

HOLDERLIN'S  
POETRY



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## AUTHOR'S PREFACES

### PREFACE TO THE FOURTH, ENLARGED EDITION (1971)

The present *Elucidations* do not claim to be contributions to research in the history of literature or to aesthetics. They spring from a necessity of thought.

### PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION (1951)

These attempts at the elucidation of several of Hölderlin's poems, published separately until now, are gathered together here in their unaltered form.

These elucidations belong within the dialogue of thinking with a form of poetry whose historical uniqueness can never be proved by the history of literature, but which can be pointed out by the dialogue with thinking.

A previously published remark of mine says the following about elucidating:

In spite of the names "elegy" and "hymn," we still do not know to this very hour what Hölderlin's poems truly are. The poems appear like a shrine without a temple, which preserves what has been made into poetry. Amid the noise of "unpoetic languages" (IV, 257), the poems are





like a bell that hangs in the open air and is already becoming out of tune through a light snowfall that is covering it. Perhaps this is why Hölderlin once said in his later lines the verse that sounds like prose, and yet is poetic in a way that few others are (Draft for "Colombus," IV, 395):

Put out of tune  
By humble things, as by snow,  
Was the bell, with which  
The hour is rung  
For the evening meal.

Perhaps every elucidation of these poems is like a snowfall on the bell. Whatever an elucidation can or cannot do, this is always true of it: in order that what has been composed purely into a poem may stand forth a little clearer, the elucidating speech much each time shatter itself and what it had attempted to do. For the sake of preserving what has been put into the poem, the elucidation of the poem must strive to make itself superfluous. The last, but also the most difficult step of every interpretation, consists in its disappearing, along with its elucidations, before the pure presence of the poem. The poem, which then stands in its own right, itself throws light directly on the other poems. This explains why in rereading the poems we think that we had understood them in this way all along. It is well for us to believe this.

**“HOMECOMING / TO KINDRED ONES”**



## "HEIMKUNFT / AN DIE VERWANDTEN"

## 1

Drinn in den Alpen ists noch helle Nacht und die Wolke,  
 Freudiges dichtend, sie dekt drinnen das gähnende Thal.  
 Dahin, dorthin toset und stürzt die scherzende Bergluft,  
 Schroff durch Tannen herab glänzet und schwindet ein Stral.  
 Langsam eilt und kämpft das freudigschauernde Chaos,  
 Jung an Gestalt, doch stark, feiert es liebenden Streit  
 Unter den Felsen, es gährt und wankt in den ewigen Schranken,  
 Denn bacchantischer zieht drinnen der Morgan herauf.  
 Denn es wächst unendlicher dort das Jahr und die heiligen  
 Stunden, die Tage, sie sind kühner geordnet, gemischt.  
 Dennoch merket die Zeit der Gewittervogel und zwischen  
 Bergen, hoch in der Luft weilt er und ruft den Tag.  
 Jezt auch wachet und schaut in der Tiefe drinnen das Dörflein,  
 Furchtlos, Hohem vertraut, unter den Gipfeln hinauf.  
 Wachstum ahnend, denn schon, wie Blize, fallen die alten  
 Wasserquellen, der Grund unter den Stürzenden dampft,  
 Echo tönet umher, und die unermessliche Werkstatt  
 Reget bei Tag und Nacht, Gaaben versendend, den Arm.

## 2

Ruhig glänzen indess die silbernen Höhen darüber,  
 Voll mit Rosen ist schon droben der leuchtende Schnee.  
 Und noch höher hinauf wohnt über dem Lichte der reine  
 Seelige Gott vom Spiel heiliger Stralen erfreut.  
 Stille wohnt er allein, und hell erscheint sein Antliz,  
 Der ätherische scheint Leben zu geben geneigt,  
 Freude zu schaffen, mit uns, wie oft, wenn, kundig des Maases,  
 Kundig der Athmenden auch zögernd und schonend der Gott  
 Wohlgediegenes Glük den Städten und Häusern und milde  
 Reegen, zu öffnen das Land, brütende Wolken, und euch,  
 Trauteste Lüfte dann, euch, sanfte Frühlinge, sendet,  
 Und mit langsamer Hand Traurige wieder erfreut,

"HOMECOMING / TO KINDRED ONES"

1

Within the Alps it is still bright night and the cloud,  
Composing poems full of joy, covers the yawning valley within.  
This way, that way, roars and rushes the playful mountain breeze,  
Steep down through the fir trees a ray of light gleams and vanishes.  
Chaos, trembling with joy, slowly hurries and struggles,  
Young in form, yet strong, it celebrates loving strife  
Amidst the rocks, it seethes and shakes in its eternal bounds,  
For more bacchantically morning rises within.  
For the year grows more endlessly there and the holy  
Hours, the days, are more boldly ordered and mingled.  
Yet the bird of the thunderstorm notes the time and between  
Mountains, high in the air he hovers and calls out the day.  
Now in the depths within, the little village also awakens and  
Fearless, familiar with the high, looks up from under the peaks.  
Divining growth, for already, like lightning flashes, the ancient  
Waterfalls crash, the ground steaming beneath the falls,  
Echo resounds all about, and the immeasurable workshop,  
Dispensing gifts, actively moves its arm by day and night.

2

Meanwhile the silvery heights gleam peacefully above,  
Up there the luminous snow is already full of roses.  
And still higher up, above the light, dwells the pure  
Blissful god rejoicing in the play of holy rays.  
Silently he dwells alone, and brightly shines his countenance,  
The aetherial one seems inclined to give life  
To create joy, with us, as often, when, knowing the measure,  
Also knowing those who breathe, hesitant and sparing, the god  
Sends true good fortune to towns and houses and gentle  
Rain to open the land, brooding clouds, and then you,  
Dearest breezes, you gentle springtimes,  
And with patient hand brings joy again to those who mourn,



Wenn er die Zeiten erneut, der Schöpferische, die stillen  
 Herzen der alternden Menschen erfrischt und ergreift,  
 Und hinab in die Tiefe wirkt, und öffnet und aufhellt,  
 Wie ers liebet, und jezt wieder ein Leben beginnt,  
 Anmuth blühet, wie einst, und gegenwärtiger Geist kömmt,  
 Und ein freudiger Muth wieder die Fittige schwellt.

## 3

Vieles sprach ich zu ihm, denn, was auch Dichtende sinnen  
 Oder singen, es gilt meistens den Engeln und ihm;  
 Vieles bat ich, zu lieb dem Vaterlande, damit nicht  
 Ungebeten uns einst plötzlich befele der Geist;  
 Vieles für euch auch, die im Vaterlande besorgt sind,  
 Denen der heilige Dank lächelnd die Flüchtlinge bringt,  
 Landesleute! für euch, indessen wiegte der See mich,  
 Und der Ruderer sass ruhig und lobte die Fahrt.  
 Weit in des Sees Ebene wars Ein freudiges Wallen  
 Unter den Seegeln und jezt blühet und hellet die Stadt  
 Dort in der Frühe sich auf, wohl her von schattigen Alpen  
 Kommt geleitet und ruht nun in dem Hafen das Schiff.  
 Warm ist das Ufer hier und freundlich offene Thale,  
 Schön von Pfaden erhellt, grünen und schimmern mich an.  
 Gärten stehen gesellt und die glänzende Knospe beginnt schon,  
 Und des Vogels Gesang ladet den Wanderer ein.  
 Alles scheint vertraut, der vorübereilende Gruss auch  
 Scheint von Freunden, es scheint jegliche Miene verwandt.

## 4

Freilich wohl! das Geburtsland ists, der Boden der Heimath,  
 Was du suchest, es ist nahe, begegnet dir schon.  
 Und umsonst nicht steht, wie ein Sohn, am wellenumrauschten  
 Thor' und siehet und sucht liebende Nahmen für dich,  
 Mit Gesang ein wandernder Mann, glükseeliges Lindau!  
 Eine der gastlichen Pforten des Landes ist diss,  
 Reizend hinauszugehn in die vielversprechende Ferne,

When he renews the seasons, the creative one, refreshes  
And seizes the silent hearts of aging men,  
And works down to the depths, and opens and brightens up,  
As he loves to do, and now once again a life begins,  
Grace blooms, as once, and present spirit comes,  
And a joyous courage spreads its wings once more.

3

Much I spoke to him, for whatever poets meditate  
Or sing, it mostly concerns the angels and him;  
Much I asked for, for love of the fatherland, lest  
Unbidden one day the spirit might suddenly fall upon us;  
Much also for you, who have cares in the fatherland,  
To whom holy thanks, smiling, brings the fugitives,  
Countrymen! for you, meanwhile the lake rocked me,  
And the boatman sat calmly and praised the journey.  
Far out on the surface of the lake was One joyous swell  
Beneath the sails, and now the town blooms and brightens  
There in the dawn, and the boat is safely guided  
From the shady Alps and now rests in the harbor.  
Warm is the shore here and friendly the open valleys,  
Beautifully lit up with paths, gleam verdantly toward me.  
Gardens stand together and already the glistening bud is beginning,  
And the bird's song invites the wanderer.  
All seems familiar, even the hurried greetings  
Seem those of friends, every face seems a kindred one.

4

But of course! It is the land of your birth, the soil of your homeland,  
What you seek, it is near, already comes to meet you.  
And not in vain does he stand, like a son, at the wave-washed  
Gate, and sees and seeks loving names for you,  
With his song, a wandering man, blessed Lindau!  
This is one of the land's hospitable portals,  
Enticing us to go out into the much-promising distance,





Dort, wo die Wunder sind, dort, wo das göttliche Wild,  
 Hoch in die Eben herab der Rhein die verwegene Bahn bricht,  
 Und aus Felsen hervor ziehet das jauchzende Thal,  
 Dort hinein, durchs helle Gebirg, nach Komo zu wandern,  
 Oder hinab, wie der Tag wandelt, den offenen See;  
 Aber reizender mir bist du, geweihte Pforte!  
 Heimzugehn, wo bekannt blühende Wege mir sind,  
 Dort zu besuchen das Land und die schönen Thale des Nekars,  
 Und die Wälder, das Grün heiliger Bäume, wo gern  
 Sich die Eiche gesellt mit stillen Birken und Buchen,  
 Und in Bergen ein Ort freundlich gefangen mich nimmt.

## 5

Dort empfangen sie mich. O Stimme der Stadt, der Mutter!  
 O du triffest, du regst Langegelerntes mir auf!  
 Dennoch sind sie es noch! noch blühet die Sonn' und die Freud' euch,  
 O ihr Liebsten! und fast heller im Auge, wie sonst.  
 Ja! das Alte noch ists! Es gedeihet und reifet, doch keines  
 Was da lebet und liebt, lasset die Treue zurük.  
 Aber das Beste, der Fund, der unter des heiligen Friedens  
 Bogen lieget, er ist Jungen und Alten gespart.  
 Thörig red ich. Es ist die Freude. Doch morgen und künftig  
 Wenn wir gehen und schau'n draussen das lebende Feld,  
 Unter den Blüthen des Baums, in den Feiertagen des Frühlings  
 Red' und hoff' ich mit euch vieles, ihr Lieben! davon.  
 Vieles hab' ich gehört von grossen Vater und habe  
 Lange geschwiegen von ihm, welcher die wandernde Zeit  
 Droben in Höhen erfrischt und waltet über Gebirgen,  
 Der gewähret uns bald himmlische Gaaben und ruft  
 Hellern Gesang und schickt viel gute Geister. O säumt nicht,  
 Kommt, Erhaltenden ihr! Engel des Jahres! und ihr,

## 6

Engel des Hausses, kommt! in die Adern alle des Lebens,  
 Alle freud zugleich, theile das Himmlische sich!

There, where the wonders are, there, where the divine wild game,  
High up the Rhine breaks his daring path down to the plains,  
And forth from the rocks the jubilant valley emerges,  
In there, through bright mountains, to wander to Como,  
Or down, as the day changes, to the open lake;  
But you are more enticing to me, you consecrated portal!  
To go home, where the blossoming paths are known to me,  
There to visit the land and the beautiful valleys of the Neckar,  
And the forests, the green of holy trees, where the oak  
Likes to stand amidst silent birches and beeches,  
And in the mountains a place, friendly, takes me captive.

5

There they welcome me. O voice of the town, of my mother!  
O you touch me, you stir up what I learned long ago!  
Yet they are still the same! Still the sun and joy blossom for you,  
O you dearest ones! And almost more brightly in your eyes than before.  
Yes! Old things are still the same! They thrive and ripen, yet nothing  
Which lives and loves there abandons its faithfulness.  
But the best, the real find, which lies beneath the rainbow  
Of holy peace, is reserved for young and old.  
I talk like a fool. It is joy. Yet tomorrow and in the future  
When we go outside and look at the living fields,  
Beneath the tree's blossoms, in the holidays of spring,  
Much shall I talk and hope with you about this, dear ones!  
Much have I heard about the great father and have  
Long kept silent about him, who refreshes wandering time  
In the heights above, and reigns over mountain ranges,  
Who will soon grant us heavenly gifts and call  
For brighter song and send many good spirits. O do not delay,  
Come, you preservers! Angels of the year, and you,

6

Angels of the house, come! Into all the veins of life,  
Rejoicing all at once, let the heavenly share itself!





Adle! verjüngle! damit nichts Menschlichgutes, damit nicht  
Eine Stunde des Tags ohne die Frohen und auch  
Solche Freude, wie jetzt, wenn Liebende wieder sich finden,  
Wie es gehört für sie, schicklich geheiliget sei.  
Wenn wir seegen das Mahl, wen darf ich nennen und wenn wir  
Ruhn von Leben des Tags, saget, wie bring' ich den Dank?  
Nenn' ich den Hohen dabei? Unschikliches liebet ein Gott nicht,  
Ihn zu fassen, ist fast unsere Freude zu klein.  
Schweigen müssen wir oft; es fehlen heilige Nahmen,  
Herzen schlagen und doch bleibet die Rede zurück?  
Aber ein Saitenspiel leiht jeder Stunde die Töne,  
Und erfreuet vielleicht Himmlische, welche sich nahn.  
Das bereitet und so ist auch beinahe die Sorge  
Schon befriediget, die unter das Freudige kam.  
Sorgen, wie diese, muss, gern oder nicht, in der Seele  
Tragen ein Sänger und oft, aber die anderen nicht.



Ennoble! Renew! So that nothing that's humanly good, so that not a  
Single hour of the day may be without the joyful ones and that also  
Such joy, as now, when lovers are reunited,  
As it should be, may be fittingly hallowed.  
When we bless the meal, whom shall I name and when we  
Rest from the life of day, tell me, how shall I give thanks?  
Shall I name the high one then? A god does not love what is unfitting,  
To grasp him, our joy is almost too small.  
Often we must be silent; holy names are lacking,  
Hearts beat and yet talk holds back?  
But string-music lends its tones to every hour,  
And perhaps brings joy to the heavenly who draw near.  
This makes ready, and care too will almost be  
Appeased, which came into our joy.  
Cares like these, whether he likes it or not, a singer  
Must bear in his soul, and often, but the others not.



To know little, but of joy much  
Is given to mortals . . .

(IV, 240)

According to its title, Hölderlin's poem speaks of homecoming. This makes us think of arrival on one's native soil, and meeting one's countrymen in the homeland. The poem tells of a trip across the lake "from the shady Alps" to Lindau. In the spring of 1801, Hölderlin, then a private tutor, left the Thurgau village of Hauptwil near Constance and traveled back across Lake Constance to his Swabian homeland. So the poem "Homecoming" might represent a piece of poetry about a joyful trip home. Yet the last stanza, whose tone is set by the word "care," suggests nothing of the joyful mood of someone who returns home care-free. The last word of the poem is an abrupt "not." The first stanza, which describes the Alpine mountains, stands directly before us as though it too were a mountain range consisting of verses. It reveals nothing of the pleasures suggestive of home. The "echo" of the "immeasurable workshop" of what is rather unhomelike "resounds all about." When stanzas such as these enclose it, this "homecoming" is hardly accomplished just by an arrival on the shore of the "land of one's birth." Indeed, even the arrival on the home shore is already strange:

All seems familiar, even the hurried greetings  
Seem those of friends, every face seems a kindred one.

The people and things of the homeland seem pleasantly familiar. Yet they are not so. They have shut away what is most proper to them. That is why the homeland addresses a line to the newcomer immediately upon his arrival:

What you seek, it is near, already comes to meet you.

The one returning home has not yet reached his homeland simply by arriving there. And so the homeland is "difficult to win, what is self-reserved" ("The Journey," IV, 170). For that reason the one who arrives is

still seeking something. What is sought, however, does come to meet him. It is near. But that which is sought is not yet found if "find" means to appropriate what is found, make it one's own, and to live with it as though it were a possession.

But the best, the real find, which lies beneath the rainbow  
Of holy peace, is reserved for young and old.

Hölderlin later changed a second fair copy of this poem, and instead of "but the best, the real find . . ." he wrote the words "But the treasure, the German . . . is still reserved." All that is most unique to the homeland was prepared long ago, and apportioned to those who lived in the land of one's birth. The homeland's own special nature was a gift of destiny, or what we today call history. Nevertheless, this destiny has not yet conveyed what is most distinct about it. That is still held back. And that is why whatever pertains to this destiny itself, what is becoming to it, has yet to be found. What has been granted, and yet is still denied, is, we say, reserved. And so this real find that we meet is still reserved and still being sought. Why? Because those who "have cares in the fatherland" are not yet ready to receive the homeland's very own peculiar character, "the German," as their own possession. Therefore what constitutes the homecoming is that the countrymen must first become at home in the still withheld essence of their homeland—indeed, even prior to this, that the "dear ones" at home must first learn how to become at home. For this it is necessary to know in advance what is the homeland's own specific nature and what is best in it. But how should we ever find this, unless a seeker is there for us, and the sought-for essence of the homeland shows itself to him?

What you seek, it is near, already comes to meet you.

The friendly openness of the homeland, and everything there that is brightened up, and glows and gleams, and casts forth its light, comes forth in one single gracious appearance upon one's arrival at the door of the homeland. The door is



Enticing to go out into the much-promising distance

.....

But you are more enticing (to the poet) . . .

To go home, where the blossoming paths are known to me,  
 There to visit the land and the beautiful valleys of the Neckar  
 And the forests, the green of holy trees, where the oak  
 Likes to stand amidst silent birches and beeches,  
 And in the mountains a place, friendly, takes me captive.

What should we call the silent shining appearance in which everything—things and persons alike—send their greeting to the seeker? What is most inviting in the homeland, and what comes to meet him half-way, is called “full of joy,” the joyful. This name outshines all others in the entire poem “Homecoming.” The second stanza abounds with references to the “joyful” and to “joy,” almost as much as in the last stanza. The words are found less frequently in the other stanzas. They are missing only in the fourth stanza, the one which offers an immediate vision of the joyful. But the joyful is named at the very start of the poem in connection with the composition of poetry:

Within the Alps it is still bright night and the cloud,  
 Composing poems full of joy, covers the yawning valley within.

Joyfulness is composed into a poem. The joyful is tuned by joy into joy. In this way it is what is rejoiced in, and equally what rejoices. And this again can bring joy to others. So the joyful is at the same time that which brings joy. The cloud “within the Alps” drifts upward toward the “silvery heights.” It opens itself up to the lofty brightness of the heavens, while at the same time it “covers” “the yawning valley.” The cloud lets itself be seen from the open brightness. The cloud composes poetry. Because it looks straight into that which gazes upon it in return, its poem is not idly invented or contrived. To compose is to find. Accordingly, the cloud must reach out beyond itself toward something other than itself. It does not generate the theme of its poem. The theme does not come out of the cloud. It comes over the cloud, as something that the cloud awaits. The



cloud waits in an open brightness that gladdens the waiting. The cloud is cheered in this gladness. What it composes, the joyful, is gaiety. We also call it the cheerful, but from now on we have to use this word in a strict sense: what has been cleared and brightened up. What has been cleared in this way has had a space freely made for it, illuminated and put in order. Only gaiety, that which has been cleared and brightened up in this manner, is able to place everything in its proper place. The joyful has its being in the gaiety that brightens. But gaiety itself appears only in that which gives joy, that which delights. As this brightening makes everything clear, gaiety grants to each thing its essential space, where everything, according to its kind, belongs, in order to stand there in the brightness of gaiety, like a quiet light, contented in its own being. The rejoicing shines forth toward the homecoming poet,

... where the oak

Likes to stand amidst silent birches and beeches,  
And in the mountains a place, friendly, takes me captive.

Near is the gentle spell of well-known things and their simple relations. But nearer still and becoming ever nearer, though less apparent than birches and mountains and therefore mostly overlooked and passed by, is the gaiety itself in which people and things appear. Gaiety lingers in its inconspicuous appearance. It demands nothing for itself, is not an object, and nevertheless it is not "nothing." In the joyful, however, which first comes to meet the poet, the greeting of that which brightens already holds sway. Those who offer the greeting of gaiety are the messengers, ἄγγελοι, the "angels." That is why the poet, while greeting what is joyful in the homeland and comes to meet him, invokes in "Homecoming" the "angels of the house" and the "angels of the year."

Here "the house" means the space opened up for a people as a place in which they can be "at home," and thereby fulfill their proper destiny. This space is bestowed by the inviolate earth. The earth houses the peoples in their historical space. The earth brightens up "the house." Thus the brightening earth is the first angel "of the house."



"The year" houses those times that we call the seasons. In the "mingled" play of fiery brightness and frosty darkness which the seasons grant, things blossom and close up again. The seasons "of the year" bestow upon man, in the changes of gaiety, the stay which has been allotted for his historical sojourn in the "house." "The year" extends its greeting in the play of light. The brightening light is the first "angel of the year."

Both, earth and light, the "angels of the house," and "the angels of the year," are called "preservers," because as the greeting ones they bring to light the gaiety in whose clarity the "nature" of things and people is safely preserved. What remains preserved, safe and sound, is "homelike" in its essence. The messengers' greeting comes out of the gaiety that allows everything to be at home. The granting of this feeling of being-at-home is the essence of the homeland. It is already approaching—namely, in the joyful, where gaiety first comes to appearance.

Yet what is already approaching still remains what is sought. Since the joyful is only encountered where a composer of poems comes to greet it, so too the angels, messengers of gaiety, can appear only if there are poets. That is why in the poem "Homecoming," we find this verse:

. . . for whatever poets meditate,  
Or sing, it mostly concerns the angels and him.

The song of the poetic word concerns "mostly the angels," because as the messengers of gaiety, they are the first "who draw near." "And him"—the poetic saying is intended for "him." The "and" here actually signifies "and above all"—"him."

Who is He? If the poesis concerns "him" above all, and if the poesis composes the joyful, then He dwells within the most joyful. But what is this and where is this?

The cloud, "composing poems full of joy," gives us the sign. The cloud hovers between the peaks of the Alps, and covers the mountain ravines, down into whose unlit depths plunges the brightening ray of light. That is why the young Chaos "celebrates" "loving strife" there "amidst the rocks,"

and "celebrates" it "trembling with joy." But the cloud, "a hill of the heavens" (IV, 71), dreams its way between the heights and into the joyful. While composing, the cloud points upward toward gaiety.

Meanwhile, the silvery heights gleam peacefully above,  
 Up there the luminous snow is already full of roses.  
 And still higher up, above the light, dwells the pure  
 Blissful god rejoicing in the play of holy rays.

In the Alps there comes to pass an increasingly tranquil self-surmounting of the high up to the highest. The peaks of the mountain range, which is the highest messenger of the earth, emerge into the light to meet the "angel of the year." That is why they are called "the peaks of time." Yet still higher up, above the light, gaiety itself opens up into its pure brightening, without which even the light would never be allowed its brightness. What is highest, "above the light," is the very opening for any stream of light. This pure opening which first "imparts," that is, grants, the open to every "space" and to every "temporal space," we call gaiety [*die Heitere*] according to an old word of our mother tongue. At one and the same time, it is the clarity (*claritas*) in whose brightness everything clear rests, and the grandeur (*serenitas*) in whose strength everything high stands, and the merriment (*hilaritas*) in whose play everything liberated sways. Gaiety preserves and holds everything within what is safe and sound. Gaiety heals fundamentally. It is the holy. "The highest" and "the holy" are the same for the poet: gaiety. As the source for everything joyful, it remains the most joyful, and it lets the pure brightening come to pass. Here in the highest dwells "the high one," who is who he is insofar as he has re-joyed "in the play of holy rays": *the joyful one* [*der Freudige*]. If He is one of us, he seems inclined "to create joy, with us." Since his being is the brightening, "he loves" "to open up" and "to illuminate." Through a clear gaiety, he "opens" things into the rejoicing of their presence. Through a merry gaiety, he illuminates the heart of men, so that they may open their hearts to what is genuine in their fields, towns, and houses. Through a grand gaiety, he first lets the dark depth gape open in its illumination. What would depth be without lighting?





Even the "mourning ones" are gladdened again by "the joyful one," although "with a patient hand." He does not take away their mourning, but he changes it by letting those who mourn divine that mourning itself only springs from "old joys." The joyful one is the "father" of all that rejoices. He, who dwells in gaiety, only now allows himself to be named after his dwelling place. The high one is called "aether," Αἰθήρ. The wafting "air" and the lightening "light" and the "earth" which blossoms with them are the "three in one," in which gaiety brightens up and lets the joyful emerge and greet men in joy.

Yet how does gaiety come down from its height to men? The joyful one and the joyful messengers of the brightening, father aether, and the angel of the house (the earth), and the angel of the year (light), cannot accomplish anything by themselves. Indeed, among all those who dwell within the orbit of gaiety, these three-in-one are loved the most by those who rejoice; and yet—nevertheless—in their "essence," that is to say, in their brightening, the three would have become virtually exhausted if it were not for the poets who, occasionally, have come composing, and approaching near to the joyful one because they belong to him. That is why the elegy "The Wanderer," whose title already testifies to its relation to the later elegy "Homecoming," says (IV, 105ff.):

And so I am alone. But you, above the clouds,  
 Father of the fatherland! Mighty aether! And you,  
 Earth and Light! You three in one, who reign and love,  
 Eternal gods! My bonds with you shall never break.  
 Parting with you, with you too have I wandered,  
 You, O joyous ones, more experienced now, I bring you back.

In "The Journey," earth and light, the angels of the house and of the year, are called "gods." And in the first fair copy of the elegy "Homecoming," Hölderlin still said "gods of the year" and "gods of the house." Likewise, in the first fair copy of the last stanza of "Homecoming" (line 94), instead of "without the happy ones," it reads: "without the gods." In the later version, then, have the gods been reduced to mere angels? Or have angels also been introduced along with the gods? Neither—but now

with the name "angels" the being of those who were previously called "gods" is said more purely. For the gods are the brightening ones, whose brightening offers the greeting sent by gaiety. Gaiety is the essential ground of the greeting, that is, of the angelic, in which the very being of the gods consists. By using the word "gods" sparingly, and hesitating to say the name, the poet has brought to light the proper element of the gods, that they are the greeting ones through whom gaiety extends its offering.

The returning wanderer has become more experienced in the being of the gods, that is, of the joyful ones.

What you seek, it is near, already comes to meet you.

The poet has a clearer view of gaiety. The joyful which comes to meet him in the sight of the homeland he now sees as that which is brightened up only by the most joyful and can remain near only by coming from this alone. But now if "whatever poets meditate or sing" is above all intended for "him," the high father aether, then must not the poet who seeks the most joyful take up his stay where the joyful ones dwell, namely (according to the first stanza of the hymn "The Rhine" [IV, 172]), the place of the

... Steps of the Alpine range,  
Which I call the divinely built,  
Fortress of the heavenly ones,  
As in ancient belief, but where  
Much still decided in secret  
Reaches men; ... ?

But now the "homecoming" manifestly leads the poet away from the "Alpine range" and over the waters of the lake to the shore of his native country. His sojourn "beneath the Alps," the nearness to the most joyful, is now sacrificed precisely for the return home. Even stranger is the fact that still above the waters which lead the poet away from the Alpine range, beneath the winds of the vessel that bears him away, the joyful appears:



Far out on the surface of the lake was One joyous swell  
Beneath the sails . . .

Joyfulness starts to bloom upon the farewell to the "fortress of the heavenly ones." If we represent Lake Constance, which is also called "the Swabian Sea," in a geographic or tourist-like or even folkloric sense, then we mean the lake which lies between the Alps and the upper Danube, through which the young Rhine also flows. Yet we would still be thinking of this water unpoetically. How much longer shall we continue to do so? How much longer are we still going to suppose that there is first of all a nature in itself and then a landscape for itself, which with the help of "poetic experiences" becomes mythically colored? How much longer are we going to prevent ourselves from experiencing beings as beings? How long will Germans continue to ignore the words which Hölderlin sang in the first stanza of the "Patmos" hymn (IV, 199 and 227)?

Near and  
Hard to grasp is the god.  
But where the danger is,  
There also grows our saving grace.  
In the darkness dwell  
The eagles and fearless over  
The abyss walk the sons of the Alps  
On lightly built bridges.  
Therefore, since amassed all around are  
The peaks of time,  
And the dearest dwell near, languishing on  
Mountains farthest apart,  
Thus give us innocent water,  
O give us wings, most faithful in heart  
To cross over and to return.

The poet must "cross over" to the "Alpine range"; but "most faithful in heart" means that out of faithfulness to his homeland, he will return to it, where according to the words of "Homecoming," what is sought "is near." Therefore, the nearness to the most joyful, and that means nearness to the

origin of all that is joyful, cannot be found there "beneath the Alps." The nearness to the origin, therefore, is something quite mysterious. The Swabian homeland, separated from the Alpine range, must be the very place of nearness to the origin. Yes, so it is. The first stanzas of the hymn "The Journey" say so. Hölderlin published this hymn in 1802, together with the elegy "Homecoming," in an issue of the almanac *Flora*. This enigmatic hymn begins by invoking the homeland. The poet deliberately gives it the old name "Suevien." He thereby names the oldest, most proper, still concealed essence of the homeland—which was already prepared from the beginning (IV, 167).

The hymn "The Journey" begins:

Blissful Suevien, my mother,  
 You too, like the more shining, your sister  
 Lombardy on the other side,  
 Traversed by a hundred brooks!  
 And trees enough, white-flowering and reddish,  
 And darker ones, wild, full of deeply greening foliage,  
 And the Alpine range of Switzerland, too, casts its shade  
 On you, the neighboring; for near the hearth of the house  
 You dwell, and hear how within,  
 From silver vessels of sacrifice  
 The source murmurs, poured out  
 By pure hands, when touched

By warm rays  
 Crystalline ice and overturned  
 By gently quickening light  
 The snowy summit floods the earth  
 With purest water. That is why  
 Faithfulness is inborn in you. For whatever dwells  
 Near the origin is loathe to leave the place.  
 And your children, the towns  
 By the distantly glimmering lake,  
 By the Neckar's willows, by the Rhine,  
 They all believe there could be  
 No better place to dwell.





Suevien, the mother, dwells near “the hearth of the house.” The hearth watches over the ever-reserved glow of the fire, which, when it bursts into flame, gives air and light to gaiety. Around the fire of the hearth is the workshop, where what is decided in secret is forged. The “hearth of the house,” that is, of the maternal earth, is the origin of that brightening, whose light pours forth in streams over the earth. Suevien dwells near the origin. This nearness is mentioned twice. The homeland itself dwells near. It is the place of nearness to the hearth and to the origin. Suevien, the mother’s voice, points toward the essence of the fatherland. It is in this nearness to the origin that the neighborhood to the most joyful is grounded. What is most characteristic of the homeland, what is best in it, consists solely in its being this nearness to the origin—and nothing else besides this. That is why in this homeland, too, faithfulness to the origin is inborn. That is why anyone who has to, is loathe to leave this place of nearness. But now, if the homeland’s being a place of nearness to the most joyful is what is most unique about it, what, then, is homecoming?

Homecoming is the return to the nearness to the origin.

Only he can return home who previously, and perhaps for a long time, has wandered as a traveler and borne upon himself the burden of the journey upon his shoulders, and has crossed over into the origin, so that there he might experience what that is which was to be sought, in order then, as the seeker, to come back more experienced.

What you seek, it is near, already comes to meet you.

The nearness that now prevails lets what is near be near, and yet at the same time lets it remain what is sought, and thus not near. We usually understand nearness as the smallest possible measurement of the distance between two places. Now, on the contrary, the essence of nearness appears to be that it brings near that which is near, yet keeping it at a distance. This nearness to the origin is a mystery.

But now, if homecoming signifies becoming at home in nearness to the origin, then must not the return home consist first of all, and perhaps for a long time, in knowing the mystery of this nearness, or even prior to

this, in learning to know it? Yet we never know a mystery by unveiling or analyzing it to death, but only in such a way that we preserve the mystery as mystery. But how can we preserve it—this mystery of nearness—without our knowing it? For the sake of this knowledge there must always be one who first returns home and says the mystery again and again:

But the best, the real find, which lies beneath the rainbow  
Of holy peace, is reserved for young and old.

"The treasure," which is most proper to the homeland, "the German," is reserved. The nearness to the origin is a nearness which still holds something back in reserve. It withholds the most joyful. It preserves and saves it for those who are coming; but this nearness does not take away the most joyful, it only lets it appear precisely as saved. In the essence of nearness there comes to pass a concealed reserving. That it reserves the near is the secret of the nearness to the most joyful. The poet knows that when he calls the reserved "the real find," that is, something he has found, he says something that runs counter to common sense. To say that something is near while it remains distant means, after all, either violating a fundamental rule of ordinary thought, the principle of contradiction, or else playing with empty words, or else making an outrageous statement. That is why the poet, almost as soon as he has brought himself to say his words about the mystery of the reserving nearness, interrupts himself:

I talk like a fool.

But he talks nevertheless. The poet must talk, for

It is joy.

Is it just any indefinite joy over something or other, or is it the joy which is joy only because in it the essence of all joy unfolds itself? What is joy? The original essence of joy is learning to become at home within a nearness to the origin. For in this nearness there draws near in greeting that brightening in which gaiety appears. The poet comes home by



entering into nearness to the origin. He enters into this nearness by saying the mystery of the nearness to the near. He says it insofar as he composes poems full of joy, that is, by putting the most joyful into a poem. Poesis does not merely bring joy to the poet, but rather it *is* the joy, the brightening, because it is in poesis first of all that the homecoming takes place. The elegy "Homecoming" is not a poem about homecoming; rather, the elegy, the poetic activity which it is, is the homecoming itself, and still it comes to pass as long as its words ring like a bell in the language of the German people. Poesis means to be in the joy which preserves in words the mystery of nearness to the most joyful. Joy is *the* joy of the poet, as he puts it when he says "our joy" (line 100). The poetic joy is the knowledge that in everything joyful, which already comes to meet us, the joyful greets us while reserving itself. In order therefore that the reserving nearness to the most joyful may remain protected, the poetic word must take care not to hasten by or to lose that which sends its greeting out of the joyful, which sends its greeting as the self-reserving. Thus it is that, since care must be taken to protect the self-reserving nearness of the most joyful, care enters into the joyful.

Therefore, the joy of the poet is in truth the care of the singer, whose singing protects the most joyful as the reserved, and lets what is sought be near in its reserving nearness.

But now that care has entered into the most joyful, how then must the poet say the most joyful? At the time of the elegy "Homecoming" and the hymn "The Journey," Hölderlin noted in an "epigram" how the song of the most joyful, i.e., of the reserved, how therefore the "German Song" should be sung; the epigram bears the title "Sophocles" and reads (IV, 3):

Many have sought in vain to joyfully say the most joyful,  
Here at last it is expressed to me, here in mourning.

Now we know why, at the time when he returned home to the homeland, to the place of the reserving nearness to the origin, the poet had to translate "The Tragedies of Sophocles." Separated from mere sadness by an abyss, mourning is the joy which is brightened up for the most joyful,



insofar as it still reserves itself and hesitates. From where else could come the far-reaching inner light of mourning, if, in its concealed ground, it were not a joy about the most joyful?

Hölderlin's poetic dialogue with Sophocles in his "Translations" and "Commentaries" does indeed belong to the poetic homecoming, but it does not exhaust its full meaning. That is why the dedication with which Hölderlin launched his translation of "The Tragedies of Sophocles," closes with the confession (V, 91):

For the rest, I wish, if there is time, to sing of  
the parents of our princes, their thrones and the  
angels of the holy fatherland.

"For the rest," so read the timid words for "in truth." For now and in the future the song concerns "mostly the angels and him." The high one, the one who inhabits the gaiety of the holy, is most of all the one who draws near within the reserving nearness, where the reserving joy of the poet has become at home. But

To grasp him our joy is almost too small.

"To grasp" means to name the high one himself. To name poetically means to let the high one himself appear in words, not merely to say his dwelling-place, gaiety, the holy, not merely to name him only with respect to his dwelling-place. To name him himself, even mourning joy will not yet suffice for that, even though it abides in a fitting nearness to the high one.

Indeed, at times "the holy" can be named and the word spoken out of its brightening light. But these "holy" words are not naming "names":

... holy names are lacking.

To say who He himself is who dwells in the holy, and in saying this to let him appear as himself—for this the naming word is lacking. This is why poetic "singing," because it lacks the genuine, naming word, still remains





a song without words—"lyre-music." To be sure, the "song" of the string-player follows the high one everywhere. The "soul" of the singer does indeed glance into gaiety, but the singer does not see the high one himself. The singer is blind. In the poem "The Blind Singer," which is prefaced by a line from Sophocles, Hölderlin says (IV, 58):

After him, O my strings! With him lives  
 My song, and as the source follows the stream,  
 There where he thinks, there I must go and  
 Follow the sure one on the stray path.

"Lyre-music"—this is the most timid name for the hesitant singing of the singer who cares:

But lyre-music lends to each hour its tones,  
 And perhaps gladdens the heavenly ones, who draw near.  
 This makes ready . . .

To prepare joyfully for the greeting messengers, who bring the greeting of the still-reserved treasure, is to prepare for the fitting nearness for their approach—this is what determines the vocation of the homecoming poet. The holy does indeed appear. But the god remains distant. The time of the reserved discovery is the age when the god is absent. The "absence" of the god is the ground for the lack of "holy names." However, since the find is near, although in a reserved manner, the absent god extends his greeting in the nearing of the heavenly ones. Thereby "god's absence" is also not a deficiency. Therefore, the countrymen, too, may not try to make themselves a god by cunning, and thus eliminate by force the presumed deficiency. But they must also not comfort themselves by merely calling on an accustomed god. True, on such paths the presence of the absence would go unnoticed. But if the nearness were not determined by the absence, and thus were not a reserving nearness, the precious find could not be near in the way in which it is near. Thus for the poet's care there is only one possibility: without fear of appearing godless, he must remain near to the god's absence, and wait long enough in this prepared

nearness to the absence till out of the nearness to the absent god there is granted an origivative word to name the high one.

In the same annual in which the elegy "Homecoming" and the hymn "The Journey" appeared, Hölderlin also published a poem entitled "The Poet's Vocation." This poem culminates in the stanza (IV, 147):

But fearless man remains, as he must,  
 Alone before God, simplicity protects him,  
 And he needs no weapons and no  
 Cunning, till God's absence helps.

