's scathing critique of postmodernism, postmodernist literary criticism and philosophy as well as deconstruction stems from a responsible critique Heideggerian thought that composes these movements. However, Hirsch's questioning further challenges the possibility of an authentic reading of Heidegger in our time : « Is it possible that a man of Heidegger's intelligence would have joined the Nazi party without having read *Mein Kampf*? And is it conceivable that so powerful a thinker could have read *Mein Kampf* without recognizing Hitler's racist mentality and his unconcealed racist policies? And could so deep a thinker have taken on the rectorship of a great university without realizing that in doing so he was not only approving, but becoming an accomplice to, the implementation of the murderous racist policies that Hitler had enunciated in *Mein Kampf*? Is it possible, further, that there should be no connection between the Nazi effort to murder God in Auschwitz and Heidegger's attempt to deconstruct the metaphysical tradition in Western philosophy, which is to say his attempt to destroy that fusion of Hellenism and Hebraism which is Christianity? In fact, are we not bound in all honesty to say that the real-world endpoint of Heideggerian (and now Derridean and de Manian) deconstruction of the logocentric tradition is precisely Auschwitz? » See Hirsch, *MHPG*, p. 86-87. It is this within the context of these crucial questions that Hirsch proposes : « [...] we scuttle the vague and misleading category, " postmodern ", for the historically rooted term, " post-Auschwitz " ». Hirsch, *MHPG*, p. 87. It is significant then, that upon reflection, the Derridean acolyte Lacoue-Labarthe

but also to the god whose absent presence forever marks Auschwitz. At this juncture, it would be fitting to contrast an earlier moment with the 1967 « encounter » between Heidegger and Celan in the Black Forest writing hut *vis-à-vis* hope :

Einer Hoffnung, heute,  
auf eines Denkenden  
(un-  
gesäumt kommendes)  
Wort  
im Herzen,

A hope, today,  
for a thinker's  
(un-  
delayed coming)  
word  
in the heart,<sup>54</sup>

The earlier moment where this motif of hope also resonates is in the poem which marks Celan's « encounter » with Nelly Sachs at the Zurich Hotel in 1960. Consider the traces of this impossible hope in an earlier poetic incarnation. Recall that for Celan every poem stands in the mystery of the encounter with the other :

Von deinem Gott war die Rede, ich sprach  
gegen ihn, ich  
liess das Herz, das ich hatte,

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(see Hirsch, *MHPG*, p. 278) rescinds his initial interpretation of Celan's hope and consequent disappointment with the *Denker* : « Herein lies Heidegger's irreparable offense : not in his declarations of 1933-34, which we can understand without approving, but in his silence on the extermination. He should have been the first to say something. And I was wrong to think initially that it was enough to ask for forgiveness. It is absolutely unforgivable. That is what I should have said. In any case, there is a risk that thought will never recover from this silence ». See Lacoue-Labarthe, *PaE*, p. 122. On the limits of forgiveness that confronts every Jew as survivor, cf. Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower : On the possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*, Schocken Books, New York, 1998. In light of the question of hope for forgiving the unforgivable, its impossibility is further complicated by the « confrontation that took place between the anti-Enlightenment, antihumanist Heidegger, and the humanist, humane Ernst Cassirer at a Kant symposium at Davos in 1929, where Heidegger is reputed to have refused the hand of reconciliation offered to him by Cassirer after their debate. » See Hazard Adams, « Thinking Cassirer », *Criticism*, vol. XXV, no 3, Summer 1983, p. 193. See Hirsch, *MHPG*, p. 279, ff. 22.

