

HEIDEGGER, GOD(s), DANGER AND the EARTHLY SALVATION

[Heidegger, Tanrı(lar), Tehlike ve Dünyevi Kurtuluş]

Musa Duman

Yrd. Doç. Dr., M. Artuklu Üniversitesi, Felsefe Bölümü

m.duman67@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In this article, I examine a number of closely connected issues in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*; god, gods, decision, the modern danger, and the salvation of humanity which is associated with the upsurge of a radically different age of being, what he calls, "the other beginning". Heidegger situates the other beginning in the context of the emergency of a profound danger linked with the modern technological world. This prospect of danger calls for a (radical) decision in which human beings need to participate. Heidegger seems to present an intimating, refusing and passing god as the only alternative beyond the onto-theo-logical tradition that lies behind the modern world. In this connection, I also suggest that the other beginning as "the history of the preservation of god" represents a sort of salvific conception, in a sense, a salvation from objectifying reason. As I see it, Heidegger offers the last god and gods as an antidote to the hegemony of objectifying reason.

Keywords: The last god, gods, being, refusal, the future ones, decision, Hölderlin.

ÖZET

Bu makalede Heidegger'in *Contributions to Philosophy* adlı eserinde birbiriyle yakından bağlantılı bir dizi konuyu inceliyorum; tanrı, tanrılar, karar, modern tehlike ve onun “başka başlangıç” dediği, varlığın radikal bir şekilde farklı bir döneminin yükselişiyle ilişkili olan insanlığın kurtuluşu. Heidegger bu başka başlangıcı modern teknolojik dünyayla ilişkili derin tehlikenin aciliyeti bağlamına yerleştirir. Bu tehlike görüşü insanların katılmaları gereken (radikal) bir kararı icap ettirir. Heidegger, modern dünyanın altında yatan onto-teo-lojik geleneğin ötesinde tek alternatif olarak yakınlaşan, uzaklaşan ve geçmekte olan bir tanrıyı sunar gibidir. Bu bağlantıda, başka başlangıcın “tanrının muhafaza edilmesi tarihi” olarak, bir tür kurtarıcı kavramsallaştırması, bir anlamda nesnelleştirici akıldan kurtulma kavramsallaştırmasını temsil ettiğini önerisini de getiriyorum. Kanımca Heidegger son tanrı ve tanrılar nesnelleştirici aklın hegemonyasına bir panzehir olarak sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Son Tanrı, Tanrılar, varlığın kökensel anlamı, gelecek olanlar, karar, Hölderlin.

INTRODUCTION

In the final part of the *Contributions to Philosophy*¹, Heidegger speaks of the relation between god and gods in terms of undecidability (*Unentschiedenheit*). Strangely enough, this issue that invites decision in the highest sense is presented as something on which we are by no means entitled to decide. The urgency of decision in this modern age where “God is dead” (Nietzsche) and “gods have taken flight” (Hölderlin) is tied to our incapacity thereof. Implicit here is the conviction on Heidegger’s part that historical decisions are not ones left to the deliberations of a “subject”, but ones belonging to the historical character of the moment in which the emergency of being claims us. Decisions which are constantly made in the pragmatism of everyday life or by the objectifying-calculating reason are already determined, with respect to their essential constitution, by an original decision made back in ancient Greece. Being (*Seyn*) alone can decide itself, but a people is needed to correspond to it, to receive it, that is, “to be there” (*Da-sein*). This happens as the most creative historical moment of a people, as is the case in the first beginning of the Greeks. We moderns now move in the domain of this decision, take things in terms of the truth established by this decision, the truth which is called metaphysics. Decision in this sense is *Ereignis*, the happening of being (*Wesung des Seyn*), which, Heidegger says, is incalculable (GA 65, 7, 409). Undecidability, then, means that being evades all determinations belonging to objectifying reason. We need to leave the decision (about being) to being itself but must be prepared for the historical moment which will bring the decision of being as the passing-by of the last god. Last god, the most crucial but also enigmatic notion of the *Contributions to Philosophy*, is conceived together with the Hölderlinian theme of “gods”. Heidegger imagines a time of being (i.e., the other beginning) where the extreme god and gods belong and function together in an essential harmony, which reminds us of the project of the sensuous religion in *The Oldest System Program of the German Idealism*, a project which, according to William Desmond, led to Hölderlin’s breakdown (Desmond, 1986, p. 109). All this is related, one may hold, to a quite different sense of salvation, the salvation of humanity and earth, a salvation which is not intelligible in terms of the classical notion of salvation (e.g., Judaeo-Christian). We might call it “earthly salvation”. At stake is the danger that characterizes the situation

¹*Beiräge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klosterman, 1989 (abbreviated as GA 65 with the page number). In my quotations I will consult the new English translation by Richard Roycewicz and Daniela Wallega-Neu (2012) and indicate it with the abbreviation, CP. If this abbreviation is not indicated, all translations are mine.

of modern man. Here I want to explore the background of this salvific vision in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*, and try to raise, in this context, a couple of questions about it.