The poet's vocation is homecoming, by which the homeland is first prepared as the land of the nearness to the origin. To preserve the mystery of the reserving nearness to the most joyful, and thus to unfold it while preserving it, that is the care of homecoming. That is why the poem ends with the words:

Cares like these, whether he likes it or not, a singer  
 Must bear in his soul, and often, but the others not.

Who are "the others" to whom the abrupt "not" is spoken? The poem which closes in this way begins with the ambiguous dedication "To Kindred Ones." But why should the "homecoming" first be spoken to the countrymen, who have been in the homeland forever? The homecoming poet is met by the hurried greeting of his countrymen. They *seem* to be kindred to him, but they are not yet so—i.e., not related to him, the poet. But assuming that the "others" named at the end are those who are first to become the poet's kindred ones, why does the poet explicitly exclude them from the singer's care?

The abrupt "not" does indeed release "the others" from the care of the poetic saying, but it in no way releases them from the care of listening to what "the poets meditate or sing" here in "Homecoming." The "not" is the mysterious call "to" the others in the fatherland, to become listeners, so that for the first time they may learn to know the essence of the homeland. "The others" must first learn to reflect upon the mystery of the reserving



nearness. Such thinking first forms the thoughtful ones, who do not hasten by that precious find which has been reserved and committed into the words of the poem. Out of these thoughtful ones will come the patient ones of a lasting spirit, which itself again learns to persist in the still-enduring absence of the god. Only the thoughtful ones and the patient ones are the careful ones. Because they think of what is composed in the poem, they are turned with the singer's care toward the mystery of the reserving nearness. Through this single devotion to the same theme, the careful listeners are related to the speaker's care; they are "the others," the poet's true "kindred spirits."

Assuming then that those who are merely residents on the soil of the native land are those who have not yet come home to the homeland's very own; and assuming, too, that it belongs to the *poetic* essence of homecoming, over and above the merely casual possession of domestic things and one's personal life, to be open to the origin of the joyful; assuming *both* of these things, then are not the sons of the homeland, who though far distant from its soil, still gaze into the gaiety of the homeland shining toward them, and devote and sacrifice their life for the still reserved find, are not these sons of the homeland the poet's closest kin? Their sacrifice shelters in itself the poetic call to the dearest in the homeland, so that the reserved find may remain reserved.

So it will remain, if those who "have cares in the fatherland" become the careful ones. Then there will be a kinship with the poet. Then there will be a homecoming. But this homecoming is the future of the historical being of the German people.

They are the people of poetry *and* of thought. For now there must first be thinkers so that the poet's word may be perceptible. By thinking again of the composed mystery of the reserving nearness, the thinking of the careful ones alone is the "remembrance of the poet." In this remembrance there is a first beginning, which will in time become a far-reaching kinship with the homecoming poet.

But now, if through remembrance "the others" become akin, are they not then turned *toward* the poet? Does the abrupt "not" with which "Homecoming" ends, concern them? Yes, it does. But not only them. If

they have become akin, "the others" are also the "others" in still another sense. By heeding the spoken word and thinking of it, so that it may be properly interpreted and preserved, they help the poet. This help corresponds to the essence of the reserving nearness, in which the most joyful draws near. For just as the greeting messengers must help, in order that gaiety may reach people in its brightening, so, too, there must be a first one who poetically rejoices before the greeting messengers, in order that he, alone and in advance, may first shelter the greeting in the word.

But because the word, once it is spoken, slips out of the protection of the caring poet, he alone cannot easily hold fast in all its truth the spoken knowledge of the reserving find and of the reserving nearness. That is why the poet turns to others, so that their remembrance may help in understanding the poetic word, so that in understanding each may have come to pass a homecoming appropriate for him.

Because of the protection in which the spoken word must remain for the poet and his kindred spirits, the singer of "Homecoming" names at the same time in "The Poet's Vocation" the other relation of the poet to the "others." Here Hölderlin speaks of the poet and his knowledge of the reserving nearness (IV, 147):

... But alone he cannot easily preserve it,  
And a poet gladly joins with others,  
So that they may understand how to help.





# HÖLDERLIN AND THE ESSENCE OF POETRY

In memory of Norbert von Hellingrath  
Who was killed in action  
On December 14, 1916

## THE FIVE KEY VERSES

1. Composing poems: "This most innocent of occupations." (III, 377)
2. "That is why language, the most dangerous of goods, has been given to man . . . so that he may bear witness to what he is. . . ." (IV, 246)
3. "Much has man experienced.  
Named many of the heavenly ones,  
Since we have been a conversation  
And able to hear from one another." (IV, 343)
4. "But what remains is founded by the poets." (IV, 63)
5. "Full of merit, yet poetically, man  
Dwells on this earth." (VI, 25)



Why choose *Hölderlin's* work if our purpose is to show the essence of poetry? Why not Homer or Sophocles, why not Virgil or Dante, why not Shakespeare or Goethe? Surely the essence of poetry has come to rich expression in the works of these poets, more so indeed than in Hölderlin's creation, which broke off so prematurely and so abruptly.

That may be so. And yet I choose Hölderlin, and him alone. The question can arise whether it is possible in any case to read off the general nature of poetry from the work of just one poet. We can only obtain what is universal, that is, what is valid for many, by a comparative study. And for that we would need to present the greatest possible diversity, both of poems and of kinds of poetry. For such a study, Hölderlin's poetry could count at best as one among many. In no way would it suffice as our sole measure for determining the essence of poetry. Consequently, our project would be doomed from the start. Certainly that is true—if we understand by “essence of poetry” whatever is drawn together into a universal concept, one that would be valid for every kind of poetry. But a universal like that, equally valid for every particular instance, always proves to be something neutral or indifferent. An “essence” of that kind always misses what is truly essential.

We, however, are searching for something truly essential, something that will force us to decide whether we shall take poetry at all seriously in the future, and whether the presuppositions that we bring along with us will enable us ever to stand within poetry's sphere of influence.

I did not choose Hölderlin because his work, as one among many, realizes the universal essence of poetry, but rather because Hölderlin's poetry is sustained by his whole poetic mission: to make poems solely about the essence of poetry. Hölderlin is for us in a preeminent sense *the poet's poet*. And for that reason he forces a decision upon us.

But—to make poems about the role of the poet—is that not to betray a misguided self-contemplation, and at the same time to confess one's lack of worldly content? Poems about poetry—wouldn't that be something weak and overly refined, something decadent, a dead end?

The answer may be given by what follows. Admittedly, we shall only approach this answer by adopting an expedient. Properly, one ought to

interpret each of Hölderlin's poems in a continuous sequence, but here we cannot go that route. Instead, we shall only consider five of the poet's key verses on poetry. The specific order of these verses and their inner coherence will place before our eyes the true nature of poetry, what really is essential to it.

## 1.

In a letter to his mother, dated January, 1799, Hölderlin says that writing poems is "this most innocent of all occupations" (III, 377). In what way is it the "most innocent"? Indeed, the pursuit of poetry often looks like little more than *play*. Without responsibility, it invents a world of images; lost in thought, it remains within an imaginary realm. Such play evades the seriousness of decisions, in which one always assumes guilt in one way or another. So the pursuit of poetry is completely harmless. At the same time it is ineffectual; it remains mere talk. It has nothing in common with action, which takes hold of reality directly in order to transform it. Poetry is like a dream, not reality; a play with words, not the seriousness of action. Poetry is harmless and ineffectual. For what could be more harmless than mere language? Now it is true that by taking poetry as "the most innocent of all occupations," we have not yet grasped its true nature. But at least we have been given an indication of where we must look for it. Poetry creates its works in the realm of language and out of the "material" of language. What does Hölderlin say about language? Let us listen to a second of the poet's key verses.

## 2.

In a fragmentary draft, dating from the same period (1800) as the letter just quoted, the poet says:

But man dwells in huts and wraps himself with a modest garment, for  
the more intimate he is, / the more attentive too, and that he preserves





the spirit, as the priestess the heavenly flame—this is his understanding. And that is why free will / and higher power to command and to accomplish have been given to him, who is like the gods, and that is why the most dangerous of goods, language, has been given to man, so that creating, destroying and perishing, and returning to the everliving, to the mistress and mother, he may bear witness to what he is / to have inherited, learned from her, her most divine gift, all-sustaining love. (IV, 246)

Language, the field of “the most innocent of all occupations,” is “the most dangerous of goods.” How can these two verses be reconciled? We shall put this question aside for the moment, and consider three preliminary questions: 1. Whose good is language? 2. In what way is it the most dangerous good? 3. In what sense is it a good at all?

First of all, we take note of where this key verse about language is found: in the draft of a poem which is supposed to say who man is in distinction to the other beings of nature; mention is made of the rose, the swans, the stag in the forest (IV, 300 and 385). Distinguishing man from the other living creatures, the cited fragment begins thus: “But man dwells in huts.”

Who is man? He is the one who must bear witness to what he is. To bear witness can signify to testify, but it also means to be answerable for what one has testified in one's testimony. Man is *he* who he is precisely in the attestation of his own existence. This attestation does not mean a subsequent and additional expression of man's being; rather, it forms a part of man's existence. But what should man testify to? To his belonging to the earth. This belonging consists in the fact that man is the inheritor, and the learner of all things. But *things*, of course, stand in opposition. What keeps things apart in opposition and at the same time joins them together, Hölderlin calls “intimacy.” The attestation of belonging to this intimacy occurs through the creation of a world and through its rise, as well as through its destruction and decline. The attestation of man's being, and thus his authentic fulfillment, comes from freedom of decision. Decision takes hold of what is necessary, and places itself in the bond of a highest claim. Man's being a witness to his belonging among beings as a whole occurs as history. But so that history may be possible, language has been given to man. It is one of man's goods.

But in what sense is language “the most dangerous good”? It is the danger of all dangers because it first creates the possibility of a danger. Danger is the threat that beings pose to being itself. But it is only by virtue of language at all that man is exposed to something manifest: *beings* which press upon him and inflame him in his existence, or *nonbeings* which deceive and disappoint him. Language first creates the manifest place of this threat to being, and the confusion and thus the possibility even of the loss of being, that is—danger. But language is not only the danger of dangers; rather, it necessarily shelters within itself a continual danger to itself. Language is charged with the task of making beings manifest and preserving them as such—in the linguistic work. Language gives expression to what is most pure and most concealed, as well as to what is confused and common. Indeed, even the essential word, if it is to be understood and so become the common possession of all, must make itself common. Accordingly, it is said in another of Hölderlin’s fragments: “You spoke to the divinity, but this you have all forgotten, that the first-fruits are not for mortals, that they belong to the gods. The fruit must first become more common, more everyday, then it will be the mortals’ own” (IV, 238). The pure and the common are both equally something said. The word as word never offers any immediate guarantee as to whether it is an essential word or a deception. On the contrary—an essential word, in its simplicity, often looks like an inessential one. And on the other hand, what shows itself in its finery in the appearance of the essential is often merely something recited and repeated by rote. Thus language must constantly place itself into the illusion which it engenders by itself, and so endanger what is most its own, genuine utterance.

Now in what sense is this most dangerous thing a “good” for man? Language is his property. He has charge over it for the purpose of communicating his experiences, resolutions, and moods. Language serves to facilitate understanding. As an appropriate tool for this purpose, it is a “good.” And yet being a means of making oneself understood does not constitute the essence of language. Such an account does not touch its actual essence, but rather only points to a consequence of the essence. Language is not merely a tool which man possesses alongside many



others; rather, language first grants the possibility of standing in the midst of the openness of beings. Only where there is language, is there world, that is, the constantly changing cycle of decision and work, of action and responsibility, but also of arbitrariness and turmoil, decay and confusion. Only where world holds sway is there history. Language is a good in a more primordial sense. It holds good for the fact that man can *be* as historical, i.e., it guarantees that. Language is not a tool at man's disposal, but that primal event<sup>1</sup> which disposes of the highest possibility of man's being. We must first of all assure ourselves of this essence of language, in order truly to comprehend the domain of poetry and thus poetry itself. How does language occur? In order to find the answer to this question, let us consider a third of Hölderlin's key verses.

### 3.

We come across these words in a long and complicated draft of the unfinished poem which begins "Conciliator, you who never believed . . ." (IV, 162ff. and 339ff.):

Much has man experienced.  
 Named many of the heavenly ones,  
 Since we have been a conversation  
 And able to hear from one another. (IV, 343)

Let us first choose the line which has a direct bearing on what we have discussed so far: "Since we have been a conversation. . . ." We—human beings—are a conversation. Man's being is grounded in language; but this actually occurs only in *conversation*. Conversation, however, is not only a way in which language takes place, but rather language is essential only as conversation. What we usually mean by "language," namely, a stock of words and rules for combining them, is only an exterior aspect of language. But now what is meant by "conversation"? Obviously, the act of speaking with one another about something. Speaking, then, mediates our coming to one another. But Hölderlin says, "Since we have been a conver-



sation and able to hear from one another.” Being able to hear is not merely a consequence of speaking with one another, but is on the contrary the presupposition of speaking. But even being able to hear is itself in turn based upon the possibility of the word and has need of it. Being able to talk and being able to hear are co-original. We are a conversation—and that means we are able to hear from one another. We are a conversation, that always also signifies we are *one* conversation. The unity of a conversation consists in the fact that in the essential word there is always manifest that one and the same on which we agree, on the basis of which we are united and so are authentically ourselves. Conversation and its unity support our existence.

But Hölderlin does not simply say “we are a conversation”—rather—“Since we have been a conversation. . . .” Even where man’s ability to speak is present and is put into practice, the essential event of language—conversation—does not necessarily occur. Since when have we been a conversation? If there is to be *one* conversation, the essential word must remain related to what is one and the same. Without this relation, even a quarrel is impossible. But the one and the same can be manifest only within the light of something that remains. However, permanence and endurance come to appearance only when persistence and presence light up. But this occurs in the moment in which time opens itself up in its dimensions.<sup>2</sup> Since man has placed himself in the presence of something lasting, he can expose himself to the changeable, to what comes and goes; for only the persistent is changeable. Only since “torrential time” has been broken up into present, past, and future, has it become possible to agree upon something that remains over time. We have been *one* conversation since the time when there “is time.” Ever since time arose and was brought to stand, since then we *are* historical. Both—to be *one* conversation and to be historical—are equally ancient, they belong together, and they are the same.

Since we have been a conversation—man has experienced much and named many of the gods. Since language has authentically come to pass as conversation, the gods have come to expression and a world has appeared. But again it is important to see that the presence of the gods and the appearance of the world are not merely a consequence of the occurrence



of language; rather, they are simultaneous with it. And this to the extent that it is precisely in the naming of the gods and in the world becoming word that authentic conversation, which we ourselves are, consists.

But the gods can come to expression only if they themselves address us and place us under their claim. A word which names the gods is always an answer to such a claim. Its answer always springs from the responsibility of a destiny. Only because the gods bring our existence to language do we enter the realm of the decision concerning whether we are to promise ourselves to the gods or whether we are to deny ourselves to them.

Only now can we fully judge what this line means: "Since we have been a conversation. . . ." Since the gods have brought us into conversation, since that time is there time, since then the ground of our existence has been a conversation. The statement that language is the highest event of human existence thus receives its significance and foundation.

But the question at once arises: How does this conversation, which we are, begin? Who performs the naming of the gods? Who takes hold of something enduring in torrential time and brings it to stand in the word? Hölderlin tells us this with the secure simplicity of the poet. Let us listen to a fourth of his key verses.

#### 4.

This line forms the conclusion of the poem "Remembrance" and reads: "But what remains is founded by the poets" (IV, 63). This line throws light on our question of the essence of poetry. Poetry is a founding by the word and in the word. What is established in this way? What remains. But how can what remains be founded? Is it not that which has always already been present? No! Precisely what remains must be secured against being carried away; the simple must be wrested from the complex, measure must be opposed to excess. What supports and dominates beings as a whole must come into the open. Being must be disclosed, so that beings may appear. But even this, though it remains, is transitory. "Everything heavenly is



quickly passing; but not in vain" (IV, 163ff.). But that this may abide and remain, it is "entrusted to the care and service of those who make poems" (IV, 145). The poet names the gods and names all things with respect to what they are. This naming does not merely come about when something already previously known is furnished with a name; rather, by speaking the essential word, the poet's naming first nominates the beings as what they are. Thus they become known *as* beings. Poetry is the founding of being in the word. What endures is never drawn from the transient. What is simple can never be directly derived from the complex. Measure does not lie in excess. We never find the ground in the abyss. Being is never a being. But because being and the essence of things can never be calculated and derived from what is present at hand, they must be freely created, posited, and bestowed. Such free bestowal is a founding.

But when the gods are originally named and the essence of things comes to expression so that the things first shine forth, when this occurs, man's existence is brought into a firm relation and placed on a ground. The poet's saying is not only foundation in the sense of a free bestowal, but also in the sense of the firm grounding of human existence on its ground. If we comprehend this essence of poetry, that it is the founding of being in the word, then we can divine something of the truth of that verse which Hölderlin spoke long after he had been taken away into the protection of the night of madness.

## 5.

We find this fifth key verse in the great and awe-inspiring poem which begins:

In lovely blueness blooms the  
Steeple with its metal roof. (VI, 24ff.)

Here Hölderlin says (line 32ff.):



Full of merit, yet poetically, man  
Dwells on this earth.

Whatever man brings about and pursues is earned and merited by his own efforts. "Yet"—says Hölderlin in sharp opposition—all this does not touch the essence of his dwelling on this earth, all this does not reach into the ground of human existence. Human existence is "poetic" in its ground. But we now understand poetry as a founding—through the naming of gods and of the essence of things. "To dwell poetically" means to stand in the presence of the gods and to be struck by the essential nearness of things. Existence is "poetic" in its ground—which means, at the same time, as founded (grounded), it is not something earned, but is rather a gift.

Poetry is not merely an ornament accompanying existence, not merely a temporary enthusiasm and certainly not excitement or amusement. Poetry is the sustaining ground of history, and therefore not just an appearance of culture, above all not the mere "expression" of the "soul of a culture."

That our existence is poetic in its ground cannot mean, in the end, that it is really just a harmless game. But does not Hölderlin himself, in the first key verse that we cited, call poetry "this most innocent of all occupations"? How can this be reconciled with the essence of poetry which we have now unfolded? That brings us back to the question which we first put aside. By answering this question, we shall try at the same time to summarize, to bring before our inner eyes, the essence of poetry and of the poet.

First it became clear that poetry's domain is language. The essence of poetry must therefore be conceived out of the essence of language. But it later became apparent that poetry is a founding: a naming of being and of the essence of all things—not just any saying, but that whereby everything first steps into the open, which we then discuss and talk about in everyday language. Hence poetry never takes language as a material at its disposal; rather, poetry itself first makes language possible. Poetry is the primal language of a historical people. Thus the essence of language must be understood out of the essence of poetry and not the other way around.

The foundation of human existence is conversation as the authentic occurrence of language. But the primary language is poetry as the founding of being. Language, however, is “the most dangerous of goods.” Thus poetry is the most dangerous work and at the same time the “most innocent of all occupations.”

In fact—only if we think these two conceptions together as one do we comprehend the full essence of poetry.

But, then, is poetry the most dangerous work? In a letter to a friend, written immediately before his departure for his last journey to France, Hölderlin writes: “O friend! The world lies before me, brighter and more serious than before! I am pleased with what happens, I am pleased as when in the summer ‘the old holy father with calm hand shakes the holy lightning flashes out of the red clouds.’ For among all that I can see of God, this sign has become my chosen one. I used to be able to rejoice over a new truth, a better view of what is above us and around us, but now I fear that I shall end like old Tantalus, who received more from the gods than he could digest” (V, 321).

The poet is exposed to the god’s lightning flashes. This is spoken of in that poem which we consider to be the purest poem on the essence of poetry, and which begins:

As when on a holiday, to see the field  
A countryman goes out, at morning, . . . (IV, 151ff.)

Here it is said in the last stanza:

Yet us it behooves, you poets, to stand  
Bare-headed beneath God’s thunderstorms,  
To grasp the Father’s ray, itself, with our own hands  
And to offer to the people  
The heavenly gift wrapt in song.

And a year later, after Hölderlin, struck by madness, had returned to his mother’s house, he wrote to the same friend, recalling his stay in France:



The mighty element, the fire of the heavens and the stillness of men, their life in nature, and their confinedness and their contentment, moved me continually, and as one says of heroes, I can well say of myself that Apollo has struck me. (V, 327)

Excessive brightness drove the poet into darkness. Do we need any further testimony in regard to the extreme danger of his "occupation"? The poet's own fate tells us everything. Hölderlin's verse in *Empedocles* resounds like a premonition:

. . . He must

Leave on time, through whom the spirit spoke. (III, 154)

And yet poetry is the "most innocent of all occupations." So Hölderlin writes in his letter, not only to spare his mother, but because he knows that this harmless exterior belongs to the essence of poetry, just as the valley belongs to the mountain; for how else could this most dangerous work be carried out and preserved, if the poet were not "cast out" (*Empedocles*, III, 191) of ordinary life and protected *from* it by the appearance of the harmlessness of his occupation?

Poetry looks like a game and yet it is not. A game does indeed bring men together, but in such a manner that each forgets himself. In poetry, on the contrary, man is gathered upon the ground of his existence. There he comes to rest; not, of course, to the illusory rest of inactivity and emptiness of thought, but to that infinite rest in which all powers and relations are quickened (cf. his letter to his brother, January 1, 1799, III, 368f.).

Poetry awakens the illusion of the unreal and of the dream as opposed to the tangible and clamorous actuality in which we believe ourselves to be at home. And yet, on the contrary, what the poet says and undertakes to be is what is truly real. So Panthea, with the clear knowledge of a friend, acknowledges of Empedocles (III, 78):

. . . To be himself, that is

Life and we others are only the dream of it.



Thus the essence of poetry seems to vacillate within the semblance of its own exterior aspect, and yet stands firm after all. In fact, it is itself, in its essence, a founding—that is: firm grounding.

To be sure, every founding remains a free gift, and Hölderlin hears it said: “Poets be free, like swallows” (I, 168). This freedom, however, is not unrestrained arbitrariness and headstrong desire, but supreme necessity.

As the founding of being, poetry is bound in a *twofold* sense. In viewing this most intimate law, we first grasp its essence in its entirety.

... and hints are,  
From time immemorial, the language of the gods. (IV, 135)

The poet's saying is the intercepting of these hints, in order to pass them on to his people. The intercepting of hints is a receiving, and yet at the same time, a new giving; for in the “first signs” the poet catches sight of what has been completed, and boldly puts what he has seen into his word in order to foretell what is not yet fulfilled. Thus

... the bold spirit flies, like the eagle  
Ahead of the thunderstorm, prophesying  
The coming of his gods. (IV, 135)

The founding of being is bound to the god's hints. And at the same time the poetic word is only the interpretation of the “voice of the people.” That is what Hölderlin calls the saying in which a people remembers its belonging to beings as a whole. But often his voice falls silent and exhausts itself. It is not at all capable of saying by itself what is authentic—it has need of those who interpret it. The poem which bears the title “Voice of the People” has been preserved for us in two versions. It is primarily the concluding stanzas which are different, but in such a way that they complement each other. In the first version, the conclusion reads:

Because it is pious, for love of the heavenly  
I honor the voice of the people, the calm,  
But for the sake of gods and men,  
May it not always rest too willingly. (IV, 141)





We add the second version:

... and sayings

Are indeed good, for they are a memory

To the highest, yet there is also a need of

One to interpret the holy sayings. (IV, 144)

Thus the essence of poetry is joined to the laws which strive to separate and unite the hints of the gods and the voice of the people. The poet himself stands between the former—the gods—and the latter—the people. He is the one who has been cast out—out into that *between*, between gods and men. But first and only in this between is it decided who man is and where his existence is settled. “Poetically man dwells on this earth.”

Unceasingly and ever more securely, out of the fullness of the images pressing on him, and ever more simply, Hölderlin has consecrated his poetic word to this realm of the between. It is this that compels us to say that he is the poet's poet.

Can we still believe that Hölderlin is trapped in an empty and excessive self-contemplation owing to the lack of worldly content? Or do we recognize that this poet, because of an excess of impetus, poetically thinks through to the ground and center of being. It is to *Hölderlin* himself that we must apply the verse which he said of Oedipus in that late poem “In lovely blueness blooms . . .”:

Perhaps King Oedipus has

One eye too many. (VI, 26)

Hölderlin puts into poetry the very essence of poetry—but not in the sense of a timelessly valid concept. This essence of poetry belongs to a definite time. But not in such a way that it merely conforms to that time as some time already existing. Rather, by providing anew the essence of poetry, Hölderlin first determines a new time. It is the time of the gods who have fled *and* of the god who is coming. It is the *time of need* because it stands in a double lack and a double not: in the no-longer of the gods who have fled and in the not-yet of the god who is coming.

The essence of poetry which is founded by Hölderlin is historical in the highest degree, because it anticipates a historical time. As a historical essence; however, it is the only true essence.

Lean and needy is the time, and thus its poet is overrich—so rich that he would often like to languish in the thought of those who have been, and in expectation of the one who is coming, and would simply like to sleep in this apparent emptiness. But he holds firm in the Nothingness of this night. In that the poet in his supreme isolation keeps his mission to himself, he brings about the truth vicariously and therefore truly for his people. The seventh stanza of the elegy “Bread and Wine” (IV, 123ff.) proclaims this. There it is said poetically what here could only be thoughtfully discussed.

But, my friend, we come too late. Indeed, the gods are living,  
 But above our heads, up in another world.  
 Endlessly there they act and seem little to care  
 Whether we live, or not, so much do the heavenly spare us.  
 For a fragile vessel is not always able to hold them,  
 Only at times can man bear divine fullness.  
 Henceforth life is a dream about them. But wandering astray  
 Helps, like sleep, and need and night makes us strong,  
 Until heroes enough have grown in the strong cradle,  
 Hearts, as once, resemble the heavenly in strength.  
 Thundering then they come. Meanwhile, I often think it is  
 Better to sleep than so to be without friends,  
 So to be always waiting, and what to do and say in the meanwhile  
 I do not know and what are poets for in a time of need?  
 But they are, you say, like those holy priests of the wine-god  
 Who traveled from land to land in holy night.

## NOTES

1. *Ereignis*. See EHP, Second Edition (1951): “intentionally ambiguous—strictly speaking, it [*Ereignis*] would have to mean ‘but the primal event, which as such. . .’”

2. EHP, Second Edition (1951): “see *Being and Time*, Sections 79–81.”



**“AS WHEN ON A HOLIDAY . . .”**



“WIE WENN AM FEIERTAGE . . .”

Wie wenn am Feiertage, das Feld zu sehn  
 Ein Landmann geht, des Morgens, wenn  
 Aus heisser Nacht die kühlenden Blize fielen  
 Die ganze Zeit und fern noch tönet der Donner,  
 In sein Gestade wieder tritt der Strom,  
 Und frisch der Boden grünt  
 Und von des Himmels erfreuendem Reegen  
 Der Weinstock trauft und glänzend  
 In stiller Sonne stehn die Bäume des Haines:

So stehn sie unter günstiger Witterung  
 Sie die kein Meister allein, die wunderbar  
 Allgegenwärtig erziehet in leichtem Umfange  
 Die mächtige, die göttlichschöne Natur.  
 Drum wenn zu schlafen sie scheint zu Zeiten des Jahrs  
 Am Himmel oder unter den Pflanzen oder den Völkern,  
 So trauert der Dichter Angesicht auch,  
 Sie scheinen allein zu seyn, doch ahnen sie immer.  
 Denn ahnend ruhet sie selbst auch.

Jetzt aber tagts! Ich harrt und sah es kommen,  
 Und was ich sah, das Heilige sei mein Wort.  
 Denn sie, sie selbst, die älter denn die Zeiten  
 Und über die Götter des Abends und Orients ist,  
 Die Natur ist jetzt mit Waffenklang erwacht,  
 Und hoch vom Äther bis zum Abgrund nieder  
 Nach vestem Geseze, wie einst, aus heiligem Chaos gezeugt,  
 Fühlt neu die Begeisterung sich,  
 Die Allerschaffende wieder.



"AS WHEN ON A HOLIDAY . . ."

As when on a holiday, to see the field  
A countryman goes out, at morning, when  
Out of the hot night the cooling lightning flashes had fallen  
The whole time and the thunder still sounds in the distance,  
The river enters its banks once more,  
And the fresh ground becomes green  
And with the gladdening rain from heaven  
The grapevine drips, and gleaming  
In quiet sunlight stand the trees of the grove:

So in favorable weather they stand  
Whom no master alone, whom she, wonderfully  
All-present, educates in a light embrace,  
The powerful, divinely beautiful nature.  
So when she seems to be sleeping at times of the year  
Up in the heavens or among plants or the peoples,  
The poets' faces also are mourning,  
They seem to be alone, yet are always divining.  
For divining too she herself is resting.

But now day breaks! I awaited and saw it come,  
And what I saw, may the holy be my word,  
For she, she herself, who is older than the ages  
And above the gods of Occident and Orient,  
Nature is now awakening with the clang of arms,  
And from high Aether down to the abyss,  
According to firm law, as once, begotten out of holy Chaos,  
Inspiration, the all-creative,  
Agains feels herself anew.



Und wie im Aug' ein Feuer dem Manne glänzt,  
Wenn hohes er entwarf: so ist  
Von neuem an den Zeichen, den Thaten der Welt jezt  
Ein Feuer angezündet in Seelen der Dichter.  
Und was zuvor geschah, doch kaum gefühlt,  
Ist offenbar erst jezt,  
Und die uns lächelnd den Aker gebauet,  
In Knechtsgestalt, sie sind bekannt, die  
Die Allebendigen, die Kräfte der Götter.

Erfrägt du sie? im Liede wehet ihr Geist,  
Wenn es von der Sonne des Tags und warmer Erd  
Entwacht, und Wetter, die in der Luft, und andern  
Die vorbereiteter in Tiefen der Zeit  
Und deutungsvoller, und vernehmlicher uns  
Hinwandeln zwischen Himmel und Erd und unter den Völkern.  
Des gemeinsamen Geistes Gedanken sind,  
Still endend in der Seele des Dichters.

Dass schnellbetroffen sie, Unendlichem  
Bekannt seit langer Zeit, von Erinnerung  
Erbebt, und ihr, von heiligem Stral entzündet,  
Die Frucht in Liebe geboren, der Götter und Menschen Werk  
Der Gesang, damit er beiden zeuge, glückt.  
So fiel, wie Dichter sagen, da sie sichtbar  
Den Gott zu sehen begehrte, sein Bliz auf Semeles Haus  
Und Asche tödtlich getroffene gebahr,  
Die Frucht des Gewitters, den heiligen Bacchus.

And as a fire gleams in the eye of the man  
Who has conceived a lofty design, so  
Once more by the signs, the deeds of the world now  
A fire has been kindled in the souls of the poets.  
And what came to pass before, though scarcely felt,  
Only now is manifest,  
And they who smiling tended our fields for us,  
In the form of servants, they are known,  
The all-living, the powers of the gods.

Do you ask about them? In the song their spirit blows,  
When from the sun of day and warm earth  
It awakens, and storms that are in the air, and others  
That more prepared in the depths of time  
And more full of meaning, and more perceptible to us,  
Drift on between heaven and earth and among the peoples.  
The thoughts of the communal spirit they are,  
Quietly ending in the soul of the poet.

So that quickly struck, for a long time  
Known to the infinite, it quakes  
With recollection, and kindled by the holy ray,  
Its fruit conceived in love, the work of gods and men,  
The song, so that it may bear witness to both, succeeds.  
So, as poets say, when she desired to see  
The god, visible, his lightning flash fell on Semele's house  
And ashes mortally struck gave birth to  
The fruit of the thunderstorm, to holy Bacchus.



Und daher trinken himmlisches Feuer jezt  
Die Erdensöhne ohne Gefahr.  
Doch uns gebührt es, unter Gottes Gewittern,  
Ihr Dichter! mit entblösstem Haupte zu stehen,  
Des Vaters Strahl, ihn selbst, mit eigener Hand  
Zu fassen und dem Volk ins Lied  
Gehüllt die himmlische Gaabe zu reichen,  
Denn sind nur reinen Herzens  
Wie Kinder, wir, sind schuldlos unsere Hände.

Des Vaters Stral, der reine versengt es nicht  
Und tieferschüttert, eines Gottes Leiden  
Mitleidend, bleibt das ewige Herz doch fest.

And hence the sons of the earth now drink  
Heavenly fire without danger.  
Yet us it behooves, you poets, to stand  
Bare-headed beneath God's thunderstorms,  
To grasp the father's ray, itself, with our own hands,  
And to offer to the people  
The heavenly gift wrapt in song,  
For only if we are pure in heart,  
Like children, are our hands innocent.

The father's ray, the pure, does not sear it  
And deeply shaken, sharing a god's suffering,  
The eternal heart yet remains firm.





The poem was written in 1800. It was not until 110 years later that it became known to the German people. Using the handwritten drafts, Norbert von Hellingrath first gave the poem a form and published it in 1910. Since then another generation has passed. During these decades, the open insurrection of modern world history has begun. Its course will force a decision concerning the future character of the absolute domination of man over the whole terrestrial globe. Hölderlin's poem, however, still waits to be interpreted.

The text which shall serve here as the basis for the present lecture, and which has been repeatedly checked against the original manuscripts, rests upon the following attempt at an interpretation. The poem lacks a title. The whole is divided into seven stanzas. With the exception of the fifth and seventh stanzas, each stanza consists of nine lines. In the fifth stanza, the ninth is lacking. According to von Hellingrath's edition, the seventh stanza contains twelve lines. Zinkernagel's edition adds as an eighth stanza some fragments from an earlier draft.

The first stanza brings us to see a countryman standing out of doors, in the fields, on a holiday morning. Here all work has ceased. And the god is nearer to man. The countryman wants to see how his fruit has survived the thunderstorm that came out of the hot night and threatened the harvest. The distant, withdrawing thunder is still reminiscent of the terror. But no deluge endangers the field. The land is fresh and green. The grapevine delights in the blessing of the heavenly drink. The forest stands in the still light of the sun. The countryman knows that his possessions stand under the constant menace of the weather, yet he finds that everything around him is at peace and delightful. He waits confidently for the future gift of the field and the grapevine. Fruit and man are protected in the favor that permeates earth and heaven and that grants something which will remain.

In naming all this, it is almost as if the first stanza wanted to describe a picture. Yet its last line ends with a colon. The first stanza opens itself to the second. The "So . . ." with which the second stanza begins corresponds to the "As when . . ." at the beginning of the first stanza. The "As when . . . : So . . ." indicates a comparison that, like a brace, joins in unity the initial stanza to the second one, in fact to all the following stanzas.

Like a countryman on his walk who lingers in the fields, rejoicing in the protection of his world, "So in favorable weather they stand"—the poets. And what favor allows them to get wind of the favorable? The favor of being those

Whom no master alone, whom she, wonderfully  
All-present, educates in a light embrace,  
The powerful, divinely beautiful nature.

The inner movement of these three lines strives toward the final word "nature," and there the movement comes to its end. What Hölderlin still calls "nature" here resounds throughout the entire poem up to its last word. Nature "educates" the poets. Mastery and teaching can only "inculcate" something. By themselves they are not capable of anything. For another kind of upbringing, something else is needed beyond human zeal for human activity. Nature "educates" "wonderfully all-present." She is present in everything that is real. Nature comes to presence in human work and in the destiny of peoples, in the stars and in the gods, but also in stones, growing things, and animals, as well as in streams and in thunderstorms. "Wonderful" is the omnipresence of nature. She can never be found somewhere in the midst of the real, like one more isolated actual thing. The all-present is also never the result of combining isolated real things. Even the totality of what is real is at most but the consequence of the all-present. The all-present escapes explanation on the basis of what is real. The all-present cannot even be indicated by something real. Already present, it imperceptibly prevents any particular intrusion on it. When human deeds attempt this intrusion, or when divine activity is directed to it, they only destroy the simplicity of what is so wonderful. The wonderful withdraws from all producing, and nevertheless it passes through everything with its presence.

That is why nature educates "in a light embrace." The all-present has in it nothing of the one-sided heaviness of what is merely real, that which at one time attracts man, at another time repels him, and at another abandons him, each time delivering him into the distortion of what is acci-



dental. However, nature's "light embrace" does not at all suggest an impotent weakness. The "all-present" is, after all, called "powerful." From where does nature take her power, then, if she is prior to all that is present? Nature does not have to borrow her power from somewhere else. She herself is that which bestows power. The essence of power is determined from the all-presence of nature, which Hölderlin calls "powerful, divinely beautiful." Nature is powerful because she is god-like in beauty.

Does nature therefore resemble a god or a goddess? If this were so, then "nature," which is, after all, present in everything, even in the gods, would be measured by the "divine," and would not be "nature" any longer. Nature is called "beautiful" because she is "wonderfully all-present." That she is present in all does not mean a complete, quantitative comprehension of all that is real, but rather the manner of permeating the real things that, according to their kind, seem to mutually exclude each other. This omnipresence holds in opposition to each other the extreme opposites, the highest heaven and the deepest abyss. But thereby the opposites that are held out to one another remain separated from one another through a kind of stubborn unruliness. Only thus can their opposition come forth into the extreme sharpness of difference. And this is what appears "extremely," this is what most appears. What appears in this way is what captivates.<sup>1</sup> But at the same time the opposites are carried away by the all-present into the unity of their belonging together. This unity does not allow its stubbornness to be extinguished in a weak compromise, but rather takes it back into that peace that lights up as a quiet brilliance from the fire of combat in which the one pushes the other into appearing. This unity of the all-present is what enraptures, carries away.

All-present nature captivates and enraptures. This coincidence of captivation and rapture is, however, the essence of the beautiful. Beauty lets one opposite come to presence in its opposite; it lets their togetherness come to presence in unity, and thus it lets everything come to presence in everything, precisely where their differences are most genuine. Beauty is all-presence. And nature is called "divinely beautiful" because where gods or goddesses appear, they come closest to awakening the semblance of captivation and rapture. But in truth they are not capable of pure beauty,



for their particular appearing remains a semblance. Mere captivation ("epiphany") resembles rapture, and mere rapture (into mystical immersion) manifests itself as captivation. But nevertheless a god is capable of the highest semblance of the beautiful and thus comes closest to the pure appearing of the all-present.

Powerful, because divinely beautiful, because wonderfully all-present, nature embraces the poets. They are drawn into this embrace. This inclusion transposes the poets into the fundamental characteristic of their being. Such transposition is education. This characterizes the poets' destiny:

So when she seems to be sleeping at times of the year  
Up in the heavens or among plants or the peoples,  
The poets' faces also are mourning,  
They seem to be alone, yet are always divining.