<sup>54</sup> See Celan, *SPP*, p. 314-315.

hoffen :  
auf  
sein höchstes, umröcheltes, sein  
haderndes Wort —

Our talk was of your God, I spoke  
against him, I let the heart  
I had  
hope :  
for  
his highest, death-rattled, his  
wrangling word —<sup>55</sup>

The poet refuses to let the god, « your God », to be freed of a decomposing faith. If poetry is indeed to be written after Auschwitz, the *Dichter* must confront this decomposition within the encounter of the poem. While the *Denker* is meandering towards the illusion of ontological purity, the *Dichter* confronts the nothingness of this ontic abyss. Inevitably the thinker must succumb to the delimitation of thought in relation to the limitless facets of the poetic statement. Even the *Denker's* admission to meandering marks his path :

Wenn es von den Hängen des Hochtals, darüber  
langsam die Herden ziehen, glockt und glockt...

Der Dichtungscharakter die Denkens ist noch ver-  
hüllt.

Wo er sich zeigt, gleicht er für lange Zeit der Utopie  
eines halbpoetischen Verstandes.

Aber das denkende Dichten ist in der Wahrheit die  
Topologie des Seyns.

Sie sagt diesem die Ortschaft seines Wesens.

When the cowbells keep tingling from  
the slopes of the mountain valley  
Where the herds wander slowly...

The poetic character of thinking  
is still veiled over.

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<sup>55</sup> See Celan, *SPP*, p. 140-141. The present elucidation is indebted to Lacoue-Labarthe's insightful juxtaposition of these two fragments within the course of his own reflections. See Lacoue-Labarthe, *PaE*, p. 107-108.

Where it shows itself, it is for a  
long time like the utopism of  
a half-poetic intellect.

But poetry that thinks is in truth  
the topology of Being.

This topology tells Being the  
whereabouts of its actual  
presence.<sup>56</sup>

What is salient to the thinker here is not poetry *per se*, but the « poetic character of thinking » in all its veiling. To recover such a « poetry that thinks » is akin to founding anew the foundation of Being. The presencing of Being is only possible through the knowledge intrinsic to a monolithic topology. Whereas the thinker is mapping out a destination amidst the wandering, it is the poet who envisions the constellation through poetic reflection. In the wake of the madman in Nietzsche's opening parable decrying : « God is dead [*Gott ist tot!*] ! God remains dead [*Gott bleibt tot!*] ! » the thinker then must seek a presencing of Being that is excised from the decomposing God. Not so for the *Dichter* !

Why then this encounter between the *Denker* and the *Dichter* in the poem at hand. The poet encounters the thinker already dwelling within the place named *Todtnauberg* — a site built upon the ruins of death, wherein the possibility of « God is dead » [*Gott ist tot!*] engendered by a being-towards-death [*Sein-zum-Tode*]. This is the *Tode* concatenating within *Todtnauberg*. Amidst this decomposition are signs of life sprouting forth. The first things that spring into the poet's line of vision are Arnica and Eyebright. Both symbols are in reality native medicinal herbs growing wild in these high mountains of the Black Forest, as Gadamer has remarked, creating the setting of the poem. However, the poet is more than merely an observer of nature, seeing that both plants are intimately related to the restoration of vision<sup>57</sup>. Here the envisioning capacity

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<sup>56</sup> See Heidegger, *TTAP*, p. 22-23/p. 6-7.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Altmann, an editor friendly with Celan, remarked the following about the poem at hand : « “ Todtnauberg ” is, strictly speaking, nothing other than description of the journey to the philosopher's house : flowers, landscape, fountain, a trip in a car. But as always with Celan, each words hides a world of images and ideas. “ Arnica, balm for the eyes ” is at once an early summer field flower and a medicinal plant, the sick man's hope of cure and consolation.

of the *Dichter* takes leave of any vision that may ensue from thinking.