First of all, Heidegger's extensive talk of god and gods (in the *Contributions*) invites attention. Heidegger says that talk of gods is not a polytheism but an "indication to the undecidability of the being of gods, whether one sole god or many" (GA 65, 437; CP, 345, translation modified). He holds that this undecidability (whether one single god or a multitude of gods) is just the opposite of metaphysics/theology, because in metaphysics thinking (as *ratio*) presumes to have the right to make a decision about it, while in the inceptual thinking the decision is left to "the questioned" (as the most question-worthy). Hence, the answer/the decision will show itself as an event (Ereignis), rather than a set of assertions; only the showing-up of the divine can decide the matter. Heidegger, to be sure, would be dismissive of a Judeo-Christian retort that god already revealed itself in the Judeo-Christian tradition and his singularity is already decided by this revelation, which is, in turn, to say that the fundamental ideas of Judeo-Christian tradition are not created by human reasoning, but based on god's self-revelation. Here, one should note Heidegger's (greatly questionable) conviction that Judeo-Christian religious experience is not intelligible apart from metaphysics: it "has metaphysics as the presupposition of its thinking" (GA 65, 411). One thing seems to be clear; Heidegger leaves open the possibility of multitude of gods. Then we may ask; in what kind of relation do the notion of the last god and the possibility of the multitude of gods stand? The relation is, in a sense, just this undecidability: undertaking this undecidability we let being show itself as the most question-worthy, which might, in turn, mean a "long preparation." In other words, questioning as the heart of thinking belongs to and grows out of undecidability: it serves for getting prepared for the answer that is simply the essential happening of being as Ereignis. This preparation is done through being-historical thinking, that is to say, through inceptual thinking (*anfängliche Denken*) that brings us to an encounter with the first beginning and thereby with the history of being. Heidegger holds that god(s) need this thinking (1) "in order to come into decision" (GA 65, 439), i.e., into a question-worthiness and (2) in order that "history can obtain its essential ground" (GA 65, 439), i.e., abyssal ground as enacted temporality.² Heidegger writes:

²Heidegger argues, in connection with his dialogue with Schelling, that this ("abgrund as enacted temporality") also refers to the essential sense of freedom. For Schelling freedom as something groundless and abysmal is the center of philosophy. With this understanding of freedom as something abysmal (*abgründig*), Schelling, Heidegger believes, "says something more fundamental than Hegel's "absolute concept"" (GA 66, 263) and represents one of the rare

As determined on the basis of the gods, the thinking of the historicality of beyng is that thinking of beyng which grasps the abyss of the neededness of beyng as what is first and never seeks the essence of beyng in what is godly itself as that which supposedly *is* most eminently. The thinking of the historicality of beyng stands outside every theology and is equally removed from any atheism, whether in the sense of a “worldview” or of a doctrine having some other character (GA 65, 439; CP, 346).

The abyss of the need of beyng (*Abgrund der Notschaft des Seyns*) is another way of signifying temporality, freedom, existence, that is, Da-sein itself. Beyng takes place (i.e., is grounded) in this abyss of human essence, and is not anchored in a god understood as the most-being. Therefore being-historical thinking, in opposition to theology, can allow us to understand the primary phenomenon that beyng happens primordially (inceptually) as history and historical world. Thinking deep historicality of beyng here is tied to a thinking “on the basis of the gods”, or what is “the same”, to a thinking from out of man (GA 65, 439). Thinking on the basis of gods actually alludes to a possibility (as “undecidability”) to be entertained from “the perspective of man.” This is, however, meant in direct opposition to Nietzsche who asserts in the *Ecce Homo*: “two thousand years passed, not even a single god.” or, more clearly, in the *Zarathustra*: “God is dead, now we want Overman to live.”³ The perspective of man, in Heidegger’s sense, takes man into account not as such but only as an opening to beyng. This is perhaps the basic meaning of Heidegger’s anti-humanism. Arising from a dialogue with Hölderlin, Heidegger’s talk of gods also represents a reaction against Nietzsche.⁴ At issue is the notion of man which is linked, in Nietzsche’s case, with “creating gods”, whereas for Heidegger without god(s) there can be no genuine creativity for us, humans.

advancements within German Idealism (GA 65, sec. 104). Of interest in this connection is Heidegger’s 1936 lecture course later published as *Schelling: Vom Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit* (GA 42), translated as *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* by Joan Stambaugh, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984.

³ A close look at Heidegger’s lectures on Nietzsche would reveal that for Heidegger these are two key expressions that bring to light Nietzsche’s anthropomorfist metaphysical stance as the completion of all the history of beyng.

⁴ In GA 50 (p. 107-113) Heidegger takes issue with Nietzsche’s view that gods are human creations and refuses to understand man’s relationship to the divine/the religious in terms of modern notions of “creativity” which rest on subject metaphysics (*Übermensch* being the extreme case). Greek ποιεῖν, by contrast, is determined, throughout, in being claimed by god (or gods).

Thus Heidegger subsequently makes it clear that he does not take here the ordinary, “the familiar conception of man” as basic to this perspective, but rather what is required is “an essential transformation of human being” (GA 65, 439). In other words, man is taken as measure only in the sense of Da-sein. Thus, Heidegger believes that man (in the sense of Dasein, *Ereignisstätte*) surpasses all gods, simply because he belongs to the fissure of beyng;

Of course, it is characteristic of Da-sein to “stand” down through the unsecured and unprotected into the abyssal ground and, therein, to surpass (*übertreffen*) the gods. This reaching *over* the gods is a going *under* as grounding the truth of beyng. But beyng ap-propriates Da-sein for the sake of grounding its own truth, i.e., for its clearing, because without this clearing de-cision of itself into the indigence (*Not*) of god and into the stewardship of Da-sein beyng would have to be consumed in the fire of its own unremitting incandescence (GA 65, 487-488; CP, 383-384, translation modified).

Gods (*Göttlichen*) are presented in the post-war texts as “beckoning messengers of Godhead”.⁵ Put in the traditional vocabulary, they are “angels.” There is a sense in which even Hölderlin’s gods can be construed as angels.⁶ We should assume that in this craving for gods Heidegger is inspired throughout by Hölderlin.⁷ Heidegger gestures towards how we should think of the gods in relation to “the most unique uniqueness” (GA 65, 411) of the last god.

The multiplicity of gods is not subject to enumeration but, instead, to the inner richness of the grounds and abysses in the site of the moment for the lighting up and concealment of the intimation of the last god (GA 65, 411; CP, 326).

⁵ “die Winkenden Boten der Gottheit” (in “Bauen Wohnen Denken” GA 7, 151 and in “Ding” GA 7, 180).

⁶ Karsten Harries (1997) draws attention to this point, see *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, Cambridge: MIT Press, p. 161.