Sleep is a kind of being-away, of absence. But how could "nature" take on the appearance of being absent if she did not come to presence in the heavenly ones, in the earth and its growth, in the peoples and their history? "At times of the year" the all-present seems to be sleeping. Here "the year" means, at one and the same time, the "seasons" and "the years of the peoples," the ages of the world. Nature seems to be sleeping; yet she is not sleeping. She is awake, but awake in the manner of mourning. Mourning withdraws from everything into the memory of one thing only. The remembrance of mourning remains near to what has been taken from it and seems to be distant. Mourning is not merely pulled back by a current to something that was lost. It lets what is absent come again and again. And the mourning poets, too, for their part, only seem to be confined to their isolation and imprisoned in it. They are not "alone." In truth, "they are always divining." Their divination thinks forward into the distant, which does not withdraw, but rather *is*, as what is coming. But because what is coming itself still rests in its primordially and remains there, the divining of what is coming is both a fore-thinking and a thinking-back. In this way, the poets persist in their belonging to "nature":



For divining too she herself is resting.

Nature is at rest. Her rest in no way signifies cessation of movement. To rest is to gather oneself in view of a beginning (and the beginning of a movement remains always present in the movement)—it is to concentrate on the coming of the beginning. That is why nature too is at rest divining. Nature is at one with herself, thinking ahead to her own coming. Her coming is the coming to presence of all-presence itself, and thus it is the very essence of the “all-present.”

Only because there are those who divine, are there those who belong to nature and correspond to it. Those who co-respond to the wonderfully all-present, to the powerful, divinely beautiful, are “the poets.” Which poets does Hölderlin mean? Those who stand in favorable weather. They alone persist in correspondence to the divining, resting nature. The poet’s being will be decided anew on the basis of this correspondence. “The poets” are not all poets in general, and not certain indeterminate ones. “The poets” are those future ones whose being will be measured by their adaptation to the essence of “nature.” And what this word “nature,” known since long ago and long since worn out in its ambiguity, is to signify here must be determined solely out of this single poem.

One usually encounters “nature” in the familiar distinctions of “nature and art,” “nature and spirit,” “nature and history,” “natural and supernatural,” “natural and unnatural.” Thus “nature” always signifies a particular realm of being. But if one wanted to posit “nature,” as named in this poem, as identical with “spirit” in the sense of “identity” in which Hölderlin’s friend Schelling thought of it at about the same time, then this would also be erroneous. Even the sense that Hölderlin himself gave to the word “nature” up until this hymn, in *Hyperion* and in the first drafts of *Empedocles*, falls short of what is now named “the wonderfully all-present.” At the same time, “nature” now becomes an incongruous word in reference to what is coming, which it is supposed to name. Nevertheless, that this word “nature” is still employed as a key-word of this poem, is due to the resonance of a power of saying whose origin reaches far back into the past.



Nature, *natura*, is called φύσις in Greek. This word is the fundamental word of thinkers at the beginning of Occidental thought. But the translation of φύσις by *natura* (nature) already transposes subsequent elements into the beginning, and replaces that which is proper to the beginning with something alien to it.

Φύσις, φύειν signifies growth. But how do the Greeks understand growth? Not as a quantitative increase, nor as "development," nor even as the succession of a "becoming." Φύσις is an emerging and an arising, a self-opening, which, while rising, at the same time turns back into what has emerged, and so shrouds within itself that which on each occasion gives presence to what is present. Thought as a fundamental word, φύσις signifies a rising into the open: the lighting of that clearing into which anything may enter appearing, present itself in its outline, show itself in its "appearance" (εἶδος, ἰδέα) and be present as this or that. Φύσις is that rising-up which goes-back-into-itself; it names the coming to presence of that which dwells in the rising-up and thus comes to presence as open. The very clearing of the open, however, becomes most purely discernible as the transparency of brightness that lets the "light" pass through. Φύσις is the rising-up of the clearing, and thus it is the hearth and the place of light. The illumination of "light" belongs to the fire; it is the fire. Fire is above all brightness and blaze. Brightness lightens and first affords the open for all appearing, and first gives clarity to all that appears. The blaze illuminates, it sets afire in its glowing all that emerges into its appearing. Thus the fire, as the illuminating-blazing "light," is the open, that which has already come to presence in everything that emerges and goes away within the open. Φύσις is what is present in all. However, must not "nature," if it is φύσις, insofar as it is the "all-present," be at the same time the all-glowing? That is why in this poem Hölderlin also names "nature" the "all-creative" and the "all-living."

The essence of Hölderlin's word "nature" resounds in this poem following the concealed truth of the primordial fundamental word φύσις. But Hölderlin never knew the force of the primordial word φύσις, whose force has still today been scarcely measured. Likewise, with what he names "nature," Hölderlin does not only want to let the experience of ancient

Greek times be brought to life again. With the word “nature,” Hölderlin puts into his poem something else that, to be sure, stands in a concealed relation to That which was once called φύσις.

Nature, whose “light embrace” keeps everything within its openness and clearing, seems at times to be sleeping. Then the clear, in mourning, has returned to itself. The mourning which enshrouds itself is impenetrable and it appears as darkness. This mourning, however, is not merely an arbitrary darkness, but a divining rest. The darkness is the night. Night is the resting divination of the day.

But now day breaks! I awaited and saw it come,  
And what I saw, may the holy be my word.

The exclamation with which the third stanza begins names the rising of the blazing brightness. Daybreak is the coming of the divining nature that has been at rest. Dawn is nature herself in her coming. The exclamation “But now day breaks!” sounds like an invocation of nature. But the call actually calls to something that is coming. The poet’s word is the pure calling of what those poets who are always divining wait and long for. The poetic naming says what the called itself, from its essence, compels the poet to say. Thus compelled, Hölderlin names nature “the holy.” In his hymn “At the Source of the Danube,” written shortly afterward, Hölderlin says:

We name you, compelled by the holy, we name you  
Nature! And new, as from a bath  
From you emerges all that is divinely born.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, in a pencil revision, the poet subsequently crossed out these lines; Hellingrath points to this (IV<sup>2</sup>, p. 337 ff.) with the remark that from now on the name “nature” no longer suffices for Hölderlin. But the name “nature,” as the fundamental poetic word, is already overcome in the hymn “As When on a Holiday. . . .” This overcoming is the consequence and sign of a saying that starts from a more primordial point.

Hölderlin names daybreak as the becoming-light of the clearing

which is present in all. The awakening of the clearing light is, however, the stillest of all events. But because it is named, indeed, even itself demands the naming, the awakening "of nature" comes into the sound of the poetic word. The essence of what is named unveils itself in the word. For by naming the essential, the word separates the essence from the non-essence. And because the word separates them, it decides their combat. The word is armed; it is a weapon. Hence, in the same hymn "At the Source of the Danube," Hölderlin speaks of the "arms of the word" as the "sanctuaries" which preserve the holy.

Because the breaking day, the light-embracing and miraculously all-present, has now become the single theme of the saying and is within the word, nature "is now" "awakening with the clang of arms. . . ." But why must "the holy" be the poet's word? Because the one who stands "under favorable weather" has solely to name that to which he belongs by virtue of his divining, that is, nature. In awakening, nature unveils her own essence as the holy.

For she, she herself, who is older than the ages  
And above the gods of Occident and Orient,  
Nature is now awakening with the clang of arms,

Nature is older than those ages [*Zeiten*] which are measured out to men and to peoples and to things. But nature is not older than "time" [*Zeit*]. How could nature be older than "time"? As long as she remains "older than the ages," she is, of course, "older," therefore earlier, thus more original, thus precisely more time-ly than the "times" with which the sons of the earth calculate. "Nature" is the oldest time, and not at all "supertemporal" in the metaphysical sense, and definitely not "eternal" in the Christian sense. Nature is more temporal than "the ages," because as the wonderfully all-present she has already bestowed on everything real the clearing in the open where everything real is first capable of appearing. Nature is prior to all actuality and all action, even prior to the gods. For she, "who is older than the ages," is also "higher than the gods of Occident and Orient." Nature is not by any means "above" the gods in an isolated





domain of reality "above" them. Nature is higher than "the" gods. She, "the powerful," is still capable of something other than the gods: as the clearing, in her everything can first be present. Hölderlin names nature the holy because she is "older than the ages and above the gods." Thus, "holiness" is in no way a property borrowed from a determinate god. The holy is not holy because it is divine; rather the divine is divine because in its way it is "holy"; for Hölderlin also calls "chaos" "holy" in this stanza. The holy is the essence of nature. As the breaking day, nature unveils her essence in awakening.

And from high aether down to the abyss,  
 According to firm law, as once, begotten out of holy Chaos,  
 Inspiration, the all-creative,  
 Again feels herself anew.

This "and" which follows "awakening" does not lead to anything else that would perhaps take place outside of the awakening, for instance, as its consequence. The "and" initiates an essential unveiling of nature as what is awakening. In awakening, nature comes to herself. Inspired, she feels herself anew, "the all-creative." And that is now the name for all-present nature. The clear lets everything emerge into its appearance and illumination, so that everything real, set aflame by it, will stand in its own contour and measure. Thus distinguished in its own essence, all that appears is irradiated by spirit: in-spired. As the all-present, all-creative one, nature in-spires everything. She herself is inspiration. She can in-spire only because she is "spirit." Spirit holds sway as the sober, though daring, setting-apart-from-one-another which sets everything that comes to presence into the well-delineated boundaries and structures of its presence. Such a setting apart is essential thinking. The unique elements "of the spirit" are the "thoughts" through which everything, even what is set apart from one another, precisely belongs together. Spirit is the unifying unity. This unity lets the togetherness of everything real appear in its collectedness. The spirit is therefore essentially, in its "thoughts," the "communal spirit." The "communal spirit" is the spirit in the fashion of inspiration,

which embraces all that appears in the unity of the all-present. The all-present herself has in her inspiration the kind of presence that arises and awakens. In awakening, nature comes to herself and is in harmony with herself. Since nature is herself primordial and prior to everything, she feels primordially, that is, feels herself "anew."

The open in which everything has its coming to presence and enduring towers over the realm of all domains. That is why the awakening holds sway "from high aether down to the abyss." "Aether" is the name for the father of light and the all-enlivening, lightening air. "Abyss" means the all-enclosing which is borne by "mother earth." "Aether" and "abyss" especially name the most extreme domains of reality, but also the supreme divinities. Both are thoroughly spiritualized by inspiration. Inspiration does not stray, like a blind intoxication, into arbitrariness. It is

According to firm law, as once, begotten out of holy Chaos

Everything that is real is joined together by nature into its main essential lines. The fundamental traits of the All unfold themselves, in that "spirit" appears in the real, and what is spiritual is reflected in spirit. In addition, immortals and mortals must meet; both must always maintain their relation to the real in their own way. Any individual actuality in all its connections is possible only if before all else nature grants the open, within which immortals and mortals and all things are able to encounter each other. The open mediates the connections between all actual things. These latter are constituted only because of such mediation, and are therefore mediated. What is mediated in that way only is by virtue of mediatedness. Thus, mediatedness must be present in all. The open itself, however, though it first gives the region for all belonging-to and -with each other, does not arise from any mediation. The open itself is the immediate. Nothing mediated, be it a god or a man, is ever capable of directly attaining the immediate. Glancing into the essential depths of all, Hölderlin recognizes from his thought the significance of an early fragment by Pindar (Schrüder no. 169):





νόμος ὁ πάντων βασιλεὺς  
 θνατῶν τε καὶ ἀθανάτων  
 ἄγει δικαῖων τὸ βιαιότατον  
 ὑπερτάτῃ χειρὶ.

In Hölderlin's translation (V<sup>2</sup>, 276):

The law  
 Of all, the king, mortals and  
 Immortals; which for that very reason  
 Powerfully steers  
 The most just right with the uppermost hand.

Hölderlin entitles this fragment "The Highest." On the basis of his own meditation, he says about this:

The immediate, strictly speaking, is as impossible for the mortals as for the immortals; the god must distinguish different worlds, in accordance with his nature, because heavenly goodness, for its own sake, must be holy, pure. Man, as the knowing one, must also distinguish different worlds, because knowledge is only possible through opposition. For this reason, the immediate, strictly speaking, is as impossible for the mortals as for the immortals. Strict mediatedness, however, is the law.

What is first present in all gathers everything isolated together into a single presence and mediates to each thing its appearing. Immediate all-presence is the mediator for everything mediated, that is, for the mediate. The immediate is itself never something mediate; on the other hand, the immediate, strictly speaking, is the mediation, that is, the mediatedness of the mediated, because it renders the mediated possible in its essence. "Nature" is the all-mediating mediatedness, is "the law." Because nature remains prior to everything, the primordial, the originally unshakeable, she is the "firm law." By awakening to herself, nature originates in accordance with her essence: "according to firm law."

But nature is nevertheless "begotten out of holy chaos." How do

"chaos" and "nomos" ("law") go together? "Chaos" signifies for us lawlessness and confusion. Hölderlin himself says: "And holy wilderness, preparing much, has grown roots" ("The Titans," IV<sup>2</sup>, 208); he speaks of the "holy wildernesses" (IV<sup>2</sup>, 250, 341), also of the "clumsy wilderness" (IV<sup>2</sup>, 216), and of the "primeval confusion" ("The Rhine," IV<sup>2</sup>, 180). Nevertheless, χάος signifies first of all the yawning, gaping chasm, the open that first opens itself, wherein everything is engulfed. The chasm affords no support for anything distinct and grounded. And therefore, for all experience, which only knows what is mediated, chaos seems to be without differentiation and thus mere confusion. The "chaotic" in this sense, however, is only the inessential aspect of what "chaos" means. Thought in terms of nature φύσις chaos remains that gaping out of which the open opens itself, so that it may grant its bounded presence to all differentiations. Hölderlin therefore calls "Chaos" and "confusion" "holy." Chaos is the holy itself. Nothing that is real precedes this opening, but rather always only enters into it. All that appears is already surpassed each time by it. Nature is, "as once," prior to and above everything. She is the former—and that in a double sense. She is the oldest of every former thing, and always the youngest of subsequent things. By awakening, nature's coming, as what is most futural, comes out of the oldest of what has been, which never ages because it is each time the youngest.

What is always former is the holy [*Heilige*]. It is the primordial, and it remains in itself unbroken and "whole" [*heil*]. This originary "wholeness" gives a gift to everything that is real by virtue of its all-presence: it confers the grace of its own abiding presence. But the primordial wholeness, which thus grants holiness, still enshrouds all fullness in itself, as the immediate, and it holds in itself the fabric of the essence of all—thus it is precisely unapproachable by any individual, be that a god or a man. The holy, as the unapproachable, renders every immediate intrusion of the mediated in vain. The holy confronts all experience with something to which it is unaccustomed, and so deprives it of its ground. Deranging in this way, the holy is the awesome itself. But its awesomeness remains concealed in the mildness of its light embrace. Because this light embrace educates the future poets, they, as the initiated ones, know the holy. Their



knowledge is divination. Divining concerns what is coming and what is rising, that is, the dawn. "But now day breaks!" What is to happen now, when the holy itself comes?

And as a fire gleams in the eye of the man  
 Who has conceived a lofty design, so  
 Once more by the signs, the deeds of the world now  
 A fire has been kindled in the souls of the poets.

Just as the lofty design of a thoughtful man is reflected in his glance, so, when the holy unveils itself in its coming, a light shines in "the souls of the poets." A brightness extends into the solitary souls of those poets who are embraced by the holy and belong to it. Because they mourn with divining nature, they too must come into the clearing when nature awakens, and they themselves must become a brightness. These poets then stand open in the open which opens itself "from high aether down to the abyss." The openness of the open then comes into a connection with what we call "a world." It is for this reason alone that for these poets the signs and the deeds of the world step into the light: these poets are not without a world. Although poets, according to their being, belong to the holy and think the reality of everything real, that is, "spirit," and although they are thus essentially "spiritual" themselves, they must at the same time also remain immersed and captive within what is real.

The poets, even  
 The spiritual, must be worldly. ("The Only One," First Version)

Thus it is that the signs and deeds of the world can become an occasion for the illumination of the rising brightness to catch fire. The "worldly" "sensations," "activities," and "successes" are nothing more than an occasion; for at no time can something worldly by itself make the holy appear. Moreover, it is only those who already see the coming of what is coming who are capable of interpreting something in the world as a sign of what is coming, and of estimating it as a deed for what is coming. And above all, the signs and the deeds of the world are never what should gen-



uinely step into the open. Into manifestation, and so too into the realm of human perception, comes "only now" "what came to pass before, though scarcely felt." "Before" signifies here in advance of everything real, that oldest of times which was formerly perceptible only in its first glimmering, the very first, primordial rising of what has since become present in all, but since then has also been inverted and has even fallen into forgottenness: "Nature" (φύσις). But how did this primordial advent prevail, which now begins to awaken, and to become manifest "anew"?

And they who smiling tended our fields for us,  
In the form of servants, they are known,  
The all-living, the powers of the gods.

The nature that is "all-present" and "all-creative" is now called the "all-living." To be sure, this word is applied to the powers of the gods, the powers by which gods are capable of what is theirs to do, and by which they themselves are what they are. But these powers do not derive from the gods: Rather the gods themselves have their being by virtue of them, the powers which, as "all-living," hold everything, even the gods, in "life." "Before," nature, "smiling," tended "the fields" for men. With a fleeting hint back to the first stanza, the word "fields" stands here for everything on which and from which men live. Formerly, the greeting of the holy was "smiling," all-present, tireless, friendly, quite untroubled if the men "scarcely felt" what was then happening. In their hurry toward the tangible, men took what was granted by nature, divinely beautiful, only for their own use and service, and reduced the all-present to the form of a servant. But she permitted this, "smiling" in the tranquil resignation of the primordial, unconcerned with successes; she left it to men to misconstrue the holy. When "nature" is misconstrued in that way, each thing "is" no more than what it accomplishes. The truth, however, is that each thing always accomplishes only that which it is. But everything, even every humanity, "is" only according to the "way" in which nature, coming to presence through itself, the holy, remains present within it.

But if it is only the poets who are lightly embraced by all-present nature,



how are "the people" ever to stand in the presence of the holy? How are "the sons of the earth" ever to experience the "all-living powers," the holy, if the fire remains locked up "in the souls" of the poets? Even a poet is never capable of attaining the holy through his own meditation, or indeed exhausting its essence and forcing it to come to him through his questioning.

Do you ask about them? In the song their spirit blows, . . .

In "song" and only in song does "spirit" join itself to the meditative structure of the holy. But the spirit does not blow in every "singing." That only occurs in a song,

When from the sun of day and warm earth  
It awakens, . . .

In the original text, however, there clearly stands "awakens" [*entwacht*], and not "grows" [*entwächst*] as most editions now read. Song must spring from the awakening of nature "from high aether down to the abyss." If it shares in this way in the "awakening inspiration," then what wafts in it is the breath of the coming of the holy. The origin of the song is now quite different from the usual. Its awakening comes to pass in "storms" which "drift on between heaven and earth and among the peoples." Needed is an uproar of the whole realm in which nature previously seemed to be sleeping. This uproar of the All springs from a shaking which is "more prepared in the depths of time." The awakening reaches back into the oldest time, from which all that is coming has already been prepared. Therefore, the shakings of the All are also "more full of meaning . . . to us"—namely, to the poets who share in the awakening. The richness of the primordial grants to their word such an excess of meaning as can scarcely be uttered. Hence, "a load of logs" is laid on their shoulders. That is why for them too, there is "much to be retained" ("Ripe are . . .," IV<sup>2</sup>, 71); "much is to be said" (IV<sup>2</sup>, 219, 221), for "there is still much to be sung" ("At the Source of the Danube," IV<sup>2</sup>, 161). Yet because the shakings stem from the oldest depths of awakening nature, and because the poets



are lightly embraced by nature, inspiration thus must be more present and so "more perceptible" to them.

The thoughts of the communal spirit they are,  
Quietly ending in the soul of the poet.

Hölderlin deliberately placed a comma after the "are." As an inconspicuous tap of the sculptor's chisel imparts a different form to the figure, so this comma places a special importance on the "are." "Awakening nature," "inspiration," is present. The manner of its presence is to be coming. The holy keeps everything together in the undamaged immediateness of its "firm law." Separating everything, "spirit" remains attached to everything, completely uniting everything through thinking. As "spirit," it is always "communal spirit." And as for the presence of the inspiration of spirit, permeating everything and maintaining everything in its unity—what sort of presence is that? "Quietly ending in the soul of the poet." "Inspiration" does not end by vanishing and ceasing. On the contrary: inspiration is admitted in and preserved—to be sure, "quietly." The shaking is quieted and preserved in rest. The awesome power of the holy rests in the mildness of the soul "of the poet." The holy is quietly present as what is coming. That is why it is never represented and grasped as an object. Elsewhere in this poem, Hölderlin speaks of the poets in the plural (lines 10/11, 16/17, 31, 56). But here he speaks of a single poet, the one who says, "I awaited and saw it come." The certainty of his words derives from his knowledge: "The thoughts of the communal spirit they are, and quietly ending in the soul of the poet."

The fifth stanza by count lacks a line. Thus we must insert an intervening thought so that a clear transition may occur to the next stanza.

Now that day breaks, "the" poet, too, has awoken. Penetrated by the awakening inspiration, a "spiritual man" is now ordained to be the poet. And there has to be a poet if a word of song is to be formed. The shaking of the holy is preserved and made quiet by a single poet in the stillness of his silence. Since a song of the authentic word can only spring from silence, everything is now prepared:



So that quickly struck, for a long time  
 Known to the infinite, it quakes  
 With recollection, and kindled by the holy ray,  
 Its fruit conceived in love, the work of gods and men,  
 The song, so that it may bear witness to both, succeeds.

The Pindaric structure of these lines is sustained by this single thought: Because the holy is quietly preserved in the soul of the poet, the song will succeed, i.e., the word will convey the holy. Success in this matter consists not only in the fact that a song is composed, however, but that "it," the soul of the poet, has good luck insofar as the work does not miscarry in composition. These emphasized words, that the song succeeds, mean to say: The threat of an essential misfortune is withstood. But from where would the threat of misfortune come? Where else than from the possibility of not finding good fortune? The good fortune, that is, of the favor which is necessary for the birth of the song. For even if the poet's soul may preserve in itself the presence of what is coming, the poet by himself is never capable of naming the holy immediately. The blaze of light, quietly preserved in the soul of the poet, needs to be kindled. Only a ray of light that emanates again from the holy itself is strong enough for that. Therefore, someone higher, who is nearer to the holy and yet still remains beneath it, a god, must throw the kindling lightning-flash into the poet's soul. Thus, the god takes upon himself that which is "above" him, the holy, and brings it together into the sharpness and force of the unique ray through which he is "allotted" to man, in order to bestow it.

Since neither men nor gods by themselves can ever achieve an immediate relation to the holy, men need the gods and the heavenly ones need mortals:

The heavenly  
 Are not capable of everything. For  
 The mortals reach sooner into the abyss. ("Mnemosyne")

Because the gods must be gods and the men must be men, and because the one can never be without the other, there is love between

them. Through the mediation of this love, however, they belong not only to each other, but to the holy, which for them is the "strict mediatedness," "the law." Now, however, the holy ray strikes the poet suddenly. Instantaneously, divine fullness blesses him. So "struck," he would be tempted to follow only this good fortune and to lose himself in the sole possession of the god. But that would be misfortune, because it would signify the loss of his poetic being; for the essential condition of the poet is grounded not in the reception of the god, but in the embrace by the holy.

But the poet now stands in favorable weather, so that he remains familiar with what is already present in everything finite, that is, with the "infinite." And because all-present nature is "older than the ages," his belonging to her is likewise "long familiar." Now when the holy ray strikes the poet, he is not carried away into the blaze of the ray, but is fully turned toward the holy. The poet's soul "quakes," to be sure, and so lets the quiet quaking awaken within itself; but it quakes with recollection, that is to say, with the expectation of that which happened before; this is the opening up of the holy. The shaking breaks the peace of silence. The word comes to be. The word-work which originates in this way lets the belonging together of god and man appear. The song bears witness to the ground of their belonging together, bears witness to the holy.

"Only now" that the thoughts of the communal spirit are first manifest does the song of the poet's soul succeed. But not always, when a work succeeds, is there good fortune, too.

So, as poets say, when she desired to see  
The god, visible, his lightning flash fell on Semele's house,  
And ashes mortally struck gave birth to  
The fruit of the thunderstorm, to holy Bacchus.

The desire to see the god in a human manner carried Semele away into the unique blaze of his unchained lightning-flash. She who conceived forgot the holy. It is true that fruit was born, Bacchus, the god of the "vine," who





Bears witness to earth and heaven, when it, drenched  
By the high sun, rises from the dark soil . . .

(Last Draft of *Empedocles*)

But the fruit was not born by her who conceived, for in conceiving the fruit, she was reduced to ashes. Semele's fate reveals in reverse how only the presence of the holy guarantees that the song truly succeeds. The recollection of Semele's fate, spoken by Euripides (*The Bacchae*) and by Ovid (*Metam.* III, 293), is only introduced into the poem as a counter-theme. That is why the beginning of the following (seventh) stanza is not joined to the end of the sixth stanza, but is connected to the middle part of the stanza:

And hence the sons of the Earth now drink  
Heavenly fire without danger.  
Yet us it behooves, you poets, to stand  
Bare-headed beneath God's thunderstorms . . .

The word "drink" does indeed remind one of the wine-god; yet it means the reception of the other fruit, the perception of the spirit that wafts within the successful song. What is perceived in the song is the awakening inspiration, the blazing brightness: "heavenly fire." This word, which henceforth recurs in the hymns ("The Rhine," line 100; "The Titans," line 271), does not mean the lightning-flash, but rather that "fire" which, prior to the birth of the song, is "now kindled in the souls of the poets," that is, the holy. This fire is now called "heavenly" because it is mediated by a "heavenly one." "Now" that "day breaks," "now" that "nature awakens with the clang of arms," "now" that "what came to pass before, only now is manifest," "now" the holy has lost its danger for the sons of the earth. The shaking of Chaos, which offers no support, the terror of the immediate, which frustrates every intrusion, the holy is transformed, through the quietness of the protected poet, into the mildness of the mediated and mediating word.

Since the song was successful because it came from the holy, "the sons of the earth," and especially "the poets," are transposed into a new mode

of being, but in such a way that the essential constitution of the sons of the earth and that of the poets become separated from each other more decisively now than ever before. While what is without danger is now simply given to the sons of the earth ("And hence . . . drink . . ."), the future poets ("Yet . . . it behooves . . .") are placed into extreme danger. Now they must stand where the holy opens up more prepared and more primordially. The poets must leave to the immediate its immediacy, and yet also take upon themselves its mediation as their only task. That is why it is their duty and obligation to remain in relation to those higher mediators. Now that day breaks, the "load of logs" is not lessened, but rather intensified, until it is hardly bearable. Even if the immediate is never perceived immediately, it is still necessary "to grasp with our own hands" the mediating ray, and to endure the rising "storms" of the primordial one. In the knowledge of what behooves them, the poets belong together. "We poets"—they are those unique and future ones, of whom Hölderlin himself, as the first, foretells all that is to be said. When the grasping and offering of their hands is followed through by a "pure heart," these poets are capable of the task that has been entrusted to them. "Heart" signifies that wherein the unique being of these poets gathers itself: the quietness of their belonging within the embrace of the holy. For Hölderlin, "pure" always means the same as "original," that is, decisively remaining in a primordial destination. This is characteristic of children. The "pure heart" is not meant here in a "moralistic" sense. This phrase means one kind of relation, and one manner of correspondence to "all-present" nature. If the poets remain within the all-presence of this powerful and beautiful "nature," then there is also excluded any possibility of their merely boasting about what is their own and of their mismeasuring what is the law. Their hands are "innocent." Their supreme decisiveness, poetic saying, then appears as the "most innocent of all occupations."

In content, line 62 concludes the seventh stanza, but also according to the number of lines chosen for the stanzas. The comma that Hellingrath and Zinkernagel placed after the word "hands," at the end of line 62, does not appear in the original manuscript. With line 63 a thought begins which returns to the saying of the holy and introduces the consummation





of the poem. That is why in the present text a period has been placed at the end of line 62, which Hölderlin had left without a punctuation mark. The seventh stanza treats of two matters: The gift of the song, mediated by a "heavenly one," is offered by the poets to the sons of the earth; the poets themselves, however, are placed beneath "God's thunderstorms." But this poem as a whole cannot close with the naming of the sons of the earth and the poets. For what this poem is obliged to say authentically and thus in its completion is what the poem itself says in the third stanza, which sustains everything else:

But now day breaks! I awaited and saw it come,  
And what I saw, may the holy be my word.

The final word of this poem must return to the holy. The poem speaks of the poets and of the gift of the song only because the holy is the terror of universal shaking and is the immediate. Hence the sons of the earth need the mediation of the holy through the gift of a song without danger. But precisely this, that the holy is entrusted to a mediation by the god and the poets, and is born in song, threatens to invert the essence of the holy into its opposite. The immediate thus becomes something mediated. Because song awakens only with the awakening of the holy, even the mediated itself arises out of the immediate. This origin of song, the "clang of arms," "with" which nature awakens, is thus the shaking which reaches into the essential depths of the holy. In that the holy becomes word, its innermost essence begins to vacillate. The law is threatened. The holy threatens to lose its fixed anchor. But

The father's ray, the pure, does not sear it  
And deeply shaken, sharing a god's suffering,  
The eternal heart yet remains firm.

This phrase, "the eternal heart," is unique in all of Hölderlin's poetry. And what this phrase signifies is said only in this single poem.

In its origin, the holy is the "firm law," that "strict mediatedness" in which all the relations of everything actual are mediated. Everything is,

only because it is gathered into the all-presence of the undamageable, within the undamageable.

All is intimate.

Thus begins a late draft (IV<sup>2</sup>, 381). Everything is only by shining forth out of the intimacy of the all-present. The holy is intimacy itself; it is—"the heart."

But the holy, "above the gods" and men, is "older than the ages." What is former, what is before all things the first and subsequent to all things the last, is what goes before everything and maintains everything in itself: the primordial and as this, what is enduring. Its remaining is the eternity of the eternal. The holy is the former intimacy, "the eternal heart." The endurance of the holy, however, is threatened by mediation through the word of the song, the mediation stemming from the holy itself, and demanded by its coming. But it is not only the human word; rather, and still more surprising, it is the "holy ray" of the father, sent into the kindling and witnessing of the word, that threatens to deprive the holy of its immediateness and, by placing it in the mediated, to surrender it to annihilation. For even in the "father's ray," the holy is already exteriorized into the mediated, if indeed even the immortals have only a mediate relation to the holy. But

The father's ray, the pure, does not sear it . . .

"it," the eternal heart. To sear signifies, according to the phrase *sengen und brennen*, the same as to annihilate; instead of "does not sear it," Hölderlin first wrote, "does not kill it." In abrupt, excited strokes of the pen, the following remark is found in the inner margin of the concluding lines:

The / sphere / that is / higher than /  
That of man / that is the god.

The hint that the poet wants to preserve for himself with these words means here: The higher sphere, the holy ray, threatens even the holy still



more deeply with the loss of its essence. But even this sphere is only "the higher" and not "the highest." Thus what sprang from the origin cannot do anything against the origin. And hence the "eternal heart," although "deeply shaken," "yet remains firm."

The shaking is, of course, grounded in that depth out of which the holy "shares a god's suffering." How does the god suffer, who, as the lightning-flash, advances in the holy ray? In an explicit addition, this ray is called "the pure" because it holds to the decisiveness of belonging to the holy; for "heavenly goodness, for its own sake, must be holy" (notes to the Pindar fragment "The Highest," V<sup>2</sup>, 276). This insistent belongingness is suffering, not mere endurance. But the manner in which Hölderlin thinks the essence of this suffering unveils itself in a subsequent alteration of the later version of that hymn which is entitled "The Only One," and which attempts to say that the Christian God is not the only one. Here (IV<sup>2</sup>, 379) Hölderlin speaks of a

... Wasteland full of

Faces, so that to remain innocent

Truth is a suffering.

Because the intimacy that once was, the remaining within the undamaged "law," is a suffering, the eternal heart suffers from its essential beginning. That is why it also "shares a god's suffering." By offering itself to the decisiveness of the ray which is a suffering, the holy nevertheless abides radiating in the truth of its essence, so it suffers primordially. But because this suffering stems from the beginning, it is not a sacrificial tolerance; rather, the intimacy that gathers all to itself does not share the god's suffering in a pitying and compassionate way. Suffering is remaining steadfast in the beginning. For the beginning is an arising, a bestowal, that is never lost or ended, but is always only a more magnificent beginning, a more primordial intimacy. In remaining firm, the holy is to be spoken. Its remaining, however, never signifies the empty endurance of something present at hand: It is the coming of the beginning. Before this, as what is former, nothing more primordial can be thought. As coming, abiding is

the primordially of the beginning before which nothing else can be thought.

But what remains is founded by the poets. ("Remembrance")

The poem is incomplete in many respects. The arrangement of the conclusion in particular, which Hölderlin himself may have once decided, remains indeterminable. But all the incompleteness here is only the result of the profusion which flows from the innermost beginning of the poem, and demands a concise conclusion. Every attempt to retrace the structure of the final stanza can only strive to awaken those who have the capacity to hear what the "word" of this poem is.

But now day breaks! I awaited and saw it come,  
And what I saw, may the holy be my word.

"Now"—when is this "now"? Is it the point in time around 1800 when the poem was written? Indeed the "now" does clearly name that point in time in which Hölderlin himself says: "But now day breaks!" The "now" certainly names Hölderlin's age and no other. But Hölderlin's age is that unique time whose tone is set by his words. Hölderlin's age is, to be sure, his age in the strictest sense. But this age of his is precisely not that which was merely simultaneous and contemporary with him in the usual sense.

The "now" names the coming of the holy. This coming alone specifies the "age," in which it is "time" for history to confront its essential decisions. Such a "time" can never be specified ("dated") and is not measurable by dates of the year and divisions of centuries. "Historical dates" are merely projected guidelines on which the occurrences are strung by human calculation. These occurrences can never occupy more than the foreground of history, that is accessible to exploration (ἱστορεῖν). But this "historiographical" element is never history itself. History is rare. History is only when the essence of truth<sup>3</sup> comes to be decided on primordially.

In its coming, the holy, "older than the ages" and "above the gods," grounds another beginning of another history. The holy primordially





decides in advance concerning men and gods, whether they are, and who they are, and how they are, and when they are.

What is coming is said in its coming through a calling. Beginning with this poem, Hölderlin's word is now the calling word. Hölderlin's word is now *hymnos* in a newly characterized and unique sense. We usually translate the Greek word ὕμνεῖν by the words "to praise" and "to celebrate." We easily understand by this translation a song and celebration of praise that is drunk with words. But now the poetic word is a foundational saying. The word of this song is no longer a "Hymn to" something, neither a "Hymn to the Poets," nor a hymn "to" nature; rather, it is the hymn "of the holy." The holy bestows the word, and itself comes into this word. This word is the primal event of the holy. Hölderlin's poetry is now a primordial calling which, called by what is coming, says this and only this as the holy. The hymnal word is now "compelled by the holy," and because compelled by the "holy," also "sobered by the holy." So says a fragment from the year 1800 which is entitled "German Song":

. . . then sits in the deep shade  
 When above his head the elm tree rustles,  
 By the stream that breathes out coolness the German poet  
 And sings, when of the water sobered by the holy  
 Enough he has drunk, listening far out into the stillness  
 To the song of the soul.

(Fragment no. 10, IV<sup>2</sup>, 244)

The "deep shade" saves the poetic word from the too great brightness of the "heavenly fire." The "stream that breathes out coolness" protects the poetic word from a too strong blaze of the "heavenly fire." The coolness and shade of sobriety correspond to the holy. This sobriety does not deny inspiration. Sobriety is the sensibility that is always ready for the holy.

Hölderlin's word conveys the holy thereby naming the space of time that is only once, time of the primordial decision for the essential order of the future history of gods and humanities.

This word, though still unheard, is preserved in the Occidental language of the Germans.

## NOTES

1. EHP, Second Edition (1951):

“ἐκφανέστατον  
ἔρασμιώτατον. τὸ καλόν”

2. EHP, Second Edition (1951): Nature as the *holy*—compels us into naming. The *holy* is the “whence” (cf. Beissner, II, 2, 695 ff.).

3. Hölderlin’s Hymn “As When on a Holiday . . .,” First Edition (1941):  
“Being (*Seyn*) itself.”



**“REMEMBRANCE”**





## ANDENKEN

Der Nordost wehet,  
Der liebste unter den Winden  
Mir, weil er feurigen Geist  
Und gute Fahrt verheisset den Schiffern.  
Geh aber nun und grüsse  
Die schöne Garonne,  
Und die Gärten von Bourdeaux  
Dort, wo am scharfen Ufer  
Hingehet der Steg und in den Strom  
Tief fällt der Bach, darüber aber  
Hinschauet ein edel Paar  
Von Eichen und Silberpappeln;

Noch denket das mir wohl und wie  
Die breiten Gipfel neiget  
Der Ulmwald, über die Mühl',  
Im Hofe aber wächst ein Feigenbaum.  
An Feiertagen gehn  
Die braunen Frauen daselbst  
Auf seidnen Boden,  
Zur Märzzeit,  
Wenn gleich ist Nacht und Tag,  
Und über langsamen Stegen,  
Von goldenen Träumen schwer,  
Einwiegende Lüfte ziehen.



## REMEMBRANCE

The northeast blows,  
Of winds the dearest  
To me, because a fiery spirit  
And a good voyage it promises to mariners.  
But go now and greet  
The beautiful Garonne,  
And the gardens of Bordeaux  
There, where along the sharp bank  
Runs the path and into the river  
Deep falls the brook, but above  
Gaze out a noble pair  
Of oaks and white poplars;

Still I remember this well, and how  
The broad treetops of the elm wood  
Lean over the mill,  
But in the courtyard a fig-tree grows.  
On holidays there too  
Walk the brown women  
On silken soil,  
In the month of March,  
When night and day are equal  
And over slow paths,  
Heavy with golden dreams,  
Lulling breezes drift.



Es reiche aber,  
 Des dunkeln Lichtes voll,  
 Mir einer den duftenden Becher,  
 Damit ich ruhen möge; denn süß  
 Wär' unter Schatten der Schlummer.  
 Nicht ist es gut  
 Seellos von sterblichen  
 Gedanken zu seyn. Doch gut  
 Ist ein Gespräch und zu sagen  
 Des Herzens Meinung, zu hören viel  
 Von Tagen der Lieb',  
 Und Thaten, welche geschehen.

Wo aber sind die Freunde? Bellarmin  
 Mit dem Gefährten? Mancher  
 Trägt Scheue, an die Quelle zu gehn;  
 Es beginnet nemlich der Reichtum  
 Im Meere. Sie,  
 Wie Maler, bringen zusammen  
 Das Schöne der Erd' und verschmäh'n  
 Den geflügelten Krieg nicht, und  
 Zu wohnen einsam, jahrlang, unter  
 Dem entlaubten Mast, wo nicht die Nacht durchglänzen  
 Die Feiertage der Stadt,  
 Und Saitenspiel und eingeborener Tanz nicht.

