

MARTIN

POETRY,

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HEIDEGGER

THOUGHT

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VALUABLE COLLECTION."
—REVIEW OF METAPHYSICS

HARPERPERENNIAL  MODERNTHOUGHT

WHAT ARE POETS FOR?

"... *and what are poets for in a destitute time?*" asks Hölderlin's elegy "Bread and Wine." We hardly understand the question today. How, then, shall we grasp the answer that Hölderlin gives?

"... and what are poets for in a destitute time?" The word "time" here means the era to which we ourselves still belong. For Hölderlin's historical experience, the appearance and sacrificial death of Christ mark the beginning of the end of the day of the gods. Night is falling. Ever since the "united three"—Herales, Dionysos, and Christ—have left the world, the evening of the world's age has been declining toward its night. The world's night is spreading its darkness. The era is defined by the god's failure to arrive, by the "default of God." But the default of God which Hölderlin experienced does not deny that the Christian relationship with God lives on in individuals and in the churches; still less does it assess this relationship negatively. The default of God means that no god any longer gathers men and things unto himself, visibly and unequivocally, and by such gathering disposes the world's history and man's sojourn in it. The default of God forbodes something even grimmer, however. Not only have the gods and the god fled, but the divine radiance has become extinguished in the world's history. The time of the world's night is the destitute time, because it becomes ever more destitute. It has already grown so destitute, it can no longer discern the default of God as a default.

Because of this default, there fails to appear for the world the ground that grounds it. The word for abyss—*Abgrund*—originally means the soil and ground toward which, because it is undermost, a thing tends downward. But in what follows we shall think of the *Ab-* as the complete absence of the ground. The ground is the soil in which to strike root and to stand. The age for which the ground fails to come, hangs in the abyss. Assuming that a turn still remains open for this destitute time at all, it can come some day only if the world turns about fundamentally—and that now means, unequivocally: if it turns away from the abyss. In the age of the world's night, the abyss of the world must be experienced and endured. But for this it is necessary that there be those who reach into the abyss.

The turning of the age does not take place by some new god, or the old one renewed, bursting into the world from ambush at some time or other. Where would he turn on his return if men had not first prepared an abode for him? How could there ever be for the god an abode fit for a god, if a divine radiance did not first begin to shine in everything that is?

The gods who "were once there," "return" only at the "right time"—that is, when there has been a turn among men in the right place, in the right way. For this reason Hölderlin, in the unfinished hymn "Mnemosyne," written soon after the elegy "Bread and Wine," writes (IV, 225):

... The heavenly powers
Cannot do all things. It is the morals
Who reach sooner into the abyss. So the turn is
With these. Long is
The time, but the true comes into
Its own.

Long is the destitute time of the world's night. To begin with, this requires a long time to reach to its middle. At this night's midnight, the destruction of the time is greatest. Then the destitute

time is no longer able even to experience its own destitution. That inability, by which even the destitution of the destitute state is obscured, is the time's absolutely destitute character. The destitution is wholly obscured, in that it now appears as nothing more than the need that wants to be met. Yet we must think of the world's night as a destiny that takes place this side of pessimism and optimism. Perhaps the world's night is now approaching its midnight. Perhaps the world's time is now becoming the completely destitute time. But also perhaps not, not yet, not even yet, despite the immeasurable need, despite all suffering, despite nameless sorrow, despite the growing and spreading peacelessness, despite the mounting confusion. Long is the time because even terror, taken by itself as a ground for turning, is powerless as long as there is no turn with mortal men. But there is a turn with mortals when these find the way to their own nature. That nature lies in this, that mortals reach into the abyss sooner than the heavenly powers. Mortals, when we think of their nature, remain closer to that absence because they are touched by presence, the ancient name of Being. But because presence conceals itself at the same time, it is itself already absence. Thus the abyss holds and remarks everything. In his hymn "The Titans" Hölderlin says of the "abyss" that it is "all-perceiving." He among mortals who must, sooner than other mortals and otherwise than they, reach into the abyss, comes to know the marks that the abyss remarks. For the poet, these are the traces of the fugitive gods. In Hölderlin's experience, Dionysos the wine-god brings this trace down to the godless amidst the darkness of their world's night. For in the vine and in its fruit, the god of wine guards the being toward one another of earth and sky as the site of the wedding feast of men and gods. Only within reach of this site, if anywhere, can traces of the fugitive gods still remain for god-less men.

... and what are poets for in a destitute time?

Hölderlin shyly puts the answer into the mouth of his poet-friend Heinse, whom he addresses in the elegy:

But they are, you say, like the wine-god's holy priests,
Who fared from land to land in holy night.

Poets are the mortals who, singing earnestly of the wine-god, sense the trace of the fugitive gods, stay on the gods' tracks, and so trace for their kindred mortals the way toward the turning. The ether, however, in which alone the gods are gods, is their godhead. The element of this ether, that within which even the godhead itself is still present, is the holy. The element of the ether for the coming of the fugitive gods, the holy, is the track of the fugitive gods. But who has the power to sense, to trace such a track? Traces are often inconspicuous, and are always the legacy of a directive that is barely divined. To be a poet in a destitute time means: to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods. This is why the poet in the time of the world's night utters the holy. This is why, in Hölderlin's language, the world's night is the holy night.

It is a necessary part of the poet's nature that, before he can be truly a poet in such an age, the time's destitution must have made the whole being and vocation of the poet a poetic question for him. Hence "poets in a destitute time" must especially gather in poetry the nature of poetry. Where that happens we may assume poets to exist who are on the way to the destiny of the world's age. We others must learn to listen to what *these* poets say—assuming that, in regard to the time that conceals Being because it shelters it, we do not deceive ourselves through reckoning time merely in terms of that which is by dissecting that which is.

The closer the world's night draws toward midnight, the more exclusively does the destitute prevail, in such a way that it withdraws its very nature and presence. Not only is the holy lost as the track toward the godhead; even the traces leading to that lost track are well-nigh obliterated. The more obscure the traces become the less can a single mortal, reaching into the abyss, attend there to intimations and signs. It is then all the more strictly true that each man gets farthest if he goes only as far as he can go along the way allotted to him. The third stanza of the same elegy that

raises the question—"What are poets for in a destitute time?"—pronounces the law that rules over its poets:

One thing strands firm: whether it be near noon
Or close to midnight, a measure ever endures,
Common to all: yet to each his own is allotted, too,
Each of us goes toward and reaches the place that
he can.

In his letter to Boehlendorf of December 2, 1802, Hölderlin writes: "... and the philosophical light around my window is now my joy; may I be able to keep on as I have thus far!"

The poet things his way into the locality defined by that lighting 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 its shape to this realm of poetic thinking. His composing dwells in this locality as intimately as no other poetic composition of his time. The locality to which Hölderlin came is a manifestness of Being, a manifestness which itself belongs to the destiny of Being and which, out of that destiny, is intended for the poet.

But this manifestness of Being within metaphysics as completed may even be at the same time the extreme oblivion of Being. Suppose, however, that this oblivion were the hidden nature of the destituteness of what is destitute in the time. There would indeed be no time then for an aesthetic flight to Hölderlin's poetry. There would then be no moment in which to make a contrived myth out of the figure of the poet. There would then be no occasion to misuse his poetry as a rich source for a philosophy. But there would be, and there is, the sole necessity, by thinking our way soberly into what his poetry says, to come to learn what is unspoken. That is the course of the history of Being. If we reach and enter that course, it will lead thinking into a dialogue with poetry, a dialogue that is of the history of Being. Scholars of literary history inevitably consider that dialogue to be an unscientific violation of what such

scholarship takes to be the facts. Philosophers consider the dialogue to be a helpless aberration into fantasy. But destiny pursues its course untroubled by all that.

Do we moderns encounter a modern poet on this course? Do we encounter that very poet who today is often and hastily dragged into the vicinity of thinking, and covered up with much half-baked philosophy? However, we must ask this question more clearly, with the appropriate rigor.

Is Rainer Maria Rilke a poet in a destitute time? How is his poetry related to the destitution of the time? How deeply does it reach into the abyss? Where does the poet get to, assuming he goes where he can go?

Rilke's valid poetry concentrates and solidifies itself, patiently assembled, in the two slim volumes *Duino Elegies* and *Sonnets to Orpheus*. * The long way leading to the poetry is itself one that inquires poetically. Along the way Rilke comes to realize the destitution of the time more clearly. The time remains destitute not only because God is dead, but because mortals are hardly aware and capable even of their own mortality. Mortals have not yet come into ownership of their own nature. Death withdraws into the enigmatic. The mystery of pain remains veiled. Love has not been learned. But the mortals *are*. They are, in that there is language. Song still lingers over their destitute land. The singer's word still keeps to the trace of the holy. The song in the *Sonnets to Orpheus* (Part I, 19) says it:

Though swiftly the world converts,
like cloud-shapes' upheaval,
everything perfect reverts
to the primeval.

Over the change abounding
farther and freer

* *Duino Elegien*. Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1923. *Die Sonette an Orpheus*. Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1923. —Tr.

your prelude song keeps sounding
God with the lyre.

Suffering is not discerned,
neither has love been learned,
and what removes us in death,
nothing unveils.

Only the song's high breath
hallows and hails.

Meanwhile, even the trace of the holy has become unrecognizable. It remains undecided whether we still experience the holy as the track leading to the godhead of the divine, or whether we now encounter no more than a trace of the holy. It remains unclear what the track leading to the trace might be. It remains in question how such a track might show itself to us.

The time is destitute because it lacks the unconcealment of the nature of pain, death, and love. This destitution is itself destitute because that realm of being withdraws within which pain and death and love belong together. Concealment exists inasmuch as the realm in which they belong together is the abyss of Being. But the song still remains which names the land over which it sings. What is the song itself? How is a mortal capable of it? Whence does it sing? How far does it reach into the abyss?