⁷ Heidegger’s dialogue with Hölderlin is quite complicated. Important, however, is Heidegger’s conviction that Hölderlin represents a quest to reclaim the poetic sense of being which the early Greeks possessed and which we, moderns, have lost, almost entirely. The poetic sense of being involves, it seems, regaining the divine (god and gods) into the heart of our life poetically. This prospect underlies Heidegger’s musings on the fourfold (*Das Geviert*), in the 1950s, as the fundamental structure of the poetic sense of being. All in all, later Heidegger thinks of himself as following the lead of Hölderlin, as he declares in *Der Spiegel* interview (1966): “My thinking has an essential connection with Hölderlin’s poetry.”

Now we may see that the discourse of gods is, in a sense, Heidegger's response to the banalization of beings, to their disclosure to the modern eye as "*Unmaß des nur Seienden*" (GA 65, 400), say, as a "monstruous pile" in the modern world. That is, it can be interpreted as a strategy of Heidegger to render beings (and being) again thought-provoking and, thereby, to challenge their self-evidence to the modern eye.⁸ In a section called "Wie aber die Götter?", he indicates that this theme of gods must not be understood in terms of "religion" (which is in Heidegger's eyes, also part of modernity or metaphysics):

Not out of "religion"; not as objectively present; not as expedients of the human being; instead, out of beyng, as its decision, futural in the uniqueness of what is *last* (GA 65, 508; CP, 399).

Heidegger in one of his lectures on Hölderlin's poetry ("Andenken", 1942) maintains that Hölderlin's gods cannot be construed on the basis of the category of "religion" which "remains a matter of the roman interpretation of the relation between human beings and gods" (GA 4, 114), that is, an interpretation in terms of metaphysics and theology in which Greek sense of the divine has already been lost. In a sense, "religion" has been the standard form in which the metaphysical/theological decision about god(s) has expressed itself in the western tradition. And if we are to think of gods in terms of beyng's own decision, which "raises to the highest the essence of the uniqueness of the Godhead" (GA 65, 406; CP, 322), we need to refer them to the futural event of "the passing-by of the last god". Thus, Heidegger is concerned here even not with "an unprejudiced look at phenomena" (which would still be Husserlian), but with the possibilities of thinking with regard to the other beginning (cf. Crowe, 2007, pp. 227-229). Hence gods are associated with "the changed forms of beings" (GA 65, 70) in which the hinting of the last god and the historical world it lights up find their "final sheltering". Consider the following statement:

⁸For a parallel reading, see Günter Figal (2001) "Forgetfulness of God: Concerning the Center of Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*" in *Companion to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. Charles E. Scott et al., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 201.

The nearing and flight, arrival and departure, or the simple remaining absent of the gods; for us in the sovereignty, i.e., as the beginning and dominion over this occurrence, the initial and final sovereignty which will show itself as the last god. In the intimations of the last god, being itself, the Ereignis as such, first becomes visible; and this lighting-up (*Leuchten*) requires both the grounding of the essence of truth as clearing-concealing and its *final sheltering* in the changed forms of beings (GA 65, 70; CP, 56, translation modified).

It is important to note that humans are needed to enact this “*final sheltering* in the changed forms of beings”; Da-sein is the site of this sheltering which shelters the truth of beyng as well as the hinting of the last god behind it. For this, however, they first need to experience the refusal as the way the divine touches the human being and tunes (*stimmt*) her with reticence. Such experience, it seems, functions as salvific.

REFUSAL

As discussed above, what is at stake with this decision, which keeps itself open to beyng’s own decision by resisting all decisions about god(s), i.e., by standing in undecidability, is nothing but history. Referring to decision Heidegger asks: “*About what?* About history or loss of history, i.e., about belonging to beyng or abandonment in nonbeings” (GA 65, 100; CP, 79). Heidegger, in the following of the same section, indicates that the decision is to be made for “the *saving* of beings” (“*Rettung des Seienden*”) (GA 65, 100), which means, to save the west and thereby to be saved from “the beginning of lack of history” (GA 65, 100). It is in this same sense that the decision is “about the flight and arrival of the gods” (GA 65, 405). Heidegger alludes that this decision is “the opening-up of an entirely different time-space—indeed the very first—grounded truth of beyng, i.e., for the Ereignis” (GA 65, 405). That is, the site of this decision, as time-space (as *Ereignisstätte* and as *Augenblicksstätte*), is the time-space of the other beginning. But it is, in this sense, also the domain of “refusal”; Ereignis is fundamentally the event and appropriation (*Ereignung*) of the refusal as such. *Verweigerung* follows from *Sichverbergen* (self-hiding or shelf-sheltering), which is a *Verwahrung* (preservation) whereby the truth of beyng is preserved by granting the revelation of beings (hence truth of beyng as *lichtende Verbergung*), i.e., in the beings, and this happens as a

strife between earth (the concealed pre-given) and world (the openness). This is not a natural, sterile, neutral process; put otherwise, what happens in all “making sense” is history (as historical world, beyng) itself. In short, the essential dimension (the truth of beyng) hides itself radically. But Heidegger, unlike Kant, conceives of the appropriation of this moment (i.e., refusal) as the primordial moment of thinking-questioning. As he notes:

Then the first and only consequence is to leave beyng in concealment and indeed to forget it. Still to leave beyng in concealment is radically different from experiencing beyng as self-concealing” (GA 65, 255; CP, 201).

In order to look more closely at the relevance of the last god with this phenomenon, let us carefully examine the following passage:

The refusal is the highest nobility of bestowal and is the basic trait of the self-concealment *whose* manifestness constitutes the originary essence of the truth of beyng. Only in this way does beyng become estrangement itself, the stillness of the passing-by of the last god (GA 65, 406; CP, 321).

This domain of refusal as the time-space (*Zeit-Raum*) of the other beginning, determined by “the passing-by of the last God”, is thus “the decisive realm of the question of the most essential finitude of beyng” (GA 65, 410; CP, 325): in the passing-by (*Vorbeigang*) of the last god, “the encounter between god and man in the midst of beyng” (GA 65, 416; CP, 330) comes to pass. It requires preparation “for a long presentiment of the last God” (GA 65, 410; CP, 325) who has its presencing (*Wesung*) in hint. Again Heidegger wants to distance himself from the god of western theological tradition, the god of intellect and proofs, the one who is reified as the most-being (*das Seiendste*). The last god, it seems, is the god of deepest intimacy of intimation and hints; it is not the god of empty eternity, but of moment, finitude and temporality, i.e., of history (*Geschichte*).