Nun aber sind zu Indiern  
 Die Männer gegangen,  
 Dort an der luftigen Spiz'  
 An Traubenbergen, wo herab  
 Die Dordogne kommt  
 Und zusammen mit der prächt' gen  
 Garonne meerbreit  
 Ausgeheth der Strom. Es nehmet aber  
 Und giebt Gedächtniss die See,  
 Und die Lieb' auch heftet fleissige Augen.  
 Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter.



But someone pass me,  
Full of dark light,  
The fragrant cup,  
So that I may rest; for sweet  
Would be slumber in the shade.  
It is not good  
To be soulless with mortal  
Thoughts. But a  
Conversation is good and to say  
The heart's intention, to hear much  
About days of love,  
And deeds which occurred.

But where are the friends? Bellarmin  
With his companion? Many  
Are shy of going to the source;  
For richness begins namely  
In the sea. They,  
Like painters, bring together  
The beauty of the earth and disdain  
Not the winged war, and  
To dwell alone, for years, beneath  
The leafless mast, where through the night gleam neither  
The holidays of the town,  
Nor lyre-music and native dancing.

But now to the Indies  
The men have gone,  
There to the windy peak  
On vine-covered hills, where down  
The Dordogne comes  
And together with the magnificent  
Garonne as wide as the sea  
The river flows out. But it is  
The sea that takes and gives memory,  
And love too fixes attentive eyes  
But what remains is founded by the poets.



The poem "Remembrance" (IV, 61 ff.)<sup>1</sup> first appeared in Seckendorf's poetic annual for the year 1808. It was probably written around 1803/4. Only the last stanza is extant in manuscript. It is found on the first page of the quarto sheets which contain the draft of the river poem which Norbert von Hellingrath has with good reason entitled "The Ister" (cf. IV, 220 ff., 300 ff., 367). Ἰστρος is the Greek name for the lower course of the river which the Romans likewise call *Ister*, but which in its upper course they called *Danubius* (cf. Pindar, Od. Olymp. III and Hölderlin's fragmentary translation V, 13 f.). "The Ister" hymn puts into poetry the very essence of this river, whose upper course makes fertile the location of its poet's place of origin. This river's run has an inverse correspondence to that of the Rhine, which proclaims its own home and origin in the neighborhood of the Taunus mountain range (Homburg, Frankfurt—cf. the elegy "The Wanderer," IV, 102 ff.). The Danube, in its upper run, close to its springs, flows only hesitatingly among the rocky cliffs. Its dark waters sometimes stop and even push back into whirlpools. It is almost as if this river, pushing back toward its origin, came from the very place where the current flows out into the foreign sea. Almost as if the river, which bearing the name "Ister," belongs to the foreign land of the East, were present in the upper Danube. In his poem that treats the river and its wooded, rocky valley, Hölderlin says (*The Ister*, IV, 220):

But this one is called the Ister  
Beautifully it dwells

The native river is designated by a foreign name. It conceals the mystery of the origin of its river-essence as stream, a theme which must still be put into poetry (IV, 221):

But it almost seems  
To flow backward and  
I think it must come  
From the East.  
Much could be  
Said about this.

The poem "Remembrance" says something about this. That is why it was no doubt written on the same pages at about the same time.

The meaning of the title *Remembrance* [*Andenken*] seems to be clear. Yet after a first hearing of the poem, the word loses its supposed unambiguousness. First of all, the title could mean that the poem, a successful linguistic creation, is a souvenir or memento that the poet dedicates to his friends in "commemoration" of previous "experiences." It is also easy to note that the memory of Hölderlin's stay in "southern France" is expressed here. The two letters to his friend Böhlendorff, one written on December 4, 1801, shortly before his departure for Bordeaux (V, 318 ff.), the other on December 2, 1802, some time after his return to his mother's house (V, 327 ff.), give a straightforward account of what happened. If we follow the thread of these "sources" and look through the "content" of the poem to track down Hölderlin's recollections of his stay in France, we shall discover many things. Would it not seem obvious that the poem gives shape "lyrically" to the very same "subject matter" as that which the second letter to Böhlendorff mentions "prosaically" in the form of an account of his journey? According to this obvious opinion, the poem bears its title with clear and apparent justification.

But suppose that the "content" of the poem is not the same as what has been composed into the poem; suppose too that the title of the poem names what has been composed into his poetry, rather than the "contents" that also occur in it;—then, through a hasty attachment to "subject matter," our attention to the poetic word would be immediately led into error. The same striving for "content" also leads us astray if we mistakenly treat the cited letters as nothing more than "sources" for Hölderlin's biography. Instead of that, we ought to perceive in the words of these letters one particular mode of address which undoubtedly expresses, in a different though no less decisive manner, the poetic character of this poet. In the second letter, Hölderlin writes that the humanity of southern France had made him more familiar with the authentic essence of the Greeks. His stay in the foreign land with its southern sky gave him, first of all and forever, a higher truth: the poet's "thinking of" [*denken . . . an*] the land of the Greeks. This kind of "reflection" [*Andenken*] did not have its essential

origin in the stay in France that he describes, for it is a fundamental trait of the poesis of this poet; for him the journey abroad to the foreign land remained essential for the return home into the law of his own particular poetic song. The poetic journey abroad did not come to an end with his trip to the southern land. The beginning of the concluding stanza of "Remembrance" points beyond Greece toward the more distant East, toward the people of India. The song of this poem thinks forward to this distant, foreign land. The first stanza of "The Ister" hymn gives us this hint:

But we sing from the Indus,  
Arrived from afar, and  
From the Alpheus, . . .

If "*remembrance*" is already a thinking back, then it thinks of the *rivers* of the Indians and the Greeks. "To re-member, to re-lect, to re-lect, to be mindful of something" [*Andenken*] – do these all imply only a thinking back? The recollection [*Erinnern*] of the past encounters something irrevocable, which allows no further questioning. Such "remembrance" would then preserve the past without questioning it. But the poem "Remembrance" questions. In the middle, at the beginning of the fourth stanza, the question is raised:

But where are the friends?

This call to his friends is not merely a clinging to the past, ruminating upon what might have happened to them at an earlier time. The question thinks about where the friends have gone, whether and how their journey was a journey to the source. Can such questioning still be called *Remembrance*? If this poem were merely a thinking backward, a "lyrical" recollection, what then would be the meaning of its culminating verse:

But what remains is founded by the poets.

Is the poet "thinking" here of [*denken . . . an*] something past, which remains simply because it is left over? Then why would there still be need



to be a founding? Does not the founding "think" rather "of" what is yet to come? Then *remembrance* [*Andenken*] would indeed be a thinking-of, but in such a way that it thinks of what is yet to come. Supposing that this *remembrance* thinks ahead, then even a thinking-back cannot think of a "past," of which there is nothing more to be said except that it is irrevocable. This "thinking of" [*Denken an*] what is yet to come can only be "thinking of" what has been, which, in distinction to what is simply past, we understand as what is still coming into presence from afar. What, then, is this ambiguous *remembrance*? The poet answers our question by composing into a poem the very essence of this kind of "thinking-of." The poetic truth of this essence is what has been forged into this poem "Remembrance." Its title says that here the essence of the poetic thinking of future poets is put into the poem. That is something quite different from the private tutor Hölderlin's poetic formation of reminiscences of his travels.

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

The northeast is the wind (in Swabian dialect, *der Luft* [the air]), which in the poet's homeland brightens up "the air" (the *aether*) and extends gaiety into the distance. The northeast wind clears the sky. It gives a free, cool path to the rays and light of the sun (the *heavenly fire*). When this wind enters into the air that is breathed by all living beings, and especially by the sons of the earth, it brings a sharp clarity that makes the transparency of all things quite incorruptible. The northeast gives to the weather a flexible constancy that opens the season when the mists vanish. "This air" hallows *the holy air, sister of the spirit, mighty master of the fire which reigns and lives within us* (*Hyperion*, Part 1, Book 2, II, 147). The northeast wind points the way out of the native land and leads in one direction, toward the southwestern sky and its *fire*. Whoever stays there in the southern land receives from the northeasterly the message of the crisp



coldness and clarity of the homeland. A fragment (Hellingrath, no. 24, IV, 256 f.) names the *starlings who, in the land of the olives, cultivate keen intelligence. They scent out the homeland, . . .*

But when  
The air clears its path,  
And the northeast, sharply blowing,  
Makes their eyes keener, they fly away.

The northeast wind calls the migratory birds home from foreign lands, so that in the homeland they can cast their wide-open eyes on what is their own and tend to it. The wind blows. We also say the wind goes. But insofar as it “goes,” it does not disappear; rather, this “going” is the wind’s remaining. It remains only as long as it “goes.” *The northeast blows*. Is this a positive assertion about the weather? How could a poem begin so “prosaically”? The line is perhaps a “poetic” description of “nature,” perhaps even an imagistic framework for the “thoughts” which follow. Or is it not rather that this line is breaking a hidden silence to give expression to the arrival of a unique good fortune? Does it not sound like a word of thanks? Surely then we have to imagine a lengthy prelude before this song begins, if we are rightly to hear its onset with this line. The northeast wind is greeted:

*Of winds the dearest / To me . . .* Why is the northeast the one that is esteemed above all other winds? Where is he to whom this wind is the dearest? Who is speaking here? Hölderlin himself. But, here and now, who is this very Hölderlin? The one whose being has found its fulfillment in “willing” that this wind be, and that it be as the wind that it is. What is thus taken up into the essential willing of a self is what is dearest. The northeast is the dearest wind,

*because a fiery spirit / And happy voyage it promises mariners.* The concluding word of this justification for his preference for the northeasterly names *the mariners*. It is of them and only of them that the fourth stanza of the poem speaks. The fifth stanza speaks of the men who, at the mouth

of the river *wide as the sea, have gone to the Indies*. Therefore, *the mariners* are named again, and this in the very stanza that ends with the word *poets*. Thus, for Hölderlin, would the name *mariners* be the essential word for *poets*? In one draft we find the following lines, unconnected to be sure, and yet pointing to one another (Fragment no. 1, IV, 237):

So God's weather wanders above  
 But you holy song  
 And you, poor mariner, seek the inhabited  
 Look toward the stars.

The *mariners* are Germania's coming poets. They say the holy. They must therefore know the heavenly bodies and be masters in reading the quarters of the sky. The northeast wind points out to these *mariners* the original place of the hot richness of the *heavenly fire* ("The Titans," IV, 208 f.) and prepares them for the favor of their departure across the sea to the foreign land. The experience of the fire of heaven in the foreign land is promised by the northeast. This wind "calls" the poets to find themselves in the destiny of their historical being. Because the northeast bestows the guarantee of this destiny, it is the truth of the concealed essential willing of this poet. Everywhere in this poem where Hölderlin says *I* and *me*, he speaks as this poet. "Personal pronouns" such as these do not only signify the poet who composed the poem, and this *remembrance* does not look back to his "personal experiences"—it thinks ahead toward the essential destiny of the poet. This poet's preference for the northeast greets within this wind the opening-up of the epoch of time in which the will to the essence will be the will "of" the one who is to come. *Yet here comes that which I will* (Fragment no. 25, IV, 257). Here "will" does not at all mean the egotistically driven compulsion of a selfishly calculated desire. Will is the knowing readiness for belonging to one's destiny. This will wills only what is coming, for what is coming has already addressed this will, summoning it to know and to stand in the wind of the promise. In this preference for the northeast there reigns the love for the experience of the *fiery spirit* in the foreign land. The love for what is not like home, purely for the

sake of becoming at home in what is one's own, is the essential law of destiny by which the poet is sent into the foundation of the history of the "fatherland." Hölderlin expresses his decisive knowledge of this law in the "letter" which he wrote to this friend *before* his departure for southern France (V, 320):

We shall learn nothing more difficult than to freely use our national character. And as I believe, it is precisely the clarity of presentation which is as natural to us as the fire of heaven was to the Greeks. But what is proper to us must be learned as well as what is foreign. That is why the Greeks are indispensable to us. Only we will not match them precisely in what is proper to us, our national character, because, as I said, the *free* use of *what is proper to one* is the most difficult.

This is the law by which the poet, by means of the poetic passage away from home to the foreign land, becomes at home in what is proper to him. What is proper to the Greeks is the *fire of heaven*. The light and the blaze which guarantee them the arrival and nearness of the gods is their home. But at the beginning of their history, they are not really at home in this fire. In order to appropriate this proper character, they must pass through what is foreign to them. This is *clarity of presentation*. They must first be astonished and seized by it, in order to enlist its aid in bringing the fire into the serene splendor of its ordained brightness. By passing through what is foreign to them, the cool capacity to collect oneself, they first come into possession of their proper element. Only the rigor of such collecting in poetry, thinking, and art enables them to encounter the gods in their luminous presence. That is their founding and building of the πόλις as the essential place of history, which is determined by the holy. The πόλις determines "the political." As a consequence, this can never decide anything about its ground, the πόλις itself, or its foundation. The Greeks' weakness lies in that, in the face of the excess of destiny and its dispensations, they could not hold onto it. It is their greatness to have learned what was foreign to them, the ability to be self-collected.

What is *natural* to the Germans, on the contrary, is *clarity of presentation*. The ability to grasp, the designing of projects, the erection of frame-



works and enclosures, the construction of boundaries and divisions, dividing and classifying, these are what captivate them. This native trait of the Germans, however, does not become authentically their own as long as this ability to grasp is not tested by the need to grasp the ungraspable and, in the face of the incomprehensible itself, to bring them into the proper "disposition." What the Germans must encounter as foreign to them, and what they must become experienced with in the foreign land, is the *fire of heaven*. Through the shock of being struck by this fire, they will be compelled to appropriate and to need and use their own proper character. That is, why, according to the poet's words, in the age of the Germans, *the main tendency must be to be able to encounter something, to have a destiny, since the absence of destiny, the δύσμορον, is our weakness*. This remark is found in the observations with which Hölderlin accompanied his translation of *Antigone* (V, 258).

What is *natural* to a historical people only becomes truly nature, an essential ground, when the natural has become historical, truly history. And for that, the history of the people must find its proper element and dwell within it. But how does man dwell on this earth? In the late poem, "In lovely blueness blooms . . ." obscure in its origin, but unthinkable in its truth without the alert spirit of Hölderlin, we find the words (VI, 24):

Full of merit, yet poetically,  
Man dwells on this earth.

This verse contains a qualification of what it initially concedes. *Full of merit*, to be sure, is man, who by his powers creates works. Immense is all that man accomplishes in establishing himself on the earth, insofar as he works, exhausts, and utilizes it, protecting himself, and advancing and securing his achievements. *Yet*—is all this the sort of dwelling that allows man to be at home in what is true, and to maintain himself there? All accomplishing and working, exploitation and cultivation, remains "culture." But culture is never more than the consequence of a mode of dwelling. Dwelling, however, is *poetic*. Yet how and whence and when does the poetic come? Is it the creation of poets? Or are the poets and the poetic





always determined by poetry? But what is the essence of poetry? Who determines that? Can this essence be derived from man's many merits on this earth? It would seem so, for modern opinion counts poets among the creative producers, and reckons poetry to be a cultural accomplishment. But if, according to the poet's words, the poetic is opposed to all *merit*, and is not one of man's merits, and if the poetic is not present somewhere in itself, then how should men ever be able to experience the poetic in order to dwell within its essential law? Who then is capable of thinking of the essence of poetry if it is not the poets? Therefore, there must be poets who first point out the "poetic" itself, and found it as the ground of all dwelling. For the sake of this founding, these poets must themselves already dwell poetically. Where can they abide? How and where can the poetic spirit find its homeland?

For the spirit is not at home  
At the beginning, not at the source. The homeland preys upon it.

The spirit loves the colony and valor forgotten.  
Our flowers and the shade of our forests give joy

To the languishing one. Almost consumed by fire was the animator.

These lines belong to a late draft of the final stanza of the elegy "Bread and Wine."<sup>2</sup> They name *the spirit* and *the animator*. Spirit is the knowing will, whose thought is that everything that can become realized, and that can be, must enter into the truth of its essence. Spirit thinks upon the very reality that is granted to everything that becomes real, that is, realized by virtue of the unity of its essence. Spirit is the will that knows the origins of everything. It has to be the spirit of everything and everyone. Before *the thoughts of the communal spirit* concern any real things that are, they touch upon the very reality of the real. By comparison to the many things that are real, such reality itself is nothing at all—it is not real—and yet, in advance of everything that *is* real, it is projected as the truth, and it is established and it is set up. Establishing itself in this way, the very reality of what is real—not itself real—is the first matter and source of poems.

Thoughts of the communal spirit are poetic. For if *spirit* ever wants to become "the spirit" of the history of a humanity on this earth, the poetic thoughts of spirit must be gathered together and completed in the soul of the poet, insofar as the poet, dwelling on this earth and yet pointing beyond it toward the heavens, first allows the earth to appear in its poetic aether. Inspired by the poetic spirit, the poet's soul is animated because he names the poetic ground of what is real, and first brings it to its essence by pointing out the very reality of it. The poetic spirit grounds, through the *animator*, the poetic dwelling of the sons of the earth. Therefore, *the spirit* itself must first dwell in the grounding ground. The poetic dwelling of the poet precedes the poetic dwelling of men. The poetic spirit will therefore be "naturally" *at home*. After all, even the tree, ever since it began to grow, is rooted in its ground without leaving it. Likewise, even the animal, at its beginning and during it, lives for the most part in the egg. And even the inanimate thing, fashioned by a human hand, at its beginning is first present in the ground of its origin, in order then to emerge in the material that has been given form by the productive process: the presence of a finished product. At least at their beginning, never again afterward, the animate and the inanimate are present in their place of origin and hold to it at that time in a manner that will never be purer. By this analogy, whose guidance we prefer when we reflect on anything real, this will also hold true for the spirit and for it above all. For at times the spirit stands before us in the appearance of the "creator" and the "genius." Everything "creative," however, must be at home in the ground of its origin. How else could it grow up into its "greatness"? It seems that the spirit, as "living," must be still more plant-like than the plants and still more animal-like than the animal. Yet the spirit is spirit. Its poesis comes into presence according to its own law.

*For the spirit is not at home / At the beginning, not at the source.* At the beginning, the spirit is not at home in its own house. Being-at-home is what it is because of a holding on to the homeland in a kind of nearness that springs from the homeland itself. The homeland is the origin and the original ground of the spirit. If *at the beginning* it is not at home, then at its very start—which is what is meant here by *beginning*—it is also *not at the source*.

But the words *not at the source* do not merely contain the repetition, in another manner, of the preceding words *not at the beginning*; the first *not* of this line negates the preceding words *at home*, whereas the second *not* negates the subsequent words *at the source*. Thus it is said that being-at-home, which is spoken of in the words *at home*, is constituted by the poetic spirit's abiding in the nearness *to the source*. But why is the poetic spirit, and that means, the animator, not at the source from the very beginning?

*The homeland preys upon it.* The spirit is present as spirit even in its beginning, and already open to the open; otherwise it would not be spirit. For that reason, the homeland too also comes toward the spirit's knowing will, right from the beginning. But because it is the origin, it comes necessarily in such a way that it conceals itself. For an origin shows itself by its giving forth. But what is closest to this giving forth is that which has sprung forth from it. The origin has released this out of itself, but in such a way that the origin does not show itself in what it has released, but rather conceals itself and withdraws behind it. What is initially homelike is not yet the nearness of the homeland. Now the spirit is indeed open at the beginning, and so it supposes that it can grasp the homeland quite immediately, but, because the homeland withdraws from such a desire to grasp it, the spirit cannot exactly find it in the midst of all that is homelike. Turned toward the homelike and wanting to find the homeland in it, at the beginning the spirit is expelled from the homeland and pushed into an always more fruitless search. Thus, because of its will to be immediately *at home* in what is proper to it, the spirit consumes and exhausts its essential powers. It is the homeland itself, which has withdrawn, that preys upon the spirit. It puts the poetic spirit into the danger of wasting away. That signifies the loss of its being. But even now the spirit, as the knowing will of the origin, still remains turned toward the homeland, so that precisely this turning lets the will awaken within it to seek, for the sake of the homeland, what is not homelike, but what can bring near the homeland that is withdrawn. This occurs when it takes into its essential will that which essentially grants the state of not being-at-home. That is the foreign, the kind of foreignness that also lets one think of the homeland.



*The spirit . . . loves the colony.* The colony is the daughterland which points back to the motherland. Insofar as the spirit loves the land of such a nature, its mediate and concealed love is only for the mother. That is the native earth, which according to the hymn "The Journey" (IV, 170) is *difficult to win, the self-reserved*. Because the spirit does not simply flee into the foreign, but rather *loves the colony*, it is thus, in an essential sense, both loving and *not at home*.

*and valor forgotten* loves the spirit. The spirit does not love it in addition, but rather on account of love for the colony. The *and* means: "and therefore" the spirit, for the sake of this love, "also" loves forgetting. What is that? We know it mostly in the form of our no-longer-thinking-of-something. It is thus almost a kind of remembering [*Andenken*]. "To forget" can mean that something eludes us and has escaped; but it can also mean that we let it escape and even drive it from our mind. Forgetting is sometimes a losing, sometimes a dismissing, and sometimes even both. If in forgetting we keep something away from ourselves, then we easily flee into something else that captivates us, so that we thereby "forget ourselves." In all these ways, the forgetting remains a behavior in which we engage, or which we allow ourselves: we forget something, and, indeed, we are all too forgetful with respect to many things. But there is still another kind of forgetting, where it is not we who forget something, but rather something forgets us, so that we are the ones forgotten—by destiny; no longer accorded a destiny, we wander about among events, cowards running away from our own essential origin. In contrast, *valor forgotten* is distinguished by its concealed love, which loves the origin. Valor always contains a knowledge of that upon which everything we do and suffer depends above all. Because of this knowledge, valor has a nobility which distinguishes it from mere "courage," taken in the sense of an agitating passion in one's striving. Valor is the courage that knows. In its knowing, there lies the ground of that tranquility, circumspection, and constancy that distinguish the valiant one. *Valor forgotten* is the knowing courage to experience what is foreign for the sake of the future appropriation of what is one's own. Meanwhile, the valor of the poetic spirit has experienced the lengthy voyage to the foreign land. The spirit has come home because it loved the colony.



*Our flowers and the shade of our forests give joy / To the languishing one.*

At the beginning, the powers of the poetic spirit had been consumed by the homeland which remained concealed, and now this spirit is languishing in a foreign land under the fire of heaven. The fire has let the poetic spirit experience that it itself must be brought back from the foreign land into the homeland, in order that what is proper to it, the capacity for clear presentation, can release its essential powers in relation to the fire, forging them together with the fire in giving expression to it. In this release of what is one's own, the homeland opens up and points to its own attributes, so that they can be appropriated. Now *our* flowers and *our* forests bestow the joy whose essence it is to shelter what is true, and to entrust it over for a free use. The native shade brings forth a gentle coolness, a protection from the glow of the foreign fire. The native flowers bring a gentle illumination, a protection from the brightness of the foreign fire. Sheltered in the return to a homeland which now opens itself, the poet recognizes that without the nearness to his origin, he would *almost be consumed by fire* in the foreign land. But this recognition at the same time moves in the knowledge that, without the experience of the fire, the clarity of presentation, too, would not have become the mild coolness and the gentle illumination that the poet has appropriated as his own. The poetic spirit, whose task is to ground man's dwelling as a poetic one, must first of all have become at home, through poetry, in the law of its essence. This is the law of poetry for future poets, and the fundamental law of the history that is to be grounded by them. The historical character of history has its essence in the return to what is proper to one, a return that can only be made as a journey out into what is foreign. That is why the poets must first be *mariners* whose voyage, favored by the northeast wind, keeps the right direction toward the land of the heavenly fire.

The words *the northeast blows* greet the coming of the wind, a wind that arrives by virtue of its "going," and that remains as well by virtue of its "going." But where is the northeast, then, to remain?

But go now and greet  
The beautiful Garonne.

*But go now*—Is the poet asking the northeast wind, no sooner than it starts to blow, to go away immediately, and to leave behind a silent calmness? Or does not the *go now* rather say: now tarry no longer in your blowing, now blow for me, who greets your coming and thus has recognized your time, which is now? Why then the *but*? Because the poet himself is now remaining behind and, as the one who remains behind, composes his poem. *But go now* points in the direction of "southern France," but, as the words of the one who remains behind, the phrase names indirectly the place from which the poet says his words: *The northeast blows*. Suppose that these words blow throughout the entire poem, then in the phrase *But go now* the location and the time of the poem are determined. The poet who remains behind is no longer numbered among the departing mariners. Is he tired of travelling? Or has he, through the successful *good voyage* to the foreign land, become *brave* enough for a *homecoming* and strong enough to remain at home? In truth, his remaining is not just being left behind as though abandoned, nor is it the helpless perseverance of someone inexperienced; rather, it is the return of one who has *arrived from afar*, who has *sought what is fitting* ("The Ister," IV, 220), and so has become more experienced. One condition for becoming at home in what is proper to one, the voyage into the foreign land, has been fulfilled. But the fulfillment can be a fulfillment only if what has been experienced (the brightness and the blaze of the heavenly fire) is preserved, and if the poet, in the presentation of what was experienced, may learn the free use of what is proper to him. This remaining behind, after having arrived, must, as a return, always think back to, and *think of*, the heavenly fire. Such *remembrance in thought*, however, cannot be the mere re-presentation of something past. The "heavenly fire" must still continue in being, if it is to let the presentation find its own structure. The thinking-of "what has been," that is, of what has come into presence, is a *remembrance* of a particular kind.

*But go now and greet*—Remembrance is a kind of greeting. While the one who remains behind has no need of the northeast wind any more for making any journey abroad, he needs the wind nevertheless. The northeast



becomes the messenger of a greeting. From the used-up and empty greeting of thoughtless exchanges to the rarity of the true greeting, and indeed up to the uniqueness of this poetic greeting, we come across many levels. In a greeting, the one who greets does indeed name himself, but only to say that he wants nothing for himself; rather, he addresses everything to the one who is greeted, all that is fitting. A true greeting acknowledges what is greeted in its own proper being, and yet it takes its own place, belonging in a different and therefore distant will. The greeting unfolds the distance between what is greeted and the one who sends the greeting, so that in such distance there may be grounded a nearness that does not need to breed familiarity. A true greeting bestows upon what is greeted the recognition of its essence. A true greeting can at times let what is greeted radiate in its own essential light, so that it loses any false individuality. A true greeting grants the priority of what is supposedly “unreal” as opposed to the merely “real.” A pure and at the same time simple greeting is poetic. Its *thinking-of* is a fundamental recognition by which what is greeted can enter into the nobility of its being, so that as what is greeted, it may henceforth have its essential abode in the greeting. What is greeted now in turn greets, as what is greeted, the one who sends the greeting, though it does not have need of a messenger. Greeting is a *re-thinking* [*An-denken*], whose mysterious rigor again shelters what is greeted and the greeting one in the distance of their own essential being. The greeting wants nothing for itself, and precisely for this reason thereby receives everything which helps the greeted one to enter into his own being. To allow a greeting is to return into one's own being, and to continue in it.

*and greet / The beautiful Garonne*—First of all, the poet sends his greeting to the river. The spirit of the river is the poetic spirit. In his thinking of the river, the poet thinks of those who are between the gods and men, the “pointers,” i.e., those who point the way. When Hölderlin devoted a poem to the essential being of the Rhine, he named first of all the surging of the river in the lightless ground of its source, *the raging of the demigod* (“The Rhine,” IV, 173), and then we read at the beginning of the tenth stanza: *Of demigods now I think*. Hence the poet must first think



on this river too, in the very same *now*, since he remains behind in the location of his being and offers the greeting. It is not by chance that the Garonne is the first named among the many things in the foreign landscape. It is the "beautiful," i.e., according to "The Ister" hymn, the "beautifully dwelling." The spirit of the river, which makes the land *fertile* and habitable, is that which must by rank be greeted first, because it is through it that the greeted land shows itself in its beauty, that is, appears in its "being":

greet

The beautiful Garonne,  
 And the gardens of Bordeaux  
 There, where along the sharp bank  
 Runs the path and into the river  
 Deep falls the brook, but above  
 Gaze out a noble pair  
 Of oaks and white poplars . . .

Would one lapse into a complicated exposition here, one which in any case would prove to be inadequate? Who would want to deface the simplicity of what is said through pompous paraphrasing? What in the poetic greeting stands purely before our view has no need of our talk. On the contrary, it is ourselves who need a few remarks so that we may notice how what is named here comes to appearance as what is greeted, which in turn gives its greeting to the greeting poet, so that he can remain within the scope of his poetic vocation. What is said must not evaporate into a poetic description of the landscape. Everything gathered into this poem is collected around the river by the spirit of the river, which was the first to be greeted.

*And the gardens of Bordeaux / There, where along the sharp bank*—The town and its gardens are not named on an equal footing with the river; rather, the river appears as the spirit which makes the land fertile, whose gardens become green along its bank, where the town lies. The bank is *sharp*. The river flows its decisive course because it is certain of its destination. Along the bank





*runs the path*—Not “a” path, but *the* narrow, inconspicuous trail which remains near to the *sharp bank* along which it runs, and because of its nearness follows along with the flowing of the spirit of the river. As the trail of men, the path has a connection to the poet’s spirit, for human dwelling in the fertile soil of the earth must be a *poetic* one.

*and into the river / Deep falls the brook*—A shallow stream, whose bottom often appears when it glides over stones, must descend from the mountains and hasten toward the hidden depths of the wide river, and be borne by it to its destination in the sea, over which the voyage will lead the mariners to the “colony.”

*but above / Gaze out*—Above the river and the gardens, above the town and the path and the brook, and nevertheless everywhere determined by the river and its bank, is a gaze, a glance which opens out into the distance, gathering into one everything that opens up. Those who glance and keep everything open are *a noble pair / Of oaks and white poplars*; they are not alike; the one is hard, broadly outstretched, and dark; the other is a slender tree, towering, trembling and light. Yet they belong together in the single openness of their nobility, which knows what dignity is, and therefore solely by virtue of its open glance is capable of bestowing dignity upon the river and upon everything that dwells within its beauty. The open gaze of this *noble pair* shelters the being and the vocation of the spirit of the river. In the silence of this greeting, which greets the “noble pair” of trees along the high bank of the river, the poet thinks of the departure that he took, which is unforgotten because it became the beginning of his poetic vocation.

*Still I remember this well*

The greeting has kept the greeted one well in mind and in memory. The greeted one was never forgotten. Nor can it ever be forgotten. For the greeted one has conveyed itself in thought to the one who greets. Thus the greeting is not simply the work of the one who greets. Is it not that the one who greets can greet only if he himself is greeted? Only if he is addressed

in his historical being, and recognized as the poet with a historical destiny? We see in this line that it is not the poet who aims his thought at the greeted one, but that the greeted one conveys itself in thought to him, the one who greets. The *northeast* wind is never just the messenger through whom the poet sends his greetings. The northeast itself is welcomed before all else, because this wind, through its blowing, makes clear for the poet the location and the time of his poetic vocation; it brings it about that he must *think of* what has been and *of* what is coming. Indeed, he is to think of what has been *as* what is to come. *Still I remember this well* is a transitional line. It seems to interrupt the greeting and the abiding with what is greeted. But in truth it binds what-has-been and what has been greeted together with what-is-coming and sends the greeting. For the learning of his own poetic vocation is something which is coming, which also allows the homelike to be something which is coming. The transitional line which leads on from the first to the second stanza is a way of catching one's breath before allowing the supreme encounter with what the greeting northeast wind blows to the poet. True, this wind "goes" away from the poet. But one of the mysteries of *re-thinking-of* [*An-denken*] is that it thinks toward what-has-been, in such a way, though, that what-has-been comes back to the one who thinks of it, coming from the opposite direction. Of course this does not mean that what-has-been remains standing now like a kind of object present in the present moment of a mere representation. If remembrance of what-has-been lets this be in its own essence, and does not disturb it by a hasty misreckoning, trying to bring it into the present, then we experience what-has-been, returning in the *remembrance*, swinging out beyond our present, and coming to us as something futural. All at once this remembrance must think of what has been, as something which is not yet unfolded. The greeting realizes that it must think well, by greeting that which conveys itself in thought: that which has already been greeted.

and how

The broad tree-tops of the elm wood  
 Lean over the mill,  
 But in the courtyard a fig-tree grows.

The *mill* and the *courtyard* are thought of. The daily work and the dwelling-place of the country man are greeted. But why the mill? Does the poet have a preference for it? In the elegy "The Wanderer," (IV, 104), the homecoming traveler greets precisely that:

In the distance the ever-busy mill rustles in the wind,

The mill greeted in the foreign land still continues to be a reminder of the homeland. But is it only the restless diligence of its course which the poet perceives? Is it not also that whereby the *ever-busy* keeps itself busy? The mill prepares the grain ("the fruit") and serves in the preparation of bread. Out of regard for the bread, the poet, who must reflect on *the heavenly ones*, thinks of this workshop of human care ("Bread and Wine," IV, 124):

Bread is the earth's fruit, yet it is blessed by the light,

The workshop to which the blessed *fruit* is entrusted must itself remain protected from the all-too-penetrating light and the torrential storm. The forest of elms offers this protection. In a late fragment (no. 10, IV, 244) and also elsewhere, the poet names the *whispering elms* in whose shade there is granted protection from the excess of fire. Even the most inconspicuous word and every "image" which seems to be formed only as a "poetical" embellishment, is a greeting word. It speaks *in commemoration* [*andenkend*] and thinks back on the foreign which has been, and on the homeland which is coming, in their original belonging-together.

*But in the courtyard a fig-tree grows.* The *but* sounds exaggerated, for it poses an opposition where we would scarcely expect one. Why would the *mill* and the *elm wood*, the *courtyard* and the *fig-tree*, not be found in harmony? The same elegy "The Wanderer" takes in the courtyard almost in the same glance:

. . . where the grove grows over  
The door opening on the courtyard, . . .



The *But* in the greeting of remembrance offers its greeting to the southern land. The *But* leads the remembrance by way of the fig-tree to the fire of the southern sky. The following lines, too, follow the same direction consistently. They no longer depend on the transitional line that introduces the stanza. Since the greeting must complete itself, the greeting now belongs entirely to what is greeted. This finally appears in that which properly belongs to the poetic spirit of the river, which was the first to be greeted.

On holidays there too  
 Walk the brown women  
 On silken soil,  
 In the month of March,  
 When night and day are equal,  
 And over slow paths,  
 Heavy with golden dreams,  
 Lulling breezes drift.

Here in a single turn, in a mysterious arc, the lines swing round to utter the single concentrated thought of the one thing to which greeting is extended. *On holidays*—Unprepared by what was previously said, this mention of the *holidays* arises as though by mere chance. Why does the poet, in a period when his composition never tolerates mere chance or the makeshift word, now think of *holidays*? Does he name them because he thinks of *the brown women who are there too*? On holidays the women appear in adorned beauty. Yet why does the poet think of these women? Without a doubt, in a "poetic" stanza this would hardly require further justification. But here it is not a matter of a sentimental designation of "the country and its people," nor is it a matter of "poesy," but rather poetry. Hölderlin does not mention the holidays because he thinks of the women; rather, he names *the women who are there too* because he remembers the holidays. But why?

Holidays are days of celebration. Normally, "to celebrate" means to put aside everyday activity, to rest from work. That is why it can happen that holidays, because they are essentially correlated to workdays, are





taken to be just an interruption in our working time. They are a diversion in the work cycle, nothing more than a pause that is established, finally, for the sake of work itself. But a celebration, strictly taken, is something other than a mere void, an interruption. In the setting aside of work, there already appears that keeping-to-ourselves in which we come to ourselves. It is not as though we were selfishly thrown back upon our own "ego." Keeping-to-ourselves rather transposes us beyond ourselves into a rarely experienced realm, out of which our being is determined. Out of such transposition there begins astonishment or terror or even awe. From such times there springs meditation. An open domain begins to surround man. But the real, that to which we become accustomed in everyday life, is incapable of keeping the open domain open. Only the unaccustomed can open up the open, insofar as the unaccustomed has its concealed measure in the rarity of the simple, in which the reality of the accustomed real is concealed. The unaccustomed cannot be directly encountered or grasped. The unaccustomed opens itself up and opens up the open only in poetizing (or, separated from it by an abyss and in its time, in "thinking"). Celebrating is a becoming-free for the unaccustomed element of the day which, in distinction to the dull and gloom of the everyday, is what is clear. A celebration which was confined to the mere cessation of work would have nothing which it could celebrate, and hence essentially would not be a celebration. The latter is defined only through what it celebrates. That is the festival. Where does the festival come from? For this poet, who *thinks of the holidays*, what is the festival? The festival, in the poetic sense of this poet, is the *wedding festival of men and gods*. The thirteenth stanza of "The Rhine" hymn says (IV, 178):

Then men and gods celebrate the wedding festival

Hölderlin's word *festival* has a lofty and at the same time simple meaning. The *wedding festival* is the encounter of those men and gods from which there issues the birth of those who stand between men and gods and endure this "between." They are the *demigods*, the rivers, who *must be signs* ("The Ister"). These pointers are the poets. The day of the *wedding festival*,

*the wedding day*, determines the birthday of the poet, i.e., the daybreak in whose light the open clears itself, so that the poet sees the coming of what his verses must say: *the holy*. That is why the first hymn of this poet which can call:

But now day breaks! . . .  
     may the holy be my word.

begins with this line:

As when on a holiday . . .

In keeping with the general rule, this beginning would seem to introduce a comparison. Yet here something else is meant. The *holiday* remains immediately related to the birth of the demigod and accordingly to the *wedding festival*. Of course, anxiety and fear fill the demigod since he, as the pointer, must distinguish between and observe the space intermediate between men and gods. *The festival* is necessary, for it answers to a hidden need. That is why the draft of the hymn "Mnemosyne" ("Remembrance"), to which Hölderlin had also thought of giving the title "The Sign," says this (IV, 225, 369):

Beautiful is  
 The wedding day, but anxious are we  
 Because of honor.

We are those of whom it has previously been said:

We are a sign.

All too easily could the demigod, pushed out above men, *not want to endure his inequality* to the gods ("The Rhine," eighth stanza, IV, 175 f.) and so at the same time wrongly measure himself by the standard of human beings. Too easily can the demigod, arisen from such a festival, be *too desirous to become one of them* ("Mnemosyne," IV, 225). Thus his own



being, carried away by the one (to be a god or to be human), can fall into division and be thrown into *doubt*.

But doubtless  
Is the highest one.