In order to fathom whether and in what way Rilke is a poet in a destitute time, and in order to know, then, what poets are for, we must try to stake out a few markers along the path to the abyss. We shall use as our markers some of the basic words of Rilke's valid poetry. They can be understood only in the context of the realm from which they were spoken. That realm is the truth of particular beings, as it has developed since the completion of Western metaphysics by Nietzsche. Rilke has in his own way poetically experienced and endured the unconcealment of beings which was shaped by that completion. Let us observe how beings as such and as a whole show themselves to Rilke. In order to bring this realm

into view, we shall give close attention to a poem that originated within the horizon of Rilke's perfected poetry, though later in point of time.

We are unprepared for the interpretation of the elegies and the sonnets, since the realm from which they speak, in its metaphysical constitution and unity, has not yet been sufficiently thought out in terms of the nature of metaphysics. Such thinking remains difficult, for two reasons. For one thing, because Rilke's poetry does not come up to Hölderlin's in its rank and position in the course of the history of Being. For another, because we barely know the nature of metaphysics and are not experienced travelers in the land of the saying of Being.

We are not only unprepared for an interpretation of the elegies and the sonnets, but also we have no right to it, because the realm in which the dialogue between poetry and thinking goes on can be discovered, reached, and explored in thought only slowly. Who today would presume to claim that he is at home with the nature of poetry as well as with the nature of thinking and, in addition, strong enough to bring the nature of the two into the most extreme discord and so to establish their concord?

Rilke did not himself publish the poem discussed below. It may be found on page 118 of the volume *Gesammelte Gedichte* which appeared in 1934, and on page 90 of the collection *Späte Gedichte* published in 1935. The poem bears no title. Rilke wrote it down in June 1924. In a letter to Clara Rilke from Muzot, August 15, 1924, the poet writes: "But I have not been so remiss and sluggish in *all* directions, luckily, Baron Lucius received his beautiful *Mathe* even *before* my departure in June; his note of thanks has long been waiting, ready to be sent on to you. I also enclose the improvised verses which I inscribed for him in the first volume of the handsome leather edition."^{*}

^{*} *Briefe aus Muzot*, edited by Ruth Sieber-Rilke and Carl Sieber. Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1936 (c. 1935). *Gesammelte Gedichte*, 4 vols. Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1930-1934 (Bd. 4: Leipzig: Pöschel & Trepete, 1934). *Späte Gedichte*. Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1934. —Tr

According to a note by the editors of the *Briefe aus Muzot* (p. 404), the improvised verses here referred to by Rilke make up the following poem:

- 1 As Nature gives the other creatures over
- 2 to the venture of their dim delight
- 3 and in soil and branchwork grants none special cover,
- 4 so too our being's pristine ground settles our plight;
- 5 we are no dearer to it; it ventures us.
- 6 Except that we, more eager than plant or beast,
- 7 go *wish* this venture, will it, adventurous
- 8 more sometimes than Life itself is, more daring
- 9 by a breath (and not in the least
- 10 from selfishness). . . . There, outside all caring,
- 11 this creates for us a safety—just there,
- 12 where the pure forces' gravity rules; in the end,
- 13 it is our unshieldedness on which we depend,
- 14 and that, when we saw it threaten, we turned it
- 15 so into the Open that, in widest orbit somewhere,
- 16 where the Law touches us, we may affirm it.

Rilke calls this poem "improvised verses." But its unforeseen character opens for us a perspective in which we are able to think Rilke's poetry more clearly. True, at this moment in the world's history we have first to learn that the making of poetry, too, is a matter of thinking. Let us take the poem as an exercise in poetic self-reflection.

The poem's structure is simple. Its articulation is clear, yielding four parts: verses 1-5; verses 6-10; verses 10-12; and verses 12-16. * The "so too our" in line 4 corresponds to the beginning, "As Nature." The "Except that" in line 6 refers back to this

^{*} In the German text the verse numbers vary slightly from these, due to differences between the original poem and the translated version. The numbers for the original are: 1-5; 5-9; 10-11; 12-16. —Tr

"our." This "Except that" restricts, but in the way in which a distinguished rank restricts its bearer. The distinction is identified in lines 6-10. Lines 10-12 state what the distinction is capable of. What it actually consists of is thought out in lines 12-16.

Through the "As Nature . . . so too our" at the beginning, man's being enters into the theme of the poem. The comparison contrasts human being with all other creatures. They are the living beings, plant and animal. The opening of the eighth Duino Elegy, making the same comparison, calls all beings "the Creature."

A comparison places different things in an identical setting to make the difference visible. The different things, plant and beast on the one hand and man on the other, are identical in that they come to unite within the same. This same is the relation which they have, as beings, to their ground. The ground of beings is Nature. The ground of man is not only of a kind identical with that of plant and beast. The ground is the same for both. It is Nature, as "full Nature" (*Sonnets to Orpheus*, II, 13).

We must here think of Nature in the broad and essential sense in which Leibniz uses the word *Natura* capitalized. It means the Being of beings. Being occurs as the *vis primitiva activa*. This is the incipient power gathering everything to itself, which in this manner releases every being to its own self. The Being of beings is the will. The will is the self-concentrating gathering of every *ens* unto itself. Every being, as a being, is in the will. It is as something willed. This should be taken as saying: that which is, is not first and only as something willed; rather, insofar as it is, it is itself in the mode of will. Only by virtue of being willed is each being that which, in its own way, does the willing in the will.

What Rilke calls Nature is not contrasted with history. Above all, it is not intended as the subject matter of natural science. Nor is Nature opposed to art. It is the ground for history and art and nature in the narrower sense. In the word Nature as used here, there echoes still the earlier word *physis*, equated also with *zoe*, which we translate "life." In early thought, however, the nature of life is not conceived in biological terms, but as the *physis*, that

which arises. In line 8 of our poem, "Nature" is also called "Life." Nature, Life here designate Being in the sense of all beings as a whole. In a note of 1885/86, Nietzsche once wrote: "Being—we have no idea of it other than 'living'?—How can anything dead 'be?'"*

Rilke calls Nature the *Urgrund*, the pristine ground, because it is the ground of those beings that we ourselves are. This suggests that man reaches more deeply into the ground of beings than do other beings. The ground of beings has since ancient times been called Being. The relation of Being which grounds to the beings that are grounded, is identical for man on the one hand, plant and beast on the other. It consists in this, that Being each time "gives" particular beings "over to venture." Being lets beings loose into the daring venture. This release, flinging them loose, is the real daring. The Being of beings is this relation of the flinging loose to beings. Whoever is in being at a given time is what is being ventured. Being is the venture pure and simple. It ventures us, us humans. It ventures the living beings. The particular being is, insofar as it remains what has ever and always been ventured. But the particular being is ventured into Being, that is, into a daring. Therefore, beings hazard themselves, are given over to venture. Beings are, by going with the venture to which they are given over. The Being of beings is the venture. This venture resides in the will which, since Leibniz, announces itself more clearly as the Being of beings that is revealed in metaphysics. We must not think of will here as the abstract generalization of willing understood in psychological terms. Rather, the human willing that is experienced metaphysically remains only the willed counterpart of will as the Being of beings. Rilke, in representing Nature as the venture, thinks of it metaphysically in terms of the nature of will. This nature of will

*Friedrich Nietzsche. *Der Wille Zur Macht*. In: *Nietzsches Werke*, 2 Abt. Bd. XV. *Nachgelassene Werke*. *Ecce Homo* und *Der Wille Zur Macht*. 1. u. 2. Buch. Leipzig, Köhner, 1922. Cf. also Nietzsche's *Werke*, edited by Karl Schlechta. München: Carl Hanser, 1956. Band 3, page 483.—Tr.

still conceals itself, both in the will to power and in the will as venture. The will exists as the will to will.

The poem makes no direct statement about the ground of all beings, that is, about Being as the venture pure and simple. But if Being as venture is the relation of flinging loose, and thus retains in the flinging even what has been ventured, then the poem tells us something indirectly about the venture by speaking of what has been ventured.

Nature ventures living beings, and "grants none special cover." Likewise, we men who have been ventured are "no dearer" to the daring that ventures us. The two imply: venture includes flinging into danger. To dare is to risk the game. Heraclitus (Fragment 52) thinks of Being as the aeon, the world's age, and of the aeon in turn as a child's game: *Aion pais esti paizon, pessonon paidos he basileie*. ("Time is a child playing, playing draughts; the kingship is a child's.") If that which has been flung were to remain out of danger, it would not have been ventured. It would not be in danger if it were shielded. Words in German associated with shield are *Schutz* (protection), *Schütze* (marksman), *schützen* (to protect); they belong to *schieszen* (to shoot), as *Buck* (boss, knob), *bücken* (to bend or stoop) belong to *biegen* (to bend or bow). *Schiessen*, to shoot, means *schieben*, to trust, e.g., to thrust home a bolt. The roof thrusts forth over the wall. In the country we still say: the peasant woman *schießt ein*, she shoves the dough formed for baking into the oven. The shield is what is pushed before and in front of. It keeps danger from harming, even touching, the endangered being. What is shielded is entrusted to the protector, the shielder. Our older and richer language would have used words like *verhahrt*, *verhört*—held dear. The unshielded, on the contrary, is "no dearer." Plant, animal, and man—insofar as they are beings at all, that is, insofar as they are ventured—agree in this, that they are not specially protected. But since they differ nonetheless in their being, there will also be a difference in their unprotectedness.

As ventured, those who are not protected are nevertheless not

abandoned. If they were, they would be just as little ventured as if they were protected. Surrendered only to annihilation, they would no longer hang in the balance. In the Middle Ages the word for balance, *die Wage*, still means about as much as hazard or risk. This is the situation in which matters may turn out one way or the other. That is why the apparatus which moves by tipping one way or the other is called *die Wage*. It plays and balances out. The word *Wage*, in the sense of risk and as name of the apparatus, comes from *wägen*, *wegen*, to make a way, that is, to go, to be in motion. *Be-wägen* means to cause to be on the way and so to bring into motion: to shake or rock, *wiegen*. What rocks is said to do so because it is able to bring the balance, *Wage*, into the play of movement, this way or that. What rocks the balance weighs down; it has weight. To weigh or throw in the balance, as in the sense of wager, means to bring into the movement of the game, to throw into the scales, to release into risk. What is so ventured is, of course, unprotected; but because it hangs in the balance, it is retained in the venture. It is upheld. Its ground keeps it safely within it. What is ventured, as something that is, is something that is willed; retained within the will, it itself remains in the mode of will, and ventures itself. What is ventured is thus careless, *sine cura*, *securum*—secure, safe. What is ventured can follow the venture, follow it into the unprotectedness of the ventured, only if it rests securely in the venture. The unprotectedness of what is ventured not only does not exclude, it necessarily includes, its being secure in its ground. What is ventured goes along with the venture.