The greatest nearness of the last god eventuates when the Ereignis, as the hesitant self-withholding, is elevated into *refusal*. The latter is essentially other than sheer absence. Refusal, as belonging to the Ereignis, can be experienced only on the basis of the more originary essence of beyng as lit up in the thinking constitutive of the other beginning (GA 65, 411; CP, 326).

The greatest nearness of the last god happens as refusal, which is, nonetheless, not absence. This refusal is essential or constitutive for Ereignis, or expressed otherwise, Ereignis is refusal as appropriated and thereby let “be”, or “happen” (*wesen*). Ereignis experiences the last god in and through this refusal, and therefore silence (*Verschwiegenheit*) and knowing awareness (*Wissen*) as belonging to each other are what follows. The event of the refusal of the last god (i.e., its remoteness) is its utmost nearness. The thinking which “needs” thinking the truth of beyng, “needs” going beyond metaphysics. Then this event of the refusal of the last god as its highest nearness is precisely the non-metaphysical event which breaks an entirely new ground for the Western history. Thinking-questioning appropriates itself in its deep silence towards the divine, but this silence as the very enactment of the *Grundstimmung* of *Verhaltenheit*, Heidegger insists, resides in a primordial language and primordial word, and is not mere muteness.

Through the refusal, Da-sein is compelled to itself as the grounding of the site of the *first* passing-by of the god as the self-refusing god. Only on the basis of this moment can it be fathomed how, as the domain of the event of that compelling, beyng must restore beings. In such mastery of beings, the honoring of the god must be carried out (GA 65, 412; CP, 327).

Here, Heidegger speaks of “need/emergency” (*Not*) which is at play in the experience of refusal that can be contrasted with the limitlessness of disengaged cognition, which can go so far as comprehending the essence of the god (Aristotle, Hegel). Refusal, on the other hand, sharply awakens the sense for limits calling for standing before the limits as the defining (*bestimmende*) moment of thinking. Beyng is the event site of this necessitating (*Ereignisbereich jener Nötigung*) that originates from the *Not* of the god. Ereignis happens as the refusal of the (last) god, as described above; in standing before the limits thoughtfully (i.e., before the refusal) god is honored

which brings things back to their original sense as belonging to a limit, i.e., as sheltering-concealing the truth of beyng. Beyng is the whole realm (historical meaning space) of this happening of the radical mystery of god. We might also say “the last god ... will refuse to provide us with a rigid conception of being”.⁹ Now, one is tempted to interpret the key expression of the *Beiträge* in a new light; *Seyn west als das Ereignis*, that is, *Seyn* is fulfilled momentarily (*augenblicklich*) as the event which is the essential happening (*Wesung*) of the radical mystery of god, a happening which is so powerful that it can ground another beginning, another historical world.

In this happening of refusal and in its appropriation as the “fundamental attunedness” (called *Verhaltenheit*), an authentic nearness to the divine is enacted and preserved. It is in this way that Da-sein is “grounded” (*gegründet*), that is, being human reaches its essential meaning in serving as the temporal site of this preservation (*Zeit-Raum*) of the truth of beyng in beings, of “the innermost intimacy between beyng and beings”. This intimacy is the realm of the last god. This preservation, on the other hand, is itself a struggle (*Kampf*) that “necessarily stand[s] in the power realm of beyng as event and thus in the furthest expanse of the sharpest whirl of the turning” (GA 65, 412-13; CP, 327, translation modified).

According to this scenario, the other beginning will be a “history of the preservation of god” (GA 65, 413) which is, above all, required by god itself as honoring it and which is realized in all beings as “work, tool, thing, deed, view, and word” (GA 65, 413). Interesting is the fact that this list of beings does not include entities from the realm of nature (a flower, for instance, which *Being and Time* would call, “present-at-hand”), which even though Heidegger puts into relation with history and world by introducing the notion of earth, appears to be nothing more than a mute realm in itself, a privative mode of being.¹⁰

To some extent, one can observe the traces of this nature in the notion of earth, namely earth as the realm of concealment bursting forth into the world through human creations (supremely, through

⁹ Mark Wrathall and Morganna Lambeth (2011), “Heidegger’s Last God”, *Inquiry* 54 (2):160-182, p. 180.

¹⁰ I think Hans Jonas comes upon something important when he urges that “No philosophy of nature can issue from Heidegger’s thought.” See “Heidegger and Theology,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1964), p. 224, footnote 11.

works of art in which this intrusion of earth becomes edified¹¹). Obviously, Heidegger cannot say that we can experience nature as it reveals itself to us, but only through the framework of an understanding of being (as “an a priori ground-plan”¹²) which discloses beings in terms of practical concerns and engagements, never in themselves. But, to be sure, what Heidegger pursues here is not simply expanding on the Kantian standpoint as interpreted in an ontological light, but rather radicalizing the “limit experience” of the subject (in relation to metaphysics) which Kant was not able to give its due. It seems that Heidegger raises this limit experience as an appropriated moment to the historical event of the passing-by of the last god as refusal.

Required is not merely a table of commandments; instead, more originarily as well as essentially, the passing by of the god requires a constancy of beings and thus of the human being in the midst of beings. In this constancy, beings in the simplicity of their respectively regained essence (as work, tool, thing, deed, look, word) first withstand the passing by and so do not still it, but let it run its course (GA 65, 413; CP, 327).