Vision is crucial to poetic envisioning. Arnica or Leopard's Bane is a curative before and after traumatic shock, providing a path to recovery from dreams of death and mutilated bodies. Such horrific anxiety would forever mark the imaginality of a Holocaust survivor and poet, like Celan. This vigilance in keeping the eyes open<sup>58</sup> comes in the face of unbearable pain incessantly recalled in seeing reality. But those eyes that are unable to see such unbearable suffering within the world of beings could be said to be blind. This is where Eyebright (or Euphrasia) functions as a curative for diseases affecting sight<sup>59</sup>. The wordthing leads the frequent inclination to blink as the lids burn and swell, while the eyes water incessantly<sup>60</sup>. This seemingly innocuous Black Forest herb conceals and salves a limitless weeping. Such limitless weeping is second only to the wailing of that indwelling within the godhead itself, the *Shekhina* [Presence], which remains incessantly in exile. Weeping to the point of becoming eyeless, moreover, concatenates in the Zoharic parable proffered by the old man to Rabbis Hiyya and Jose in the form of a riddle : « Who is a ravishing maiden without eyes [*mahu u'limtah shapirta v'leit iyyinin*], her body concealed and revealed ?<sup>61</sup> » The source of speech-thinking [*sprache-denken*] is this ravishing maiden, the *Shekhina* [Presence]. Yet the distance of this source in incessant exile means that thinking is no longer possible. Rather the waters welling up and releasing enable the one endowed with vision the possibility of overcoming the limits imposed by thinking. In tracing the trajectory of these tears back to their source in *Binah* or the Supernal Mother, the eyeless one or the

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Water drawn from the star-crowned fountain, which is similar, we might say, to a miraculous source. » See Lacoue-Labarthe, *PaE*, p. 109-110.

<sup>58</sup> See W. Boericke, *Pocket Manual of Homeopathic Materia Medica and Repertory*, B. Jain Publishgin Ltd., India, 1927, p. 77 [henceforth, Boericke, *MM*]. I am indebted to Jennifer R. Glazer, N.D. for her expertise on homeopathic medicine as well as sharing this manual with me for the purpose of this elucidation. It remains an essential tool in the elucidation of Celan's poetic *œuvre*.

<sup>59</sup> See Boericke, *MM*, p. 279-280.

<sup>60</sup> Boericke, *MM*, p. 279.

<sup>61</sup> Zohar II, 95a. See Daniel C. Matt, « The Old Man and the Ravishing Maiden », in *The Essential Kabbalah : The Heart of Jewish Mysticism*, Harper Collins, New York, 1995, p. 138.

*Shekhina* [Terrestrial Mother], is able to see anew. Such seeing is a poetic envisioning. But this envisioning needs a path, and this is the path to be explored momentarily in what Celan calls, *Das Meridian*.

Yet there are still the myriad of beings who have eyes and see, still many of this myriad move through the world veiled by blindness. The poet who in the cycle *Zeitgehöft* is « not yet/de-eyed » [*noch nicht/entaügt*], then is paradoxically proffering this blindness as a limitation of thinking. It is only the poet, like the prophet, who cries out to circumcise the eyes from their blindness, so as to dwell in the purity of envisioning. If the myriad of beings that act to presence a Presence into the world is de-eyed, then what hope is left for thinking to envision ? On such a muted plane of existence, there are enormous limits to what thinking can actually make one see. Yet in the face of this blinding, traumatic decomposition of the divine within existence, the poet still envisions the possibility of :

einer Hoffnung, heute,  
auf eines Denkenden  
(un-  
gesäumt kommendes)  
Wort  
im Herzen,

A hope, today,  
for a thinker's  
(un-  
delayed coming)  
word  
in the heart,<sup>62</sup>

While the meaning of this hope resists delimitation, this is a yearning for the redemption of thinking that remains so blind, so *de-eyed* to truth. The blindness of thinking is a function of its inability to return or dwell within a diverse constellation. While the thinker claims : « But poetry that thinks is in truth/the topology of Being », only the poet would decry the sacrifice of truths intrinsic to ontologizing a singular truth. The hope is for a return to the plurality of effaced beings upon which the *abgrund* of Being is

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<sup>62</sup> See Celan, *SPP*, p. 314-315.

grounded. For the poet, however, there still concatenates a hope. This is a hope of redressing the thinker's excision of God from Being by restoring the indwelling of beings within god.