Being, which holds all beings in the balance, thus always draws particular beings toward itself—toward itself as the center. Being, as the venture, holds all beings, as being ventured, in this draft. But this center of the attracting drawing withdraws at the same time from all beings. In this fashion the center gives over all beings to the venture as which they are ventured. In this gathering release, the metaphysical nature of the will, thought of in terms of Being, conceals itself. The venture—the drawing and all-mediating center of beings—is the power that lends a weight, a gravity to the

ventured beings. The venture is the force of gravity. One of Rilke's late poems, entitled "The Force of Gravity," says of it:

Center, how you draw yourself
out of all things, regaining yourself
even from things in flight: Center, strongest of all!
Standing man: like a drink through thirst,
gravity plunges through him.
But from the sleeper there falls
as from low-lying cloud,
a rich man of weight.*

In contrast with physical gravitation, of which we usually hear, the force of gravity named in this poem is the center of all beings as a whole. This is why Rilke calls it "the unheard-of-center" (*Sonnets to Orpheus*, II, 28). It is the ground as the "medium" that holds one being to another in mediation and gathers everything in the play of the venture. The unheard-of center is "the eternal playmate" in the world-game of Being. The same poem that sings of Being as the venture calls the draft that mediates here the gravity of the pure forces. The pure gravity, the unheard-of center of all daring, the eternal playmate in the game of Being, is the venture.

As the venture flings free what is ventured, it holds it at the same time in balance. The venture sets free what is ventured, in such a way indeed that it sets free what is flung free into nothing other than a drawing toward the center. Drawing this way, the venture ever and always brings the ventured toward itself in this drawing. To bring something from somewhere, to secure it, make it come—is the original meaning of the word *Bezug*, currently understood as meaning reference or relation. The drawing which, as the venture, draws and touches all beings and keeps them drawing toward itself is the *Bezug*, the draft, pure and simple. The word

*["Schwerkraft," in Rilke, Rainer Maria, *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by the Rilke Archiv, Vol. 2, p. 179. Wiesbaden: Insel-Verlag, 1963. —Tr.]

Bezug is a basic word in Rilke's valid poetry, and occurs in such combinations as "the pure *Bezug*," "the whole," "the real," "the clearest *Bezug*," or "the other *Bezug*" (meaning the same draft in another respect).

We only half understand Rilke's word *Bezug*—and in a case such as this that means not at all—if we understand it in the sense of reference or relation. We compound our misunderstanding if we conceive of this relation as the human ego's referring or relating itself to the object. This meaning, "referring to," is a later one in the history of language. Rilke's word *Bezug* is used in this sense as well, of course; but it does not intend it primarily, but only on the basis of its original meaning. Indeed, the expression "the whole *Bezug*" is completely unthinkable if *Bezug* is represented as mere relation. The gravity of the pure forces, the unheard-of center, the pure draft, the whole draft, full Nature, Life, the venture—they are the same.

All the names listed name what is, as such, as a whole. The common parlance of metaphysics also calls it "Being." According to the poem, Nature is to be thought of as the venture. The word "venture" here designates both the ground that dares the venture, and what is ventured as a whole. This ambiguity is not accidental, nor is it sufficient for us merely to note it. In it, the language of metaphysics speaks unequivocally.

Everything that is ventured is, as such and such a being, admitted into the whole of beings, and reposes in the ground of the whole. The given beings, of one sort or another, are according to the attraction by which they are held within the pull of the whole draft. The manner of attraction within the draft is the mode of the relation to the center as pure gravity. Nature therefore comes to be represented when it is said in what manner the given ventured being is drawn into the pull toward the center. According to that manner, the given being then is in the midst of beings as a whole.

Rilke likes to use the term "the Open" to designate the whole draft to which all beings, as ventured beings, are given over. It is

another basic word in his poetry. In Rilke's language, "open" means something that does not block off. It does not block off because it does not set bounds. It does not set bounds because it is in itself without all bounds. The Open is the great whole of all that is unbounded. It lets the beings ventured into the pure draft draw as they are drawn, so that they variously draw on one another and draw together without encountering any bounds. Drawing as so drawn, they fuse with the boundless, the infinite. They do not dissolve into void nothingness, but they redeem themselves into the whole of the Open.

What Rilke designates by this term is not in any way defined by openness in the sense of the unconcealedness of beings that lets beings as such be present. If we attempted to interpret what Rilke has in mind as the Open in the sense of unconcealedness and what is unconcealed, we would have to say: what Rilke experiences as the Open is precisely what is closed up, unlightened, which draws on in boundlessness, so that it is incapable of encountering anything unusual, or indeed anything at all. Where something is encountered, a barrier comes into being. Where there is confinement, whatever is so barred is forced back upon itself and thus bent in upon itself. The barring twists and blocks off the relation to the Open, and makes of the relation itself a twisted one. The confinement within the boundless is established by man's representation. The oppositeness confronting him does not allow man to be directly within the Open. In a certain manner, it excludes man from the world and places him before the world—"world" meaning here all beings as a whole. In contrast, what has the character of world is the Open itself, the whole of all that is not objective. But the name "the Open," too, like the word "venture," is, as a metaphysical term, ambiguous. It signifies the whole of the unbounded drawings of the whole draft, as well as openness in the sense of a universally prevailing release from all bounds.

The Open admits. To admit does not, however, mean to grant entry and access to what is closed off, as though what is concealed had to reveal itself in order to appear as unconcealed. To admit

means to draw in and to fit into the unlightened whole of the drawings of the pure draft. Admittance, as the way the Open is, has the character of an including attraction, in the manner of the gravity of the pure forces. The less ventured beings are debarred from admittance into the pure draft, the more they belong within the great whole of the Open. Rilke, accordingly, calls those beings that have been ventured directly into this great whole and there rest in the balance, the "great-accustomed things" (*Späte Gedichte*, p. 22). Man is not among them. The song that sings of this different relation of living beings and of man to the Open is the eighth of the *Duino Elegies*. The differences lie in the different degrees of consciousness. Ever since Leibniz, the distinction among beings in this respect has been current in modern metaphysics.

What Rilke thinks when he thinks the word "the Open" can be documented by a letter which he addressed in the last year of his life (February 25, 1926) to a Russian reader who had questioned him about the eighth elegy. * Rilke writes:

You must understand the concept of the "Open," which I have tried to propose in the elegy, in such a way that the animal's degree of consciousness sets it into the world without the animal's placing the world over against itself at every moment (as we do); the animal is *in* the world; we stand *before it* by virtue of what peculiar turn and intensification which our consciousness has taken. [Rilke goes on.] By the "Open," therefore, I do not mean sky, air, and space; *they*, too, are "object" and thus "opaque" and closed to the man who observes and judges. The animal, the flower, presumably *is* all that, without accounting to itself, and therefore has before itself and above itself that indescribably open freedom which perhaps has its (extremely fleeting) equivalents among us only in those first moments of love when

* Maurice Betz, *Rilke in Frankreich. Erinnerungen—Briefe—Dokumente* [Vienna, Leipzig, Zürich: Reclam, 1937. —Tr.]

one human being sees his own vastness in another, his beloved, and in man's elevation toward God.

Plant and animal are admitted into the Open. They are "in the world." The "in" means: they are included and drawn, unlightened, into the drawing of the pure draft. The relation to the Open—if indeed we may still speak here of a "too"—is the unconscious one of a merely striving-drawing ramification into the whole of what is. With the heightening of consciousness, the nature of which, for modern metaphysics, is representation, the standing and the counterstanding of objects are also heightened. The higher its consciousness, the more the conscious being is excluded from the world. This is why man, in the words of Rilke's letter, is "before the world. He is not admitted into the Open. Man stands over against the world. He does not live immediately in the draft and wind of the whole draft. The passage from the letter helps us to understand the Open better, especially because Rilke here denies expressly that one may think of the Open in the sense of the openness of sky and space. Still further removed from Rilke's poetry, which remains in the shadow of a tempered Nietzschean metaphysics, is the thought of the Open in the sense of the essentially more primal lightening of Being.

All that belongs immediately within the Open is taken up by it into the drawing of the center's attraction. Therefore, among all ventured beings, those belong most readily within the Open which are by nature benumbed, so that, in such numbness, they never strive for anything that might oppose them. The beings that exist in this way are in "dim delight."

As Nature gives the other creates over
to the venture of their dim delight . . .

"Dim" is used here in the sense of "muted": never breaking out of the draft of the unbounded drawing onward, which is untroubled by the restless relating back and forth in which con-

scious representation stumbles along. Dim, like the muted tone, means what rests on an underlying depth and has the nature of a bearer. "Dim" is not meant in the negative sense of "dull" or "oppressive." Rilke does not think of the dim delight as anything low and inferior. It is evidence that the great-accustomed things of Nature belong to the whole of the pure draft. Thus he can say in a late poem: "Let a flower's being be great to us" (*Späte Gedächtnis*, p. 89; compare *Sonnette*, II, 14). Just as the letter which we cited thinks of man and of living beings in respect of the different relation of their consciousness to the Open, so the poem speaks of the "creatures" and of "us" (humans) in respect of our different relation to the daring venture:

Except that we, more eager than plant or beast,
go with this venture . . .