The highest one is nearest to that which is *the Highest*. But that is *the holy*, the law which ordains its measure in a different way than does human law. Seen from this viewpoint, the manner in which the holy reigns above all *dispositions*, because it is the sending of destiny, can scarcely be called a law. But through the divisive desire to become one of the two, that between, to which the demigods must keep, is destroyed. The open realm of this between closes itself up. By this closing, that which is *above men and gods* becomes inaccessible, the highest that let their between emerge, that sent them into it and, within it, allotted them to one another. This destiny, which is sent by the holy, is the festival. The festive character of the festival has its determinate ground in the *holy*. The holy lets the festival be the wedding festival that it is. Such letting-be of a being in its being is the primordial greeting. The festival is the primal event [*Ereignis*] of the greeting, in which *the holy* greets, and in the greeting appears. Through those who are greeted in the wedding festival, the demigod, who arises from it, is the one who is genuinely greeted. The wedding festival is festive, and awakens celebration, only when the being of the demigod, who originated from the wedding day, lives and moves in the feast. But the essence of the demigod is to express what is *unlike*, what is neither god nor man. To be unlike, to be neither like the heaven nor like the earth, demands that he possess the essential being that is destined for him. It is appropriate for him to preserve this difference. Destiny finds its equilibrium when and only when what is unlike abides as unlike. Here the equilibrium is not at all an equalization, realizing what is undifferentiated, but rather the letting reign of what is different in its difference. The equilibrium is not the effacing of those who are different—the gods and the men—but rather their return into their own proper being. What is unlike, then, is able to last on account of that returning. And as long as the unlike can last, so

long is the moment in which destiny can linger for awhile ("The Rhine," thirteenth stanza, IV, 178):

The men and gods celebrate their wedding festival  
 All the living ones celebrate  
 And for a moment destiny is equalized.

It is the waiting time of destiny that sets a measure for any genuine abiding. This time, this moment, appears to a thinking which counts on the feast-less security of stock-taking of the real, and whose reality is measured only accordingly, only as a "mere" moment. It is counted as the temporary, and is pushed aside for what is constant. But the true moment, the time of the equilibrium of destiny, is the time of the festival. It lingers for a while in its own manner. Ordinary duration appears in the mere progress of the etcetera. If this, perchance, could do without beginning or end, that duration with no beginning and no end would be raised to the appearance of the purest abiding. But something which, seen within the horizon of calculation, is of short duration, can nevertheless outlast all the etcetera of mere persistence, for it can express the manner of time that is held within the essence of destiny. In such a time, that which happens once and only once does not need to recur, because, when it has happened, no "repetition" is suitable. Because the event is unique, it is unsurpassable and it moves toward what is coming, so that all that is coming has its advent in the moment of the unique event. The moment is neither finite nor infinite. Its time of endurance is *prior* to those measures. This moment harbors that rest in which all the sending of destiny is contained. To such a moment comes the holy (IV, 354), which first gives blessing to its being.

Then comes the wedding song of heaven.

From the quiet of this moment arises all movement and all mere occurrence. On the other hand, no mere occurrence finds its way back by itself to such a moment. The festival, first sent by the holy, remains the origin



of history. History is “the collected gatherings of all such sendings of destiny,” just as the mountain range is for the mountains; it is the foundation that originally unifies and determines all the sendings of destiny. But if the festival is the essential origin of the history of a humanity, and if the poet stems from the festival, then the poet becomes the founder of the history of a humanity. He prepares the *poetic* upon which a historical humanity dwells as upon its own ground. The festival of the wedding day is the concealed birthday “of” history, which here means German history. That is why the history *of the kings and of the peoples* orders itself according to the law of what is festive in the *holidays of Germania*, and only according to these holidays (“Germania,” final stanza, IV, 184 f.). The poet, standing in the blowing of the northeast wind, is the one greeted by the greeting of the holy. That is why he must welcome this wind which exposes him to his essential vocation. That is why the poet sends his greeting through this wind to what-has-been. He thinks of what-has-been in his thinking of what-is-coming. That is the holy, whose arriving prepares the festive character of the festival. The greeting, which offers its greeting to what-has-been in its being, must hence think of the festival that has been. That is why the poet thinks of the holidays. They are the days preceding the festival. When the holidays are named, it is the wedding festival that is named in a silent manner, and so in the highest reverence.

But because it is a wedding festival, the poet, in thinking on the festival, commemorates the women.

On holidays there too  
Walk the brown women  
On silken soil,

*The women*—This word still has here its ancient force, meaning mistress and guardian. But now it is spoken in sole reference to the birth of the poet in his essence. In a poem which was written shortly before the period of the hymns and which is in transition to it, Hölderlin said all that we need to know (“German Song,” eleventh stanza, IV, 130):

To the German women give thanks! They have  
 Preserved for us the friendly spirit of the images of the gods,

The poetic truth of these early lines, veiled still from the poet himself, became illuminated in the hymn "Germania." The German women save the appearance of the gods, which remains the primal event of the history whose moment is withdrawn from being captured in the chronological calculation which at most can ascertain "historical situations." German women save the advent of the gods in the mildness of a kindly light. They deprive this primal event of its formidableness whose terror strays into excess, whether the excess of the symbolization of the gods' being and their place, or the excess of the grasping of their being. The preservation of this advent is the constant co-preparation of the festival. In the greeting of "Remembrance," however, it is not German women who are named, but

*the brown women there too.* This recalls the southern land, where the element of the *heavenly fire* radiates an excess of brightness and by its glow threatens to *almost consume* those who are exposed to it. And yet, just as in the naming of the *mill*, the *elms*, and the *courtyard*, a thinking back to the foreign speaks out of a thinking ahead toward the homelike, so here the greeting of the brown women is a fulfilled remembrance. In order to keep the distance, in its distant presencing, in its nearness, the poet says *there too*, which to the contemporary ear comes close to legal and commercial language. But the poetic character of the greeting resounds so simply throughout the whole stanza that any suggestion of the "prosaic" melts away. Above all, the poet during this period is so little inclined to shrink from a word which is at first unpoetic and peculiar that he even listens especially for such a word. A word can be employed in a very peculiar image where it is something purely invisible that the poem evokes. *There too* walk the women

*to silken soil, [auf seidnen Boden]*—Since the handwritten text of this stanza is missing, it cannot be deciphered whether Hölderlin has written exactly what the text now has, and whether, if he did write it thus, we

should reckon it as a spelling error. One would rather read *on silken soil* [*auf seidnem Boden*]. Of course, perhaps not only the substratum on which one walks should be named. The poet already sees the path on which the women walk and upon which they step and climb. Yet this supposition is not necessary if we observe that in the eighteenth century, the “n” often replaced the “m” of the dative singular of the adjective. *On silken soil walk the women*. The soil is, nevertheless, not an insignificant foundation for their walk. From this ground emerges the spring-like attitude in the steps of those who stride along. The soil on the ground is silken. It gleams quietly and tenderly in the preciousness of the hidden richness of the scarcely disturbed earth. Or is the poet thinking of the earth itself, from which and above which and in which is breathed that indeterminate tenderness of the first sprouting and stirring of nature, in early spring, where everything is at once concealed and indefinite and yet already something inwardly decided? The following line, consisting only of five words, relieves us of the task of seeking the answers to such questions.

In the month of March,

March is a transitional period. Transition gives the appearance of merely mediating. The transitional seems to be, on the whole, the transitory, merely passing by, not lingering. And yet the *month of March* has nothing hurried or violent about it. In a hidden pause there is prepared the reconciliation of winter with summer, a pause, however, that is not a standstill, but rather a unique and veiled coming forth: the reconciliation between the harshness and sternness of winter and the ease and force of summer. Reconciliation sets the combatants free and gives them an equal right to their own being, that right which each one has. Such a transition is like that equilibrium whose essence corresponds to the moment of a lingering destiny. Such a transition is not a hurried passage, but an enduring which takes stock of itself, from which the one and the other receive the peaceful rest of their essence. The period of transition is the preparation for the festival. The month of March is the month of the holiday.



When night and day are equal,

Usually we use the word sequence day and night. We first call out the day as being something "positive." We let follow it the night, which is its disappearance. Night is the absence of day. But for Hölderlin the night which precedes the day is the sheltering profusion of the day, even though still indeterminate. Night is the mother of day. Insofar as the holy comes in the breaking of day, and the advent of the gods is given, the night is the time of god-lessness. This word does not mean here the mere lack or even the naked absence of gods. The time of god-lessness contains what is indecisive about what is yet to be decided. Night is the time of the sheltering of the *gods of the past* and of the concealment of the gods that are coming. Because the night, in such sheltering-concealing darkness, is not nothing, it also has its own vast *clarity* and the *peacefulness* of the silent preparation for something which is coming. To the latter belongs its own vigil, not that sleeplessness that needs sleep, but rather that which keeps watch over and protects the night. No doubt the length of this night can at times exceed human powers to the point that one wishes to sink away into sleep. But night, as the mother of the day which brings the holy, is *holy night* (IV, 213):

... and when in holy night  
 Of the future one thinks and  
 Bears the care of those who sleep without care,  
 The freshly blossoming children.

But if the night is *equal* to the day, then it has become prepared to let the day rise above it, without, however, giving up its own essence. Now is the time of the equilibrium. The emerging day is festively tuned to the celebration of the wedding festival. The women follow their paths when night and day are in equilibrium

And over slow paths,  
 Heavy with golden dreams,  
 Lulling breezes drift.





*And over slow paths*—The first stanza already names the path that goes along the river, because the path of human beings on this earth must stay close to the poetic. Now the paths are named once more. Are they the same paths of the walking women who walk and also prepare festively the celebration of the festival? The paths are *slow*. The meditating and divining step, which can linger and which is familiar with the moment, belongs to them. The slow paths are the paths of that moment in which destiny has come to equilibrium: festive paths which must keep to the poetic spirit of the river. And if we are permitted to think with the word *paths*, not only on striding and climbing, but also on stepping over and climbing over, then the paths name the transition for *passing over to the other side*. *Not without wings may . . . one* cross over from the side of the foreign to the side of home (“The Ister,” IV, 220). Inconspicuous bridges are the paths, narrow and for few, often vacillating and needy in appearance. But so too is the crossing over of the poet and everything which belongs to him. Yet of what help are wings without breezes? That is why the slow paths are blessed, so that over them

*Lulling breezes drift*.—The second stanza, in which there is completed the greeting of the northeast wind, which in turn offers its own greeting, ends with the greeting of such breezes. The native greeting wind and the foreign greeted winds are suited for each other. The paths are the inconspicuous passages and footpaths of transition. They themselves are not empty places without “atmosphere.” They are bestowed and passed over by drifting breezes which lull. To where do they lull one? To lull is to carry away into the sweet stupor of slumber, to carry off into the floating intoxication of forgetfulness. Are the *lulling breezes* the festive air which passes over the footpaths of celebration? Intoxication is characteristic of a festival. Yet is it then the mere inebriation of blind drunkenness? The *lulling breezes* cannot bring the delirium of wild rapture. And yet to lull is to keep safe in the cradle. It belongs to birth. The cradle is related to that which owes its origin to the wedding festival. The lulling breezes must essentially codetermine the origin of the essence of the demigod, i.e., the poet. That is also why in the greeting they are the last and highest to be greeted. The

manner in which the breezes lull, and why they are lulling, arise from their unique character. They are:

*Heavy with golden dreams*,—Often, dreams are to us mere dreams and so mere "shadows." In their inconsistent fleetingness and their almost arbitrary character, they fall without connection and without definition into the firm and consistent world which we call the "real" world, the world of waking experience. We consider dreams to be unreal, something that we only dream about. What has a dreamlike character is measured against the real, as if we knew with unquestionable certainty what reality is. True, we explain the real as what has been enacted and which then goes on to act further. Yet what is activity and what is an action? Are actions found only where one can specify results and consequences? Or is there also action which does not bring consequences? Is it then true that only the real has being, that the nonreal has no being and is nothing? Where does the boundary lie between the real and the nonreal? Are the two of them separated into different regions by a boundary line? Or is the nonreal already housed in the real? What about the reality of the real? What would everything real be if it, as the real, did not have its being in reality? But if reality itself is no longer something real, is it then dissolved into the supposed nullity of the merely "abstract"? But doesn't this "abstraction" that we disparage when we insist on the unreality of "reality" itself, indicate a helpless misinterpretation, springing from our blind attachment to the real? If everything real only is insofar as it has its being in reality, then is not everything real suspended in the nonreal, though never in nullity? But then the nonreal could even take priority over the real. So we must at least ponder whether or not dreams, as the nonreal, can be a measure for the real. We must no longer evaluate them according to the "real," according to that which one crudely holds for the real as such. Perhaps, however, not everything nonreal in all dreams is a measure of the real. Perhaps that only holds for the dreams that the poet names here in the realm of the birth of the being of the poet and of the art of poetry, insofar as the poet, as demigod, is *enacted by gods and men*, i.e., is the *fruit* of the wedding festival ("As when on a holiday . . ." IV, 152). Perhaps this is true



only of *golden dreams*. Their nonreality must be thought according to the meaning of the poet. However, the nonreal is for that reason never a mere nullity because it can be either the no-longer-actual or the not-yet-actual. The nonreal contains this either-or, and, moreover, is for the most part undecided between them. But supposing that the nonreal is the not-yet-real, then it has its being *between* nonreality and reality, and if we further suppose, in the sense of metaphysics, reality to be equal to true being, then the not-yet-real, which can also be called the possible, has its being as the state between not-being and being. During the very time in which Hölderlin's hymnic poetry was germinating, the poet wrote a treatise which is entitled "Becoming in Passing-Away" (III, 309 to 316). There we find the sentence:

[in] the state between Being and not-Being, everywhere the possible becomes real, and the actual ideal, and this is in the free imitation of art a terrible but divine dream.

The becoming-real of the possible, as the becoming-ideal of the actual, in the realm of the free imagination of poetry, has the essential character of a dream. This dream is terrible because it expels those to whom it shows itself from the careless sojourn among the familiar and real, and throws them into the terror of the nonreal. But this terrible dream is a divine one, because the possible, entering into actuality, is halloved in its advent by the coming of the holy. This distinguished dream gives to the possible a greater being, and to what until then was held to be real a lesser being. This dream shows itself to the poet because the dream, as this divinely terrible nonreality, is the poem of the holy that cannot be composed in advance. This is the poem which the poets must utter. Listening to this poem, they dream the dream. Only when they are *dreaming* are they the ripened fruit of the festival. But the poets can compose that which is in advance of their poem only if they utter that which precedes everything real: what is coming. Their word is the foretelling word in the strict sense of *προφητεύειν*. The poets are, if they stand in their essence, *prophetic*. They are not, however, "prophets" according to the Judeo-



Christian sense of the term. The "prophets" of these religions do not only utter in advance the primordial word of the holy. At the same time they prophesy the God on whom they count for the security of their salvation in celestial blissfulness. Let one not disfigure Hölderlin's poetry by "the religious element" of a "religion" which expresses the Roman interpretation of the relation between men and gods. Let one not overburden the essence of this poetic calling by making the poet into a "seer" in the sense of the soothsayer. The holy which is foretold poetically merely opens the time for an appearing of the gods, and points into the location of the dwelling of historical man upon this earth. The being of this poet must not be thought in correspondence to those "prophets"; rather, the "prophetic" element of this poetry must be grasped in terms of the being of the poetic foretelling. Their dream is divine, but they do not dream of a god. This dream has its own center of gravity, by virtue of which the lulling breezes do not confuse themselves in whirlwinds, but drift on their unique route over the slow paths.

But how can drifting breezes be heavy? Because they are heavy with *golden* dreams. Usually heaviness crushes and becomes a burden. But the golden dreams are heavy like gold because the essence of their poem is solid. They gleam like gold because of the luminous blaze of the holy. They are noble like gold because that which the holy has ordained and sent is pure. Here the heaviness is the fullness of the imponderable gift, blown by the wind, which is concealed in the dreams. What the golden dreams harbor, the poet does not say, at least not directly. But what could the drifting breezes of the heaven in the southern land harbor other than the blaze and the light of the holy ray, to which the poet owes the birth of his being? The breezes lull in the cradle of this origin. The greeting of the foreign land culminates in the greeting of its breezes. Thus greeting, the poet thinks of the *heavenly fire*, which must be experienced first of all and always, if the presentation, that is to say, his very own capacity, may have something to present, something on which his capacity to grasp may be able to prove itself. It is only when the experience of the foreign and the practice of what is native have become fused into a historical unity that the fruit of the Hesperion has become ripe ("Bread and Wine," IV, 125).





The being of the coming German poet is then founded. Then the poet says (IV, 71):

Ripe are, dipped in fire, cooked  
 The fruit and tested on the earth, and it has become a law  
 That all must enter in, like serpents,  
 Prophetic, dreaming on  
 The hills of heaven.

Everything that is to be fruit must enter into the fire. That is the law of the journey abroad in order to experience the heavenly fire. Nothing of our own on our native earth is capable of thriving without this process of becoming cooked in the foreign land, whereby it could almost be consumed by fire. Nothing of our own is exempt from this law. But when the fruits are ripe and are tested in what is proper to them, they are what they must be: the poets. They are the *signs* which, as signifying, reveal and conceal at the same time. Of such an ambiguous nature is the serpent; that is no doubt also why the draft of the hymn "Mnemosyne" first bore the title "The Serpent," instead of "The Sign." The poets, having become ripe to their being, are *like serpents*. They are *prophetic*. They are *dreaming* and so they are in the midst of the dreams with which the breezes are heavy, in whose draft *the hills of heaven*, i.e., the clouds, drift by. If the poets have become ripe, then and only then can they be used by the gods who *need* them. Now that they have come to ripeness, there begins the *care* ("Homecoming," IV, 111) characteristic of the poetic vocation. For he must always, in order to abide in his being, think of the heavenly fire and of the presentation of what has been sent to him. Both are to be retained in memory [*andenkend*], namely, the golden dreams with which the breezes are heavy and the right use of what is proper to one in order to say what is to be said. Both are, even for a demigod, not little, but much. That is why the poem immediately goes on to say:

. . . And much  
 As on the shoulders a  
 Load of logs must  
 Be retained.

Only through a thinking that retains in memory can the being of this poetic vocation be ripened and kept. That is why its first poet must first of all and always ponder this very kind of remembrance. This means: to make a poem of it, to fulfill it poetically. That is why the poet who has returned home, and who has only now come under the law of historicity, extends his greeting through the northeast wind to the fire in the foreign land. But in the greeting, what is greeted in turn greets the one who remains behind. The heavenly fire thinks itself toward the one who greets, and it remains close to him as the being of what has been divine. The experience of the foreign is not the simple past, still understood only in representation, without a word of greeting and deprived of all being.

*Still I remember this well*,—This transitional verse in the greeting leads from the first stanza to the second. At the same time it carries the great arc over from the second to the third stanza. The word *well* not only says that the poet, having returned home, *still* well and rightly retains in memory the foreign fire. The word *well* contains in addition the sense of a limitation, which will be defined by what follows. Of course *the fire of the south* is near. And, to be sure, the one who remains behind, and gives greetings, is more experienced. But, then, is this greeting, remaining behind, already the ability to remain in what is one's own? Indeed, one essential commandment of the law of historicity has been fulfilled: the voyage to the colony. But that is precisely why the other commandment, the free use of what is one's own in the experience of the foreign, must also find its fulfillment. The thinking of what has been is all well and good, but now there must also be, uniquely and in accord with that, a thinking of what is to come.

Still I remember this well, . . .

.....

.....

But someone pass me,  
 Full of dark light,  
 The fragrant cup,  
 So that I may rest now; for sweet  
 Would be slumber in the shade.



Does this sound like a departure for home? After all, the poet has already arrived in the homeland. Or is mere arrival insufficient? Is it that the return home to the homeland only begins with the arrival? Remaining in the homeland is in no way brought about by itself. It does not consist in the fact that the poet is, so to speak, merely present in the compass of home. The abiding is only what it must be in the return home. This is the course of learning which learns the free use of what is proper to the sons of the earth, which is *needed* by the heavenly ones. The poet calls for the cup, *so that I may rest*. Does he speak so boldly in order to gain what is his own? Is that not rather the worn-out call of one who seeks only to rest? The poet asks for the cup so that he *may* also desire this *rest*, i.e., so that he may bestow all his desires (love) to this rest, in order to be capable of such *rest*, because of this love, so that he may be strong enough to carry the possibility of this rest to its end. But then this rest cannot be the rest of relaxation and slumber. True, the poet has arrived into the rejoicing of the shade of the homelike forest. The coolness of the shade could seduce him to avoid the fire and to let his sojourn in the shade become a rest much like sleep:

*for sweet / Would be slumber in the shade.*—If it really had come to him, if the rest could have been the inactivity of sleep and the throwing off of his load from his shoulders. Yet the slumber *would* merely *be* sweet. It is not, because it must not be. Therefore, the rest, which the poet now asks to be capable of, is of another kind. The poet has already spoken the words: *But now day breaks!* (IV, 151, 19). The poet must stay awake, indeed become even more awake, in order to attain a higher meditation. What is his own, the clarity of presentation, he uses “freely” only when the clarity of his saying is determined by the open experience of what is to be presented. The flaming light of the holy, which is given to the poet through his departure abroad, and which as this gift is still present in the greeting of what has been, must be the standard for the word. Only thus is he able to let that which appears show itself to him and, by pointing it out to others, be himself the sign. Only thus can there be accomplished the renunciation of that false freedom which believes that the inheritance of



the homelike is immediately present in the poet's ability, and can be easily acquired and become his possession. This will to immediate acquisition is the deluded relation to the homeland, and this is why the homeland "preys" on the spirit. To learn the free use of one's own possibilities means to devote oneself more and more exclusively to being open for that which is assigned, to be alert to what is coming, to possess a sobriety which without staggering in varied courses holds fast to that one thing which is necessary. A sober, observant openness for the holy is at the same time an attunement to quietness, the rest that corresponds to the "restfulness" of which he thinks. This resting is the ability to remain in what is his own. Such remaining is present only as a learning journey, the homecoming return to the origin of what is his own. However, how can the poet, if it is true that he must learn to be able to remain in this clarity, now say:

But someone pass me,  
 Full of dark light,  
 The fragrant cup . . .

When he calls for the cup, does he not rather call for the fragrance which anesthetizes one into forgetfulness and for the inebriating drink which makes one lose consciousness? The wine is named the *dark light*. Thus at the same time the poet asks for the light and for the brightness which contribute to clarity. But the dark light in turn cancels out the clarity, for the light and the dark are in conflict. Or so it seems to be for that kind of thinking which is exhausted in calculating with objects. The poet of course sees an illumination which comes to appearance through its darkness. The dark light does not deny clarity; rather, it is the excess of brightness which, the greater it is, denies sight all the more decisively. The all-too-flaming fire does not just blind the eyes; rather, its excessive brightness also engulfs everything that shows itself and is darker than darkness itself. Sheer brightness is a greater danger to the poet's presentation, because the brightness leads to the illusion that in its appearance alone there can be sight. The poet asks for the gift of the dark light in which the brightness is tempered and softened. But this softening does not





weaken the light of the brightness. For the darkness permits the appearance of that which conceals, and thus in its appearing preserves what is concealed within. The darkness preserves in the light the fullness of what it has to bestow in its shining appearance. The dark light of the wine does not take away awareness; rather, it lets one's meditation pass beyond that mere illusion of clarity which is possessed by everything calculable and shallow, climbing higher and higher toward the loftiness and nearness of the highest one. So this filled cup does not produce a stupor. Its work is not to make one inebriated, but it does nevertheless make one intoxicated. The intoxication is that sublime elevation of mood wherein that single voice can be heard that sets a tone, and where those who are attuned to it may be led most resolutely beyond themselves. Of course, they are not resolute by means of any calculated decision of their own, but because their essential being is directed by that which the voice has provided them. The intoxication confuses the senses so little, that it rather brings sobriety for the sublime and lets one *think of* this. Sobriety without pretentiousness, genuine in many ways and secure in itself, is of another type than that which is tuned into the bare and lifeless, the desolate and the void. Both kinds of sobriety are essentially distinguished from the sobriety of intoxication that induces the audacity of lingering in the elevation of the highest. This intoxication lifts one into the illuminating clarity in which the depths of the concealed are opened up and darkness appears as the sister of clarity. The unfinished elegy "The Walk to the Country" (IV, 112 f. and 314 f.) can help to clarify this. Yet the almost surprising simplicity of this poem is still more difficult to think than other poems. We can only suppose that this walk to the country is the walk of one who has come home in the genuine homecoming. This walk which returns home is a remaining at home. The return is imbued with the single *wish* to build a house for the heavenly ones who are to come as guests, approaching the dwelling place of men. For only when this third element, *the guest-house*, stands between the heavenly ones and men, is there a place of mortal preparedness for the nearness of the heavenly ones, so that the heavenly ones can be for us the ones who they are. The poem names this one desire: to be allowed to begin the foundation of the guest-house *in the holidays of*

*spring*. For that, however, everything, the homelike land and the air, the hearts of mortals and the heavenly ones must be *open*, i.e., *in accordance with the spirit*.<sup>3</sup>

Thus I even have hope it will come to be,  
 If we begin what is wished and our tongue is loosed,  
 And the word found, and the heart is opened,  
 And springing from our intoxicated brow a higher meditation  
 Commences at once with ours, the flowering of the heavenly,  
 And to the open gaze the illuminating one will be open.

The gift of the wine-god, the god of poets, bestows the intoxicated brow that preserves the ability to abide in the elevated clarity of that presentation which must show the *illuminating one* in the naming word. Because the dark light bestows such a gift, the drink from the fragrant cup can become at the same time the gift which the returning one presents in remembrance first to the gods and then to the mariners. By this offering the poet dedicates his own homeward passage to preparing the ground upon which dwelling is to be founded. The wandering of the wanderer ends with the beginning of this becoming-at-home. So says the conclusion to the elegy "The Wanderer" (IV, 106):

Therefore pass me now the cup filled to the rim  
 With wine from the Rhine's warm mountains!  
 That I may drink first to the gods and in remembrance of the heroes,  
 The mariners, and then to you, too, dearest ones.

Parents and friends! and forget all my pain and sorrow  
 Today and tomorrow and quickly be among those who are at home.

When the poet calls out for a fragrant cup, he is asking to be confirmed in the essential law of his poetic activity, which is to think with one accord of what has been and of what is coming, instead of sleeping through the time which now is.



It is not good  
 To be soulless with  
 Mortal thoughts.

Now that the northeast wind is conveying greetings, and is recalling to the poet the festival that took place in the foreign land, this selfsame northeast wind brings with it a bold clarity. It makes the poet think of his being able to abide in the proper element of his poetic vocation. That is why he must think of what is good and what is not good for learning the free use of his own gift of presentation.

*It is not good*—It is not some indefinite danger that is being warded off here. And moreover the phrase does not hold for men in general. It is meant to lead to a meditation upon what is fitting for the moment in which destiny lies in equilibrium, and which makes the poet fit for making his utterance. It would now be unfitting *to be—soulless*—for then how could the poet accord with his essence to be the “animator”? “Soul” means here something different from the mere general principle of life for any living thing. “To have a soul” means here to be soulful or to have heart. “Soul” signifies the same thing as “heart.” To be sure, for us this name, too, has lost its original force. At most, “heart” connotes for us the tenderness of sensitivity, if not indeed the merely “sentimental,” something weak or submissive. But the word “heart” stores up for us yet another directive which we shall hear again one day after we have unlearned to think of man according to the categories of anthropology. Heart [*Gemüt*] is the source and the site, the fabric and the voice, of the *muot*, that which brings us to the inwardness of those who are calm of heart or lowly in heart, of the soft-hearted and the great-hearted, of those who are gracious of heart and selfless in heart, of the magnanimous and the long-suffering. The heart experienced in this way Hölderlin calls the “soul.” The “soulful” man (V, 319) is the one who has high spirits, who takes heart, who demands of himself the highest. The poet would be *soulless* if he were content merely to live out his days devoid of *mortal thoughts*. These thoughts open the heart for the demand in which the essential is addressed to him. But to



what extent can mortal thoughts overcome the soulless? Manifestly, it is not fallible and transient thoughts that are meant here, but rather those thoughts which are thought by the mortals who are the *sons of the earth*. Yet is it not precisely the task of the poet to think the holy, that which is above gods and men? Certainly. He must, however, make the presentation of the holy: and through this saying the gods come to feel themselves. Thus they will bring themselves to appear in the dwelling place of man upon this earth. So this poet is to think of that which concerns the sons of the earth if they are to be able to dwell in their homeland. And the poet must think this "mortality," which concerns sons of the earth, in many ways, among them the way of thinking that the sons of the earth follow. For as the one who points, the poet stands between men and gods. Out of this "between," he thinks that which passes beyond both gods and men and makes them holy and is different from them both, and addresses itself to him as the poem which is to be uttered. Thinking like a mortal, he puts the highest into a poem. To be without these thoughts is not good for the ability to abide poetically in what is proper to him.

But a  
 Conversation is good and to say  
 The heart's intention, to hear much  
 About days of love  
 And deeds which occurred.

Again,<sup>4</sup> we must ask: What is a conversation? From the preceding, it is clear that it can only be the thinking of mortal thoughts. From which it in turn clearly appears that such thinking has the character of conversation. What characterizes conversation, the poet names by the elucidation which follows the *and*:

*to say—to hear*—Does this merely mean that reporting and listening make up the ingredients of the conversation? As though a conversation were formed just by putting them both together? Saying and hearing only form the spoken conversation, in that they unfold the original conversa-





tion. In such unfolding, they themselves first spring from the original conversation. This is the ever wordless address of what is sent to us, the silent voice of the greeting, in which there comes to pass the demand of that which someone must first bear in his heart, and be determined by this voice to be the one who points. To stand under such a claim means to be able to hear. That is the essential ground of genuine saying. Saying is originally a hearing, just as a genuine ability to hear is an original re-saying (not a mere mechanical repetition) of what has been heard. Only because the bodily organs, mouth and ear, differ in how they look, and are situated in different places of the body, do we separate saying and hearing into two separate faculties and thereby overlook the original unity of both, which nevertheless first of all sustains the very possibility of their interrelation. Saying and hearing both essentially arise from the original conversation. That is why in a good conversation what is said and what is heard are the same. In his poetic naming of good conversation, Hölderlin thinks of that saying and hearing which spring from the original conversation. A good conversation says

*the heart's intention.* This means that about which the heart thinks in constant anticipation. With good reason, one compares the word "intention" [*Meinung*] with "love" [*Minne*]. What the heart thinks in its depths, and that means also what it "wants," gathers all wishing within it. Essential wishing is to be distinguished from the mere longing that always wants what it longs for only for itself, and that, in its longing, also wills itself. Such longing turns away from what is fitting and proper. Because it lacks genuine thought, it is without understanding. Of this *wishing* Hölderlin says ("The Rhine," IV, 173):

Yet wishing is  
Unintelligible in the face of destiny . . .

In contrast, genuine wishing, which is brought to expression in the elegy "The Walk to the Country," wants what is fitting (IV, 112):

For it is not mighty, but it belongs to life,  
 What we want, and it seems both fitting and joyful.

*Not mighty*—not grandiose and impressive in appearance, also not such a thing that requires violence and secures its validity only through domination. Ruling inconspicuously, *it yet belongs to life*, not as a mere accessory, but as what is fitting, which the sons of the earth must hear in advance if they want to dwell on this earth. Since, however, this dwelling is *poetic*, that which is suitable to life can only be that *which we*, i.e., the poets, want. The heart's intention means the poem of the holy, in which for a moment destiny lingers at the time of the festival. The heart's intention thinks of the celebration of the festival. To utter such an opinion is what serves to prepare the poet to stand within the essence of his destined vocation. However, insofar as a good conversation utters the heart's intention, it can

hear much  
 Of days of love,  
 And deeds which occurred.

Here the word *much* signifies the wealth and the fullness of that which is one, not the multiplicity of an aggregate of scattered things. This hearing never perceives what is merely past, but hears what has been, insofar as it is initiated in the essence of what has occurred. This hearing thinks of the generosity, the gentle heart and the patient heart, of the days of love. Its spirit is the will that finds the beloved in its own being and steadfastly abides therein. This hearing is a commemoration of the sincerity and selfless heart of the *deeds* which, as having occurred, are always an accomplishment and establish something valid. Love and deeds fulfill the optimism of courage, from which alone the heart of mortals begins to prepare itself for the demand of a destiny which stands above men and yet beneath the gods, and must endure the inequality of the demigod. Love attunes the heart to the festival. The deeds free the heart to remain within destiny. In the realm of mortals, love and deeds are the celebration in



which the festival is readied. Love and deeds are the poetic elements which it is good for the poet to hear, who through the experience of the foreign fire and for the sake of it, is to exercise the free use of words to present that which erects the mortals' dwelling in the homelike. Insofar as this conversation speaks of love and deeds, it utters the heart's intention. What is said and what is heard are one and the same. In good conversation, the welcoming response makes one think of that about which all remembrance must think. Good conversation makes those who speak more thoughtful in the thinking of *mortal thoughts*. The poet becomes more soulful, that is to say, more poetic. The commemorative thinking of good conversation speaks the poetic language. The poet knows of what the poetic essence of good conversation consists, for he knows the nature of inessential conversation and of the language that functions there. The counter-essence of good conversation is *unpoetic* babbling. In a late fragment it is written (no. 25, IV, 257):

The spirit of the night,  
The one who reaches for the stars, he has strewn  
Our land with many languages, unpoetic, and  
This rubbish continues  
To this very hour.  
Yet there comes that which I want,

What the poet *wants* is what is fitting, that which is willed in the essential wish. This does not come because the poet wants it; rather, the poet must poetically wish what is coming, for that is the poem that cannot be composed in advance [*das unvordichtbare Gedicht*]: the dream of the holy. To this coming one the poets must *consecrate the soil with good talk* ("The Walk to the Country," IV, 112). Only thus is prepared for the sons of the earth the promise of a poetic dwelling. In the draft of the fragment, Hölderlin struggles to say more clearly what is meant by the word *unpoetic* [*undichtrischen*]. Norbert von Hellingrath remarks on this in the following way (IV, 392): "above the word *unpoetic* the variants are piled upon each other like a tower: *unending, unpeaceful, unbinding, unrestrained.*"

By means of this poetic interpretation of his own words, the poet lets

us know this: the poetic is the finite, which submits itself to the limits of its destiny. The poetic is what is peaceful in thoughtful rest which bans all strife. The poetic is the bond which binds together all that is unbound. The poetic is what is retained in the bond and the measure, that which is full of measure. In whatever direction it goes, the poetic does not want to surpass the limits, the rest, the bond, the measure. Poesis thinks of something which abides and endures. Poetic conversation exercises the language in the presentation of what is abiding, and thus bestows on the poet the free use of his capacity, so as to remain in what is proper to him. Such conversation is good. In it, one kind of remembrance encounters another. In their encounter, the harmony of the same thoughts, and thus their belonging together, is experienced as an enduring friendship.

But where are the friends? Bellarmin  
With his companion?

The fourth stanza begins with a question. It is the only one in the poem. But why should *remembrance*, which consists in decisiveness, fall now into the uneasiness of doubt? Perhaps the interrogative form of the two lines is only another more insistent linguistic phrase for the necessary word which, stemming from the same demand for *rest* and from the same remembrance, is spoken in the hymn "The Titans" (IV, 208):

Meanwhile, in holiday hours  
And so that I may rest,  
To think of the dead. Many have died  
In olden times, generals,  
And beautiful women, and poets  
And more recently  
Many of the men.  
But I am alone.

If we wanted to understand the question *But where are the friends?* as merely a rhetorical question, then it would have to read: But where are friends to be found? However, the poet asks about *Bellarmin with his com-*





*panion*. The question unequivocally asks about *the* friends. It asks where they are. The question is a genuine question. Nevertheless, there is still something indefinite in it. Are the friends whose whereabouts are sought the two who are named, who along with the poet as a third member would conduct a good conversation, so that the poet could rest? Then the poet himself would be one of the friends and companions. Or are *the friends* those two alone who are to speak and listen to one another? But Hölderlin precisely thinks of a conversation which is good for him, which means, good for the rescue of his poetic activity. What would be the relevance of a conversation among friends to which he himself is not a party? *Bellarmin* is the name of the companion with whom *Hyperion* once engaged in a long conversation in the course of many letters, which tell stories of *days of love* and *deeds*. *Hyperion* is the name of the poet. He himself is *the* companion about whose whereabouts the question inquires. But where he himself is the poet must certainly know, especially now, because, as the greeting one, he lets himself be known as the one who stays behind in his homeland. But the poet first asks about Bellarmin *with* his companion. Are we to suppose his companion is still with him? Or are we to assume that the two are separated? Where are the friends? This question does not want to locate the friends' whereabouts geographically. It thinks the essence of the place to whose location each of the friends has now been destined. For in the meantime, since the poetic period of Hölderlin's novel *Hyperion*, the poet has experienced other things. In the drama *Empedocles* the friend is no longer Bellarmin's companion. He has journeyed to another essential place. But even this place has been left behind in the interval. The *Empedocles* still belongs to the journey. *Homecoming* begins only where *The Wanderer* has crossed over to the poetic saying about the homeland's rivers ("The Rhine" and "The Ister"). Yet even the homecoming only begins the return home to what is one's own. That is why the arriving one asks for the cup, and aspires to be able to abide in what is proper to him. Should we then be surprised if the poet asks where he himself is, supposing that this question thinks in the direction of the process of becoming at home in one's essential place? So then *remembrance* does not exclude such questioning. It is only that it does not get caught up in

some calculations of doubt. Also, this poetic questioning is of another kind than that of thoughtful questioning, which dares to ask what is essentially worthy of questioning, and in this brings forward something different from the saying of the holy. The thinker thinks toward what is un-homelike, what is not like home, and for him this is not a transitional phase; rather, this is his being *at home*. The poet's questioning, on the other hand, is a commemorative questioning that puts the homelike itself into poetry. For the meaning of this kind of questioning, the sole question of the poem remains simply the shy unveiling of the concealed question that thinks forward to the essence of *remembrance* itself. Yet the poet questions poetically. The revealing emergence of his question is also a veiling. What seems to be indefinite about the question is this hovering veiling, which nevertheless lets what it asks be divined. The poet asks about *the companion* and about the friends and yet he is asking above all, though not only, about himself. Certainly, he is not speculating about the "ego" of his own personhood; rather, he asks, away from his ego, about the essential place of the self, whose own proper element is the fulfillment of the essence of his poethood. But if he is the one who has come home, what other question can he ask but whether through his homecoming he now really is *at home, at the source?*

Many  
Are shy of going to the source . . .

That is the answer to the question or at least the inner core of the answer, from which the rest can be unfolded. But the answer may be still more disconcerting than the unsettling question. For now *many* are named, who in turn belong in the number of those who are destined to go to the source. In this number are united those who belong together in this way. They are the friends, joined in a friendship that is founded upon their being destined for future poethood. The friends about whom the poet inquires, among whom he himself belongs, are the concealed (and still concealed even today) mariners who are remembered at the beginning of the poem. Among the number of these friends, many are shy of going to



the source. Does this mean to say only that while many are shy and a few will not make it to the source, the majority, nevertheless, without the least fear or hesitation, will directly undertake this course? If this were meant, it would contradict the fundamental law of history, which is a law invoking men to become-at-home. But this consists in a transition through a not-being-at-home, the only course suited for the appropriation of that which is one's own. For *the source* is the origin of the river which makes the land fertile and lets the sons of the earth dwell in it. *The source* is the origin of the river's spirit, which conceals in itself the poetic fullness of what is proper to the homeland. But the source manifests itself as source only to one who has experienced the river and its course into the sea. That is why the path to the source is the return pathway, running back toward the source in the opposite direction from the usual course of the river. The path to the source must first lead away from the source. The way to it does not lead directly toward it. What is, in its truth, the origin of the homelike, cannot be experienced precisely at the beginning of one's youthful growing up *at home*. To the same elegy "Bread and Wine," for which the words of the law of becoming-at-home were destined, Norbert von Hellingrath appends the following draft (IV, 323):

but of the origin

One thinks with difficulty and the house of the youth  
the seers no longer grasp.