But there is more that encircles the restoration of this divine indwelling within beings. For Celan, the revelation dwells in the circularity of language itself. The poem is an « encounter » of resistance along the impossible path towards truths, as he proffers in his remarks regarding the meridian :

Ich finde das Verbindende und wie das Gedicht zur Begegnung  
Führende.

Ich finde etwas — wie die Sprache — Immaterielles, aber  
Irdisches, Terrestrisches, etwas Kreisförmiges, über die beiden  
Pole in sich selbst Zurückkehrendes und dabei — sogar die Tropen  
Durchkreuzendes — : ich finde... einen Meridian.

I find something that binds and that leads to encounter, like a  
poem.

I find something — like language — immaterial yet earthly,  
terrestrial, something circular, returning upon itself by way of both  
poles and thereby — happily — even crossing tropics (and tropes) :  
I find... a meridian.<sup>63</sup>

This crossing over of the delimitations posed by tropics and tropes in the imaginal mappings of our existence is the task of the Hebrew Poet [*m'shorer 'ivri*] as an *'ivri* or boundary crosser. What rumbles in its unleveling experience alongside the path of thinking trodden with the thinker in the poem, *Taudtnauberg*, here is opened to the limitlessness constellation of *der Meridian* [the meridian]. Why is this symbol of the meridian so crucial to the poetic experience of

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<sup>63</sup> See Paul Celan, *Der Meridian*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1999, p. 12 : 50b-c. See Celan, *SPP*, p. 413 [henceforth, Celan, *DM* ; German pagination/English pagination]. That my initial intuition of the centrality that *Der Meridian* plays within Celan's response to Heidegger is shared by Lacoue-Labarthe was only confirmed upon nearing the end of the investigation at hand. See Lacoue-Labarthe, *PaE*, p. 108-109 : « Celan could not fail to think of Heidegger and the path motif when writing “ The Meridian ”, and even “ The Bremen Speech ”. Not only poetry itself (all poems), but also the thought of poetry appears there as paths. [...] I remain convinced that the “ dialogue ” with Heidegger is critical, at least for the issue of poetry's essence. That is why the encounter of 1967, in this very place, took on such importance in Celan's eyes. »

the poet ? How might the poetics of the meridian enact a liberation from a decomposition of thinking God ?

In conjuring the meridian, Celan is drawing upon an imaginal symbol *par excellence*, rooted somewhere between the terrestrial and the immaterial, between existence and the imagination. A meridian is an imaginary line encircling the north and south points of the horizon, passing directly through the zenith. It thus acts, in its imaginal capacity, as a reference line for a transit. The transit is the shadow emitted by the satellites of the constellation. It traces the passage of a celestial body or a point on the celestial sphere across the meridian of an observer<sup>64</sup>, and moreover the one who dares envisioning. At the time of transit or passage, the point on the celestial sphere must be at its highest point in the sky. At this very point of passing over, for Celan there is this incessant turn away from the language of thinking. A re-turn to the language of words that brings forth envisioning is still possible. The poet takes leave of the earlier « unlevelled » path of thinkers in their heading towards this unity of the fourfold. From the conceptual time-space thinking of the thinker — the veritable site unifying the fourfold<sup>65</sup> — Celan's turn [*kehre*] is away from such a singular inter-relation with beings in the world. Rather the poet's relation to the poem is more of a re-turn [*heim-kehren*] to the elemental nature of its letters that bring forth wondrous possibilities within words. It is this re-turn [*heim-kehren*] into the constellation of the meridian that itself opens as a by-path [*Um-Wege*] to the poet meandering along the thinker's path to oblivion :

Geht man also, wenn man an Gedichte denkt, geht man Gedichten solche Wege ? Sind diese Wege nur Um-Wege, Umwege von dir zu dir ? Aber es sind ja zugleich auch, unter wie vielen anderen Wegen, Wege, auf denen die Sprache stimmhaft wird, es sind Begegnungen, Wege einer Stimme zu einem wahrnehmenden Du, kreatürliche Wege, Daseinentwürfe vielleicht, ein

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<sup>64</sup> See R. Smith & K. Woodward, s.v. « meridian », in the *Derby & District Astronomical Society*, England, 2002, <http://www.derby-astro-soc.fsnet.co.uk/>.