That man goes with the venture, even more than does plant or beast, could mean first that man is admitted into the Open with even less restraint than are those other beings. In fact, the "more" would have to mean just that, if the "with" were not stressed. The stress on "with" does not mean a heightening of the unrestrained going along, but signifies: for man, to go with the venture is something specifically represented and is proposed as his purpose. The venture and what it ventures, Nature, what is as a whole, the world, is brought out into prominence for man, out of the mutedness of the draft that removes all barriers. But what has so been brought forward—where is it put, and by what? It is by the positioning* that belongs to representation that Nature is brought before man. Man places before himself the world as the whole of everything objective, and he places himself before the world. Man sets up the world toward himself, and delivers Nature over to himself. We must think of this placing-here, this producing, in its broad and multifarious nature. Where Nature is not satisfactory to

*"Pro-positioning" would be a nearer translation.—Tr.

man's representation, he reframes or redispenses it. Man produces new things where they are lacking to him. Man transposes things where they are in his way. Man interposes something between himself and things that distract him from his purpose. Man exposes things when he boosts them for sale and use. Man exposes when he sets forth his own achievement and plays up his own profession. By multifarious producing, the world is brought to stand and into position. The Open becomes an object, and is thus twisted around toward the human being. Over against the world as the object, man stations himself and sets himself up as the one who deliberately pushes through all this producing.

To put something before ourselves, propose it, in such a way that what has been proposed, having first been represented, determines all the modes of production in every respect, is a basic characteristic of the attitude which we know as willing. The willing of which we are speaking here is production, placing-here, and this in the sense of objectification purposely putting itself through, asserting itself. Plant and animal do not will because, muted in their desire, they never bring the Open before themselves as an object. They cannot go with the venture as one that is represented. Because they are admitted into the Open, the pure draft is never the objective other to themselves. Man, by contrast, goes "*with*" the venture, because he is the being who wills in the sense described:

Except that we, more eager than plant or beast,
go *with* this venture, will it. . . .

The willing of which we speak here is the putting-through, the self-assertion, whose purpose *has already* posited the world as the whole of producible objects. This willing determines the nature of modern man, though at first he is not aware of its far-reaching implication, though he could not already know today by what will, as the Being of beings, this willing is willed. By such willing, modern man turns out to be the being who, in all relations

to all that is, and thus in his relation to himself as well, rises up as the producer who puts through, carries out, his own self and establishes this uprising as the absolute rule. The whole objective inventory in terms of which the world appears is given over to, commended to, and thus subjected to the command of self-assertive production. Willing has in it the character of command; for purposeful self-assertion is a mode in which the attitude of the producing, and the objective character of the world, concentrate into an unconditional and therefore complete unity. In this self-concentration, the command character of the will announces itself. And through it, in the course of modern metaphysics, the long-concealed nature of the long-since existing will as the Being of beings comes to make its appearance.

Correspondingly, human willing too can be in the mode of self-assertion only by forcing everything under its dominion from the start, even before it can survey it. To such a willing, everything, beforehand and thus subsequently, turns irresistibly into material for self-assertive production. The earth and its atmosphere become raw material. Man becomes human material, which is disposed of with a view to proposed goals. The unconditional establishment of the unconditional self-assertion by which the world is purposefully made over according to the frame of mind of man's command is a process that emerges from the hidden nature of technology. Only in modern times does this nature begin to unfold as a destiny of the truth of all beings as a whole; until now, its scattered appearances and attempts had remained incorporated within the embracing structure of the realm of culture and civilization.

Modern science and the total state, as necessary consequences of the nature of technology, are also its attendants. The same holds true of the means and forms that are set up for the organization of public opinion and of men's everyday ideas. Not only are living things technically objectivated in stock-breeding and exploitation; the attack of atomic physics on the phenomena of living matter as such is in full swing. At bottom, the essence of life is supposed to yield itself to technical production. The fact that we today, in all

seriousness, discern in the results and the viewpoint of atomic physics possibilities of demonstrating human freedom and of establishing a new value theory, is a sign of the predominance of technological ideas whose development has long since been removed beyond the realm of the individual's personal views and opinions. The inherent natural power of technology shows itself further in the attempts that are being made, in adjacent areas so to speak, to master technology with the help of traditional values; but in these efforts technological means are already being employed that are not mere external forms. For generally the utilization of machinery and the manufacture of machines is not yet technology itself—it is only an instrument concordant with technology, whereby the nature of technology is established in the objective character of its raw materials. Even this, that man becomes the subject and the world the object, is a consequence of technology's nature establishing itself, and not the other way around.

When Rilke experiences the Open as the nonobjective character of full Nature, the world of willing man must stand out for him, in contrast and in a corresponding way, as what is objective. Conversely, an eye that looks out upon the integral whole of beings will receive a hint from the phenomena of rising technology, directing it toward those realms from which there could perhaps emerge a surpassing of the technical—a surpassing that would be primordially formative.

The formless formations of technological production interpose themselves before the Open of the pure draft. Things that once grew now wither quickly away. They can no longer pierce through the objectification to show their own. In a letter of November 13, 1925, Rilke writes:

To our grandparents, a "house," a "well," a familiar staple, even their own clothes, their cloak *still* meant infinitely more, were infinitely more intimate—almost everything a vessel in which they found something human already there, and added to its human store. Now there are intruding,

from America, empty indifferent things, sham things, *dummies of life*. . . . A house, as the Americans understand it, an American apple or a winestock from over there, have *nothing* in common with the house, the fruit, the grape into which the hope and thoughtfulness of our forefathers had entered. . . . *

Yet this Americanism is itself nothing but the concentrated rebound of the willed nature of modern Europe upon a Europe for which, to be sure, in the completion of metaphysics by Nietzsche, there were thought out in advance at least some areas of the essential questionability of a world where Being begins to rule as the will to will. It is not that Americanism first surrounds us modems with its menace; the menace of the unexperienced nature of technology surrounded even our forefathers and their things. Rilke's reflection is pertinent not because it attempts still to salvage the things of our forefathers. Thinking ahead more fully, we must recognize what it is that becomes questionable along with the thingness of things. Indeed, still earlier—on March 1, 1912—Rilke writes from Duino: "The world draws into itself; for things, too, do the same in their turn, by shifting their existence more and more over into the vibrations of money, and developing there for themselves a kind of spirituality, which even now already surpasses their palpable reality. In the age with which I am dealing [Rilke is referring to the fourteenth century] money was still gold, still metal, a beautiful thing, the handsomest, most comprehensible of all" (*Briefe*, 1907-1914, pp. 213 ff.). And still a decade earlier, in the *Book of Pilgrimage* (1901), second part of the *Book of Hours*, he published the highly prophetic lines:

The kings of the world are grown old,
inheritors they shall have none.
In childhood death removes the son,

* *Briefe aus Muzot*, pp. 335 f.

their daughters pale have given, each one,
sick crowns to the powers to hold.

Into coin the rabble breaks them,
today's lord of the world takes them,
stretches them into machines in his fire,
grumbling they serve his every desire;
but happiness still forsakes them.

The ore is homesick. And it yearns
to leave the coin and leave the wheel
that teach it to lead a life inane.

The factories and tills it spurns;
from petty forms it will uncongeal,
return to the open mountain's vein,
and on it the mountain will close again.*

In place of all the world-content of things that was formerly perceived and used to grant freely of itself, the object-character of technological dominion spreads itself over the earth ever more quickly, ruthlessly, and completely. Not only does it establish all things as producible in the process of production; it also delivers the products of production by means of the market. In self-assertive production, the humanness of man and the thingness of things dissolve into the calculated market value of a market which not only spans the whole earth as a world market, but also, as the will to will, trades in the nature of Being and thus subjects all beings to the trade of a calculation that dominates most tenaciously in those areas where there is no need of numbers.

Rilke's poem thinks of man as the being who is ventured into a willing, the being who, without as yet experiencing it, is willed in the will to will. Willing in this way, man can go with the venture in such a way as to set himself up as the end and goal of everything.

* *Gesammelte Werke*, II, 254. [Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, Volumes I-VI, 1927, Volumes VI-IX, 1930.—Tr.]

Thus man is more venturesome than plant or beast. Accordingly, he also is in danger differently from them.

Among those beings, plants and beasts, too, none is under special protection, though they are admitted into the Open and secured in it. Man, on the other hand, as the being who wills himself, not only enjoys no special protection from the whole of beings, but rather is unshielded (line 13). As the one who proposes and produces, he stands before the obstructed Open. He himself and his things are thereby exposed to the growing danger of turning into mere material and into a function of objectification. The design of self-assertion itself extends the realm of the danger that man will lose his selfhood to unconditional production. The menace which assails man's nature arises from that nature itself. Yet human nature resides in the relation of Being to man, its draft upon him. Thus man, by his self-willing, becomes in an essential sense endangered, that is, in need of protection; but by that same nature he becomes at the same time unshielded.

This "our unshieldedness" (lines 12-13) remains different from the absence of special protection for plant and beast in the same measure as their "dim delight" differs from man's self-willing. The difference is infinite, because from the dim delight there is no transition to the objectification in self-assertion. But this self-assertion not only places man outside all care or protection; the imposition of the objectifying of the world destroys ever more resolutely the very possibility of protection. By building the world up technologically as an object, man deliberately and completely blocks his path, already obstructed, into the Open. Self-assertive man, whether or not he knows and wills it as an individual, is the functionary of technology. Not only does he face the Open from outside it; he even turns his back upon the "pure draft" by objectifying the world. Man sets himself apart from the pure draft. The man of the age of technology, by this parting, opposes himself to the Open. This parting is not a parting *from*, it is a parting *against*.

Technology is the unconditional establishment, posed by man's self-assertion, of unconditional unshieldedness on the

ground of that turn which prevails in all objectiveness against the pure draft, by which the unheard-of center of beings draws all pure forces to itself. Technological production is the organization of this parting. The word for parting—*Abscheid*—in the meaning just sketched, is another basic word in Rilke's valid poetry.