The last god is not simply the god of a moral universe or command¹³; rather, more primordially, we need a world in which beings can be disclosed in their essential sense, that is, as embodying in various ways the radical divine mystery, a mystery which happens as the *Augenblick* of the passing-by of the god and is infinitely repeated and retrieved, is “let reign over beings”, by Da-sein. Here, we do not have the event, albeit temporary and momentary, of the revelation of god as we have in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Instead what we have is its radical mystery and unfathomability; in other words, not god, but its mystery (as refusal) reveals itself. One can wonder whether such a god revealing itself in utmost mystery and refusal does make sense, whether we do not need a minimum of things to know about such a god (at least, to be able to use such word as “god” consciously). One

¹¹ See “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes” in *Holzwege* (GA 5).

¹² I am using David E. Cooper’s expression, see “Heidegger on Nature” (p. 349), *Environmental Values*, vol. 14 (2005).

¹³ It is important to note that Heidegger protests the transformation of the Greek experience of “ethos” (ἦθος) to the subjective sphere of the “morality.” Predictably, this goes back to his early explorations into Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*. “Ethical” (ἠθικός) as opposed to the ego-based connotations of the moral suggests a sense of standing/being in the world (*Aufenthalt*). In this sense, Heidegger says, *Being and Time* attempts at an originary ethics, but fails (see “Letter on Humanism”, in GA 9, pp. 353-358). Heidegger’s meditations on dwelling, technology, poetry and thinking in the 1950s can be understood as an attempt at engaging with the original sense of the ethical associated with an originary thinking of being as Ereignis.

can multiply the questions: how would such a god make a call to a human being? How would it relieve the heart of the believer (or “the questioner”, given that the questioner, too, needs to know a minimum of things to be able to raise a question)? How would one pray for such a god? How would such a god relate to one’s practical life? How would such a god compel one knee down before its greatness and sacrifice one’s everything? Is not this an empty god, let alone contradictory?¹⁴ Most probably, Heidegger would take issue with the underlying notion of god-man relationship presupposed in these questions. The other beginning will bring a new structure to god-man relationship totally incompatible with the traditional scheme.

Occurring here is not a deliverance—i.e., basically a suppression—of the human being but, rather, an *establishment* of the more original essence (the grounding of Da-sein) in beyng itself: the acknowledgement of the belongingness of the human being to beyng through the god and the admission by the god of needing beyng, whereby the god does not at all renounce himself or his greatness (GA 65, 413; CP, 327).

Without god, a historical world is not possible and god is needed for human being’s belonging to and participating in a historical world. But god, too, needs a historical world to “be” a god it is, i.e., a god in history, a god of a historical people. Remember that for Heidegger it is not possible to use the word “be” without reference to meaning and we cannot abstract meaning from a historical world, which is exactly what metaphysics and science do, i.e., a de-contextualized engagement with meaning.

Now it seems that there is no place here for a classical conception of god-man relationship (e.g., saving god, obeying man; ordering god, invoking man etc.) which Heidegger regards as “a suppression (*Niederwerfung*) of man.” Rather, what is proper to god’s place in a historical world and man’s belonging to a historical world (to be grounded ultimately by Ereignis) is “the strife between god and man, between the passing by of the god and the history of man” (GA 65, 413),

¹⁴Heidegger’s observations about the metaphysical god(*causa sui*) might well apply to “the last god,” too; one “can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui*, men can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god” (GA 11, 77; ID, 72). Cf. Ángel E. Garrido-Maturano, “Las imposibilidades del Dios: Introducción al problema de Dios en los Beiträge zur Philosophie de Martin Heidegger,” *Universitas Philosophica* 28 (June 1997), pp. 90-91, discussed in Richard Polt (2006), *The Emergency of Being: On Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 210-213.

“the collision of god and man in the midst of beyng” (GA 65, 416). Perhaps, we might say that “historical creativity” is the way one is authentically oriented to such a god, one honors him, and this is in turn the way such a god finds genuine presence in history. Undecidability appropriated (on the part of humans) is necessary if the last god itself is to be decisive by grounding human creativity dedicated ultimately to its refusal and mystery. Then it consists in opening space to another beginning as a new space of decisions belonging to beyng’s own truth. Heidegger argues that this is the task of “the few and the rare.”

“THE FUTURE ONES”

Inasmuch as the last god is the god of historical creativity, it is the god of “the few and the rare”, “the creative individuals of a people” who pave the way for it. Predictably, Heidegger understands them futurally; “the futures ones” (*Zukünftigen*). The future ones and the last god belong to each other, because only “the future ones” can withstand the challenge of the decision of gods and thrust of beyng. “They are tuned /determined (*be-stimmt*) by the last god” (GA 65, 396), destined with a *Grundstimmung* which is *Verhaltenheit* which as the fundamental mood of the other beginning brings into accord guiding moods (*Leitstimmungen*) which are *Schrecken* (shock) and *Scheu* (deep awe). Heidegger, throughout, plays with words like *Klingen* (*Klang, Anklang, Einklang*), *stimmen* (*Stimmung, Stimme, Bestimmen, Gestimmtheit, Zustimmen, Anstimmen*) and *Fügen* (*Fugue, Fügung, Gefüge, Einfügen, Verfugen* etc) which convey musical overtones. We might also include the overtones of “Hören” (*Zuhören, Gehören...*) and *Mut* (*Gemüt, Zumutesein*). One cannot help but wonder whether Heidegger aims at executing Nietzsche’s urge for animating the musical sense of being/life as opposed to its metaphysical determination established by Platonism. Or should this also remind us “music making Socrates” (*Phaedo*) where, it seems, Socrates puts into question the intellectual experience of truth in favor of a musical/artistic one? Also relevant is Plato’s warning in the *Republic* that changes in the musical tastes of people would be revolutionary (424 b-d).

Heidegger’s seeing essential ties between mood and beyng, and resisting psychology of any sort for an understanding of “mood” is something we already observe in *Being and Time* (*Befindlichkeit*). Heidegger does not understand mood in terms of a private experience but as something

atmospheric, communal and historical. Heidegger now ties moods (being in a mood) to, so to speak, being in relation to the music of beyng, that is, Dasein's standing in and as the un-concealment of beyng. Thus, the un-concealment of beyng as essential happening of beyng (*Wesung des Seyns*) that will characterize the other beginning as the primordial determination (*ursprüngliche Bestimmung*) is a basic mood (*Grundstimmung*) given by the last god to "the future ones" (*Zukünftigen*).