<sup>65</sup> See Martin Heidegger, « The Thing », in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. [tr. A. Hofstadter], Perennial Library, New York, 1971, p. 73 [henceforth, Heidegger, *Thing*] : « In the gift of the outpouring, earth and sky, divinities and mortals dwell together at once. These four, at one because of what they are, belong together. Preceding everything that is present, they are enfolded into a single fourfold ».

Sichvorausschicken zu sich selbst, auf der Such nach sich selbst...  
Eine Art Heimkehr.

Then does one, in thinking of poems, does one walk such paths with poems ? Are these paths only by-paths, bypaths, from thou to thou ? Yet at the same time, among how many other paths, they're also paths on which language gets a voice, they are encounters, paths of a voice to a perceiving Thou, creaturely paths, sketches of existence perhaps, a sending oneself ahead toward oneself, in search of oneself... A kind of re-turning.<sup>66</sup>

*Eine Art Heimkehr* is not (*contra* Felstiner) a homecoming *per se*, but really refers to the by-path away from thought, namely the return [*heim-kehren*] within poetry rather than the turn [*kehre*] from thought. Recall that as *Denker*, Heidegger seeks the pre-Christian content of basic theological concepts of hope and the *parousia* to measure out the collision of the « last god » and the human in the midpoint of being ; by contrast, as *Dichter*, Celan seeks a re-turn that while in German is rendered as *heim-kehren*, finds its expression in Hebrew as *teshuva*<sup>67</sup> — to dialogue with others from within the self, whereby :

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<sup>66</sup> See Celan, *DM*, p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> Although the course of the elucidation at hand the centrality of « re-turn » has been revealed through a close reading of Celan, in retrospect there are the concatenations of readings shared with me by my teachers. For keen poetic attunement to « response » [*teshuva*] in Zoharic Kabbalah and its correlation to the poetics of Hölderlin and the thinking of Heidegger, see Elliot R. Wolfson, « Fore/giveness On the Way : Nesting in the Womb of Response », in *Transgression, Punishment, Responsibility, Forgiveness : Graven Images*, 1998, p. 153-169. For a remptive re-reading of Heidegger as an act of responsible « re-turn », see Gibbs, *RHDTR*, p. 157-172. Therein Gibbs incorporates the « returning » of *teshuvah* as a mode of re-reading Heidegger's text, in the face of the thinker's own failure to engage in such return, see Gibbs, *RHDTR*, p. 157-172 : « The doubled responsibility of returning, the responsibility to return and the enacted responsibility of a past moment at which I failed to respond, is itself a response to the destruction Heidegger calls for. Despite his engagement with questions of disclosing and covering up being, of a remembering and a forgetting of the question of being, Heidegger failed to accept responsibility for his own tradition. [...] Without transcending the notion of responsibility, the attempt to reread against the grain of effective history falls back on the murky invocation of " primordial sources ". This dialogue of returning and destruction thus would lead to a conversation concerning Romanticism in distinction from ethical transcendence. » Gibbs, *RHDTR*, p. 168-169. Rather than being a recovery of the same, which typifies Heidegger's « return » Gibbs' strategy of re-ponding : « In a dialogue to

From Thinking the Last god of Thought to the poetic God Without End...

Ich suche auch, denn ich bin ja weider da, wo ich begonnen habe,  
den Ort meiner eigenen Herkunft.  
Ich suche das alles mit wohl sehr ungenauem, weil unruhigem  
Finger auf der Landkarte — auf einer Kinder-Landkarte, wie ich  
gleich gestehen muß.  
Keiner dieser Orte ist zu finden, es gibt sie nicht, aber ich weiß, wo  
es sie, zumal jetzt, geben müßte, und...ich finde etwas !