What is deadly is not the much-discussed atomic bomb as this particular death-dealing machine. What has long since been threatening man with death, and indeed with the death of his own nature, is the unconditional character of mere willing in the sense of purposeful self-assertion in everything. What threatens man in his very nature is the willed view that man, by the peaceful release, transformation, storage, and channeling of the energies of physical nature, could render the human condition, man's being, tolerable for everybody and happy in all respects. But the peace of this peacefulness is merely the undisturbed continuing relentlessness of the fury of self-assertion which is resolutely self-reliant. What threatens man in his very nature is the view that this imposition of production can be ventured without any danger, as long as other interests besides—such as, perhaps, the interests of a faith—retain their currency. As though it were still possible for that essential relation to the whole of beings in which man is placed by the technological exercise of his will to find a separate abode in some side-structure which would offer more than a temporary escape into those self-deceptions among which we must count also the flight to the Greek gods! What threatens man in his very nature is the view that technological production puts the world in order, while in fact this ordering is precisely what levels every *orda*, every rank, down to the uniformity of production, and thus from the outset destroys the realm from which any rank and recognition could possibly arise.

It is not only the totality of this willing that is dangerous, but willing itself, in the form of self-assertion within a world that is admitted only as will. The willing that is willed by this will is already resolved to take unconditional command. By that resolve, it is even now delivered into the hands of total organization. But

above all, technology itself prevents any experience of its nature. For while it is developing its own self to the full, it develops in the sciences a kind of knowing that is debarred from ever entering into the realm of the essential nature of technology, let alone retracing in thought that nature's origin.

The essence of technology comes to the light of day only slowly. This day is the world's night, rearranged into merely technological day. This day is the shortest day. It threatens a single endless winter. Not only does protection now withhold itself from man, but the integrality of the whole of what is remains now in darkness. The wholesome and sound withdraws. The world becomes without healing, unholy. Not only does the holy, as the track to the godhead, thereby remain concealed; even the track to the holy, the hale and whole, seems to be effaced. That is, unless there are still some mortals capable of seeing the threat of the unhealable, the unholy, *as* such. They would have to discern the danger that is assailing man. The danger consists in the threat that assaults man's nature in his relation to Being itself, and not in accidental perils. This danger is *the* danger. It conceals itself in the abyss that underlies all beings. To see this danger and point it out, there must be mortals who reach sooner into the abyss.

But where there is danger, there grows
also what saves.

Hölderlin, IV, 190*

It may be that any other salvation than that which comes from *where the danger is*, is still within the unholy. Any salvation by makeshift, however well-intentioned, remains for the duration of his destiny an insubstantial illusion for man, who is endangered in his nature. The salvation must come from where there is a turn

*Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by N. v. Hellmuth, F. Seebass, & L. v. Pögenot. 1st edition, Munich: 1913-1916. 2nd edition, 6 vols., Berlin: 1922-1923. 3rd edition, vols. 1-4, Berlin: 1943.—Tr.

with mortals in their nature. Are there mortals who reach sooner into the abyss of the destitute and its destituteness? These, the most mortal among mortals, would be the most daring, the most ventured. They would be still more daring even than that self-assertive human nature which is already more daring than plant and beast.

Rilke says in lines 6 ff.:

Except that we, more eager than plant or beast,
go *with* this venture, will it, . . .

and then he continues, in the same lines:

. . . adventurous
more sometimes than Life itself is, more daring
by a breath (and not in the least
from selfishness). . . .

Not only is man by nature more daring than plant and beast. Man is at times more daring even "than Life itself is." Life here means beings in their Being: Nature. Man is at times more venturesome than the venture, more fully (abundantly) being than the Being of beings. But Being is the ground of beings. He who is more venturesome than that ground ventures to where all ground breaks off—into the abyss. But if man is the ventured being who goes with the venture by willing it, then those men who are at times more venturesome must also will more strongly. Can there, however, be a heightening of this willing beyond the absolute of purposeful self-assertion? No. Those, then, who are at times more venturesome can will more strongly only if their willing is different in nature. Thus, willing and willing would not be the same right off. Those who will more strongly by the nature of willing, remain more in accord with the will as the Being of beings. They answer sooner to Being that shows itself as will. They will more strongly in that they are more willing. Who are these more willing ones

who are more venturesome? To this question the poem, it seems, gives no explicit answer.

True, lines 8 to 11 say something about the more venturesome ones, negatively and by approximation. The more venturesome ones do not venture themselves out of selfishness, for their own personal sake. They seek neither to gain an advantage nor to indulge their self-interest. Nor, even though they are more venturesome, can they boast of any outstanding accomplishments. For they are more daring only by a little, "more daring by a breath." The "more" of their venture is as slight as a breath which remains fleeting and imperceptible. These hints do not allow us to gather who the more venturesome ones are.

Lines 10 and 11, however, tell what this daring brings which ventures beyond the Being of beings:

There, outside all caring,
this creates for us a safety—just there,
where the pure forces' gravity rules. . . .

Like all beings, we are in being only by being ventured in the venture of Being. But because, as the beings who will, we go with the venture, we are more venturesome and thus sooner exposed to danger. When man entrenches himself in purposeful self-assertion, and by means of absolute objectification installs himself in the parting against the Open, then he himself promotes his own unshieldedness.

But the daring which is more venturesome creates a safety for us. It does not do so, to be sure, by raising protective defenses around the unprotected; in that way, a protection would be raised only in those places where protection is lacking. And that would once again require a production. Production is possible only in objectification. Objectification, however, blocks us off against the Open. The more venturesome daring does not produce a defense. But it creates a safety, a secureness for us. Secure, *securus, sine cura* means: without care. The caring here has the character of

purposeful self-assertion by the ways and means of unconditional production. We are without such care only when we do not establish our nature exclusively within the precinct of production and procurement, of things that can be utilized and defended. We are secure only where we neither reckon with the unprotected nor count on a defense erected within willing. A safety exists only outside the objectifying turning away from the Open, "outside all caring," outside the parting against the pure draft. That draft is the unheard-of center of all attraction which draws all things into the boundless, and draws them for the center. This center is "there," where the gravity of the pure forces rules. To be secure is to repose safely within the drawing of the whole draft.

The daring that is more venturesome, willing more strongly than any self-assertion, because it is willing, "creates" a secureness for us in the Open. To create means to fetch from the source. And to fetch from the source means to take up what springs forth and to bring what has so been received. The more venturesome daring of the willing exercise of the will manufactures nothing. It receives, and gives what it has received. The more venturesome daring accomplishes, but it does not produce. Only a daring that becomes more daring by being willing can accomplish in receiving.

Lines 12 to 16 circumscribe what the more venturesome daring consists in, which ventures itself outside all protection, and there brings us to a secureness. This safety does not at all remove that unshieldedness which is put there by purposeful self-assertion. When human nature is absorbed in the objectification of beings, it remains unprotected in the midst of beings. Unprotected in this way, man remains related to protection, in the mode of lacking it, and thereby he remains within protection. Secureness, on the contrary, is outside all relation to protection, "outside all caring."

Accordingly, it seems that secureness, and our reaching secureness, call for a daring that surrenders all relation to being shielded and unshielded. But it only seems that way. The truth is that when our thinking proceeds from the enclosure of the whole draft, we then finally experience that which in the end—that is,

beforehand—relieves us of the care of unprotected self-imposition (lines 12 ff.):

. . . in the end,
it is our unshieldedness on which we depend. . . .

How is unshieldedness supposed to keep us safe, when only the Open affords safety, while unshieldedness consists in the constant parting against the Open? Unshieldedness can keep us safe only when the parting against the Open is inverted, so that it turns toward the Open—and into it. Thus, what keeps safe is unshieldedness in reverse. Keeping means here, for one thing, that the inversion of the parting performs the safekeeping, and for another, that unshieldedness itself, in a certain manner, grants a safety. What keeps us safe is

. . . our unshieldedness . . .
and that, when we saw it threatening, we turned it
so into the Open. . . .

The "and" leads over into the explanation which tells in what manner this strange thing is possible, that our unshieldedness, outside all protection, grants us a safety. Unshieldedness will, of course, never safeguard us if we invert it only from case to case, whenever it threatens. Unshieldedness keeps safe only if we have already turned it. Rilke says: "that . . . we turned it / so into the Open. . . ." In our having turned it there is implied a distinctive manner of conversion. In our having turned it, unshieldedness is turned from the outset, as a whole, in its nature. The distinctive feature of the conversion consists in our having seen unshieldedness as what is threatening us. Only such a having-seen sees the danger. It sees that unshieldedness as such threatens our nature with the loss of our belonging to the Open. The conversion must lie in this having-seen. It is then that unshieldedness is turned "into the Open." By having seen the danger as the threat to our human being, we must

have accomplished the inversion of the parting against the Open. This implies: the Open itself must have turned toward us in a way that allows us to turn our unshieldedness toward it,

so into the Open that, in widest orbit somewhere,
where the Law touches us, we may affirm it.

What is the widest orbit? Presumably Rilke is thinking of the Open, and indeed in a specific respect. The widest orbit surrounds all that is. The orbiting rounds into one all beings, so that, in the unifying, it is the Being of beings. But what does "being" mean? The poet, to be sure, designates beings as a whole with the names "Nature," "Life," "the Open," "the whole draft." Following the habits of the language of metaphysics, he even calls this rounded whole of beings "Being." But we do not learn what the nature of Being is. And yet, does not Rilke speak of it when he calls Being the venture that ventures all? Certainly. Accordingly, we tried to trace in thought what has been so designated back to the modern nature of the Being of beings, the will to will. And yet, what is said about the widest orbit does not tell us anything definite when we try to think of what was mentioned as the whole of beings, and of the orbiting as the Being of beings.