The originary harmony of the guiding moods is fully attuned only through the basic mood. In it are the future ones, and as so attuned they are tuned/determined by the last god (GA 65, 396; CP, 314, translation modified).

Here hyphenated word "*be-stimmt*" deserves attention. Heidegger's intention is clear, namely to read "determining" in the sense of "giving mood". "The future ones" receives this musical turn of beyng by being open (prepared) to "hear" it, which is, in turn, constitutive for the possibility of this turn of beyng; preparation essentially means attuning (GA 65, 86). God hints to "the future ones" through the realm of this attunedness in a manner which is comparable to the intimacy of musical reception. It is in this sense that "the future ones" come to stand before the hints of the last god (GA 65, 83). Thus, the question becomes more intriguing; who are these "the future ones"? In the following statement, one of the things Heidegger indicates is that they are "the seekers."

A people is a people *only* if it receives its history as allotted to it through finding its god, the god that compels this people beyond itself and thus places the people amid beings. Only then does a people escape the danger of circling around itself and of idolizing, as its *unconditioned*, what are merely conditions for its subsistence. How is a people supposed to find the god, however, unless there are seekers who in reticence *seek on behalf* of this people and who, as these seekers, must apparently even stand *against* a "people" that is *not yet* properly a people? Yet these seekers themselves must first *be*; the task is to prepare for them precisely as beings. Da-sein: what else is it but the *grounding* the being of *these* beings, the future ones of the last god? (GA 65, 398; CP, 316).

Here, we may draw a few conclusions; (1) Da-sein is people (*Volk*) not in its present condition (*Vorhandenheit*), that is, not as “society”, but in its historical venture and enactment. (2) We have a view of history comparable to Nietzsche’s great-men view of history set forth in *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*. (3) “The future ones” are the great men of a people, who make a people historical and who represent the historical creativity (venture, leap and enactment) of a people in relation to being.¹⁵ Heidegger’s difference from Nietzsche, however, is that these “rare and few” men to come are not as the foundation and creators of all that is genuinely historical. Rather they belong to (*gehört zu*) the last god, their creativity simply consists in that they are essentially receptive of the call (*Zuruf*) with which they become determined/attuned (*be-stimmt*).¹⁶ (4) Taking Heidegger’s texts and lectures of that period carefully into account, we can say that “the future ones” are none other than the “poets and thinkers” of a people; hence Heidegger’s dream of Germans as a people of “poets and thinkers.” (5) The mission of these poets and thinkers is seeking god; they are seekers of god, and thus they are those who are supposed to prepare the other beginning, the coming of a god who can save the westerners (or the Germans) from machination and “lived experience” (*Erlebnis* i.e., the predomination of subjective self-seeking and self-satisfaction). (6) Seeking god in the forms of poesy (as the supreme art) and thinking as forms of “gathering” is what historicizes a people as the ultimate framework of the projection (*Entwurf*) of a people. It is thus what makes a people a people; without relatedness to god in the manner of questioning and seeking there can be no history and no communal existence (Da-sein). We should speak of a correlative need: being a people consists in grounding the truth of being and a people is needed for this mission.

In its origin and destiny this people is unique, in accord with the uniqueness of being itself, whose truth this people must ground once and for all in a unique site and a unique moment (GA 65, 97; CP, 77).

¹⁵ Accordingly Heidegger asserts that we do not produce our thinkers and poets, rather “unsere Denker und Dichter uns in unser Wesen hervorbringen” (GA 50, 102).

¹⁶ See GA 46 (pp. 57-65), *Zur Auslegung von Nietzsches II. Unzeitgemäßer Betrachtung “Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben.”* Here Heidegger protests sharply Nietzsche’s talk of genius (as artist, and ultimately *Übermensch*) as the paramount expression of modern subject metaphysics. As he notes: “...gegenüber all diesen anthropologisch-subjekthaften Ansetzungen des Menschen gilt es das von der Gründung der Wahrheit des Seyns her bestimmte Entwerfen des Da-seins, worin der Mensch erst inständig wird zum Seyn als dem Ereignis des möglichen Entscheidungsspielraumes.” Heidegger does not understand great men (few, rare, unrevealed individuals) subjectivistically, but as responders to the truth of being. They are, in this sense, essential thinkers and poets (of a people) to come.

The emphasis here laid on “this people” should presumably be read in connection with the present situation of German people and its historical future which Heidegger sees deeply threatened by metaphysics and technology. Heidegger believes that “this people” needs a divine god to enable a historical future of its “own”. “Own” suggests a dual sense here; it is a history which is at once both Germans’ own and the Last god’s own. Er-eignis is the happening of this dual “ownness”. The last god seems to be the notion that serves to approximate such divine god needed to secure the historical vitality of the historical world of a historical people. “The last god is not the end; the last god is the other beginning of the immeasurable possibilities of our history” (GA 65, 411; CP, 326).¹⁷

I believe that the expressions like “this people”, “our history” cannot be easily overpassed here. Indeed, it would not be far-fetched to say that Heidegger’s concern is not the future of humanity as a whole in this metaphysical-technological age. Rather, the idea of humanity as a whole would seem something foreign to his mind; it would merely mean speaking of man in the abstract. One wonders whether it could be that this very idea of universal brotherhood of all peoples before god, which the Abrahamic experience of god entailed is one of the fundamental reasons why Heidegger despised and rejected this tradition. We should not, however, forget that YHWH also is a historically engaged god and the god of a “chosen people.” Perhaps, this brings Heidegger closer to the Hebraic experience, even though he seems to makes sense of it in reference to the Greek beginning. In Heidegger’s scenario, on the one side we have the Greeks (the first beginning) and on the other, the Germans who are missioned to ground the other beginning and who are to “wait” and “prepare” for “the great moment” (GA 65, 291) of the passing-by of the last god. As indicated above, crucial point here is Heidegger’s attaching a special historical mission to Germans to save the West and eschewing any reference to the Judeo-Christian tradition for this religious/philosophical salvation. At the very least, Heidegger’s reflections on the last god are poisoned by a euro-centrism to such a radical degree that he does not consider even Christianity as indigenous to the western historical