It was...myself I encountered. ...  
I also seek — for I'm back again where I began — the place of my  
own origin.  
I am seeking all of what with an inexact finger because uneasy  
finger on the map — on a children's map, I must admit.  
None of these places is to be found, they do not exist, but I know  
where, especially now, they would have to exist, and ...I find  
something !<sup>68</sup>

To take leave of this by-path [*Um-Wege*] seeking a re-turn [*heim-kehren*] or *teshuva* from exile is the Jewish content that founds this basic theological experience. Being at home is to be in « the place of non-place » or the '*attar d'lo 'attar* in Lurianic discourse. Yet being in « the place of non-place » is only possible once one has passed over and broken through the reality of « the place of un-being » or '*attar d'lo havai*<sup>69</sup>. These pre-ontological gestures take place within the intimate constellation of community wherein the poet and the concreteness of the poem dwell.

Moreover, when moral conscience is « affected to its marrow [*atteinte dans sa moelle*] » the by-path [*Um-Wege*] is towards the constellation of the « objective order of the community to obtain this intimacy of deliverance [*cette intimité de la délivrance*]<sup>70</sup> ». What the lyricism in Celan's poetry of pain seeks to uncover is the

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assume a responsibility for the difference, for the failure of ourselves, and for the failure of others », echoes *das Meridian* and *Umwege* of Celan. However, despite Celan's difference from Heidegger, this poet is still vitally concerned with mystical contemplation of language within this dialogue of re-sponse (*contra* Gibbs, *Ibid.*, p. 171).

<sup>68</sup> Celan, *DM*, p. 11 : 45f ; p. 12 : 49b-d/p. 412-413.

<sup>69</sup> See Hayyim Vital, *Sha'ar Ma'amarai Rash"Bi. Qol Qitvai ha-Ari*, Jerusalem, 1988, p. 105a-111a.

<sup>70</sup> See Emmanuel Lévinas, « Envers l'Autre », in *Lectures Talmudiques*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1977, p. 39. *Ibid.*, [tr. A. Aronowicz], Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1994, p. 17. [Henceforth, Lévinas, *TTO* ; French pagination/English pagination].

by-path [*Um-Wege*] of the « encounter. » While this poetry cries out for the destruction of all community<sup>71</sup>, it also calls forth to its redemptive restoration. From the temporal perspective, the set point in time within the temporal meridian of Sabbaths, is the Sabbath of Sabbath or the Day of At-onement. This center of centers — the true indwelling of exile — is forever enopening to the needs of « the damaged moral conscience to reach its intimacy and reconquer the integrity that no one can reconquer for it<sup>72</sup> ». This dialectic of the intimate collective of beings maps out the constellation — « the place of un-being » or '*attar d'lo havai* — from whence the poet envisions the poem to re-turn [*heim-kehren*] :

Das Gedicht wird — unter welchen Bedingungen ! — zum Gedicht eines — immer noch — Wahrnehmenden, dem Ercheinenden Zugewandten, dieses Erscheinende Befragenden und Ansprechenden ; es wird Gespräch — oft ist es verzweifertes Gespräch.

Erst im Raum dieses Gespräch konstituiert sich das Angesprochene, versammelt es sich um das es ansprechende und nennende Ich. Aber in diese Gegenwart bringt das Angesprochene und durch Nennung gleichsam zum Du Gewordene auch sein Anderssein mit. Noch im Hier und Jetzt des Gedichts — das Gedicht selbst hat ja immer nur diese eine, einmalige, punktuelle Gegenwart — , noch in dieser Unmittelbarkeit und Nähe läßt es das ihm, dem Anderen, Eigenste mitsprechen : dessen Zeit.

A poem — under what conditions ! — becomes the poem (ever yet) perceiving, facing phenomena, questioning and addressing these phenomena ; it becomes dialogue — often despairing dialogue.