As thinking beings we think back, of course, to the fact that the Being of beings has from the beginning been thought of with regard to the orbiting. But we think of this spherical aspect of Being too loosely, and always only on the surface, unless we have already asked and learned how the Being of beings occurs initially. The *eon*, being, of the *eonita*, beings as a whole, is called the *hen*, the unifying One. But what is this encircling unifying as a fundamental trait of being? What does Being mean? *Eon*, "in being," signifies present, and indeed present in the unconcealed. But in presence there is concealed the bringing on of unconcealedness which lets the present beings occur as such. But only Presence itself is truly present—Presence which is everywhere as the Same in its own center and, as such, is the sphere. The spherical does not

consist in a circuit which then embraces, but in the unconcealing center that, lightening, safeguards present beings. The sphericity of the unifying, and the unifying itself, have the character of unconcealing lightening, within which present beings can be present. This is why Parmenides (Fragment VIII, 42) calls the *eon*, the presence of what is present, the *eukuklos sphaire*. This well-rounded sphere is to be thought of as the Being of beings, in the sense of the unconcealing-lightening unifying. This unifier, uniting everywhere in this manner, prompts us to call it the lightening shell, which precisely does not embrace since it uncovers and reveals, but which itself releases, lightening, into Presence. We must never represent this sphere of Being and its sphericity as an object. Must we then present it as a nonobject? No; that would be a mere flight to a manner of speaking. The spherical must be thought by way of the nature of primal Being in the sense of unconcealing Presence.

Rilke's words about the widest orbit—do they mean this sphericity of Being? Not only does nothing allow us to think so, but what is more, the characterization of the Being of beings as venture (will) argues positively against it. Yet Rilke himself, on one occasion, speaks of the "globe of being," and does so in a context which touches directly on the interpretation of the statement about the widest orbit. In a letter of January 6, 1923 (see *Insel-Almanach* 1938, * p. 109), Rilke writes:

"... like the moon, so life surely has a side that is constantly turned away from us, and that is not its opposite but its completion to perfection, to plenitude, to the real, whole, and full sphere and globe of being." Though we must not press the figurative reference to the celestial body represented as an object, it nevertheless remains clear that Rilke is here thinking of sphericity not in regard to Being in the sense of lightening-unifying Presence, but in regard to beings in the sense of the plenitude of all their facets. The globe of Being of which he speaks here, that is, the globe of all beings as

* [Leipzig: Insel-Verlag.—Tr.]

a whole, is the Open, as the pure forces serried, boundlessly flowing into one another and thus acting toward one another. The widest orbit is the wholeness of the whole draft of attraction. To this widest circle there corresponds as the strongest center, the "unheard-of center" of pure gravity.

To turn unshieldedness into the Open means to "affirm" unshieldedness within the widest orbit. Such a yea-saying is possible only where the whole of the orbit is in every respect not only in full measure, but commensurate, and is already before us as such and, accordingly, is the *positum*. Only a positing can correspond to it, never a negating. Even those sides of life that are averted from us must, insofar as they are, be taken positively. In the letter of November 13, 1925, already mentioned, we read: "Death is the *side of life* that is averted from us, unilluminated by us" (*Briefe aus Muzot*, p. 332). Death and the realm of the dead belong to the whole of beings as its other side. That realm is "the other draft," that is, the other side of the whole draft of the Open. Within the widest orbit of the sphere of beings there are regions and places which, being averted from us, seem to be something negative, but are nothing of the kind if we think of all things as being within the widest orbit of beings.

Seen from the Open, unshieldedness too, as the parting against the pure draft, seems to be something negative. The parting self-assertion of objectification wills everywhere the constancy of produced objects, and recognizes it alone as being and as positive. The self-assertion of technological objectification is the constant negation of death. By this negation death itself becomes something negative; it becomes the altogether inconstant and null. But if we turn unshieldedness into the Open, we turn it into the widest orbit of beings, within which we can only affirm unshieldedness. To turn it into the Open is to renounce giving a negative reading to that which is. But what is more in being—in terms of modern thought, what is more certain—than death? The letter of January 6, 1923, cited earlier, says that the point is "to read the word 'death' *without* negation."

If we turn unshieldedness as such into the Open, we then convert its nature—that is, as the parting against the whole draft—into a turning toward the widest orbit. Nothing is then left for us but to affirm what has been so converted. This affirmation, however, does not mean to turn a No into a Yes; it means to acknowledge the positive as what is already before us and present. We do so by allowing the converted unshieldedness within the widest orbit to belong "where the Law touches us." Rilke does not say "a law." Nor does he mean a rule. He is thinking of what "touches us." Who are we? We are those who will, who set up the world as object by way of intentional self-assertion. When we are touched from out of the widest orbit, the touch goes to our very nature. To touch means to touch off, to set in motion. Our nature is set in motion. The will is shaken by the touch so that only now is the nature of willing made to appear and set in motion. Not until then do we will willingly.

But what is it that touches us directly out of the widest orbit? What is it that remains blocked off, withdrawn from us by ourselves in our ordinary willing to objectify the world? It is the other draft: Death. Death is what touches mortals in their nature, and so sets them on their way to the other side of life, and so into the whole of the pure draft. Death thus gathers into the whole of what is already posited, into the *positum* of the whole draft. As this gathering of positing, death is the laying-down, the Law, just as the mountain chain is the gathering of the mountains into the whole of its cabin. There, where the Law touches us, there is the place within the widest orbit into which we can admit the converted unshieldedness positively into the whole of what is. Our unshieldedness, so converted, finally shelters us within the Open, outside all protection. But how is the turning possible? In what way can the conversion of the parting against the Open come about? Presumably only in this way, that the conversion first turns us toward the widest orbit, and prompts us, ourselves, in our nature, to turn toward and into it. The region of secureness must first be shown to us, it must be accessible beforehand as the possible arena of

conversion. But what brings us a secure being, and with it generally the dimension of security, is that daring venture which is at times more daring even than Life itself.

But this more daring venture does not tinker here and there with our unshieldedness. It does not attempt to change this or that way of objectifying the world. Rather, it turns unshieldedness as such. The more daring venture carries unshieldedness precisely into the realm that is its own.

What is the nature of unshieldedness, if it consists in that objectification which lies in purposeful self-assertion? What stands as object in the world becomes *standing* in representational production. Such representation presents. But what is present is present in a representation that has the character of calculation. Such representation knows nothing immediately perceptual. What can be immediately seen when we look at things, the image they offer to immediate sensible intuition, falls away. The calculating production of technology is an "act without an image" (ninth of the *Duino Elegies*, line 46). Purposeful self-assertion, with its designs, interposes before the intuitive image the project of the merely calculated product. When the world enters into the objectness of the thought-devised product, it is placed within the nonsensible, the invisible. What stands thus owes its presence to a placing whose activity belongs to the *res cogitans*, that is, to consciousness. The sphere of the objectivity of objects remains inside consciousness. What is invisible in what which stands-over-against belongs to the interior and immanence of consciousness.

But if unshieldedness is the parting against the Open, while yet the parting lies in the objectification that belongs to the invisible and interior of calculating consciousness, then the natural sphere of unshieldedness is the invisible and interior of consciousness.

But since the turning of unshieldedness into the Open concerns the nature of unshieldedness from the very start, this conversion of unshieldedness is a conversion of consciousness, and that *inside* the sphere of consciousness. The sphere of the invisible and

interior determines the nature of unshieldedness, but also the manner in which it is turned into the widest orbit. Thus, that toward which the essentially inner and invisible must turn to find its own can itself only be the most invisible of the invisible and the innermost of the inner. In modern metaphysics, the sphere of the invisible interior is defined as the realm of the presence of calculated objects. Descartes describes this sphere as the consciousness of the *ego cogito*.

At nearly the same time as Descartes, Pascal discovers the logic of the heart as over against the logic of calculating reason. The inner and invisible domain of the heart is not only more inward than the interior that belongs to calculating representation, and therefore more invisible; it also extends further than does the realm of merely producible objects. Only in the invisible innermost of the heart is man inclined toward what there is for him to love: the forefathers, the dead, the children, those who are to come. All this belongs in the widest orbit, which now proves to be the sphere of the presence of the whole integral draft. True, this presence too, like that of the customary consciousness of calculating production, is a presence of immanence. But the interior of uncustomary consciousness remains the inner space in which everything is for us beyond the arithmetic of calculation, and, free of such boundaries, can overflow into the unbounded whole of the Open. This overflow beyond number rises, in its presence, in the inner and invisible region of the heart. The last lines of the ninth elegy, which sings man's belonging to the Open, run: "Existence beyond number/wells up in my heart."

The widest orbit of beings becomes present in the heart's inner space. The whole of the world achieves here an equally essential presence in all its drawings. Rilke, in the language of metaphysics, here speaks of "existence." The world's whole presence is in the widest sense "worldly existence." That is another name for the Open, other because of the different manner of naming, which now thinks the Open, insofar as the representing-producing parting against the Open has now reversed itself, from the immanence

of calculating consciousness toward the inner space of the heart. The heart's inner space for worldly existence is therefore also called the "world's inner realm." "Worldly" means the whole of all beings.

In a letter from Muzot dated August 11, 1924, Rilke writes:

However vast the "outer space" may be, yet with all its side-real distances it hardly bears comparison with the dimensions, with the *depth dimensions of our inner being*, which does not even need the spaciousness of the universe to be within itself almost unfathomable. Thus, if the dead, if those who are to come, need an abode, *what refuge could be more agreeable and appointed for them than this imaginary space?* To me it seems more and more as though our customary consciousness lives on the tip of a pyramid whose base within us (and in a certain way beneath us) widens out so fully that the farther we find ourselves able to descend into it, the more generally we appear to be merged into those things that, independent of time and space, are given in our earthly, in the widest sense worldly, existence.

By contrast, the objectness of the world remains reckoned in that manner of representation which deals with time and space as *quanta* of calculation, and which can know no more of the nature of time than of the nature of space. Rilke, too, gives no further thought to the spatiality of the world's inner space; even less does he ask whether the world's inner space, giving its abode to worldly presence, is by this presence grounded in a temporality whose essential time, together with essential space, forms the original unity of that time-space by which even Being itself presences.