But, in pure rule, the earth is still a thing of value.

A clarity, the night, this and the peaceful too

An understanding one knows well, a more princely one, and shows

The divine, they too are as long as the heaven and as deep.

If the spirit from abroad, commemorating what was experienced there, returns home, then above all the poet has in view that which he was charged to present. Thus gazing into what is coming, he no longer views *being at home* as he once did in his youth, since then he wanted to grasp the homeland directly. Only now the rule of the homelike earth holds sway, because the presentation that is to be ruled by it is determined by the fire which is to be presented. One such being, a higher, more princely



being, a demigod, in fact, who is enlightened in this clarity, can show the divine, even if the peacefulness and clarity to which the presentation must adapt itself would be as long and deep as the heaven. The thinking of the origin which returns back to the source is the most difficult kind of thinking. That is why so many are *shy*, not because they fear this most difficult thought, but because they love it. Shyness is certainly something other than bashfulness, which in all of its encounters remains fainthearted and insecure. On the contrary, shyness is restrained by the unequivocally unique one before whom it is shy. Shyness does not become more and more insecure, and yet it does keep to itself. In their keeping to themselves, however, shy ones escape the danger of becoming all wrapped up in themselves in the manner of those who are fearful. But the keeping-to-oneself of shyness also knows nothing of reservedness. As an originally firm and collected keeping to oneself, in the face of what makes it shy, this shyness has at the same time the most intimate affection for it. What arouses shyness makes one hesitate. Yet this hesitant shyness knows nothing of the fainthearted or downhearted. Its hesitation is the expectant decisiveness to be patient. Here hesitation is the courage to go slowly, a courage decided long ago. The hesitation of shyness is forbearance. But the essence of shyness is not confined to such hesitation. For in this shyness itself there rules the fond thinking which thinks through to the source of the shyness. Shyness is that reserved, patient, astonished remembrance of that which remains near in a nearness which consists solely in keeping something distant in its fullness, and thereby keeping it ready for its arising from its source. This essential shyness is the mood of a homecoming which *commemorates and remembers* the origin. Shyness is the knowledge that the origin cannot be directly experienced. This shyness is the center of gravity in which the heart of those poets must rest whose words found the historical course of a humanity toward what is home for it, so that it does not fall out of equilibrium. Shyness does not obstruct. But it sets what is slow and patient on its way. It is the fundamental mood of the holidays for the slow paths. Shyness attunes the course toward poetic paths. Shyness determines that one go to the origin. It is more decisive than all violence.





*Many / Are shy of going to the source . . .* does not mean that many remain away and do not go to the source; rather, the phrase says: many a one hesitates and does not rush toward the source. In his shyness, however, he alone knows well the law of passage to the source. By not going directly to the source, he precisely undertakes the authentic path to it. That is why only the shyest of the shy can be underway on this course. That is he. But he says this in a veiled manner; for he cannot boast of himself as the exception. He knows that the knowledge of the law consists only in standing within the law by first valiantly forgetting the homeland in order to wander abroad: namely *not at home is the spirit / At the beginning, not at the source*. Why is the spirit in the beginning not at the source, which according to the usual opinion, is after all the place which conceals the emergence of all plenitude?

For richness begins namely  
In the sea.

Richness is never mere possession; still less is it the consequence of possession—for it is always the very ground thereof. Richness is the abundance of what grants the possession of one's own being, in that it opens the way to its appropriation and has an inexhaustible command to become ripe for what is one's own. Abundance is not the enormous quantity that always is present in surplus on the table of one who is satiated. Genuine abundance is an overflowing which overflows itself and thus surpasses itself. In such surpassing, the overflowing flows back toward itself, and learns that it is not sufficient unto itself because it is constantly surpassed. But a surpassing-itself which is never sufficient unto itself is an origin. Richness is essentially an origin, in which what is proper can become property. A source is the unfolding of the one in the inexhaustibility of its unity. The one of this kind is the simple. Only he can be rich who understands how to use wealth freely, and to see it first and above all in its being. Only he is capable of this who can be poor, in the sense of poverty which is no mere deprivation. For deprivation is constantly entangled in a not-having, for which, as soon as there is something that it does not have, it would also

like to "have" everything, though without being fit for it. This deprivation does not spring from the courage of poverty. This deprivation, which wants to have, is mere indigence which ceaselessly hangs onto wealth, without being able to know its true nature, and without being able to meet the conditions of its appropriation. Essential poverty is the courage for the simple, which is only present in the origin. This poverty catches a glimpse of the essence of wealth and thus knows its law. The will to be rich must pass through a stage of self-surpassing. But this has to be learned. The learning must begin where wealth is shown the most easily. This occurs where wealth is spread out and where the essence of the simple, i.e., the source, can still be concealed in the immediate plenitude of what is offered. Expanded is the wealth, which is the source itself, where the river, which has arisen from it and still rushes everywhere, has spread itself out in order then, *as wide as the sea*, and ready for the sea, to discharge itself into the sea. The river "is" the source, so that as a consequence of its departure into the sea, the source conceals itself in the sea. As for those of whom it is said that *many* are shy of going to the source, from this shyness they must have recognized the path to the source as the detour via the sea. Their spirit loves the colony. These poets are mariners.

They,  
 Like painters, bring together  
 The beauty of the earth . . .

The poesis of these poets is not yet within the true element of poetry. Their manner is still like that of painters. Their saying has still not come home to what is homelike to them. It is that kind of poesis which *Bel-larmin with his companion* must bring to completion: the poetry of *Hyperion*. Upon their departure across the sea to the foreign land, they bring together the *beauty of the earth*. Here *beauty* in no way means many kinds of alluring and charming natures. *The beauty of the earth* is the earth in its beauty. With these words, however, the poet of *Hyperion* names *Being [Seyn]*. Instead of offering many citations as proof, a reference to the passage in the draft of a preface to *Hyperion* (II, 546) will suffice:



To end that eternal conflict between ourselves and the world, to bring again the peace of all peace, which is higher than all reason, to unite ourselves again with nature, with the One infinite whole: that is the goal of all our striving whether or not we are agreed with each other about it.

But neither our knowledge nor our action in any period of our existence attains to the cessation of all conflict where All is One; the definite line is reunited with the indefinite only in an infinite approach.

We would have no divination of that infinite peace, of that Being, in the sole, unique sense of the word, we would not have striven to unite nature with ourselves, we would not think and act, there would be nothing at all (for us), we would not think anything itself (for us), if it were not present to us through that infinite unity, that Being, in the sole, unique sense of the word. It is present—as beauty; to speak like Hyperion, a new kingdom awaits us where beauty is queen.

I think that at the end we will all say: holy Plato, forgive! One has (originally, we have) badly wronged you.

The Editor

Beauty is the enduring presence of *Being*. Being is what is true about beings. The poet of *Hyperion*, Hölderlin at the time of his departure abroad, always calls what is true of beings *nature*. The day will come when the poet who has come home, and who must say what establishes becoming-at-home in its own proper element, must no longer use and need this word as the fundamental word of his poetry.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, however, the mariners must let the beauty of the earth appear, if indeed, as poets, they are to be able to say what is true. Beauty is the original unifying One. This One can appear only if it is brought together in its Oneness as the unifying One. According to Plato, the εἶν is only visible in the συναγωγή, i.e., in the bringing together. But the poets *bring together like painters*. They let Being (the ἰδέα) appear in the aspect of the visible. *Like painters* does not mean that these poets depict the real. Painting is essentially to project (ὑπόθεσις) the one aspect in whose unity *beauty* is



shown. As the same preface says, poets are not "reporters," in pursuit of ever new "facts" hidden behind apparent transformations. The comparison of poets with painters in no way wants to defend "descriptive poesy." That Hölderlin had an aversion to this is shown in a distich which originated immediately after *Hyperion* (III, 6):

Listen! Apollo has become the god of journalists,  
And his man is the one who faithfully reports the facts to him.

The poets whose vocation is to let beauty appear in the project of the beautiful, know, even if it is only a presentiment, where their voyage leads. That is why they do not withdraw from the departure across the sea. Out of their shyness toward the source, they take heart in their poverty, which does not consider itself too good to endure the passage through the journey. They travel

And disdain  
Not the winged war.

Their *war* is called *winged* after *the ship's wings*, the word with which Hölderlin designates the sails in the elegy "The Archipelago" (IV, 91). Winged war is the struggle with contrary winds and with unfavorable weather. For the sea is open to all winds. The crossing is not always good and it is not always clear which course is to be followed. Many things remain undecided. Yet this war brings forth the possibilities of true and false wealth and, although it is never itself the source, it points out the direction of the source. That is why the mariners are resolved

To dwell alone, for years, beneath  
The leafless mast,

Like a long winter in which the trees stand without leaves, reserving their strength and sap for growth, thus it is the time of the sea voyage beneath the treelike mast. It vibrates with its woodwork and rigging like a winter tree stripped of its leaves in a storm. At the time of the glow of the





southern fire, however, it offers no shade. Thus, the mariners  *dwell*  in something unhomelike far from the shady forests of the homeland, as if in a foreign country. They know that the season is long in which the true comes to pass;  *for years*  they persist there,

where through the night gleam neither  
The holidays of the town  
Nor lyre-music and native dancing.

The mariners are without holidays. So it seems as if they are without relation to the festival, thrust out into a festival-less time. But why does Hölderlin expressly name the night? Because the mariners keep watch throughout their journey. Insofar as their wakefulness determines the whole manner in which they persist in the season of wandering, this season appears as the time of night. In it neither the foreign nor the home-like is already purely decided. But what is still undecided is not nothing. The period of this night does not plunge into mere blackness, which lets nothing appear. This night has its own clarity; it is serious, without the gaiety of peaceful play; still waiting calmly, yet without the swaying and swinging of the native dance. The night of the mariners' voyage, who have departed to experience the heavenly fire, still remains the mother of the day, which is defined as the holiday on the day before the festival, during whose time destiny hangs in the balance for a moment. The mariners' voyage is the nightwatch for destiny. The mariners are on a voyage to the origin of their own being. That is why they can never become adventurers, those for whom the foreign is always something "exotic," which is revealed in like a drug, perhaps to experience the sensation of surprise and the element of the unusual, equating this with the "marvelous." The mariners' sea voyage is noble and sober. They experience abroad the first reflection of what is their own, for whose appropriation they wait to become better learners. An adventurer, on the contrary, is possible only in the historical space which altogether lacks festivals. Here he is still only the acknowledged substitute for the experienced ones, and thus he is the final confusion of the season without festivals. The mariners, on the other hand, have

the location of their being in the journey of the voyage, which from its beginning is already a return home.

The poetic meaning of the words *But where are the friends?* is illuminated by the answer which begins to unfold in the same stanza. The question asks: At what location of their being do these poets of the coming time stand? The shy, paraphrased answer reads: These ones are still on their sea voyage. We do not recognize them. The other has already come home. *At home* he now begins the genuine course to the source. Here he is the first apprentice and therefore still without companions. The words from "The Titans" hymn (IV, 208) now point to the imminent future:

But I am alone.

These words are quite different from an inconsolable discovery of empty abandonment. It means the steady knowledge which has decided to learn only what is one's own, paying heed to what has been found fitting, and which has the aptitude to present the destiny that has been experienced. These words declare that now poetry must be different from the presentation that brings beauty together *like painters*. Because the poet must now be alone, even good conversation can no longer help. Another March month has come. Its saying is different. If being alone is not mere abandonment and if there remains conversation, this conversation too now has a different manner; for the discovery of the proper manner vouchsafes the flowering of Being. The last stanza of the poem "Ganymede" (IV, 69) makes this all clear:

Spring comes. And everything, in its own way,  
 Blooms. But he is far away; no longer there.  
 Now he would go astray, for all too good are  
 The geniuses; heavenly conversation is his now.

The poet is now no longer *far away* from home; he is near the source. But he is far away from Greece and the conversations of the past. The manner of being away, however, is the greeting. Of course, were he to count only on his own personal ability, *he could go astray*. But he does not

go astray; for he now recognizes, as the second stanza of the poem says, *the heightened play of the breezes*. His hearing is keener. His saying is stronger. But he is not the mighty, booming “prophet.” He is only beginning to learn the free use of what is his own. That is why the foreign must remain near. That is why, for the future poets, the journey preserves what is unavoidable according to the law whereby they must become-at-home. That is why he who is alone and ponders what is his own at the same time commemorates his companions (“The Titans,” IV, 208):

But I am alone.  
 .....  
 . . . and sailing into the ocean  
 To ask the fragrant islands,  
 Where have they gone?

Even here where some fragments are lacking, the context is nevertheless clear. The poet does not think of the mariners in order that the thought of their being distant would cause him to sink down further into his own solitude. He thinks of his being-alone in order that out of the being of his previous solitary course, he may abide in belonging to the mariners, and that the established law of becoming-at-home may be well understood. For that it is necessary to know the beginning and the stages of the voyage, the turning point toward home and the beginning of homecoming. That is why the poet asks, *where have they gone?*

But now to the Indies  
 The men have gone,

*But now*—This sounds like a disappointment. Thus the mariners have not stayed in the greeted land, which poetically stands for Greece. *The men*—in the draft Hölderlin had written: *The friends*—have gone far beyond Greece to the East, as the poet himself once said of his voyage (“The Journey,” IV, 167):

But I want to go to the Caucasus!

The poetical men have even more decisively moved away from the homeland. The mariners must still be braver in their forgetting. But in this extreme distance from the homeland, don't they precisely come nearer to their own proper element? Having reached the Indies, won't they have turned toward the place where the journey to the colony runs back to the source? Can the thinking which guides their crossing only consist in not thinking of the homeland?

*But now—to the Indies*—These words are spoken with confidence. For at the Indus River, it all turns in the direction of Germania. In a hymn fragment to which N. von Hellingrath has given the title "The Eagle," it is said (IV, 223):

But as in the beginning  
 Out of the forests of the Indus,  
 The strongly fragrant,  
 Our parents have come.

The spirit of the Indus River has made a home for the parents in the primal homeland and has founded their first dwelling there. In the domain of this river the voyaging men should experience whatever is ancestral so that they, coming home, become more experienced, in order to greet their parents in what is proper to them and to thank them for the preservation of the origin, which they now bring to fulfillment in the German homeland. The thought which thinks toward the men who are in the Indies thinks only toward learning to know what is proper in an ever more proper way and to become more practiced in its free use. Correspondingly—in the reverse direction—this young man, student and teacher, had to undertake his journey into the remotest distances, for in the *Hyperion* period he was seeking what was his own only through a presentiment, and his destiny had not yet been found. Hyperion writes to his companion Bellarmin (II, 102):

It is as if I rage against my Adamas  
 For having left me. But I do not rage at him.  
 Oh yes, he wanted to come back! In the





depths of Asia there is supposed to be concealed a people  
of rare perfection; it is there that  
his hope drove him further.

The *distance* of this *further* has meanwhile lost the indefiniteness of what was simply surmised. This "further" does not mean here the mere expansion of an adventurous journey into a still greater expanse. What is the most distant of all distant things is the *beginning of the parents'* origin. It is where the *Indies* are that the journey turns from the foreign back toward home. Where the journey turns itself toward "Germania," it brings the departure abroad to its decisive moment. But in this manner the southern land, which stands for Greece, becomes the departure place for the journey to the location of the journey's turn. That is why the poet must now not just name the place of this departure in general. With the emphasized word *there*, he must expressly confess the necessity of departing from the splendid foreign land as well.

There to the windy peak  
On vine-covered hills, where down  
The Dordogne comes  
And together with the magnificent  
Garonne as wide as the sea  
The river flows out.

Once more the previously greeted land appears, but now in the greeting of a departure which carries within itself a transformed return. The *windy peak* lets one think anew of "the air" and "the wind" of the northeast, which now waits in its relentless sharpness in order to bring the mariners on the way to the most distant of all distances, the "original." In the sea's wide-open spaces there is prepared the final decision of the turn from the foreign to what is properly one's own. The richness of the source begins to bestow itself. *There*, in order to preserve what has been for the future, the voyaging poets must have moored their remembrance, where, in the *month of March*, everything is gathered along the *river* and its *slow paths* and where the *heavenly fire* first appears. While the poet still thinks

of the distant mariners and on the manner in which they must think of their journey, his own *remembrance*, which has meanwhile reflected on his return home, his homecoming, is elevated into the clarity of his being.

*But now to the Indies / The men have gone*—So speaks now the tranquil patience of that *single man* who experiences his solitude as the essential fulfillment of a friendship, which requires that among poetic men there be a first one who is sacrificed in learning the free use of what is his own. In this remembrance, this reflecting on, the poet knows that each place that must become a place of rest during the departure abroad is an essential place, through whose location the journey is more decisively, i.e., more originally, granted its beginning as its own. That is why the poet can never place too high a value on one place in favor of the other. Nevertheless, the land of the Greeks, in distinction to one's own homeland, remains the first to be greeted and, in the departure of the journey to the turning place of the journey, also the last to be greeted. The mystery of thought, according to whose manner the commemorative poet thinks, has now divulged its simple, essential fullness. It demands that its simplicity become clearly separated into words so that there may be an answer to the question in which the poetic meditation on the essence of friendship among poets hangs in the balance: What kind of remembrance is it whose thoughts arise in *war* with the sea and so stir the souls of the mariners? What kind of remembrance inspires the homecoming "animators"?

But it is the sea  
That takes and gives memory,

With the departure upon the sea, the home shore must be forgotten and thinking must be turned toward the foreign land. Insofar as the sea takes away the remembrance of the homeland, it unfolds its richness at the same time. When its openness is passed through, it leads to the foreign shore, which induces a reflection on what is foreign, what is to be learned, so that, with the return home, the appropriation of what is one's own can be accomplished, and the foreign that has been transformed and brought

back can be presented. The sea thus takes away memory insofar as it gives it. But it gives memory at the same time that it takes it away. If the sea voyage grants a turning toward the foreign, then likewise, through the very viewing of it, it awakens a reflecting on what is one's own. This remembrance that is now bestowed, which thinks ahead toward the path to the source, again allows what is merely strange in the foreign to be forgotten, so that only that foreignness that is to be transformed through what is proper to one is preserved. Only because the taking away of memory is also a giving and the giving is also a taking away, does the sea take away and give memory. The sea voyage is permeated by a remembrance which thinks back upon the departed homeland and forward toward what is to be attained. Yet this thinking of the mariners can never be a pure remembering because it always requires some forgetting. To be sure, this remembrance already reaches back to the *at home* and preserves those who think in it.

And love too fixes attentive eyes.

Good conversation, to which the poet is so attached, which shows him how to remain in what is his own, lets him hear of *days of love*. For love is the vision of the essential being of the beloved, a vision which sees through this essence into the essential ground of the lovers. Yet this essential vision is unlike mere contemplation, which is only the enjoyment of an appearance. What the spirit of love sees is not confined to a mere appearance, but it fixes itself to the essence of the beloved, placing it back firmly on its ground through an *attentive gaze*. Hölderlin had first written (IV, 301):

and  
Love fixes  
The eyes.

The lover's fixed gaze occurs attentively, i.e., not only in constant care, but "on purpose." This purpose, however, is not a calculative intention. It



stems from the aim to gaze, in an essential way, into the essential ground of the lovers. This aim fixes everything to its ground. The attentive thinking of the spirit of love is also a remembrance. Lovers think ahead into the essence of the beloved, and yet they must always think back as well, to be sure that they persevere in the essence that is to be thought. In the remembrance of the mariners and in the remembrance of lovers, the original essence of remembrance comes to light for the first time. Remembrance, reflecting on something [*An-denken*], is a making firm which thinks of something firm, to which thinkers adhere so as to be made firm in their own essence. Remembrance attaches thinkers to their essential ground. Yet neither the thinking of the mariners nor the thinking of lovers is yet the original remembrance. Even though love may think only of the essential ground of the lovers, its remembering, remaining in the vicinity of the lovers and thinking of their belonging to one another, still takes love's essential ground for granted. Such thinking, which is actually love itself, is still not able to ground this ground itself, i.e., to found all loves in a historical homeland. True, the remembrance of the mariners, in constantly thinking of the foreign and on the homeland, brings together the *beauty of the earth* as the ground of all beings. But this thinking which brings together into the One, does not yet go to the source. For that the mariners must first be moored at the shore of the homeland, relinquish the sea voyage, and set out on the path to the nearness of the origin. As long as they, as mariners, are on the journey, they do indeed establish a ground. Yet the essential places that they have experienced keep them from lasting and deny them what remains.

But what remains is founded by the poets.

What love beholds in its essential vision is something which remains over time. But the loving gaze is not a founding. The manner in which the mariners establish the One is the establishing of a foundation. But they do not found what remains. That is why they do not establish an original foundation. That is why they are not yet the poets of the coming poetic activity. Yet what is that *which remains*? What does the original *founding*





consist of? The one is not to be thought without the other. It is in their relationship that *the poets* have their being.

*What remains*—is something that lasts and abides. Is this not known to all of us, out of the wishes of our hearts, even if we have never actually found something that remains? What remains is the unchangeable. And yet, even that can just vanish in a moment along with its unchangeableness. Hence, only that remains which does not vanish, which does not pass away because it is imperishable. The imperishable shows itself as the everlasting. Remaining, then, consists in a persisting, in the sense of constant presence. We think of what remains only in a cursory manner, it seems, scarcely paying heed to the fact that even something that is merely left over could also perhaps be said to remain. Here what remains has lost its distinguishing characteristic, the very reason why we desire what remains. Often we even take what remains as something that is to contain ourselves, so that we are present at hand within what remains, like a thing in a thing-like receptacle. We thereby misinterpret what remains, as well as ourselves, as mere things, and thus we hold the essence of lasting to be obvious and accessible to the intellect of each and all. Although human thinking always inclines to what remains in this way, and even though Hölderlin himself does not always escape this conception of what remains, we have to listen to the poem itself and only to the poem, because it comes to its end in the naming of *what remains*. In these concluding words, the poet gives no explanation of what remains. He does not name that which we would like to grasp first of all, i.e., the “content” of what endures. In the draft of this line, Hölderlin had first written (IV, 301):

But something remaining is founded by the poets.

*Something remaining*—not remaining in general, which is meant indefinitely and without any particular aspect. *Something remaining* is that which abides in a special kind of lasting. Does this not come to words in the poem? The poet who remains behind lets the foreign land be greeted. But the one who stays behind does not persist in the rigidity of

blind abandonment. He calls for that which grants him the ability to *rest*, i.e., to remain, in his very own determination. This remaining reveals its essence in the question *But where are the friends?* The remaining in what is one's own is the path to the source. This is the origin from which arises all dwelling of the sons of the earth. Remaining means going to the nearness of the origin. Whoever dwells in the nearness realizes the essence of remaining.

What dwells

Near the origin is loathe to leave it.

It is not by chance that these words are found in the hymn "The Journey," which begins by praising the native earth (IV, 167). Remaining means hardly being able to leave the place of origin. Being loathe to leave stems from the shyness of the path to the source, for the shyness has been fixed by that which inspires the shyness. Thus the source must be that which is fixed. It is this because it endures, insofar as it abides as the origin. It is at the source where the richness that began in the sea is fulfilled. The source is the wealth, but only when it is experienced as the source. This occurs in such a way that, through the journey abroad, the source first of all becomes that which is distant, that to which a homecoming can come near when it sets out for home. The dwelling-near-to-the origin must spring out of this coming-near. This dwelling retains the manner of coming-near, assuming that it knows (*Ripe are*—IV, 71):

But much is

To be retained. And need, the faithful,

namely, faithful to the essence of the origin. For the origin surpasses itself in letting something spring forth, and is never sufficient unto itself. Taken for itself, the origin can only be poor, because, notwithstanding all that it lets spring forth, it needs to secure itself in its essential ground. Only that which moves backward to secure itself is capable of letting something flow forth out of itself without thereby losing its essence. The origin retains its



essence through this securing of itself in its ground, and only thereby does the ground attain to being a ground. This self-securing of the origin is an establishing of the ground. In this establishing alone consists the steadfastness which is proper to the origin. The character of the source as being an origin does not only consist of its giving forth its waters, as if it were a hidden container. The original flowing of the source flows backward into its ground. It is not only concealed by the earth, but its flowing is a self-concealing sheltering in the ground. Thus, the source remains anchored to its ground. Hence, to dwell near to the origin means to follow it backward as it is secured by its ground. This following neither makes the origin nor does it merely discover it like something present-at-hand, and so it must hold onto this firmness in such a way that it shows the origin in its self-securing, and in its letting-flow-forth. The showing brings what is shown near, and yet keeps it distant. The showing only draws near to what is shown. The more essential the distance which is maintained in this drawing near, all the nearer is the showing to what is shown. This remains distant to the degree that an essential self-withdrawal belongs to it. The more distant distance which is hereby unfolded, however, guarantees the essential nearness of the showing to what is shown. For this nearness does not measure itself according to any spatial distance, but according to the manner of the openness of what is shown and of the showing that is suitable to it. Along with the establishment of its ground which goes back into itself, the origin lets the most distant distance spring forth, and in this distance lies the possibility of the pure nearness which sustains the distance. The origin can be shown only in one way: returning back from a journeying which first originated from the origin, the showing moves into a nearness to the origin. Thereby the showing itself is pinned down in the steadfastness of the origin. This means: it is founded. Accordingly, founding is what remains, which approaches the origin, and it endures because, as the shy approach to the source, it finds it difficult to leave this place of nearness. What this founding, as a remaining which shows, founds is itself. What remains here is the remaining. What is thus founded the poet can call *something remaining*. Only that which is so founded is what the poet thinks as that *which is remaining*.



The attempt to characterize the remaining and the founding without any appeal to a content seems to correspond to the final word of the poem. This is of course true only as long as we take this word in isolation and thereby still overlook that it, all immediate indefiniteness notwithstanding, still reflects on the poets. They are demigods. *The source* is the source of the rivers, of the native rivers at that, whose stream-essence was the theme of the hymns "At the Source of the Danube," "The Rhine," and "The Ister." These rivers are the living spirit of those poets who, standing between men and gods, must first establish the ground for this open between-realm which springs from their being. In this openness alone do gods and men find one another, approach each other, if such is destined to them. This open opens itself when there arrives that which is above men and gods, in that, coming from high above, it first lets an open emerge so that something true (unconcealed) can be. This opening in advance is the holy, the poem that cannot be composed in advance, that poesis that has soared above all poesis because in it all founding establishes what has been founded by it. The holy opens itself to men and gods especially when the festival comes to pass. In the festival, the steadfast appears, in which the essential origin of the poet is established. The poet dwells near to the origin in that he shows what is far, but which draws near in the coming of the holy. The poet can discern this coming—and thus be the pointer and the poet—only when he especially thinks of the heavenly fire, and brings what he has experienced back into the necessity of a presentation, thinking of the appropriation of his own capacity. For only because he, thinking of what has been—the journey and what is to be learned in the location of his native home—is open for divinity and humanity, does he have the showing gaze for the open in which gods first come as guests, and men can build a housing for the true, where they may be able to secure themselves. The poet shows this open realm of the between in which he himself must dwell in such a manner that his saying, showing, follows the origin, and thus is that which endures, securing itself in the holy which is to come into words. This founding is what is first founded. Only if this enduring endures is dwelling-near-to-the-origin grounded. Founding is now *at home* in its essence. A dwelling which



founds in this way is the original dwelling of the sons of the earth, who at the same time are the children of heaven. Those are the poets. Only now, through poetry, is there a founding. These poets first lay out and secure the building site upon which the house must be built in which the gods are to come as guests. The poets *consecrate the soil*. They are not the carpenters who celebrate the raising of the roof ("The Walk to the Country," IV, 113):

May the carpenter on the rooftop take the credit,  
We, as long as it succeeds, have done our share.

Yet why should the founders, who say *the highest* in advance, not also think ahead to what belongs to the building of the house, and likewise to that which is capable of preserving the building, and thus securing the relations in which the gods and men have arrived? Of course, this securing is something different from making-fast. For the latter, the highest is necessary; for the former, the strongest. Neither can replace the other. That is why with respect to the securing of what has sprung forth, art must step back. In a note which Hölderlin added to a fragment of Pindar, to which he gave the title *The Highest*, he says (V, 277):

Discipline, insofar as it is the form in which man may encounter himself and god, church and state and the inherited rules (the holiness of god and for man the possibility of recognition, an explanation): these guide the most just law with the almightiest hand, they hold fast, stronger than art, the living relationships in which with time a people is encountered and encounters itself.

But if the *living relationships* had never come to life in the first place and sprung forth, i.e., if they had not remained secured in their origin and in their essential ground of their poetic origin, then all discipline, be it as strong as it may be, would have had nothing firm to *hold on to*. Unless what remains stays near the origin, only the nothingness of emptiness is left over. And this emptiness then only hastens the forgetting of the ultimate truth: that even nothingness itself is not present without being.

The dwelling near the origin that prepares a foundation is the original dwelling, in which the poetic is first grounded, upon whose ground the sons of the earth are then to dwell, at least if they are to *dwell poetically upon this earth*. The poesis of the poets is now what founds everything that remains. What remains is the *remembrance* of the poet. It does not only think of what has been and of what is coming; rather, it ponders from where the coming had first been uttered, and thinks back to where what has been must be concealed, so that this foreign element itself can remain what it is even when it is appropriated. Remembrance thinks of the location of the place of origin in thinking of the journey of the voyage through the foreign. Remembrance thinks of the source, because of its reflecting on the sea that was traversed, into which the source flowed out as the river. The spirit of the river carries the source into the sea and brings the sea back to the source, which only now, in the backward-moving current, manifests itself as the source. The flowing of the river founds what remains. That which remains prepares the historical place in which German humanity must first learn to become at home, so that, when it is time, it will be able to linger in the moment when destiny lies in the balance. Only whoever has gone back into that remaining will be strong enough himself for this lingering. The poetic truth of remembrance is granted in the *flowing* of the rivers. Never does the remembrance merely make present an origin that is already known. But neither does it create it. Yet this thinking makes itself securely fast in the essential ground of poetry, and shows it insofar as it follows its essence into the origin, and through this following is itself poesis. *Remembrance* is a poetic abiding in the essence of what is fitting to poetic activity, which, in the secure destiny of Germany's future history, festively shows the ground of its origin. Destiny has sent the poet into the essence of poetic activity, and chosen him to be the first sacrifice. In such a sending, the poet is originally greeted. The one who is thus greeted greets the northeast wind, which places the poet in the clarity of what is homelike, and grants favor to the voyaging mariners. Through the northeast wind, one of the friends stands with the other in the same wind. That is why the one who stays behind can let the distant land be greeted through the same wind which points out to him

what is his own. The one who greets, however, stays behind, because the essence of what is greeted has become a remaining through the greeting of the holy. Its remaining is founded in the words of the poem "Remembrance." The poem does not "express" "experiences"; rather, it takes the poet into the open realm of his essence, which was opened up as a poem. The poem shelters the astonished thanks for the wonder of being greeted by the holy and thus called to a founding. The poetic astonishment gradually unfolds the richness of a vocation which is certain to remain, which, mounting up, encounters level after level, leaving each one again in favor of the next, yet without forgetting the steps left behind. This structure of the voyage of becoming-at-home in what is one's own is poetically structured by the *but*, which gives to the poem its hidden tone:

The northeast blows —  
     But go now —  
         Still I remember this well —  
             But in the courtyard a fig-tree grows —  
                 But someone pass me —  
                     But where are the friends? —  
                         But richness begins —  
                             But it takes —  
                                 But what remains  
                                     Is founded by the poets.

"Remembrance" is a unique ordering of the *but*, structured in itself, which names the word of mystery as that which, *purely sprung*, remains in its origin. Poetry is remembrance. Remembrance is founding. The dwelling of the poet who founds shows and consecrates the ground for the poetic dwelling of the sons of the earth. Something that endures comes to remain. Remembrance is. The northeast blows.

## NOTES

1. The next to last line of "Remembrance" has been altered in accordance with the variant reading given by Friedrich Beissner. [M.H.]



2. Friedrich Beissner discovered these lines, which were not published by Hellingrath, and issued them for the first time in his important book *Hölderlin's Translations from the Greek*, 1933, p. 147. Beissner also recognized the significance of these lines for the discussion of the question of Hölderlin's relation to "Hesperia and Greece."—The extent to which the law of historicity poetized in these lines can itself be derived from the principle of the unconditional subjectivity of the German absolute metaphysics of Schelling and Hegel, according to whose doctrine the very being-in-itself of spirit requires its return to itself, which in turn presupposes its being-outside-itself, to what extent such a reference to metaphysics, even if it does make "historically correct" relations manifest, clarifies the poetic law, or rather obscures it, that question is best left for further reflection. In addition, one should see that the question, so often treated in Hölderlin research, of this poet's "Occidental turn" (whether this turning is toward Christianity while turning away from Greece, or whether it is a transformed attitude toward both) is already too little thought out even as a question, and remains stuck in superficial "historiographical" categories. To be sure, Hölderlin himself changed, but he did not turn. Only in this transformation did he find what was proper to him, toward which he was always turned. In his transformation, the knowledge of the truth of Greece and Christianity and *the East* in general is transformed. The usual periods and ages of historiographical consideration lose any point. [M.H.]

3. Now if we have first thought "the open" through a nonpoetic thinking, and experienced its being beforehand as the clearing of being, whose essence is reminiscent of what the Greeks initially divined in the word ἀλήθεια (un-concealedness), but which they could never bring into the foreground, the question may arise whether something foreign is thereby introduced into Hölderlin's poetry through the interpretation. On the other hand, this thinking might have come to meet this poetry half-way, admittedly from an entirely different region. This question must be left for further consideration. Cf. "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," *Jahrbuch für die geistige Überlieferung*, Vol. 2 (1942), which appeared as a separate impression in 1947 with A. Francke (Bern). In contrast, what Rilke, in the eighth of his *Duino Elegies*, called "the open" is so foreign to the thinking of the ground of ἀλήθεια that even to show that Rilke's words were at the extreme opposite to Hölderlin's word would not be putting it strongly enough. (Cf. *Holzwege* [1950], pp. 262 ff.) [M.H.]

4. Cf. "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry." [M.H.]

5. Cf. "As When on a Holiday . . ." [M.H.]





# HÖLDERLIN'S EARTH AND HEAVEN

*Lecture delivered at the meeting of the Hölderlin Society in Munich on June 6, 1959 at the Cuvilliés-Theatre in the Residenz.*

*Repeated on July 14, 1959 at the Stuttgart Library Society in the Blue Room of the Recital Hall.*

*Repeated on November 27, 1959 for the Studium Generale of the University of Freiburg i. Br. in the main auditorium.*

*Repeated on January 18, 1960 in the new auditorium of the University of Heidelberg.*

## PREFACE TO THE LECTURE IN MUNICH

Immanuel Kant made roughly the following remark: It is easy to discover something once we have been shown where to look.

With regard to Hölderlin, Norbert von Hellingrath, whose image was made present to us this morning through a masterly sketch, remains this kind of pointer for us all.

**PREFACE TO THE LECTURE IN STUTTGART**

In the meantime, the question has been raised as to whether Hölderlin belongs to the philologists or to the philosophers. He belongs neither to one nor to the other, nor even to both. This either-or, however it may be resolved, misses the crucial point. In what way? Inasmuch as the question which needs to be clarified is not to whom among us Hölderlin belongs; rather, the sole question is whether we in the present age are capable of belonging to Hölderlin's poem.

Our reflection is concerned solely with Hölderlin's poem. It is an attempt to transform our accustomed way of representing things into an unaccustomed, because simple, thinking experience. (The transformation into the thinking experience of the center of the infinite relation—out of the collected framework [*Ge-stell*] as the self-dissimulating event [*Ereignis*] of the fourfold.)

There is no *one* true way into the greatness of Hölderlin's poem. Each of the various ways is, as a mortal one—an errant way.

If what Paul Valéry says of the poem is true: "The poem—this prolonged lingering between sound and sense," then the listening to the poem, and even the thinking which prepares such listening, lingers even longer than the poem itself. After all, such lingering has its own lofty resoluteness; it is no mere vacillation.

**PREFACE TO THE LECTURE IN FREIBURG I. BR.**

What we shall attempt to say in the following lecture calls for some prefatory remarks. The title of the lecture reads: "Hölderlin's Earth and Heaven." For this reason you have before you a text whose title is "Greece."

So it could be a matter of interpreting the draft of the poem with the purpose of explaining how Hölderlin represents earth and heaven. This would be a justifiable project. It would, perhaps, result in a contribution to Hölderlin research.

In comparison, however, the following lecture has something dif-

ferent in mind, something preliminary: *a matter of thinking*. Let it remain open whether and how Hölderlin's poetry, as poetry, may thereby strike us in our own being.

It is a matter of daring an attempt to transform our accustomed way of representing into an unaccustomed, because simple, thinking experience.

This transformation, however, plays within the domain of a poetic saying that comes out of a poetic activity that we shall never be able to grasp by means of the guidelines of literary and aesthetic categories.

We shall let Bettina von Arnim tell us in what sense Hölderlin experiences *the* poetic activity—not merely his own. On the basis of Hölderlin's commentaries to his Sophocles translations, which appeared in 1804, Bettina von Arnim explains (toward the end of the first part of *Günderode*) Hölderlin's definition of the poetic activity in the following sentences:

And thus the god has used the poet as an arrow to propel his rhythm from the bow, and whoever does not experience this and is [not] pliable enough, will never have either the skill or the athletic virtue for being a poet, and such a one is too weak to be able to grasp either the matter of the worldview of earlier ages, or the later mode of representation of our tendencies, and no poetic forms will manifest themselves to him. Poets who study established forms can only repeat the once given spirit, for they place themselves like birds on a branch of the tree of language and rock themselves gently on it, according to the primordial rhythm which lies in its roots; but such a one cannot soar like a spirited eagle hatched by the living spirit of language.