What is addressed takes shape only in the space of this dialogue, gathers around the I addressing and naming it. But what's addressed and is now become a Thou through naming, as it were, also brings along its otherness into this present. Even a poem's here and now — the poem itself really has only this one, unique,

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<sup>71</sup> See Lacoue-Labarthe, *PaE*, p. 100 : « Could this be the starting point for trying to understand the problem of what Celan calls “ the encounter ” ? But to what community could (the poem's) solitude, the lack of community, be related in the most sociable manner ? Perhaps the one that incarnates not the lack, but the destruction of community. Such a designation goes, not exclusively but first, to the Jewish people. »

<sup>72</sup> See Lévinas, *TTO*, p. 17-39.

momentary present — even in this immediacy and nearness it lets the Other's ownmost quality speak : its time.<sup>73</sup>

The possibility of the by-path of re-turn [*heim-kehren*] or *teshuva* that opens through the poem is derived from the time of true discernment or *Binah*<sup>74</sup>. At this temporal incursion into the poem's temporality, the presencing of Presence or *Shekinah* opens in its everlasting ground through this discernment<sup>75</sup>, as seen in the verse « This shall be an everlasting statute for you [to make atonement for the Israelites because of all their sins once a year] » (Lev, 16 : 34). But re-turn [*heim-kehren*] or *teshuva* is prominent the moment its wholeness is broken into, peeling forth a meridian of nine days<sup>76</sup>. This encircled time is dedicated to self-restoration through attunement to alterity's temporality. Face-to-face with this alterity through the very words and their time within the poem, the cavity once filled with ground, foundation and splendor, is ruptured<sup>77</sup>.

In opening to the discernment of language that takes time — from one letter to its other — words in their alterity come forth in the responsive possibilities of dialogue [*Gespräch*]. In the immediacy of a poem's « here and now » [*Hier und Jetzt*], the Other's ownmost quality speaks [*dem Anderen, Eigenste mitsprechen*]. Whatever is discerned to be spoken in the poem takes place through its time [*dessen Zeit*]. This dialectic of discernment within the intimate collective of beings maps out the constellation wherein words come to dialogue in their ownmost alterity as letters. Inscribed within these building blocks of language is alterity. Whereas for the *Denker*, language is the house of being, by

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<sup>73</sup> See Celan, *DM*, p. 9 : 36a-b/p. 412-413.

<sup>74</sup> This sphere of *Binah* [discernment] is the source of supernal judgement on *Yom ha-Qippurim* [Day of At-onement], alluded to in the exegesis of the verse « From all your sins before the Tetragram you shall be cleansed » (Lev XVI, 30). To immediately precede is revealed in the words « before the Tetragram », so experience of the emanation of *Tiferet* [splendor] is possible once *re-turn* to the words of dialogue within system of language has taken place. See *Zohar*, III, 67a.

<sup>75</sup> *Zohar*, III, 69a.

<sup>76</sup> Traditionally referred to as '*Asseret y'mai teshuva* or the ten days of re-turn, marking the time between the *Rosh ha-Shana* [the Year's Incipience] and *Yom ha-Kippurim* [Day of At-onement].

<sup>77</sup> See Hayyim Vital, « Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot », Derush no 4, in *Inyan Yom ha-Kippurim*. In *Sha'ar ha-Haqdamot. Qol Qitvai ha-Ari*, Jerusalem, 1988, p. 288b.

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contrast, here for the *Dichter*, the alterity of letters that compose words open up the temporality of dialogue between beings.

The poem is forever taking place as it discerns the grounding each letter's temporal alterity. The temporality that takes place is the temporality of re-turn [*heim-kehren*] to a wholeness always already broken into. Thus Celan's poetics of alterity [*das Gedichte dem Anderen*]. This is the hope for a time of discerning restoration, that eternal moment for the indwelling of beings within god, by way of re-turn [*heim-kehren*] to creaturely by-paths [*kreatürliche Um-wege*]...