¹⁷ It sounds, nonetheless, a bit strange (at least, to a non-western observer like me) that the other beginning and the history it inaugurates must rest on one unique moment of the passing-by of the last god; the rest is deep silence (in relation to the divine) attuned by the memory/mindfulness of this event which underlies, what Heidegger describes as “the immeasurable possibilities of our history”. One might ask accordingly: Why is god’s relation to the consequent history confined to the impact of one moment (Ereignis) alone, rather than to unlimitable multiplicity of moments that might arise between the divine and thus transformed man? Why is “the world” not conceived as the arena of infinite and inexhaustible possibilities of god’s renewed events? Why should history be anchored in one ultimate event? This somehow calls to mind the unique event of the passing-by of Christ in the cross and the historical (Christian) world built around this memory. At this point, perhaps, Seidel’s thesis that Heidegger’s last god in the *Beiträge* bears some crucial references to Christology invites attention. See George Seidel, “Heidegger’s Last God and the Schelling Connection”, *Laval théologique et philosophique*, vol. 55, no: 1, 1999, p. 85-98.

world; something essentially alien, an offshoot of Judaism platonized later. Indeed, he protests “the prolonged Christianization of god” (GA 65, 24). It seems more probable that what he is seeking after is a religious rebirth of Germany (or of the West) exclusively from indigenous sources.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Heidegger believes that today we live in a one-dimensional metaphysical-technological world. This means that technological understanding of being determines comprehensively and coherently the way we make sense of things. An understanding of being, for Heidegger, is something total and global; so to speak, a tight-knit net cast over us. There can be no way to deal with the world (things, tools, persons, ourselves) independently of this rigid framework; change in a historical world can only happen as a rupture, as a paradigmatic shift, i.e., epochally. And the other beginning as the beginning of the last god promises us another paradigmatic shift, one more profound than all others. We, as moderns, experience beings in the utter poverty which the present metaphysical age entails: we live in a one-colored (presumably, ‘black’) world. This is a strong claim and Heidegger nowhere seems to have succeeded in being convincing. Actually, we do not have any good reason not to believe that there are many different colors and voices to the world we live in and that there is much room for freedom to experience things; perhaps, understanding of being involves determinism (“destiny”) much less than Heidegger supposes.¹⁸ Once this is granted, Heidegger’s argument that today all religious sense is metaphysically determined (“god is dead”) becomes question-begging. With this, what also proves question-begging is whether we really need a radically new beginning in response to the spiritual threats of the present age. This does not, however, need weaken Heidegger’s critique of theology and his call for a new sense of the divine. We might even maintain that what Heidegger offers us in the guise of man’s comportment towards the last god (in the other beginning) is actually a phenomenological re-description of the inner religious life of the pious man with which he was certainly familiar from his Christian background.¹⁹ Indeed, this religious

¹⁸One may call to mind, among others, Cassirer’s criticism of Heidegger in *The Myth of the State*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946, p. 292 f.

¹⁹Hans Jonas, a former student of Heidegger from the Marburg period, affords bitter remarks about Heidegger’s “borrowing” from Judeo-Christian religious tradition in coming up with some fundamental insights about human experience (pp. 212-214). He is adamant that “there is much secularized Christianity in Heidegger’s thought” (“Heidegger and Theology”, p. 212).

psychology can easily be summed up as *Verhaltenheit*. According to Heidegger, *Verhaltenheit*, as the *Grundstimmung* of the other beginning, will determine the attitude (*Verhalten*) of thinking in which thinking will learn to comport itself in the face of the refusal and thereby to stand back and keep back before (the last) god, i.e., back from the metaphysical ratiocination. He has this to say; “but in thinking the godhead, how should we intend to reckon, instead of being all-around mindful of the danger of what is strange and incalculable” (GA 65, 407; CP 286 EM, translation modified). It remains again question-begging whether we need the other beginning to understand and practice this caveat, for, one might suggest, all piety is already deeply aware of it.

On the other hand, it is a prominent feature of Heidegger’s language of *Sein* that he speaks of it everywhere by way of attributing “intentional acts” to it, as if, one might think, it was an agent. More often than not, his remarks about being can call, quite easily, god to mind.²⁰ Being, however, is certainly not something that can have consciousness or intentionality: it is not a being. Heidegger should be aware of the problem that once one takes this strictly, it becomes extremely difficult to say anything of being. In a sense, Wittgensteinian strictures are inescapable. Could it be that this strange talk of being (of which the *Beiträge* is probably the most extreme case, “beyng”) is precisely meant to circumvent Kant’s walls erected against metaphysics? But Heidegger already acknowledges in *Being and Time* that being requires an entirely different way of expression: “... it is one thing to give a report in which we tell about *beings*, but another to grasp *beings* in their Being. For the latter task, we not only lack most of the words but, above all, the ‘grammar’” (SZ, 39; BT, 63). But to the extent that Heidegger’s being is falling prey to an ontic discourse, that it is not “truly” free from the way we talk about entities, from an ontic structure of language, Heidegger’s project seems to be in danger of facing a shipwreck. After all, Heidegger believes that language is primordially something about being, hence “on the way to language”; any ontic employment of language is necessarily deficient, short of the essential mission of language. Language becomes essential in the rigor and simplicity of the saying of being. Is it possible that our language can provide us with a non-ontic way of saying things? Would that be intelligible to us at