Rilke attempts, however, within the spherical structure of modern metaphysics, that is, within the sphere of subjectivity as the sphere of inner and invisible presence, to understand the unshieldedness established by man's self-assertive nature, in such a way that this unshieldedness itself, having been turned about,

safeguards us in the innermost and most invisible region of the widest inner space of the world. Unshieldedness safeguards as such. For it gives to man's nature, as inward and invisible, the clue for a conversion of the parting against the Open. The conversion points to the innermost region of the interior. The conversion of consciousness, therefore, is an inner recalling of the immanence of the objects of representation into presence within the heart's space.

As long as man is wholly absorbed in nothing but purposeful self-assertion, not only is he himself unshielded, but so are things, because they have become objects. In this, to be sure, there also lies a transmutation of things into what is inward and invisible. But this transmutation replaces the frailties of things by the thought-contrived fabrications of calculated objects. These objects are produced to be used up. The more quickly they are used up, the greater becomes the necessity to replace them even more quickly and more readily. What is lasting in the presence of objective things is not their self-subsistence within the world that is their own. What is constant in things produced as objects merely for consumption is: the substitute—*Ersatz*.

Just as it is a part of our unshieldedness that the familiar things fade away under the predominance of objectness, so also our nature's safety demands the rescue of things from mere objectness. The rescue consists in this, that things, within the widest orbit of the whole draft, can be at rest within themselves, which means that they can rest without restriction within one another. Indeed, it may well be that the turning of our unshieldedness into worldly existence within the world's inner space must begin with this, that we turn the transient and therefore preliminary character of objects away from the inner and invisible region of the merely producing consciousness and toward the true interior of the heart's space, and there allow it to rise invisibly. Accordingly the letter of November 13, 1925 (*Briefe aus Muzot*, p. 335), says:

"... our task is to impress this preliminary, transient earth upon ourselves with so much suffering and so passionately that its nature rises up again 'invisibly' within us. *We are the bees of the*

invisible. Nous butinons éperdument le miel du visible, pour l'accumuler dans la grande ruche d'or de l'Invisible." (We ceaselessly gather the honey of the visible, to store it up in the great golden beehive of the Invisible.)

The inner recalling converts that nature of ours which merely wills to impose, together with its objects, into the innermost invisible region of the heart's space. Here everything is inward: not only does it remain turned toward this true interior of consciousness, but inside this interior, one thing turns, free of all bounds, into the other. The interiority of the world's inner space unbars the Open for us. Only what we thus retain in our heart (*par cœur*), only that do we truly know by heart. Within this interior we are free, outside of the relation to the objects set around us that only seem to give protection. In the interiority of the world's inner space there is a safety outside all shielding.

But, we have been asking all along, how can this inner recalling of the already immanent objectness of consciousness into the heart's innermost region come about? It concerns the inner and invisible. For that which is inwardly recalled, as well as the place to which it is recalled, is of such a nature. The inner recalling is the conversion of the parting into an arriving at the widest orbit of the Open. Who among mortals is capable of this converting recall?

To be sure, the poem says that a secuness of our nature comes to us by man's being

... adventurous
more sometimes than Life itself is, more daring
by a breath....

What do they dare, those who are more daring? The poem, it seems, withholds the answer. We shall therefore try to meet the poem halfway in thought, and we shall also draw on other poems for help.

We ask: what is there still to be dared that would be still more daring than Life, which is itself the daring venture, so that it would

be more daring than the Being of beings? In every case and in every respect, what is dared must be such that it concerns every being inasmuch as it is a being. Of such a kind is Being, and in this way, that it is not one particular kind among others, but the mode of all beings as such.

If Being is what is unique to beings, by what can Being still be surpassed? Only by itself, only by its own, and indeed by expressly entering into its own. Then Being would be the unique which wholly surpasses itself (the *transcendens* pure and simple). But this surpassing, this transcending does not go up and over into something else; it comes up to its own self and back into the nature of its truth. Being itself traverses this going over and is itself its dimension.

When we think on this, we experience within Being itself that there lies in it something "more" belonging to it, and thus the possibility that there too, where Being is thought of as the venture, something more daring may prevail than even Being itself, so far as we commonly conceive Being in terms of particular beings. Being, as itself, spans its own province, which is marked off (*temnein, tempus*) by Being's being present in the word. Language is the precinct (*templum*), that is, the house of Being. The nature of language does not exhaust itself in signifying, nor is it merely something that has the character of sign or cipher. It is because language is the house of Being, that we reach what is by constantly going through this house. When we go to the well, when we go through the woods, we are always already going through the word "well," through the word "woods," even if we do not speak the words and do not think of anything relating to language. Thinking our way from the temple of Being, we have an intimation of what they dare who are sometimes more daring than the Being of beings. They dare the precinct of Being. They dare language. All beings—objects of consciousness and things of the heart, men who impose themselves and men who are more daring—all beings, each in its own way, are *gna* beings in the precinct of language. This is why the return from the realm of objects and their representation

into the innermost region of the heart's space can be accomplished, if anywhere, *only in this precinct*.

For Rilke's poetry, the Being of beings is metaphysically defined as worldly presence; this presence remains referred to representation in consciousness, whether that consciousness has the character of the immanence of calculating representation, or that of the inward conversion to the Open which is accessible through the heart.

The whole sphere of presence is present in saying. The objectness, the standing-over-against, of production stands in the assertion of calculating propositions and of the theorems of the reason that proceeds from proposition to proposition. The realm of self-assertive unshieldedness is dominated by reason. Not only has reason established a special system of rules for its saying, for the *logos* as declarative prediction; the logic of reason is itself the organization of the dominion of purposeful self-assertion in the objective. In the conversion of objective representation, the logic of the heart corresponds to the saying of the inner recall. In both realms, which are determined metaphysically, logic prevails, because the inner recalling is supposed to create a secureness, out of unshieldedness itself and outside all shielding. This safekeeping is of concern to man as the being who has language. He has language within the Being that bears the stamp of metaphysics, in this way, that he takes language from the start and merely as something he has in hand, like a personal belonging, and thus as a handle for his representation and conduct. This is why the *logos*, saying *qua* organon, requires organization by logic. Only within metaphysics does logic exist.

But when, in the creation of a safety, man is touched by the Law of the world's whole inner space, he is himself touched in his nature, in that, as the being who wills himself, he is already the sayer. But since the creation of a safety comes from the more venturesome, these more venturesome ones must dare the venture with language. The more venturesome dare the saying. But if the precinct of this daring, language, belongs to Being in that unique

manner above which and beyond which there can be nothing else of its kind, in what direction is that to be said which the sayers must say? Their saying concerns the inner recalling conversion of consciousness which turns our unshieldedness into the invisible of the world's inner space. Their saying, because it concerns the conversion, speaks not only from both realms but from the oneness of the two, insofar as that oneness has already come to be as the saying unification. Therefore, where the whole of all beings is thought of as the Open of the pure draft, the inner recalling conversion must be a saying which says what it has to say to a being who is already secure in the whole of all beings, because he has already accomplished the transmutation of what is visible in representation into that which is an invisible of the heart. This being is drawn into the pure draft by one side and the other of the globe of Being. This being, for whom borderlines and differences between the drawings hardly exist any longer, is the being who governs the unheard-of center of the widest orbit and causes it to appear. This being, in Rilke's *Diino Elegies*, is the Angel. This name is once again a basic word in Rilke's poetry. Like "the Open," "the draft," "the parting," "Nature," it is a basic word because what is said in it thinks the whole of beings by way of Being. In his letter of November 13, 1925 Rilke writes:

"The Angel of the *Elegies* is that creature in whom the transmutation of the visible into the invisible, which we achieve, seems already accomplished. The Angel of the *Elegies* is that being who assures the recognition of a higher order of reality in the invisible."^{*}

Only a more primal elucidation of the nature of subjectness will serve to show how, within the completion of modern metaphysics, there belongs to the Being of beings a relation to such a being, how the creature which is Rilke's Angel, despite all difference in content, is *metaphysically the same* as the figure of Nietzsche's Zarathustra.

^{*} *Brigite aus Muscat*, p. 337.

The poem thinks of the Being of beings, Nature, as the venture. Every being is ventured in a venture. As ventured, it now lies in the balance. The balance is the way in which Being ever and again weighs beings, that is, keeps them in the motion of weighing. Everything ventured is in danger. The realms of beings may be distinguished by the kind of relation they have to the balance. The nature of the Angel, too, must become clearer with respect to the balance, assuming he is of higher rank in the whole realm of beings.

Plant and beast, "in the venture of their dim delight," are held carefree in the Open. Their bodily character does not perplex them. By their drives, the living creatures are lulled into the Open. They too remain in danger, to be sure, but not in their nature. Plant and beast lie in the balance in such a way that the balance always settles into the repose of a secureness. The balance in which plant and beast are ventured does not yet reach into the realm of what is in essence and thus constantly unstilled. The balance in which the Angel is ventured also remains outside of what is unstilled—not, however, because it does not yet belong to the realm of the unstilled, but because it belongs there no longer. In keeping with his bodiless nature, possible confusion by what is sensibly visible has been transmuted into the invisible. The Angel is in being by virtue of the stilled repose of the balanced oneness of the two realms within the world's inner space.

Man, on the contrary, as the one who purposely asserts himself, is ventured into unshieldedness. In the hands of man who has been so ventured, the balance of danger is in essence unstilled. Self-willing man everywhere reckons with things and men as with objects. What is so reckoned becomes merchandise. Everything is constantly changed about into new orders. The parting against the pure draft establishes itself within the unstilled agitation of the constantly balancing balance. By its objectification of the world, the parting, contrary to its own intention, promotes inconstancy. Thus ventured into the unshielded, man moves within the medium of "businesses" and "exchanges." Self-assertive man lives by stak-

ing his will. He lives essentially by risking his nature in the vibration of money and the currency of values. As this constrict trader and middleman, man is the "merchant." He weighs and measures constantly, yet does not know the real weight of things. Nor does he ever know what in himself is truly weighty and preponderant. In one of his late poems (*Späte Gedichte*, p. 21 f.) Rilke says:

Alas, who knows what in himself prevails.
Mildness? Terror? Glances, voices, books?