(Bettina von Arnim, *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by W. Oehlke, Vol. II, p. 345)





## GRIECHENLAND

O ihr Stimmen des Geschicks, ihr Wege des Wanderers  
Denn an der [Augen] Schule Blau,  
Fernher, am Tosen des Himmels  
Tönt wie der Amsel Gesang  
Der Wolken [sichere] heitere Stimmung gut  
Gestimmt vom Daseyn Gottes, dem Gewitter.  
Und Rufe, wie hinaus schauen, zur  
Unsterblichkeit und Helden;  
Viel sind Erinnerungen. Wo darauf  
Tönend, wie des Kalbs Haut  
Die Erde, von Verwüstungen her, Versuchungen der Heiligen  
Denn anfangs bildet das Werk sich  
Grossen Gesezen nachgeheth, die Wissenschaft  
Und Zärtlichkeit und den Himmel breit lauter Hülle nachher  
Erscheinend singen Gesangeswolken.  
Denn fest is der Erde  
Nabel. Gefangen nemlich in Ufern von Gras sind  
Die Flammen und die allgemeinen  
Elemente. Lauter Besinnung aber oben lebt der Aether. Aber silbern  
An reinen Tagen  
Ist das Licht. Als Zeichen der Liebe  
Veilchenblau die Erde.  
[Aber wie der Reigen  
Zur Hochzeit,]  
Zu Geringem auch kann kommen  
Grosser Anfang.  
Alltag aber wunderbar zu lieb den Menschen  
Gott an hat ein Gewand.  
Und Erkenntnissen verberget sich sein Angesicht  
Und deket die Lüfte mit Kunst.  
Und Luft und Zeit dekt  
Den Schröcklichen, dass zu sehr nicht eins  
Ihn liebet mit Gebeten oder  
Die Seele. Denn lange schon steht offen

GREECE<sup>1</sup>

O you voices of destiny, you ways of the wanderer!  
For amid the [eyes'] blue school,  
From afar, amid the uproar of heaven  
Rings out like the blackbird's song  
The clouds' [secure] serene mood, well  
Tempered by the existence of God, by the thunderstorm.  
And calls, like looking out, for  
Immortality and heroes;  
Recollections are many. Where ringing out  
On it, as on the calf's hide,  
The earth, proceeding from devastations, temptations of the holy ones,  
For in the beginning the work forms itself,  
Pursues great laws, knowledge  
And tenderness and the width of heaven, pure covering, later  
Appearing, sing clouds of song.  
For firmly fixed is the earth's  
Navel. For captive in green banks of grass are  
The flames and the common  
Elements. But above pure meditation lives the aether. But silver  
On clear days  
Is the light. As a sign of love  
Violet-blue the earth.  
[But like the round dance  
To a wedding,]  
A great beginning can come  
Even to the humble.  
Everyday but wonderfully, for the love of men,  
God has put on a garment.  
And his face is concealed from the knowing  
And covers the skies with art.  
And air and time cover  
The terrible one, so that not too much one  
With prayers may love him  
Or the soul. For long already like leaves,



Wie Blätter, zu lernen, oder Linien und Winkel  
Die Natur  
Und gelber die Sonnen und die Monde,  
Zu Zeiten aber  
Wenn ausgehn will die alte Bildung  
Der Erde, bei Geschichten nemlich  
Gewordnen, muthig fechtenden, wie auf Höhen führet  
Die Erde Gott. Ungemessene Schritte  
Begränzt er aber, aber wie Blüten golden thun  
Der Seele Kräfte dann der Seele Verwandtschaften sich zusammen,  
Dass lieber auf Erden  
Die Schönheit wohnt und irgend ein Geist  
Gemeinschaftlicher sich zu Menschen gesellet.

Süss ists, dann unter hohen Schatten von Bäumen  
Und Hügeln zu wohnen, sonnig, wo der Weg ist  
Gepflastert zur Kirche. Reisenden aber, wem,  
Aus Lebensliebe, messend immerhin,  
Die Füße gehorchen, blühn  
Schöner die Wege, wo das Land

Or lines and angles,  
Nature stands open to learn  
And yellower the suns and the moons,  
But at times  
When the ancient form of earth wants  
To go out, amid histories, what has been,  
And boldly fencing, as on high places God  
Leads the earth. Unmeasured paces, though,  
He limits, but like blossoms golden  
Then the soul's powers, the soul's affinities, come together,  
So that more willingly  
Beauty dwells on earth and a spirit of some kind  
More communally joins itself to men.

Sweet it is then to dwell under the high shade  
Of trees and hills, sunny, where the way  
Is paved to the church. To travelers, though,  
To him, whose feet, from love of life,  
Measuring all along, obey him,  
More beautifully blossom the ways where the land



## HÖLDERLIN'S EARTH AND HEAVEN

Earth and heaven—this phrase names a connection. The conjunction “and” expresses it. However, it does not tell us what the connection is, and how it comes to be a connection, whether it exists by itself, or whether it comes from afar. In the latter case, it would have to belong in a richer relation, from which even earth and heaven would first receive their determination.

Hölderlin speaks to us of this. We would like to hear it. We shall attempt this by reflecting on a draft of the poem entitled “Greece.” Yet as mortals, we men can hear only if we, on our part, speak to what would like to speak to us. What is spoken by us need not surpass what is spoken to us, but must come to meet it. That is why we are bound to listen to the poem in terms of that which concerns us in the present age. It is precisely then that the poet himself speaks to us clearly and distinctly out of what is his own.

The present draft of the poem “Greece” stems from Hölderlin’s later years when his wandering had entered into its peace, into the proper element of the Hesperian, i.e., the occidental. But then why “Greece,” which Hölderlin himself calls “the oriental”? If at such a late point Hölderlin calls to Greece more urgently than ever before, he must have finally attained an extreme partiality toward it.

A powerful testimony speaks to us concerning the fact *that* this came to pass and *how* it was prepared. It is a letter. Hölderlin wrote it presumably in the late fall of 1802 from Nürtingen to his friend Böhlendorff, after he had returned during the spring from southern France to his homeland. (Hellingrath V<sup>2</sup>, p. 327 ff.; GSA VI, no. 240; VI, p. 1086 ff.):

The letter reads:

Dear Friend,

I have not written to you for a long time; meanwhile I have been in France and seen the sad, lonely earth; the shepherds of southern France and individual beauties, men and women, who grew up in the anxieties of patriotic despair and hunger.

The mighty element, the fire of heaven, and the stillness of the people, their life in nature, their confinedness and their contentment, moved me continually, and as one says of heroes, I can well say of myself that Apollo has struck me.

In the regions bordering on the Vendée I was interested in a quality fiercely warlike, and purely masculine, to which the light of life becomes immediate in eye and limb, which experiences the feeling of death like a kind of virtuosity and satisfies its thirst for knowledge.

The athletic character of the southern people, in the ruins of the spirit of antiquity, made me more familiar with the authentic essence of the Greeks; I came to understand their nature and their wisdom, their bodies, how they grew in their climate and the rule they used to protect their exuberant genius from the power of the element.

This determined their popularity, their ways of adopting foreign natures and of communicating with them, and from this they derived their distinctive individuality which appears to be alive insofar as the supreme understanding, to the Greeks, is the power of reflection; and this becomes comprehensible to us when we comprehend the heroic bodies of the Greeks; it [the popularity of the Greeks] is tenderness, like our popularity.<sup>2</sup>

The sight of ancient art made an impression on me that brought me closer to an understanding not only of the Greeks, but of what is highest in art, which, generally, even in the highest movement and phenomenalization of concepts and every serious intention, still preserves everything as permanent and for itself, so that certainty, in this sense, is the highest kind of showing.

After many shocks and emotions in my soul, it was necessary for me to settle down for a while, and for the time being I am living in my home town [Hölderlin learned of Diotima's death only after his return from France].

Nature in these home regions moves me more powerfully, the more I study it. The thunderstorm, not only in its highest appearance, but precisely in its guise as a power and shape, among the other forms of heaven, light in its effects, nationally and as a principle that fashions a mode of destiny, so that something is holy to us, its urgency in coming and going, what is characteristic of the forests and the convergence in one region of different characters of nature, so that all the holy places of



the earth are together around one place, and the philosophical light around my window is now my joy; and may I keep in mind how I have come as far as here.

Dear friend, I think that we shall not gloss the poets up to our time, but that song altogether will assume a different character, and that we therefore will not recover because we, after the Greeks [who “neglected the patriotic character,” Hellingrath, IV, p. 264], are beginning once more to sing patriotically and naturally, that is, in a truly original way.

Please write to me soon. I need your pure tones. The Psyche among friends, the genesis of thought through conversation and letters is necessary to artists. Otherwise we have none for ourselves; but it belongs to the holy image we are forming. A sincere farewell.

Yours,

H<sup>3</sup>

We would need many days and favorable hours to reflect on this letter in an appropriate manner. We shall now heed only three issues, and all with the necessary brevity. They belong together.

First, we shall consider the fact that Hölderlin only now becomes “more familiar with the authentic essence of the Greeks,” and how he does so.

Secondly, we shall consider that place at which, after having arrived there, the poet preserves in memory the ways of his wandering, while at the same time heeding the light in which such remembrance moves.

Finally, we shall consider Hölderlin’s words about “what is highest in art.”

All of this, however, arises from our sole preparatory purpose, which is to become more acute in listening to what the poetic draft “Greece” says of earth and heaven and of their connection. Therefore we remain within the danger that we may hear wrongly. This danger is so essential and so great that mere scholarly zeal can never eliminate it.

“The athletic character of the southern people, in the ruins of the spirit of antiquity” more clearly shows Hölderlin the authentic essence of the Greeks. Hölderlin does not experience “the athletic character” isolated by itself, but in the element of the spirit of antiquity. The Greek verb



ἀθλέω means: to fight, to struggle, to seize and to bear arms. In Greek thought, the athletic character both discloses and preserves everything that struggles together. The athletic character is the heroic, “warlike” element in the sense of πόλεμος, that battle which Heraclitus thinks as the movement in which and for which gods and men, the free and the servile, come forth into the shining appearance of their being. The athletic character of the “heroic body” is neither the merely physical nor the plastic. It is the shining appearance of the spirit which struggles forth into its corporeal measure and form, and grasps itself therein.

“Supreme understanding in the Greek sense” is “the power of reflection,” which means here: the capacity to let everything reflect back whatever shines within it most purely, and thereby comes to presence. What comes to presence in such shining is, however, the beautiful. Both the athletic character and the power of reflection together form the ways of bringing beauty to its shining appearance. Therefore, Hölderlin can write that the one may be understood only together with the other. They belong together in what Hölderlin calls “tenderness.” Tenderness constitutes the fundamental characteristic of the “popularity” of the Greeks, their native essence. In the draft of the poem “Greece,” we shall again hear the word “tenderness” together with what is meant by power of reflection.

The word “tenderness” has, until the eighteenth century, and so also for Hölderlin, a lofty, far-reaching, unsentimental sense.

In a later version of “Patmos” (GSA II, p. 180), Hölderlin calls Greece “the youthful land of athletic eyes.” Their glance, like every genuine glance, is spiritual and shines forth in the corporeal. The eyes catch sight of what shines only insofar as they have already been shone upon and viewed by it. The “athletic eyes” catch sight of beauty. Beauty is truth experienced in a Greek way, namely, the unconcealing of what comes to presence by its own power, of φύσις that nature in which and from which the Greeks lived. Hölderlin’s higher knowledge of the authentic essence of the Greeks is one of the matters of which the letter speaks.

The second point, which is inseparable from the first one, contains Hölderlin’s reference to the place from which the recently attained authentic knowledge of the Greek essence is named.





“That all holy places of the earth are together around one place . . . is now my joy.” Through the place in which the poet now dwells, the earth becomes for him earth in a new way. The earth, as the structure of the heavenly ones, shelters and supports the holy, the sphere of the god. The earth is earth only as the earth of heaven; the heaven is heaven only insofar as it acts downward upon the earth. The heaven’s manifestations, from the highest, the lightning flash, to the “other forms,” are mentioned in the preceding sentences of the letter. *Blitz* [lightning-flash] is the same word as *Blick* [glance]. In the glance, there is existence [*Dasein*]. That is why the thunderstorm is called “the existence of God” [*Daseyn Gottes*]. For the quiet-joyous mood of the poet, earth and heaven and the gods concealed within the holy, are all present in the whole of primordially rising nature. Nature appears to him in a special light.

“And the philosophical light around my window is now my joy.” This light is that brightness which, in the capacity which permits reflecting, in the power of reflection, endows all that comes to presence with the brilliance of its presence. What is special about this light, that it is “philosophical,” arises out of Greece, as its name φιλοσοφία discloses. There the truth of being originally opened itself up as the shining revelation of what comes to presence. There truth was beauty itself.

This reference clarifies the third issue that is to be stressed with regard to the letter. The following sentence names it:

The sight of ancient art made an impression on me that brought me closer to an understanding not only of the Greeks, but of what is highest in art, which, generally, even in the highest movement and phenomenization of concepts and every serious intention, still preserves everything as permanent and for itself, so that certainty, in this sense, is the highest kind of showing.

Art, as the pointing that allows the appearance of what is invisible, is the highest kind of showing. The ground and the summit of such showing again unfold themselves in saying as poetic song.

For the Greeks, however, what is to be shown, that is, what shines of its own power, is therefore true: beauty. That is why truth needs art, the

poetic being of man. Poetically, dwelling man brings all that shines, earth and heaven and the holy, in which every appearance is preserved as permanent and for itself, he brings it, in the form of the work, to a secure stand. "To preserve everything as permanent and for itself"—is called: founding.

Thus, Hölderlin's letter does not only speak *about* Greece. Greece itself approaches him in the shining of earth and heaven, in the holy which conceals the god, in the poetizing-thinking being of man; she approaches him at the one place where his poetic wandering has found peace, in order to preserve everything there in remembrance.

Although the unity of the whole of earth and heaven, God and man, remains unsaid in the letter, we have already seen more clearly that earth and heaven and their connection belong in a richer relation. It no longer surprises us that what prepares itself in the letter should, at this late date, be followed by a song which is called "Greece," and which would like to bring this richer relation into the founding word.

Presumably about the same time as this draft, another one was noted down. It bears no title. The subsequently added title, "The Vatican," is misleading. This poem breaks off in the following lines (GSA II, p. 253, lines 45ff.):

Completed rest. Reddish-golden. And the rib rings out  
 Of the sandy globe in the work of God  
 A definite style of building, green night  
 And spirit, the pillar's order, really  
 Whole relation, including the center,  
 And gleaming

We shall now heed only the words "really/ whole relation, including the center," and shall *presumably* understand them as the names for that whole unity of earth and heaven, God and man. On the basis of Hölderlin's "Philosophical Fragments" from his first Homburger period, we may now name this "whole relation," in which earth and heaven and

their connection belong, the “more tender infinite relation.” The determination “*in-finite*” is to be thought here in the sense of the speculative dialectic of Schelling and Hegel.

In-finite means that the ends and the sides, the regions of the relation, do not stand by themselves cut-off and one-sidedly; rather, freed of one-sidedness and finitude, they belong *in-finitely* to one another in the relation which “thoroughly” holds them together from its center. The center, so called because it centers, that is, mediates, is neither earth nor heaven, God nor man. The in-finity that is to be thought here is abysmally different from that which is merely without end, which, because of its uniformity, allows no growth. On the other hand, the “more tender relation” of earth and heaven, God and man, can become more in-finite. For what is not one-sided can come more purely to light from the intimacy in which the named four are bound to each other.

If we consider in this way what has been said regarding the letter, then Hölderlin’s letter will give us what we, too, need: “The genesis of the thought,” namely, that thought which we must think in advance of the song “Greece,” in order to hear from it how the poet sings of earth and heaven, that is, poetically in-vokes them.

The song “Greece” begins:

O you voices of destiny, you ways of the wanderer

The first draft begins: “Ways of the wanderer!” There is a blank space before these words. For Hölderlin already knows that the ways are determined from elsewhere and from afar. Who is the wanderer? Presumably the poet himself. But now, after all, he has arrived at his place. The wandering is at its end. Then the call, “you ways of the wanderer,” remains a remembrance of the past ways of his poesis. Yet such ways do not end by ceasing. The ways end in coming to rest, but they do this by gathering themselves in the song of the rest of completion. The song, however, lingers in a continual wandering and traveling that constantly measures its steps in the meter of the verse’s feet, in the measure of the poetic saying. The ways of such travelers are even more beautiful than the journeys

undertaken for other purposes. The poetic ways are more beautiful because the land that they traverse, and so first render passable, is the realm of beauty in which the infinite relation comes to its shining appearance. The draft "Greece" ends in the lines (48ff.):

..... to travelers, though,  
 To him whose feet, from love of life,  
 Measuring all along, obey him,  
 More beautifully blossom the ways, where the land

Here the draft breaks off abruptly. Is it by chance? Or is it because the landscape of the infinite relation has more authentically opened itself to the poet, overwhelming him, because Greece now comes near to the poet in its ownmost element, and indeed, comes near to him in the manner in which this song called "Greece" sings it?

Let us not, however, overlook the "though" in line 48: "to travelers, though. . ." The wanderer, the poet, is being distinguished from what is said in the immediately preceding lines (46ff.):

Sweet it is then to dwell under the high shade  
 Of trees and hills, sunny, where the road  
 Is paved to the church.

The poet knows of the happiness of those who may walk back and forth to the church on a secured path. That is not his way. But neither does Hölderlin deny his nearness to the "church steeple" that "in lovely blueness blooms with its metal roof."

Out of such nearness comes a late song. But even it is still a wandering. This wandering goes up to the "myrtles" which "are found in Greece," up to "King Oedipus who perhaps has one eye too many," to "the son of Laius," "the poor stranger in Greece." This song closes:

Life is death, and death is also a life.



Accordingly, the “love of life,” named in line 49 of the draft, will conceal something deeper. It includes death. Insofar as death comes, it vanishes. The mortals die the death in life. In death the mortals become *im*-mortal.

“. . . you ways of the wanderer”—the “voices of destiny” precede them. What does “destiny” [*Geschik*] mean here? If we are ever to understand it, we will do so only by paying heed to how it is named. “O you voices of destiny.” Voices? They ring out. In its fourth stanza, the elegy “Bread and Wine” asks: “and where does the great destiny ring out?” What is meant is that which is called at the beginning of the stanza “the soulful land of the Greeks,” for which and in which the great destiny rang out.

Through what do the “voices of destiny” ring out? What rings out? Lines 2ff. say:

For amid the [eyes'] blue school,  
From afar, amid the uproar of heaven,  
Rings out, like the blackbird's song,  
The clouds' serene mood, well  
Tempered by the existence of God, by the thunderstorm.

Heaven is what rings out. Its voice is the clouds' serene mood. What tempers the clouds into opening up is precisely what they conceal within themselves: the “thunderstorm's extreme appearance,” the lightning flash, the thunder, the storm, and the arrows of rain. The god's presence is concealed within these appearances. Although the thunderstorm's clouds veil the heaven, they belong to it, and show the god's joy. Consequently, the clouds are “well-tempered,” that is, in their right disposition.

In the draft of the poem, Hölderlin first wrote: “the clouds' secure mood.” Here secure means the *securum*, the care-free stillness. Because they are tempered in their own disposition, namely, to be the “pure covering” of the heaven through which it rings out, the clouds remain still in spite of all the uproar.

Heaven rings out. It is one of the voices of destiny. The earth is another voice. It also rings out (lines 9ff.):

.....Where ringing out  
 On it, as on the calf's hide,  
 The earth . . .

As the hide of the drum, when struck, thunderously resounds in its own way from the drumbeats, so the earth resounds from the claps of lightning and the "shower of arrows" ("Greece," First Version, GSA II, p. 254, 6). The ringing out of the earth is the echo of heaven. In resounding, the earth by its own movement replies to heaven.

A late fragment says (GSA II, p. 334):

Always, loved one! The earth  
 Goes and heaven stays.

To where does the earth go and upon which ways?

.....Where ringing out  
 On it, as on the calf's hide,  
 The earth . . . (lines 9ff.)  
 Pursues great laws, and knowledge  
 And tenderness (lines 13ff.)

The earth "pursues great laws." The "laws" named here are the νόμοι in the sense of the directions of the great destiny which points and sends everyone to where he is needed according to his being. Unwritten, because unwritable, the laws determine the infinite cohesion of the whole relation. As Hölderlin already noted in the Homburger "Philosophical Fragments," (Hell. III, p. 261), they are the laws "of which Antigone speaks."

Sophocles, *Antigone* 456-57:

οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κάχθές, ἀλλ' αἰεί ποτε  
 ζῆ ταῦτα, κούδεις οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου φάνη.

For not only today and yesterday, but forever and ever,  
 It (the direction) arises, and no one has gazed upon that  
 Place from which it came to shining appearance.

The earth reconciles itself to the great laws. On which ways? They are named (lines 13ff.): “knowledge and tenderness.” The word “knowledge” [*Wissenschaft*] has the same meaning here that it had for his teacher Fichte and his friend Hegel: “Knowledge” is the thinking of the thinkers, which has received its name and with it its being from Greece. The brightness of thinking determines “the light all around my window,” through which the poet “looks out.”

“And tenderness”—We heard this word in the letter to Böhlendorff. Tenderness characterizes the “popularity” of the Greeks. *Popularitas* is the capacity for the highest affection for, and the utmost intimation of, what a people in their native character fatefully encounter as the foreign. The popularity of the Greeks is tenderness. The athletic character of the heroic body and the power of reflection belong together within it. Tenderness, with its gladdening-bestowing and at the same time simply-receiving essence, together with knowledge, with its thinking that allows reflection, holds the earth open to the heaven. Both form the connection of the earth to the heaven, and so are thereby heavenly.

One of the “Night Songs” that sings of Greece under the title “Tears” and that was written between the letter to Böhlendorff and the draft of “Greece,” begins:

Heavenly love! O tender! If you I should  
 Forget, if you, O you fateful ones,  
     You fiery ones, that are full of ashes and  
     Even before were deserted and lonely,

You beloved islands, eyes of the wondrous world!  
 You alone concern me and matter now,

(GSA II, p. 58; Hell. IV, p. 70)

The earth rings out, tuned into the “echo of heaven.” The earth rings out through “knowledge and tenderness,” which, both earthly, co-respond to destiny. In what language? First heaven rings out. Then the earth rings out. And later? Lines 14ff. say:

... and the width of heaven, pure covering, later  
 Appearing, sing clouds of song.

The clouds of song sing, "later appearing." Where and how do they appear later, after their ringing out in heaven, after the resounding of the earth? Later this singing can only be that song which calls heaven from the earth and so is heavenly-earthly at the same time. Lines 7ff.:

And calls, like looking out, for  
 Immortality and heroes;

The calling out of the singers is a looking out for immortality, for the divinity which is sheltered in the holy. The calls are like a looking out from the earth into the width of heaven. There is a wondrous sameness of looking and calling in the earthly song of the singers. However, it corresponds only to the sameness of heaven's glance and voice. The voice of heaven is the ringing out of the "eyes' blue school." The calling that looks out for the voices of destiny goes to school with the blue of the heaven. In the draft "Columbus" (GSA II, p. 242), Hölderlin says:

and it is necessary  
 To question heaven.

In their reflecting glance, the "eyes of the wondrous world," the islands of Greece, "their heroes and holy ones," learn of the fateful from the eyes' blue school. In the third stanza of the "Night Song" "Tears," Hölderlin sings:

For, all too thankful, there the holy ones  
 Served in the days of beauty, and  
 The furious heroes;<sup>4</sup>

The calls which look out for immortality are the calls of those who are called. In "The Poet's Vocation," they receive their destination to sing. Those who call in this way become one of the voices of destiny. Their "love for immortality," for divinity, "is of a god" ("What Is God?" GSA II, p. 210,



6 ff.). Such love belongs to the god, but remains something foreign to which he reconciles himself, just as he reconciles himself to the clouds of song. For even the god still stands under destiny. The god is one of the voices of destiny. In the poem "What Is God?" it is said of God:

The more something is  
Invisible, the more it reconciles itself to the foreign.

He reconciles himself, that is, he submits and resigns himself to the foreign. That is why the looking call of the singers cannot catch sight of the face of the god. The singer is blind. The god comes to presence only by concealing himself. For this reason, the manner in which the blind singer speaks of the god in his song must be that of an art which covers the eyelids. The thought formed by the singer's poesis belongs to the holy image, to the sight of the holy which conceals the god. But the song which calls out from the earth to the heaven would not be a voice without the god's voice which, however, saves men from the "terrible one" (line 30). What is wonderful about *this* voice of destiny is that the god shows himself "everyday" and "far about" by reconciling himself to his concealment, for the sake of the looking callers. Lines 25ff.:

Everyday but wonderfully, for the love of men,  
God has put on a garment.  
And his face is concealed from the knowing  
And covers the eyelids with art.

According to the manuscript and to the matter, "eyelids" may be read in line 28, instead of "skies," or "images," or even "love." Hölderlin means the eyelids of those eyes whose school is the blue of heaven.

There are four voices which ring out: heaven, earth, man, and god. Destiny gathers the whole infinite relation in these four voices. Yet none of the four stays and goes one-sidedly by itself. In this sense, none is finite. None is without the others. *In*-finite, they hold themselves to each other, they are what they are from the *in*-finite relation, they are this whole relation itself.

Consequently, earth and heaven and their connection belong in the richer relation of the four. This number is never expressly thought or said by Hölderlin. Nevertheless, throughout all his sayings, the four are first caught sight of out of the intimacy of their togetherness. They are already numbered in the ordinary sense of the tale of the "old (scarcely heard) saying" of their togetherness. "Four" does not name any calculated sum; rather, it names the self-unifying form of the in-finite relation of the voices of destiny. And what of destiny itself? What do its voices tell us about destiny? Destiny sends the four to each other by holding them, the whole relation, gathered to itself. Then destiny would presumably be "the center" which centers, that is, mediates, insofar as the center first determines the four in their belonging together, sends them into their togetherness. The sending of destiny gathers the four to itself, into its center. It takes them to itself, and initiates their intimacy. Under the title "Form and Spirit," Hölderlin says: "All is intimate" (GSA II, p. 321; Hell IV<sup>2</sup>, p. 381). As the center of the whole relation, destiny is the all-gathering beginning. As the ringing out of the great destiny, the center is the great beginning.

But in what manner *is* a beginning? A beginning is present, insofar as it remains in its coming. For the mediation that gathers the four into the center of their intimacy is a first coming. Beginning remains as advent. The beginning remains all the more, the closer it keeps itself within the possibility that it can come, and in its coming brings and sends that which it keeps to itself: the infinite relation. But then, something great, too, must correspond to the coming of the great beginning, something which can grasp it greatly, i.e., which can await it greatly.

But Hölderlin puts it differently (lines 23/24):

A great beginning can come  
Even to the humble.

Where is the humble? We must look for it at the place from which Hölderlin calls, looking out through the philosophical window. For him, it is the one place to which all holy places are gathered.

In the draft of the hymn which begins:



But when the heavenly have  
 Built, it is still  
 On the earth, and well-formed stand  
 The dazed mountains.

(GSA II, p. 222, 1ff.)

Hölderlin says:

But now it blooms  
 In the poor place.  
 And wondrously great it  
 Wants to stand.

(Lines 18ff.)

Now, after the great uproar of the originary building is stilled, "in the beginning the work has formed itself" (line 12), now, when that building stands of which it is said (GSA II, p. 723):

          fetched out of the deep  
 And built down from above.

It is the building of the infinite relation. Now "it blooms in the poor place." Blooming is the joyful-waiting preparation of ripeness and fruit. The infinite relation waits for the time when it may stand great in the poor place and thus correspond to the great beginning. Another draft of a hymn, written at the same time, covers up with its lines, as Friedrich Beissner has confirmed, the "germinating word" of the entire hymn, which reads: "A secret place" (cf. fifth stanza of "Germania"). Does the "one place," which the poet found in his homeland, belong, as the poor (and secret), in that humbleness to which "even a great beginning can come"? But how does the great beginning come?

The two lines which precede the words of the coming of the great beginning, contain the answer:

But like the round dance  
 To a wedding,

This sounds strange. The round dance is supposed to be the great and the wedding the humble? One would expect the reverse! This becomes even stranger if we consider that this “But like . . .” does not introduce a mere comparison, but says the very matter itself: namely, how a great beginning can come even to the humble. Then the wedding would be the humble after all. Insofar as something else comes to it, the wedding remains within what comes, even belongs in the coming. The wedding is itself what comes. At the beginning of the thirteenth stanza of “The Rhine” hymn, Hölderlin says of the wedding (GSA II, p. 147, 180):

Then gods and men celebrate their nuptials,

The earth is the bride, to whom the song of heaven comes. So says a late draft (GSA II, p. 253, 44):

Then comes the wedding song of heaven.

The wedding is the whole of the intimacy of: earth and heaven, men and gods. It is the festival and celebration of the in-finite relation. The wedding comes only “then.” When is the time of this “then”? Of what kind is its time? It withdraws itself from all calculation. Such time temporalizes itself for the expectation within the calling which looks out. Here time always means the right time, when its time has come: the historical moment. This moment has its own “then.” How is it then, when it is quiet on the earth, when the great beginning has come to the humble? Hölderlin tells us (lines 19–22):

. . . But above pure meditation lives the aether. But silver  
On clear days  
Is the light. As a sign of love  
Violet-blue the earth.

Then there is “Completed-rest. Reddish-golden.” Golden are the “yellow suns and moons” which stand out in the open heaven. And “red”? Is it that “red” through which, from the earth, the blue of heaven becomes violet-





blue for the earth? Then this would be, in the sphere of the illuminating, the echo to the eyes' blue school.

The pure days are without the threatening tumult of the thunderclouds. The existence of God is not veiled in darkness. For even more veiling than this darkness is the brightest light. In its brightness above, the god reflects upon the destiny of the infinite relation, insofar as he "hates" "untimely growth" (GSA II, p. 225, 93ff.). The Greeks already knew that brightness is still more veiling than darkness.

But now, how can such completed-rest of the infinite relation be called the humble? *Gering* [humble] is the intensified word for the German word *ring*, which signifies what is light, soft, pliant: the small in distinction to the large. But *klein* [small] originally means *fein* [fine] and precious, as the word *Kleinod* [jewel] still says. Now Hölderlin does not understand the wedding of earth and heaven, which the gods and men celebrate, as the humble in the sense of insignificant. For after all, what blooms in the poor place wants to stand "great." The humble only becomes the humble, the precious, which is the last to be enjoyed, in the coming of the great beginning. The great beginning, however, comes in the manner of the round dance.

As little as we may represent what is called the humble in the draft as insignificant, to such a degree must we leave the word "round dance" that richness through which it is able to name the same as the talk of the great beginning. The round dance is the Greek χορός, the festive singing dance that celebrates the god: χοροῖς τιμᾶν Διόνυσου (Euripides, *The Bacchae*, 220). Thus Hölderlin speaks of the "Maenadic Round Dance" in a variant to the ode "The Poet's Courage" (GSA II, p. 532, 33). Nevertheless, such a round dance corresponds to the god only because the heavenly themselves are together in the choruses "a holy number" ("Celebration of Peace," lines 105ff.). The round dance is the drunken togetherness of the gods themselves in the heavenly fire of joy. Only from this can the clouds, the serene and secure mood of the existence of God, be clouds of song. The hymn "The Titans" sings (Hell. IV<sup>2</sup>, p. 209, 47 ff; GSA II, p. 850, 25):

But when the busy day  
 Has been kindled,  
 And pure is the light and drunken  
 Are the heavenly  
 From the truth that each thing  
 Is, as it is,

Only as the round dance of the heavenly, who come out of their fire *upon* the earth and the earthly *to* dance in the song, can the round dance be great, and as the great, be the rising beginning of the great destiny. We are not capable of exhausting the richness of the word "round dance," uttered here in simple awe. For the word "round dance" names the particular richness of what would like to come. In the hymn "The Titans," it is said (lines 20ff.):

For long already the clouds  
 Have worked downward  
 And holy wilderness, preparing much, takes root.  
 Richness is hot. For the song  
 That loosens the spirit is lacking.  
 It would consume  
 And would go against itself,  
 For the heavenly fire  
 Never suffers captivity.

What the word "richness" means here is told to us by the poem which presumably originated around the time of the previously cited letter to Böhlendorff, and was written down on the back of a letter from Diotima dated March 5, 1800:

What is human life an image of divinity.  
 As all the earthly wander under heaven, they  
 See it. But men, reading as if from  
 A written text, imitate infinity, and  
 Richness. Yet is the innocent heaven  
 Rich? Like flowers indeed are



Silver clouds. But dew and  
 Moisture rain from there. When, however,  
 The blue is effaced, the innocent, then  
 Dimness shines, that matches the marble, like ore,  
 Indication of richness. (GSA II, p. 209)

Called by the song into the openness of the earth, this fire, as the great beginning, must come to the humble. "Now come, fire!" begins "The Ister" hymn. But what comes is not the god by himself alone. What comes is the whole in-finite relation in which, along with god and mankind, earth and heaven belong. The coming of the great beginning first brings forth the humble into its humbleness. Thus transformed, the humble is itself the in-finite relation, and belongs to the poor, secret place in the home fields of the poet.

The humble is the occidental. Greece, however, the oriental, is the great beginning that may possibly come. The humble *is*, however, only insofar as it *becomes* that to which the great beginning can come. Can it still come?

Does the occidental still exist? It has become Europe. Europe's technological-industrial domination has already covered the entire earth. On the other hand, the earth, as a planet, has already been included in the interstellar-cosmic space which is placed at man's disposal by the planned projects of man. The earth and heaven of the poem have vanished. Who would dare to say whither? The in-finite relation of earth and heaven, man and God, seems to have been destroyed. Or has it never yet appeared within our history *as* this in-finite relation, purely joined together by the gathering of the voices of destiny, never yet become present, never yet been founded as a whole within what is highest in art? Then it could not have been destroyed; rather, in the worst case, it could only have been displaced and denied its appearing. Then it would be up to us to think about this denial of the in-finite relation. To think about a matter means: to let it be said, to listen to it where something is said about it, namely for us in the present age, in Hölderlin's poem.

Immediately after the First World War (1919), Paul Valéry published

a letter under the title, "The Crisis of the Spirit." In it he poses two questions:

This Europe, will it become *what it is in reality (en réalité)*, that is, a small cape of the asiatic continent? Or will this Europe, rather, remain *as what it appears to be (ce qu'elle paraît)*, that is, the precious part of the whole earth, the pearl of the globe, the brain of a spacious body?

Perhaps Europe has already become what it is: a mere cape, yet as such, also the brain of the entire terrestrial body, the brain that manages the technological-industrial, planetary-interstellar calculation. Because this is so, and because what is in such a manner cannot remain, we may perhaps let a third question follow both of Paul Valéry's questions. Our question does not pass over and beyond Europe, but back into its beginning. It could read thus: Must Europe, as this cape and brain, first become a land of an evening from which another morning of world-destiny prepares its rise? Our question sounds presumptuous and arbitrary. However, it has its basis: on the one hand, in an essential fact, on the other, in an essential supposition.

The fact consists in this: In its essential beginning, which can never be lost, the present planetary-interstellar world condition is thoroughly european-occidental-grecian. However, the supposition reflects on this: What changes can do so only out of the reserved greatness of its beginning. Accordingly, the present world condition can receive an essential change or, for that matter, preparation for it, only from its beginning, which fatefully determines our age. It is the great beginning. There is, of course, no return to it. The great beginning becomes present, as that which awaits us, only in its coming to the humble. But the humble can no longer abide in its occidental isolation. It is opening itself up to those few other great beginnings which, with their own character, belong in the sameness of the beginning of the in-finite relation in which the earth is contained.

Yet we men of this age are presumably not even within the humbleness and neediness of that need from which the four of the infinite rela-





tion call to each other. We are scarcely in need. Its need consists in that the mortals do not catch sight of, and do not heed, what may possibly come, comes to us all the more, the further we step back from it. But to where could we step back? Into the awaiting reserve. This is at the same time the supposing which thinks in advance. Such reserve anticipates what is coming, in that it attempts to experience what *is* present.

If we again listen to the draft of the poem "Greece," then it is revealed that: The appearing of the infinite relation as a unified whole remains denied to us. This is why we are hardly able to hear the "voices of fate" from its unity.

What denies itself to us actually approaches us in its own way. Such an approach strikes man everywhere today in a provocation that is still seldom thought about. The men of this earth are provoked by the absolute domination of the essence of modern technology, together with technology itself, into developing a final world-formula which would once and for all secure the totality of the world as a uniform sameness, and thus make it available to us as a calculable resource. The provocation to such making-available orders everything into a single design, the making of which levels the harmony of the infinite relation. The togetherness of the four "voices of destiny" no longer rings out. The provocation to the calculating making-available of everything that is and can be, *displaces* the in-finite relation. More than that: The provocation that reigns in the domination of the essence of modern technology, above all, holds within the unexperienceable That from which the ordering power of the provocation receives its mission. What is That?

It is the center of the whole infinite relation. It is pure destiny itself. What is uncannily encircles the globe now that destiny strikes the men of this age *directly*, not only through a ringing out of its voices. Destiny approaches man silently—a mysterious kind of stillness. Man will presumably ignore this stillness for a long time to come. Thus, he is still unable to correspond to this destiny of denial. Rather, he evades it through his more and more hopeless attempts to master technology with his mortal will.

As soon as we trouble ourselves enough to reflect on this, a supposi-

tion arises: the ordering of a joint may hold sway within the power of that provocation, that is, within the absolute, essential domination of modern technology, from which and through which the whole in-finite relation joints itself into its fourfoldness. Only with the greatest difficulty can we hear the silent voice of this joining. For in preparation for this listening, we must first learn again to hear an older saying, in which the once great destiny of Greece rang out. We would need to anticipate each everyday experience and include within it what Heraclitus says in Fragment 54:

Ἀρμονίη ἀφανῆς φανερῆς κρείσσων.

The joint that denies its appearance is of a stronger ruling than the one that comes to appearance.<sup>5</sup>

Insofar as we consider all of this, we might be able to think something insignificant [*ein Gering-Füßiges*, literally, something that joins in a humble manner] ahead of Hölderlin's poem, namely, the humble, in which he dwells in one place. Attuned to these thoughts, we may be able to become keener listeners for the song that, under the title "Greece," calls the great beginning into its possible coming to the humble.

It is the wedding of earth and heaven, since men and "a spirit of some kind," that is, a god, more communally allow beauty to dwell upon the earth. Beauty is the pure shining of the unconcealment of the whole infinite relation, together with its center. But the center, as the centering, that is, as the mediating, is what joints and what orders. The center is the joint of the relation of the four, which spares its appearing.

Since the rising of the great beginning—rising is φύσις, "nature"—the whole infinite relation has been preparing itself for the coming. Beauty is called into the work in order to release and to conceal everything in its own undamageable element. In lines 32–45, the draft "Greece" sings:

. . . For long already like leaves,  
Or lines and angles,  
Nature stands open to learn  
And yellower the suns and the moons,



But at times  
 When the ancient form of earth wants  
 To go out, amid histories, what has been,  
 And boldly fencing, as on high places God  
 Leads the earth. Unmeasured paces, though,  
 He limits, but like blossoms golden then  
 The soul's powers, the soul's affinities, come together,  
 So that more willingly  
 Beauty dwells on earth and a spirit of some kind  
 More communally joins itself to men.

This re-membrance [*An-denken*] of the completed rest is the thought that "belongs to the holy image" that Hölderlin would like "to form" with his poetical friends. However, Hölderlin also knows how the humble is related to the great. (Fragment of a late version of "Patmos," GSA II, p. 181, 146ff.):

But it is hard  
 To maintain the great within its greatness.

