

MARTIN

POETRY,

LANGUAGE,

HEIDEGGER

THOUGHT

"A FIRST-RATE  
INTRODUCTION . . . [A] VERY  
VALUABLE COLLECTION."  
—REVIEW OF METAPHYSICS

HARPERPERENNIAL  MODERNTHOUGHT

I

THE THINKER AS POET

*(Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens)*

Way and weighing

Stile and saying

On a single walk are found.

Go bear without halt

Question and default

On your single pathway bound.

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.

When the little windwheel outside  
the cabin window sings in the  
gathering thunderstorm. . . .

When thought's courage stems from  
the bidding of Being, then  
destiny's language thrives.

As soon as we have the thing before  
our eyes, and in our hearts an ear  
for the word, thinking prospers.

Few are experienced enough in the  
difference between an object of  
scholarship and a matter thought.

If in thinking there were already  
adversaries and not mere  
opponents, then thinking's case  
would be more auspicious.

When through a rent in the rain-clouded  
sky a ray of the sun suddenly glides  
over the gloom of the meadows. . . .

We never come to thoughts. They come  
to us.

That is the proper hour of discourse.

Discourse cheers us to companionable  
reflection. Such reflection neither  
parades polemical opinions nor does it  
tolerate complaisant agreement. The sail  
of thinking keeps trimmed hard to the  
wind of the matter.

From such companionship a few perhaps  
may rise to be journeymen in the  
craft of thinking. So that one of them,  
unforeseen, may become a master.

When in early summer lonely narcissi  
bloom hidden in the meadow and the  
rock-rose gleams under the maple. . . .

The splendor of the simple.

Only image formed keeps the vision.  
Yet image formed rests in the poem.

How could cheerfulness stream  
through us if we wanted to shun  
sadness?

Pain gives of its healing power  
where we least expect it.

When the wind, shifting quickly, grumbles  
in the rafters of the cabin, and the  
weather threatens to become nasty . . . .

Three dangers threaten thinking.

The good and thus wholesome  
danger is the nighness of the singing  
poet.

The evil and thus keenest danger is  
thinking itself. It must think  
against itself, which it can only  
seldom do.

The bad and thus muddled danger  
is philosophizing.

When on a summer's day the butterfly  
settles on the flower and, wings  
closed, sways with it in the  
meadow-breeze . . . .

All our heart's courage is the  
echoing response to the  
first call of Being which  
gathers our thinking into the  
play of the world.

In thinking all things  
become solitary and slow.

Patience nurtures magnanimity.

He who thinks greatly must  
err greatly.

When the mountain brook in night's  
stillness tells of its plunging  
over the boulders. . . .

The oldest of the old follows behind  
us in our thinking and yet it  
comes to meet us.

That is why thinking holds to the  
coming of what has been, and  
is remembrance.

To be old means: to stop in time at  
that place where the unique  
thought of a thought train has  
swung into its joint.

We may venture the step back out  
of philosophy into the thinking of  
Being as soon as we have grown  
familiar with the provenance of  
thinking.

When in the winter nights snowstorms  
tear at the cabin and one morning the  
landscape is hushed in its blanket of  
snow. . . .

Thinking's saying would be stilled in  
its being only by becoming unable  
to say that which must remain  
unspoken.

Such inability would bring thinking  
face to face with its matter.

What is spoken is never, and in no  
language, what is said.

That a thinking is, ever and suddenly—  
whose amazement could fathom it?

When the cowbells keep tinkling from  
the slopes of the mountain valley  
where the herds wander slowly. . . .

The poetic character of thinking is  
still veiled over.

Where it shows itself, it is for a  
long time like the utopianism 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.

When the evening light, slanting into  
the woods somewhere, bathes the tree  
trunks in gold. . . .

Singing and thinking are the stems  
neighbor to poetry.

They grow out of Being and reach into  
its truth.

Their relationship makes us think of what  
Hölderlin sings of the trees of the  
woods:

“And to each other they remain unknown,  
So long as they stand, the neighboring  
trunks.”



Forests spread  
Brooks plunge  
Rocks persist  
Mist diffuses

Meadows wait  
Springs well  
Winds dwell  
Blessing muses

II

THE ORIGIN OF THE WORK OF ART