But at the same time, man who is outside all protection can procure a safety by turning unshieldedness as such into the Open and transmuting it into the heart's space of the invisible. If that happens, then what is unstilled in unshieldedness passes over to where, in the balanced oneness of the world's inner space, there appears the being who brings out the radiant appearance of the way in which that oneness unifies, and who in this way represents Being. The balance of danger then passes out of the realm of calculating will over to the Angel. Four lines have been preserved from Rilke's late period which apparently constitute the beginning of a sketch for a larger poem (*Gesammelte Werke*, III, 438). For the present, no further word about them is needed. They run:

... When from the merchant's hand
the balance passes over
to that Angel who, in the heavens,
stills it, appears it by the equalizing of space. . . .

The equalizing space is the world's inner space, in that it gives space to the worldly whole of the Open. Thus the space grants to the one and to the other draft the appearance of their unifying oneness. That oneness, as the integral globe of Being, encircles all pure forces of what is, by circling through all beings, in-finitely unbounding them. All this becomes present when the balance passes over. When does it pass over? Who makes the balance pass

over from the merchant to the Angel? If such a passing comes to pass at all, it occurs in the precinct of the balance. The element of the balance is the venture, the Being of beings. We have thought of language specifically as its precinct.

The customary life of contemporary man is the common life of the imposition of self on the unprotected market of the exchangers. By contrast, the passage of the balance to the Angel is uncommon. It is uncommon even in the sense that it not only constitutes the exception to the rule, but that it takes man, in respect of his nature, outside and beyond the rule of protection and unprotectedness. This is why the passing-on occurs "sometimes." "Sometimes" here does not at all mean occasionally and at random. "Sometimes" signifies: rarely and at the right time in an always unique instance in a unique manner. The passing over of the balance from the merchant to the Angel, that is, the conversion of the parting, occurs as the inner recalling into the world's inner space at that time when there are men who are

. . . . adventurous
more sometimes than Life itself is, more daring
by a breath. . . .

Because these more venturesome ones venture Being itself and therefore dare to venture into language, the province of Being, they are the sayers. And yet, is not man the one who by his nature has language and constantly ventures it? Certainly. And then even he who wills in the usual way ventures saying, already in calculating production. True. But then, those who are more venturesome cannot be those who merely say. The saying of the more venturesome must really venture to say. The more venturesome are the ones they are only when they are sayers to a greater degree.

When, in relation to beings in terms of representation and production, we relate ourselves at the same time by making propositional assertions, such a saying is not what is willed. Asserting remains a way and a means. By contrast, there is a saying that really

engages in saying, yet without reflecting upon language, which would make even language into one more object. To be involved in saying is the mark of a saying that follows something to be said, solely in order to say it. What is to be said would then be what by nature belongs to the province of language. And that, thought metaphysically, is particular beings as a whole. Their wholeness is the intactness of the pure draft, the sound wholeness of the Open, in that it makes room within itself for man. This happens in the world's inner space. That space touches man when, in the inner recalling of conversion, he turns toward the space of the heart. The more venturesome ones turn the unwholesomeness of unshieldedness into the soundness of worldly existence. This is what is to be said. In the saying it turns itself toward man. The more venturesome are those who say in a greater degree, in the manner of the singer. Their singing is turned away from all purposeful self-assertion. It is not a willing in the sense of desire. Their song does not solicit anything to be produced. In the song, the world's inner space concedes space within itself. The song of these singers is neither solicitation nor trade.

The saying of the more venturesome which is more fully saying is the song. But

Song is existence,

says the third of the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Part I. The word for existence, *Dasein*, is used here in the traditional sense of presence and as a synonym of Being. To sing, truly to say worldly existence, to say out of the haleness of the whole pure draft and to say only this, means: to belong to the precinct of beings themselves. This precinct, as the very nature of language, is Being itself. To sing the song means to be present in what is present itself. It means: *Dasein*, existence.

But the saying that is more fully saying happens only sometimes, because only the more venturesome are capable of it. For it is still hard. The hard thing is to accomplish existence. The hard

thing consists not only in the difficulty of forming the work of language, but in the difficulty of going over from the saying work of the still covertous vision of things, from the work of the eyes, to the "work of the heart." The song is hard because the singing may no longer be a solicitation, but must be existence. For the god Orpheus, who lives in-finitely in the Open, song is an easy matter, but not for man. This is why the final stanza of the sonnet referred to asks:

But when *are* we?

The stress is on the "are," not on the "we." There is no question that we belong to what is, and that we are present in this respect. But it remains questionable when we are in such a way that our being is song, and indeed a song whose singing does not resound just anywhere but is truly a singing, a song whose sound does not cling to something that is eventually attained, but which has already shattered itself even in the sounding, so that there may occur only that which was sung itself. Men say more sayingly in this form when they are more venturesome than all that is, itself. These more venturesome ones are, according to the poem, "more daring by a breath." The sonnet from which we have quoted ends:

To sing in truth is another breath.

A breath for nothing. An afflatus in the god. A wind.

In his *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Man*, Herder writes as follows: "A breath of our mouth becomes the portrait of the world, the type of our thoughts and feelings in the other's soul. On a bit of moving air depends everything human that men on earth have ever thought, willed, done, and ever will do; for we would all still be roaming the forests if this divine breath had not

blown around us, and did not hover on our lips like a magic tone" (W. W. Suphan XIII, * 140 f.).

The breath by which the more venturesome are more daring does not mean only or first of all the barely noticeable, because evanescent, measure of a difference; rather, it means directly the word and the nature of language. Those who are more daring by a breath dare the venture with language. They are the sayers who more sayingly say. For this one breath by which they are more daring is not just a saying of any sort; rather, this one breath is another breath, a saying other than the rest of human saying. The other breath is no longer solicitous for this or that objective thing; it is a breath for nothing. The singer's saying says the sound whole of worldly existence, which invisibly offers its space within the world's inner space of the heart. The song does not even first follow what is to be said. The song is the belonging to the whole of the pure draft. Singing is drawn by the draft of the wind of the unheard-of center of full Nature. The song itself is "a wind."

Thus our poem does after all state unequivocally in poetic terms who they are that are more daring even than Life itself. They are those who are "more daring by a breath." It is not for nothing that the words "more daring by a breath" are followed in the original by three dots. The dots tell what is kept silent.

The more venturesome are the poets, but poets whose song turns our unprotected being into the Open. Because they convert the parting against the Open and inwardly recall its unwholesomeness into a sound whole, these poets sing the healing whole in the midst of the unholy. The recalling conversion has already overtaken the parting against the Open. It is "ahead of all parting" and outlives everything objective within the world's inner space of the heart. The converting inner recalling is the daring that dares to

* [Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Herders Sämmtliche Werke*. Edited by Bernhard Suphan, Carl Redlich, Reinhold Steig, et al. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1877-1913. 33 Vols. —Tr.]

venture forth from the nature of man, because man has language and is he who says.

Modern man, however, is called the one who wills. The more venturesome will more strongly in that they will in a different way from the purposeful self-assertion of the objectifying of the world. Their willing wills nothing of this kind. If willing remains mere self-assertion, they will nothing. They will nothing, in this sense, because they are more willing. They answer sooner to the will which, as the venture itself, draws all pure forces to itself as the pure whole draft of the Open. The willing of the more venturesome is the willingness of those who say more sayingly, those who are resolved, no longer closed off in the parting against the will as which Being wills beings. The willing nature of the more venturesome says more sayingly (in the words of the ninth of the *Dumino Elegies*):

Earth, your will, is it not this: to rise up
in us invisible? Is it not your dream
one day to be invisible? Earth! invisible!
What, if not transfiguration, is your pressing mission?
Earth, dear one, I shall!

In the invisible of the world's inner space, as whose worldly oneness the Angel appears, the haleness of worldly beings becomes visible. Holiness can appear only within the widest orbit of the wholesome. Poets who are of the more venturesome kind are under way on the track of the holy because they experience the unholy as such. Their song over the land hallows. Their singing hails the integrity of the globe of Being.

The unholy, as unholy, traces the sound for us. What is sound beckons to the holy, calling it. The holy binds the divine. The divine draws the god near.

The more venturesome experience unshieldedness in the unholy. They bring to mortals the trace of the fugitive gods, the

track into the dark of the world's night. As the singers of soundness, the more venturesome ones are "poets in a destitute time."

The mark of these poets is that to them the nature of poetry becomes worthy of questioning, because they are poetically on the track of that which, for them, is what must be said. On the track toward the wholesome, Rilke arrives at the poet's question: when is there song that sings essentially? This question does not stand at the beginning of the poet's way, but at the point where Rilke's saying attains to the poetic vocation of the kind of poet who answers to the coming world era. This era is neither a decay nor a downfall. As destiny, it lies in Being and lays claim to man.

Hölderlin is the pre-cursor of poets in a destitute time. This is why no poet of this world era can overtake him. The precursor, however, does not go off into a future; rather, he arrives out of that future, in such a way that the future is present only in the arrival of his words. The more purely the arrival happens, the more its remaining occurs as present. The greater the concealment with which what is to come maintains its reserve in the foretelling saying, the purer is the arrival. It would thus be mistaken to believe that Hölderlin's time will come only on that day when "everyman" will understand his poetry. It will never arrive in such a misshapen way; for it is its own destitution that endows the era with forces by which, unaware of what it is doing, it keeps Hölderlin's poetry from becoming timely.

If the precursor cannot be overtaken, no more can he perish; for his poetry remains as a once-present being. What occurs in the arrival gathers itself back into destiny. That which this way never lapses into the flux of perishing, overcomes from the start all perishability. What has merely passed away is without destiny even before it has passed. The once-present being, on the contrary, partakes in destiny. What is presumed to be eternal merely conceals a suspended transiency, suspended in the void of a durationless now.

If Rilke is a "poet in a destitute time" then only his poetry answers the question to what end he is a poet, whither his song is bound, where the poet belongs in the destiny of the world's night. That destiny decides what remains fateful within this poetry.