Yet perhaps the humble that is poetically experienced by Hölderlin is already destined for the great, in which the possible coming of the great beginning remains guarded, until the last moment of the calling that looks out to the "eyes' blue school."

In the year of his death, Hölderlin addresses a poem to the quiet realm of the infinite relation. It is one of those poems whose monotonous, almost compelling tone, disturbs many an ear. In his address, "Hölderlin's Madness," given in 1915, Norbert von Hellingrath said that these poems are "only a wonderful continuation of the harmonies of the soul that is again at peace." This poem names men in their relatedness to nature, which we must think in Hölderlin's sense as That which is *above* gods and men, whose rule, however, men are sometimes able to endure.

This poem names "the old saying," the self-showing of the great beginning. The great beginning is. Its present comes to presence "far about" around the one place; and does so with "spirituality," that is, with

godliness, which itself dwells within the holy. All holy places are gathered together. In its closing lines, the poem trusts in "humanity." According to the linguistic usage of the time, the word humanity does not mean the whole of all mankind, every man, but just as freedom says the essence of what it is to be truly free, so humanity says the essence of man. This essence is needed in the "living relation and destiny," that is, in "life."

The poem bears the title "Greece" and the signature Scardanelli; a foreign name, just as if the poet had to reconcile himself and his ownmost self, that is, had to submit and resign himself, to something foreign. The date names a "May day" and a year in which Hölderlin had not yet been born.

### GREECE

As men are, so is life magnificent,  
 Men frequently are masters of nature,  
 The magnificent land is not concealed from men,  
 With charm the morning and the evening appear.  
 The open fields are as in the harvest days  
 With spirituality the old saying is far about,  
 And new life again comes back out of humanity,  
 So the year sinks down with a stillness.

May 24, 1748

Your humble and  
 obedient servant,

Scardanelli

### NOTES

1. Third Version, printed according to the *Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe (GSA)*, edited by Friedrich Beissner and Adolph Beck, Volume II, p. 257 ff. The two lines that are enclosed in brackets are taken from the second version; likewise the words enclosed in brackets, "eyes" and "secure," are noted down in the variants. [M.H.]





2. At this point, where Norbert von Hellingrath had supposed there to be a writing error, Adolph Beck supplements (*GSA* VI, p. 1089), it seems to me appropriately: "it is tenderness, just as our own popularity is sobriety." [M.H.]

3. Many of you are informed about how this letter, and especially the one written a year earlier to the same friend immediately *before* his journey to southern France, are cited in connection with the discussion of what has been named Hölderlin's "occidental turn," and what Hölderlin himself, although with a different meaning, considers under the title "the patriotic reversal." We must, of course, hear Hölderlin's discourse on the "patriotic" and the "national" according to the meaning of his thought, which means that we must free it from our current narrow representations. The "patriotic" means the relatedness of the land to the father as to the supreme God, it means this life-granting "relation" in which man stands because he has a "destiny." Likewise, the "national" means the land of birth (*nasci, natura*) because it, as the beginning, determines what abides:

birth namely  
Accomplishes the most,  
And the ray of light,  
That meets the new-born.

The fourth stanza of "The Rhine" hymn contains an anticipation of the meaning of the names mentioned. Hölderlin's meditation upon the "patriotic reversal" and the "national" remains outside of our present consideration; not only because there is much that is difficult to explain and because the meaning of the whole has not yet been clearly resolved, but because Hölderlin finally left behind him, by overcoming it, that part of his way that he thought through under the title "patriotic reversal." Just the fact that this late poem "Greece" exists—although only in drafts—confirms this for us. [M.H.]

4. (Comment inserted during correction of the proofs). This citation of the third stanza of "Tears," and the previous citation of the first stanza of "Tears," were also supposed to serve the intention, purposely not stated, of pointing out the possible explanation of line 11, "proceeding from devastations, temptations of the holy ones," which was missed by many of the listeners of the lecture. [M.H.]

5. Separate impression from the *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* (1958–60): These words by the preplatonic thinker Heraclitus contain the decisive hint as to how we must experience all Greek beings, nature, men, human works, and the divinity; everything visible in terms of the invisible—everything sayable in terms of the

unsayable—everything which appears in terms of the self-concealing. Self-concealing is closer to the Greek essence than unconcealing: the latter lives by virtue of the former. [M.H.]



## THE POEM

*Revised text of a lecture given in honor of Friedrich G. Jünger's seventieth birthday, August 25, 1968, in Amriswil.*

To speak *about* the poem would mean to consider from above, and thus, from the outside, what the poem truly is.

On what authority, through what sort of knowledge, could this occur? Both are lacking. That is why it would be presumptuous to wish to speak about the poem. But how could we do so otherwise?

It would be better if we let the poem tell us about its proper character, what it consists of, what it is based on.

In order to perceive this sufficiently, we must be familiar with the poem. Yet only the poet is truly familiar with the poem and the craft of making poetry. Only poetic saying can speak of the poem in a suitable way. The poet neither speaks *about* the poem, nor does he treat *of* the poem. He makes the poem's own unique character into a poem. And this can occur only when he is led in his composing by the special determinations of his very own poetry.

There is one such peculiar, perhaps even mysterious poet. His name is Hölderlin.

But he is still—so it seems—not yet so near to us that his word has



reached us, has struck us, so that we are—and remain—those who are struck by it.

In Hölderlin's poetry we experience the poem poetically. "The poem"—this word now reveals its ambiguity. "The poem" can mean poems in general, the concept of the poem that holds true for all the poems of world literature. But "the poem" can also mean that exceptional poem, the one poem which is marked out to concern us uniquely and fatefully, the one which is the poesis of the destiny wherein we stand, whether we know it or not, whether we are ready to submit to it or not.

We can also see from such titles as "The Poet's Vocation" and "The Poet's Courage," and from these poems themselves in their numerous versions, that Hölderlin has devoted his poetic activity to the poet and his destiny, and thus to the poem's proper character, its own unique nature.

Hölderlin's poetic thinking also treats of poetry in the form of essays and sketches: "On the Procedure of the Poetic Spirit," "On the Differences Between the Poetic Forms," and "On the Parts of the Poem" (GSA IV, p. 241ff.). This is even more obvious from the poetic insight exhibited in his translations of "The Tragedies of Sophocles," in his "Commentaries to Oedipus," and "Commentaries to Antigone" (GSA V, 193ff., 263ff.).

Moreover, these "Essays on . . ." and "Commentaries to . . ." are based on constant self-examination of his poetic experience of his poem and what determines it.

In the depths of his being, so easily shattered and so frequently frightened off, Hölderlin knows in all clarity the proper form of his poem, as he tells us in the third stanza of his elegy "Bread and Wine," which he dedicated to his poet-friend Heinze and to whom he calls (GSA II, p. 91, lines 41ff.):

. . . So come! That we may behold the open,  
So that we may seek what is our own, however far it may be.

. . . to each also is allotted his own,  
Each one goes and comes to the place that he can.

The poet himself does not devise the proper character of his poem. This is allotted to him. He resigns himself to his destiny and follows his calling. Hölderlin names both of these in a variant to the same song.

In Hölderlin's poetic work and in the surviving manuscripts, the variants take on a very special status. Those words and phrases which were not adopted into the completed text occasionally contain abrupt, deeply penetrating insights into the proper character of his poem. The variant to verses 45–46 of "Bread and Wine" reads (GSA II, p. 597):

Before the time! is the calling of the holy singers and thus  
They must serve and wander ahead of the great destiny.

"Before the time!" Before which time do the called poets speak their words? Which destiny is the great one? Hölderlin says of the time, with regard to which the poet speaks prematurely in the hymn "Mnemosyne" (GSA II, p. 193, lines 16f.):

Long is/ The time.

We ask: How long then? So long that it even reaches beyond our present, godless age. To correspond to this long time, the premature words of the poet—waiting in the distance—must also be long. His word must call "the great destiny." It must put into poetry the advent of the present gods.

And yet how could what is "present" still be in advent? "Advent" here, however, does not mean: to have already arrived, but rather the occurrence of an earlier arrival. Those who arrive in such a manner show themselves in a special sort of approach. In such a coming, they are in their own way present to the poet: the arriving ones are the gods who come into presence. The present ones who arrive in this way are, to be sure, not the returning gods of ancient Greece who once fled, although for Hölderlin they, too, in their absence are present, and they, too, concern the poet. The beginning of the second stanza of the hymn "Germania" reads (GSA II, p. 149):

Gods who are fled! You too, present still, once  
More real, you had your times!

The present ones who were once more real have not passed away, they have not been annihilated; rather, they have only gone away.

Therefore, the arrival of the present gods in no way signifies the return of the old gods. Another variant to the elegy "Bread and Wine" (GSA II, p. 603, 19ff.) speaks more clearly of the advent which Hölderlin experiences poetically:

Long and difficult is the word of this advent, but  
White [i.e., bright] is the moment. Servers of the heavenly are,  
However, well-versed in earthly ways, their step is toward the abyss  
Of men.

If we were capable of interpreting this text correctly, it would indeed assist us in experiencing the proper character of the poem which it is allotted to Hölderlin to write. Yet this text offers difficulties too great for the meditation which we are now attempting. For this reason, let us select certain other words of the poet.

Despite the density of their formulation, these words bear directly upon our question about Hölderlin's Poem. The poet's verse which we will discuss in the following is also a variant, in fact a late one to his great hymn "The Archipelago" (lines 261–68, GSA II, p. 111).

There are seven lines. They were published for the first time by Friedrich Beissner in 1951, in the second half of the second volume of the Stuttgart Edition of Hölderlin's *Sämtliche Werke* (p. 646). The text reads:

But because the present gods are so near  
I must be as if they were far away, and dark in the clouds  
Must their name be for me, only before the morning  
Begins to glow, before life glows in its midday  
I name them quietly to myself, so that the poet may have  
His own, but whenever the heavenly light goes down  
I gladly think about what is past, and say—go on blooming!

As soon as Hölderlin has "his own," he persists firmly in the destiny which is allotted to him, he is the poet of his poem. We are inquiring into

the proper character of *the* poem. It can be experienced if we submit ourselves to the following questions:

What is the poet's "own"? What proper element is allotted to him? To where does the decree compel him? From where does it come? How does it compel?

But because the present gods are so near  
I must be as if they were far away, and dark in the clouds  
Must their name be for me . . .

We hear a "must" spoken twice. The first "must" stands at the beginning of the second line, the second at the beginning of the third line. The first "must" concerns the relation of the poet to the presence of the present gods. The second "must" concerns the kind of names by which the poet names the present gods. The extent to which the first and second "must" belong together and concern the same thing, namely, the poesis into which Hölderlin sees himself compelled, will show itself as soon as it has become clearer to what type of poesis the poet must submit himself.

But first let us ask: From where does this compulsion come?  
Why this twofold command?

The first of the seven lines gives the answer that applies to everything that follows:

Because the present gods are so near.

How strange—one would like to assume that when the present gods are so near to the poet, then the naming of their names would result by itself and require no particular directions to the poet. But this "so near" does not signify "near enough," but rather "too near." The hymn "Patmos" begins: "Near and hard to grasp is the god." The "and" means "and therefore." The god is too near to be easily grasped. The same word as "*nahe*" ["near"] speaks in the word "*genau*" ["close"]. The old word "*genau*" means *nahegehend* [near-going]. In the same hymn,



“Patmos,” we read these difficult-to-interpret lines (*GSA* II, p. 167, lines 78ff.):

The bearer of thunder loved the simplicity  
Of the youth, and the attentive man saw  
The face of the god closely [*genau*],

Too near, too near-going in the direction of the poet are the arriving gods who are present to him. Apparently their arrival lasts a long time, and is, therefore, still more pressing, and thus, still more difficult to say, than is their completed presence. For man is also incapable of openly and directly perceiving their perfect presence, and thus of receiving the good bestowed by them. For this reason, it is said at the end of the fifth stanza of “Bread and Wine” (*GSA* II, p. 92/93, lines 87ff.):

Such is man; when the good is there, and a god himself  
Cares for him with gifts, he neither knows nor sees it.  
First he must suffer; but now he names his most loved,  
Now, now words for it, like flowers, must spring to life.

Until the words are found and blossom, it is a matter of bearing one's burden. This burden necessitates the poetic saying. Such necessity compels. It comes from the “sphere of the god.” The element of the divine is the holy. That is why Hölderlin says in the hymn “At the Source of the Danube” (*GSA* II, p. 128, lines 89ff.):

We name you, compelled by the holy, we name you  
Nature! And new, as from a bath  
All that is divinely born emerges from you.

“Compelled by the holy”—We hear these words only in this place in all of Hölderlin's poetry. What speaks is the claim which holds sway everywhere in its unspokenness, the claim under which his own poetic activity stands. These words explain to us the “must” which compels the poet “so that he may have/ His own.”

To where does the poet find himself compelled?

But because the present gods are so near  
I must be as if they were far away, and dark in the clouds  
Must their name be for me, only . . .

.....  
I name them quietly to myself . . .

The poet is “compelled by the holy” into a saying that is “only” a quiet naming.

The name, in which this naming speaks, must be dark and obscure.

The place from which the poet is to name the gods must be such that, in the presence of their coming, those who are to be named remain distant from him, and thus remain precisely those who are coming. So that this distance may open itself up as distance, the poet must withdraw from the oppressing nearness of the gods, and “only quietly name” them.

Of what kind is such naming? What does “naming” in general mean? Does “naming” consist in imposing a name upon something? And how does a name originate?

The name tells us how something is called, how it tends to be named. Naming is dependent on a name. And the name flows from the naming. We are turning ourselves in circles with such an explanation.

The verb “to name” is derived from the noun “name,” *nomen*, ὄνομα. The root *gno*, γνώσις, that is, knowledge, is contained within it. The name makes known. Whoever has a name is known far and wide. Naming is a saying, that is, a showing that discloses what and how something is to be experienced and preserved in its presence. Naming unveils, reveals. Naming is the showing which allows experience. However, if this naming must take place in such a way that it withdraws from the nearness of what is to be named, then such saying of the distant, as saying into the distance, becomes calling. But if what is to be called is too near, what is named by the naming must be “dark,” so that what is called remains preserved in its distance. The name must veil. The naming, as the revealing call, is at the same time a concealing.

The word "nature," just mentioned above, is the truly obscure, veiling-unveiling name in Hölderlin's poetry. For if the naming is "compelled by the holy," the names which it calls out must be holy names.

In the concluding stanza of the elegy "Homecoming," written soon after Hölderlin's return home from Switzerland—where the poet had lived for the few months in which he served as a tutor in Hauptwil, not very far from here—it is said (GSA II, p. 99, line 101):

Often we must be silent; holy names are lacking,

Silence—does this merely mean: to say nothing, to remain speechless? Or can only he who has something to say be truly silent? If this were the case, then he who would be capable of letting the unsaid appear in his speech, of letting it appear as unsaid, would, precisely through this alone, be capable of silence in the highest degree.

Hölderlin admits:

. . . , only before the morning  
Begins to glow, before life in its midday  
I name them quietly to myself . . .

Could this mean that the poet keeps what is to be named merely to himself, and conveys nothing about it to his fellow men? If this were to happen, then he would become untrue to his poetic calling.

The poet himself "quietly" names "the present gods." "Quietly" means: stilled, becalmed, to have come to rest, to that rest in which his submission to his lot in life consists, in that he corresponds to the holy compulsion and thus is satisfied and at peace with himself. The word "quietly" is spoken again and again in Hölderlin's "Celebration of Peace."

The quiet naming occurs "before the morning/ Begins to glow, before life glows in its midday."

"Before" is a temporal referent, in fact to that time which grows ripe only through the advent and nearness, through the flight and withdrawal, of the gods.

The naming that is compelled by the holy must take place before the true advent begins in the morning of the day of the gods, and must be completed by midday, when the fire blazes in heaven. “The god wrapped in steel” appears at this time. Thus says Hölderlin in the concluding stanza of “The Rhine” hymn (GSA II, p. 148, lines 210ff.). In the draft of a late poem (GSA II, p. 249, lines 6ff.), he speaks of the “fire-steel of the hearth’s living warmth.” (The steel strikes sparks and thus is related to the fire.) “The god wrapped in steel” signifies: the god wrapped in the fire of the heavens, or in clouds. The fire of the heavens, which blinds the eyes, is no less veiling than the obscurity of the clouds.

“Before,” the temporal referent, means that “Before the time!” which the poets have projected in advance with their naming saying. “Only/ I name them quietly to myself”—the “myself” could be referring to the “I” of the person Hölderlin, were it not that we find that this line is immediately followed by another:

So that the poet may have/ His own.

To “me,” that is, to the poet, the present gods who are distantly nearing are granted as those who are to be named in his calling. Their presence is so very near that he is compelled to divert his naming, i.e., his saying, to another locale at a distance from them—as we have already mentioned.

What awaits him there? Hölderlin tells us at the beginning of his last great hymn, “Mnemosyne,” written in the year 1800 (GSA II, p. 197, lines 5ff.):

. . . And much  
As on the shoulders a  
Load of logs must  
Be retained.

The distance of the nearing gods points the poets in the direction of that region of their existence where the bottom, the sustaining ground, sinks away. Hölderlin names the absence of this ground the “abyss.” In the previously cited variant to the elegy “Bread and Wine,” which begins,



"Long and difficult is the word of this advent," Hölderlin speaks of the servers of the heavenly, that is, of the poets:

Their step is toward the abyss/ Of men.

"Toward" signifies: in the direction of the abyss.

To persevere in the saying of the word of the advent is allotted to the poet: "so that he may have his own/ Possession." The emphasis does not merely lie on the words "his own," but it lies at the same time, and even more strongly, on the word "possession," which stands at the beginning of the following line. It is a matter of achieving his own rightful possession. It is a matter of "retaining the load." It is a matter of enduring the necessity for the naming saying of the advent of the present gods. It is a matter of bearing this saying "quietly."

But on the other hand, what is his own does not belong to the poet like a property obtained through his own efforts. Rather, what is his own consists in that the poet belongs to the task for which he is needed. For the poet's saying is needed—showing, veiling-unveiling—to allow the appearance of the advent of the gods, who need the poet's words for their appearance, because only in their appearing are they themselves.

In the eighth stanza of "The Rhine" hymn, it is said (*GSA* II, p. 145, lines 109ff.):

. . . For since  
The most blessed feel nothing in themselves,  
Another, if to say such a thing  
Is permitted, must,  
Taking part, feel in the name of the gods,  
And him they need;

And in the song "The Archipelago" (*GSA* II, p. 104, lines 60ff.), written in the preceding year (about 1800), Hölderlin says:

Always, as heroes need their crowns, the hallowed elements likewise  
Need for their glory the hearts of feeling men.

Glory and glorifying are to be thought here in the Pindaric, Greek sense, as letting-appear. The poet is the one who feels in advance for the heart of feeling men. He is the other one of whom the gods have need.

With these shy, daring words about the corresponding need of the gods and the poet's being needed, Hölderlin touches upon the fundamental experience of his poetic activity. Until now, thinking has not yet been able to think this experience properly, or to ask about the realm in which this experience is at play.

*The poem*, Hölderlin's poem, gathers poesis under a holy compulsion: naming the present gods, gathering them into a saying which is needed by the heavenly ones and ordained by them. Since Hölderlin spoke it, it speaks in our language, whether or not it is heard.

The ode called "Exhortation," which the poet completed at the beginning of the year 1801, rises with the call "Echo of heaven!" This echo is Hölderlin's Poem.

But because the present gods are so near  
I must be as if they were far away, and dark in the clouds  
Must their name be for me, for only before the morning  
Begins to glow, before life in its midday  
I name them quietly to myself, so that the poet may have  
His own, but whenever the heavenly light goes down  
I like to think of what is past, and say—go on blooming!



## APPENDICES

### PREFACE TO THE REPETITION OF THE ADDRESS "HOMECOMING"

(On June 21, 1943, in the main auditorium of the University of Freiburg i. Br.)

We may never repeat a celebration of the "Remembrance of the Poet," even if we wished to do so. On the contrary, we must always practice thinking of the poet anew in the only way in which it can begin. That is the attempt to think about what has been put into poetry. Such remembrance [*Andenken*] springs from a dialogue between thinking and poetry, although at first the dialogue itself and that from which it speaks are not expressed in language.

What has been composed is preserved in the poem. As practice for "Remembrance of the Poet," let us listen to the elegy "Homecoming." All the poems of the poet who has entered into his poethood are poems of homecoming. If we give these poems the traditional characterizations of "elegy" (song of mourning) and "hymn" (song of praise), then we may do so only if we know the essence of mourning which here sings songs of mourning, and if we know the essence of the holy which is invoked in this poem. The song "Homecoming" sings of the one and of the other, of the



mourning and of the holy, and of the interrelation between them. The poem "Homecoming" "meditates" on that which the poet in his poethood invokes ("the holy"), and on the manner in which the poet must speak of what has to be brought into poetry ("the care"). For this reason, and only for this reason, the following address lets us attend to this poem, Hölderlin's last elegy. The innermost center of the poem is concealed in line 42, which names his countrymen,

To whom holy thanks smiling brings the fugitives . . .

About this the address is silent.

But in spite of the names "elegy" and "hymn," we still do not know to this very hour what Hölderlin's poems truly are. The poems appear like a shrine without a temple, which preserves what has been made into poetry. Amid the noise of "unpoetic languages" (IV, 257), the poems are like a bell that hangs in the open air and is already becoming out of tune through a light snowfall that is covering it. Perhaps this is why Hölderlin once said in his later lines the verse that sounds like prose, and yet is poetic in a way that few others are (Draft for "Columbus," IV, 395):

Put out of tune  
By humble things, as by snow  
Was the bell, with which  
The hour is rung  
For the evening meal.

Perhaps every elucidation of these poems is like a snowfall on the bell. Whatever an elucidation can or cannot do, this is always true of it: in order that what has been composed purely into a poem may stand forth a little clearer, the elucidating speech must each time shatter itself and what it had attempted to do. For the sake of preserving what has been put into the poem, the elucidation of the poem must strive to make itself superfluous. The last, but also the most difficult step of every interpretation, consists in its disappearing, along with its elucidations, before the pure presence of the poem. The poem, which then stands in its own right, itself throws light

directly on the other poems. This explains why in rereading the poems we think that we had understood them in this way all along. It is well for us to believe this.

## PREFACE TO A READING OF HÖLDERLIN'S POEMS

Will we ever grasp this?

Hölderlin's poetry is a destiny for us. It waits for the day when mortals will correspond to it.

What does Hölderlin's poetry say? Its word is: the holy. This word speaks of the flight of the gods. It says that the gods who have fled protect us, until we are inclined and able to dwell in their nearness. To be a place of nearness characterizes the homeland. And so it remains necessary to prepare a sojourn in this nearness. Thus we accomplish the first step on a path which leads us to where we may correspond appropriately to the destiny which is Hölderlin's poetry. Only thereby might we attain to the outer border of the place where "the God of gods" appears. For no human calculation and activity, in and of itself, can bring about a turn in the present world condition; one reason for this is the fact that the whole of man's activity has been stamped by this world condition and has come under its power. How then should he ever become master of it?

Hölderlin's poetry is a destiny for us. It waits for the day when mortals will correspond to it. Correspondence leads on the path of an entry into the nearness of the gods who have fled: the region of their flight will protect us.

Yet how are we to understand and retain all this? By listening to Hölderlin's poetry.

Nevertheless, only a few poems can be spoken here. The few are limited to a selection. And this could be tinged with the appearance of arbitrariness. But that is alleviated somewhat if we willingly follow several key verses, taken from Hölderlin's poetry, and listen to them repeatedly.

The first key verse reads:

*All is intimate*

(Draft of "Form and Spirit," *Stuttgarter Ausgabe* II, 1, 321)

This means that one is appropriated to the other, but in such a way that thereby it itself remains in what is proper to it, or even first attains to it:

gods and men, earth and heaven. Intimacy does not mean the coalescence and obliteration of distinctions. Intimacy names the belonging together of what is foreign, the ruling of the strange, the claim of awe.

The second key verse is in the form of a question:

*How shall I bring thanks?*

(“Homecoming,” last stanza)

Thanks is a shyly venerating, concordant remembrance of what is granted, be it even only a pointing toward the nearness to the flight of the gods who have protected us.

The third key verse says:

*To grasp it, one must examine it deeply.*

(“Celebration of Peace,” fifth stanza)

The test must have brought one *to his knees*. Willfulness must bend and disappear. The duty of meditating and thinking consists in only one thing: to think ahead of the poem, in order then to be able to step back before it.

Through repeated listening, we become better listeners. But we also become more attentive to the manner in which what the poet has said might be spoken. For more difficult still than the selection of poems is striking the proper tone. One occasion of technologically recorded speech can succeed; another can just as easily be unsuccessful.

The poet himself knows, knows as nobody else does, that the right tone of utterance is easily missed. In later verses it is said:

Put out of tune  
By humble things, as by snow,  
Was the bell, with which  
The hour is rung  
For the evening meal.

In these words the exceptional, the grand, is named through the humbleness of daily life:





*The evening meal* is the evening of time, when time turns itself around.

*Snow* is the winter:

Woe is me! where shall I find, when  
It is winter, the flowers, and where  
The sunshine,  
And shadows of the earth?

(“Half of Life”)

But the bell—its sound—is the poet’s song. He calls out toward the turning of time.

## A GLIMPSE INTO HEIDEGGER'S STUDY

A facsimile of Martin Heidegger's marginal notes from his personal copy of the second volume of the *Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe* of Hölderlin's collected works. The marginal notes stem from the time of composition of the lecture "Hölderlin's Earth and Heaven." The poems are the second and third versions of Hölderlin's poem "Greece."

GRIECHENLAND

Zweite Fassung

9. Ihr Stimmen des Gesätes, ihr Wege des Wanderers

Denn an dem Himmel

Tönt wie der Amsel Gesang

Der Wolken sichere Stimmung gut

Gestimmt vom Daosyn Gottes, dem Gewitter

Und Rufe, wie hinaussehen, zur

Unverrücktheit und Helden

Viel sind Erinnerungen.

Und wo die Erde, von Vergiltungen her, Verrückungen der Heiligen

Großer Grenzen nachgeht, die Einigkeit

Und Zärtlichkeit und dem ganzen Himmel naher

Kochwind singen

Gesangswolken. Denn immer lebt

Die Natur. Wo aber allzusehr sich

Der Ungebundene zum Tode sehnt

Himmliches einschläft, und die Treue Gottes,

Das Veränderte fehlt.

Aber wie der Regen

Zur Hochzeit,

Zu Cerimonen auch kann kommen

Großer Anfang,

Allig aber wunderbar

Gott es hat ein Gewand.

Und Erkenntnis vorbergt sich sein Angesicht

Und deckt die Lüfte mit Kunst.

Und Luft und Zeit deckt

Den Schräglichen, wenn zu sehr ihn

Ein Liebet mit Geboten edert

Die Seele.

(20)  
(25) ...

GRICHENLAND

Dritte Fassung

O ihr Schwestern des Geschicks, ihr Wege des Wanderns.

Denn an der Schale Blau,

Fernher, am Tosen des Himmels.

Tönt wie der Anruf Gesangs

Der Wolken heitern, Schimmergut

Gestirne: fünf Dasyn Gottes, dem Gewitter

Und Rauf, wie himmelscharren, zur

Unsterblichkeit und Helden;

Wie viel sind Erinnerungen. Wo darauf

Tausend, wie des Kalbe Haus

Die Erde, von Vererdungen her, Versuchungen der Heiligen

Denn anfangs bildet das Werk sich

Großen Geistes nachgehert, die Wissenschaft

Und Zärtlichkeit mit den Himmel breit/lauter Hülle/nachher/

Erschienen, in dem Ozeanewalken

Darauf fortsetzt der Rede

Nabel, Gediegen nämlich in Ufern von Gras sind

Die Flammen und die allgemeinen

Elemente, Lauter Bestimmung aber oben lebt der Aether, Aber silbern

An reinen Tagen

Ist das Licht, als Zeichen der Liebe

Verdienen die Erde.

Zu Gediegen sich kein kommen

Großer Anfang

Alles aber wunderbar im Lieb den Menschen

Oder an hat ein Gewand

Und Erkenntnissen verberget sich sein Angesicht

Und dekret die Liebe mit Kunst



HYMNISCHE ENTWÜRFE

Und Luft und Zeit dekt  
 Den Schrecklichen, daß zu sehr nicht eine  
 Ihn lobet mit Geboten oder  
 Die Seele? Denn lange schon steht offen  
 Wie Blätter, zu lernen, oder Erlasen und Winken  
 Die Natur / *Luft 277. 28*  
 Und selber die Sonnen und die Monde  
 Zu Zeiten aber  
 Wenn ausgeht will die alte Bildung  
 Der Erde, bei Geschichten nämlich  
 Geworden, muthig fechtenden, wie auf Hohen führt  
 Die Erde Gott: Ungenossene Schritte  
 Begrüßt es aber, aber wie Blüthen golden thut  
 Der Seele Kräfte dann der Seele Verwandtschaften sich zusammen,  
 Daß liebet auf Erden  
 Die Schönheit wohnt und irgend ein Geis:  
 Gemeinschaftlichen sich zu Menschen gesellet

Suß ist, dann unter hohen Schatten von Bäumen  
 Und Föhren zu ruhen, wenn die Weg ist  
 Gefährter zur Kirche. Tausender aber, wenn  
 Aus Lebensliebe, messend immerhin,  
 Die Füße gehorchen, blühen  
 Schöner die Wege, wo das Land

## REFERENCES

*Homecoming / To Kindred Ones.* This address was spoken in "Remembrance of the Poet" (its original title) during the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the day of his death held in the main auditorium of the University of Freiburg im Breisgau on June 6, 1943, and repeated in the same place on June 21, 1943. In 1944 it appeared together with the address "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," given in Rome in 1936, under the title *Elucidations of Hölderlin* (Vittorio Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main). Public distribution and critical review of the first edition of the *Elucidations* were prohibited. Since under these conditions this edition remained all but inaccessible to the broadest possible circles, the commemorative speech, which, in contrast to the lecture given in Rome, had not been published elsewhere, was reprinted in 1948 in *Trivium* (Vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 1-22).

*Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry.* This address was given in Rome on April 2, 1936 and published in the December, 1936, issue of the journal *Das innere Reich*, Vol. 3 (pp. 1065-78). A separate printing of the first and second edition appeared in 1937 with the publishers Albert Langen and Georg Müller (Münich). [It was also reprinted in *Hölderlin: Beiträge zu seinem Verständnis in unserm Jahrhundert*, edited by A. Kelletat, Tübingen, 1961, pp. 131-43. Trans.]



*As When on a Holiday* . . . This address was given several times in the years 1939 and 1940 and appeared in 1941 with Max Niemeyer (Halle a.d. S.) under the title "Hölderlin's Hymn 'As When on a Holiday. . .'"

*Remembrance.* This written discourse appeared as a contribution to the Tübingen memorial volume in honor of the hundredth anniversary of Hölderlin's death: *Hölderlin Gedenkschrift zu seinem 100. Todestag*, edited by Paul Kluckhohn, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1943, pp. 267–324. [Heidegger also discussed the poem "Remembrance" in further detail in a lecture course he gave at the University of Freiburg in the Winter Semester 1941/42. This lecture course has since been published under the title *Hölderlin's Hymne "Andenken"* as Volume 52 of the Collected Edition (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982). According to the editor of this course, Curd Ochwad, the article "Remembrance" was written in August, 1942. "As When on a Holiday . . ." and "Remembrance" were added to the second, enlarged edition (1951) of *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*. The third edition (1963) remained virtually unaltered. Trans.]

*Hölderlin's Earth and Heaven.* This lecture was first delivered at the meetings of the Hölderlin Society in Munich on June 6, 1959 at the Cuvillies-Theatre in the Residenz and appeared in the *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch*, Vol. 11 (1958–60), pp. 17–39.

*The Poem.* The essay printed here is the revised text of a lecture given in honor of Friedrich Georg Jünger's seventieth birthday, August 25, 1968, in Amriswil. [Both "Hölderlin's Earth and Heaven" and "The Poem" were added to the fourth, enlarged edition (1971) of the *Elucidations*. Trans.]

*Preface to the Repetition of the Address "Homecoming/ To Kindred Ones."* This Preface was delivered before the repetition of the talk "Homecoming/ To Kindred Ones" given on June 21, 1943 in the main auditorium of the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. It was published in the first edition (1944) of the *Elucidations* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)

and appeared after the essay on “Homecoming” and before the essay on “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry.”

*Preface to the Reading of Hölderlin's Poems.* This Preface was spoken on the long-playing record *Martin Heidegger Reads Hölderlin* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1963).

The poems, fragments, and variants in the first four *Elucidations* have been cited according to the “historical-critical edition” (2d ed., 1923) begun by Norbert von Hellingrath; the texts of the last two *Elucidations* have been cited according to the *Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, edited by Friedrich Beissner.





## EDITOR'S EPILOGUE

### I.

Volume 4 of Martin Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* (*Collected Edition*), which is presented here, is based on his own handwritten wishes, and contains the text of the fourth, enlarged edition of 1971, thus constituting the fifth printing (1981) of a separate edition of *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*. In 1996 a sixth, separate edition was issued in paperback simultaneously with the second cloth edition of Volume 4 of the *Gesamtausgabe*. This paperback was identical in word and page to the hardback edition.

Two small texts have been added as *appendices*. The "Preface to the Repetition of the Address *Homecoming/ To Kindred Ones*," Heidegger gave on June 21, 1943 in the auditorium of the University of Freiburg, and was published in 1944 in the first edition of *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*. He later worked a section of this Preface into the Foreword to the second edition of *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* (1951). The "Preface to the Reading of Hölderlin's Poems," which for the printed version was slightly improved stylistically by Heidegger, was originally written for the record *Martin Heidegger Reads Hölderlin*. Following the introductory text which on the record is designated as Preface, he reads the poems: "The Exhortation," "The Journey," "Homecoming," "Celebration of Peace," "The Ister," "What Is God?" "What Is Man's Life?" "But in Huts Dwells," "Like Sea-coasts," and "Homeland."

Furthermore, this volume contains as an appendix a photographic reproduction of both the second and third versions of the draft of Hölderlin's hymn "Greece" from Heidegger's copy of the second volume of the *Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe* of Hölderlin's collected works. The many marginal notes entered by Heidegger in pencil during the working out of the lecture "Hölderlin's Earth and Heaven" give us a glimpse into Heidegger's study and the manner in which he wrote his "Elucidations."

Six of Heidegger's essential marginal notes to his *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, which stem from his own working copy, are included in the footnotes, and have been designated by "EHP, Second Edition (1951)," to distinguish them from Heidegger's own notes in the text. As for the marginal notes which are under discussion here, only the second edition of *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* (1951) is relevant; other notes were taken from the first edition of the address "Hölderlin's Hymn 'As When on a Holiday . . .'" (M. Niemeyer, Halle a.d., 1941); and finally, the separate impression of "Hölderlin's Earth and Heaven," in the *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* (1958–60).

## II.

In a letter to Martin Heidegger of February 21, 1953, Detlev Lüders—at that time a doctoral candidate under Hölderlin scholar Adolph Beck, who is now Director of the Free German Foundation—requested an explanation of a sentence from the address "Hölderlin's Hymn 'As When on a Holiday . . .'" This sentence reads: "The text which shall serve here as the basis for the present lecture, and which has been repeatedly checked against the original manuscripts, rests upon the following attempt at an interpretation" (EHP, p. 74).

Concerning this sentence, Detlev Lüders remarks: "I do not understand how a text can be based upon its interpretation; a text, I think, is something which is definitely established in its literal wording. Your sentence contains a paradox. On the one hand, the text is the "basis"; on the other hand, it is nevertheless based upon something which because of

this becomes that which is even more fundamental, so that the text, seen from that perspective, may no longer be called the basis. You nevertheless call it such."

Martin Heidegger replied to him on February 24, 1953. Detlev Lüders published this answer in his essay "A Letter from Martin Heidegger on his Hölderlin-Elucidations" in the yearbook of the Free German Foundation (M. Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1977, pp. 247–50). Martin Heidegger's letter reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Lüders:

You are right. The cited sentence (p. 74) is impossible in its present version. If there should be a new edition, I will strike it.

If you reverse it, it reads: "The following attempt at an interpretation is based upon the text which has been repeatedly checked against the original manuscripts."

In this form, the sentence is so correct that it becomes a gross triviality and therefore superfluous.

The question, what "a text" is, how one should read it and *when* it is completely established as text, of course still remains. This question belongs together so essentially with the question of the essence of language and of the linguistic tradition, that I have always limited myself to what is absolutely necessary when something was to be noted concerning interpretations, elucidations, etc.

Beissner, the editor of Hölderlin's Collected Works, has now shown (GSA II, 2, pp. 695 ff.) that the citation (EHP, p. 80) "We name you—" is incomplete and sketchy at best. But for this reason, is the interpretation untrue, or is even Beissner's interpretation at all correct on this point? Is there a text in itself?

With Kind Regards and Best Wishes for your Work  
M. Heidegger

As it now turns out, Detlev Lüders confirmed in his essay that the third (1963) and fourth (1971) editions of *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* appeared, and that in both of the new editions the sentence in



question—contrary to Heidegger's expressed intention to strike it—has been left in its original, unaltered form.

Detlev Lüders' letter was inserted by Martin Heidegger into his original copy of the second edition of *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* without any notation from Heidegger's hand. In this original copy, the sentence in question has been entirely marked in red in the margin. In his original copy of the first edition (1941) of his address on "Hölderlin's Hymn 'As When on a Holiday . . .,'" the last word of the sentence in question ("interpretation") has been placed in quotation marks in pencil and lightly underlined; noted on the right-hand margin of the page and underlined by Heidegger in pencil we find: "Note." With the exception of these markings, we do not find, in either his own copy or even in any of the literary remains (*Nachlass*), any reference which could be taken to confirm whether Martin Heidegger had forgotten to carry out his intention to strike out this sentence in the next two editions, or whether he himself had reconsidered the matter and—contrary to the announcement in his letter—consciously let the sentence in question stand, and as can be presumed from the marginal notes in his own copy, perhaps intended to elucidate it, although for some unknown reason, the annotation did not appear.

For the solution to this difficult task of reproducing Heidegger's marginalia, made in light pencil, without any damage, I offer my sincere thanks to Mr. Walter von Kempfki. I thank doctoral candidate Mr. Hans-Helmut Gander for his careful help with the proofreading.

Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann  
Freiburg im Breisgau  
March 1981,  
May 1996

## ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

**Keith Hoeller** has been the Editor of the "Review of Existential Psychology & Psychiatry" for over two decades. He has also been Editor of the book series entitled "Studies in Existential Psychology & Psychiatry." He has edited *Heidegger & Psychology*, *Thomas Szasz: Moral Philosopher of Psychiatry*, and *Rollo May's Existential Psychology*.

He has published numerous essays on Heidegger and poetry, including "Is Heidegger Really a Poet?" His book, *Thought and Poetry in Heidegger's Turning*, is forthcoming.

Dr. Hoeller teaches philosophy and psychology in the Washington state community college system and lives in Seattle, Washington.



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