²⁰That is obviously why some theologians in 1951 in Zurich, urged him “whether it is proper to posit god and being as identical” (GA 15, 436). Heidegger categorically answered in the negative, but he pointed out: “Ich glaube, daß das Sein niemals als Grund und Wesen von Gott gedacht werden kann, daß aber gleichwohl die Erfahrung Gottes und seiner Offenbarkeit (sofern sie dem Menschen begegnet) in der Dimension des Seins sich ereignet, was niemals besagt, das Sein könne als mögliches Prädikat für Gott gelten” (GA 15, 437). This might encourage one to suggest that Sein is, ultimately considered, the dimension of the happening (Ereignen) of god, without which it remains a sort of privation, hence *Seinsverlassenheit*.

all?²¹ In Heidegger's view, the only impediment to this essential possibility is the fact that our language is structured by the forms of intelligibility of western tradition based on the truth of beings, and not of being itself.²² The task, then, is a *Destruktion* of the western tradition in an attempt to discover the truth of being lying in the origin of language, accessible to us, somehow, in the poetic enterprise, that is, regaining the poetic sense of being.²³ This, again, might give us some idea about the nature of Heidegger's dialogue with Hölderlin. The nearness of the divine happens in essential poetry, in the saying of being,²⁴ but this as extreme remoteness, as refusal. This, to say the least, sounds paradoxical and bewildering. Ontologically fulfilled language becomes the moment-site of refusal; highest intelligibility available to us comes as a recognition of its complete breakdown before the divine. This breakdown that the Greeks experienced as *thaumazein*²⁵ but oriented to suppress it in the fullness of *episteme* now turns into the shock (*Er-schrecken*) and deep awe (*Scheu*) of the other beginning that guides *Erdenken*. Inceptual thinking of the other beginning is then "sigetics" where "the coming-to-be of language is grasped for the first time" (GA 65, 79), that is, as refusal. As some commentators contend, a curious version of negative theology is constitutive not only of *the Beiträge*, but also of Heidegger's whole philosophical project.²⁶ Trouble arises, it seems, when Heidegger (1) situates the dynamics of this negative theology into the center

²¹But whether Heidegger really seeks such intelligibility in his writings is open to question as he expressly remarks in the *Beiträge* "Philosophy commits suicide when it makes itself intelligible" (GA 65, 435).

²²As he claims in "The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics"; "That difficulty lies in language. Our Western languages are languages of metaphysical thinking, each in its own way" (ID, 73). Notice, by the way, the demarcating "our Western..."

²³All language is originally poetry and thus all authentic revelation in language is necessarily poetical. Thus "Everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer" ("Language" in *Poetry, Language and Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter, Harper&Row, 1971, p. 208). Heidegger in the origin of the work of art makes it clear that "Language itself in essential sense is poetry" ("Die Sprache selbst ist Dichtung im wesentlichen Sinne" [GA 5, 62]) which is in turn "the founding of truth" ("Stiftung der Wahrheit" [GA 5, 63]).

²⁴Hence, the renowned expression of the "Letter on Humanism"; "language is the house of being."

²⁵Thaumazein (θαυμάζειν) has etymological connections with thea (Θεῖα) and theos(θεός). For the ancient Greeks, it was chiefly an unprecedented godly presence (as essentially something "visual") that provoked wonder which, in turn, meant a breakdown for the present frame of intelligibility for it proves unable to accommodate this experience. It seems that θεωρία is also related to this connection. But Heidegger argues that *Er-schrecken* is to be understood by contrast to *thaumazein* (GA 65, 14). It is not difficult to see that shock invites only silence and accordingly there is nothing at all here to be marvelled at visually.

²⁶For a useful discussion, see David Law (2000), "Negative Theology in Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie*", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 48: 139–156. Needless to say, however, Heidegger's negative theology, as different from the other negative theologies, does not belong to any religious tradition and defines itself in conscious opposition to the present theological traditions. Indeed, the last god represents the cessation of all theological traditions. This issue of negative theology is actually where Meister Eckart becomes crucially relevant to Heidegger's work. Some scholars have drawn attention to the possible elements of negativetheology in Heidegger: notable are John D. Caputo (1977) *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, Athens: Ohio University Press; Michael E. Zimmerman (1990), *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, pp. 241–242; Reiner Schürmann (1990), *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

of all human understanding and (2) claims that the truth of beyng is radically distinct from the truth of beings. Then, how can we deal with beings in thought, language and practice? Is the deep awe of the sigetics of beyng enough for this need? What about the place of dialogue in this sigetics of beyng that must entail a profound transformation of language? Indeed, what would everyday language look like in the other beginning? The silence of ongoing breakdown?²⁷ Certainly not. We need measures, of which there is none in the earth, in the ontic level, as Heidegger is insistent to stress.²⁸ But how can the refusal of the last god give us measures? How can the truth of beyng, the ineffable, the refusing center of all human intelligibility in the other beginning, give us measures in approaching beings? A quest for salvation is the guiding thread of Heidegger's whole thought; the theme of the last god and gods is its strangest manifestation. In fact, he understands his philosophical/religious relation to Hölderlin in the light of salvation from the danger. Best place here is the essay "Question Concerning Technology" (1949) which concerns itself with the deliverance from a danger inherent in the modern technological world (GA 7, 28-30). What is said in this post-war essay amounts to a paraphrase for the other beginning of the *Beiträge* as the event of the refusal of the last god. In a special sense, this refusal would compel us to new avenues of art (poetry, above all) in the service of "the restoring of beings" (*Wiederbringen des Seienden*) (GA 65, 18). If this is to be called salvation, it is a gift of the refusing god. In this rather enigmatic quest for salvation one thing is nonetheless quite clear; it has no otherworldly aspirations.

²⁷ *Being and Time* had presented the breakdown of equipments as something temporary in the smoothness of everyday pragmatism, now the *Beiträge*, by contrast, projects the authentic relatedness to language as an ongoing breakdown in relation to the unfamiliar.

²⁸ As Heidegger discusses Hölderlin's poem, "In Lovely Blueness," in his essay "... Poetically Man Dwells ..." Hölderlin asks the question; "Is there a measure on earth?" He answers "there is none."

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