

Later Heidegger's Naturalism

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<A> Introduction </>

In the following essay, I sketch the framework for a naturalistic interpretation of later Heidegger. By 'naturalistic interpretation' I do not mean a reduction of his concepts to the more basic vocabulary of natural science. Far from it. Instead, in a rough approximation, I intend something like what we might think of as Feuerbach's naturalization of Hegel or Aristotle's naturalization of Plato. Here, "naturalizing" means tracing abstract, speculative content, content that appears quite puzzling and un-worldly, back to a vocabulary that is rooted in ordinary, concrete, natural existence. Applied to later Heidegger, I adopt this methodological stance in relation to sentences such as these:

<EXT> Da-sein is owned by be-ing... [a]s en-owned, Da-sein itself becomes *more its own* and the self-opening ground of the self.ⁱ

[B]eing owned over into enowning... amounts to an essential transformation of the human from "rational animal" (*animal rationale*) to Da-sein.ⁱⁱ </>

There are countless others. One of the attractions of researching later Heidegger is the sense that his work contains deep, rich insights; one of the frustrations is that these insights have not been recognized by the wider philosophical community, which is no doubt put off by sentences such as these. This essay seeks to rectify this, as best it can. Of course, we do not have two philosophers, with one naturalizing the other, but only one, Heidegger, looked at in two ways. The result is an interpretive stance that is more hermeneutic than scholastic, with all the advantages and disadvantages that flow from this. But there is something about the later work that invites the adoption of such a stance; in any case, if our ability to communicate to non-Heideggerians is at all

valuable, then we are under an obligation to pursue these more treacherous endeavors.

So much for the methodological approach. I also intend ‘Later Heidegger’s Naturalism’ in a more substantive sense. Let us distinguish, in broad brush-strokes, three forms of naturalism (there are many others): (i) Scientific Naturalism; (ii) Ethical Naturalism; (iii) Aesthetic Naturalism. What they have in common is the refusal of supernaturalism, the idea that there exists a supernatural being, beings, or powers, outside the natural world, that have dealings, causal or otherwise, with this world. But the naturalism of each form is very different. Scientific naturalism is the view that all natural phenomena are identical to, or metaphysically constituted by, physical entities. There is nothing more to the mental, biological or social realms than the arrangement of these sorts of entities. This metaphysical stance often goes hand in hand with the methodological claim that any kind of access to the real must be anchored in the impersonal stance of scientific investigation. By ethical naturalism I mean, specifically, the naturalism of McDowell (I am ignoring the other, very different kinds). According to McDowell, we ought to contest the concept of nature as it is deployed within scientific naturalism rather than acquiesce in the view that only entities that can be subsumed under causal law are able to count as natural. This contestation amounts to a “partial re-enchantment of nature.”ⁱⁱⁱ The re-enchantment is grounded in a focus on second nature. Our first nature, our animal, biological propensities, constrain the shape of our second nature but nonetheless our second nature takes the form it does because of our upbringing (our *Bildung*). Our *Bildung* is the “framework within which [worldly] meaning comes into view”; the human capacity to resonate to the meaning we find in things is not “mysterious” but is grounded in the “normal coming to maturity of the animals that we are.”^{iv} McDowell also describes his naturalism as Aristotelian or Greek naturalism. The reason for this is that he takes *Bildung* to be a central concept in Aristotle’s ethics. Our ethical upbringing habituates our moral vision in such a way that the wise person is able to see, directly, what the practical situation demands. But McDowell generalizes the point. The culturally and linguistically structured form of our *Bildung* goes ‘all the way down,’ informing even the actualizations of our natural, perceptual powers. It is because we always see it through the inherited, socio-cultural prism of a tradition that the natural world appears to our eyes as already meaningful and ordered, i.e., as partially “enchanted.”^v

I take later Heidegger’s work to offer the framework for a radicalization of ethical naturalism. I call this picture aesthetic naturalism, although I could also have described it as romantic naturalism because it has deep affinities with the realistic intuitions of either the Jena Romantics themselves or with those loosely connected with the movement, e.g. Herder, the early Schelling, Wilhelm von Humboldt and Feuerbach. But I use these labels primarily to orientate my interpretation rather than to make specific historical claims. Aesthetic naturalism, like ethical

naturalism, contests the scientific conflation of the natural with the scientifically verifiable, but it offers a more satisfying rectification of the concept of nature because the re-enchantment it enacts goes much deeper. When Heidegger talks of Being, or worse, Beyng, this can look like supernaturalism. But I argue (in the first section) that what he is referring to ought to be taken as a power of our nature, our second nature. The activity of this power brings our species-nature to completion in familiar ways. This power, more specifically, is rhythm (second section); if I may scrutinize a remark in Heidegger's Heraclitus seminar, rhythm is the form by which language approaches the human being. When we are appropriately informed in this way, our *Bildung* opens our eyes to the 'speaking' of the things themselves (third section). This inspired modality of experience, which occurs when the power of Being is activated in an *Ereignis*-experience, can happen across the full range of our passive and active natural powers. Nature, and natural beings, in what I think of as an 'austerely animist' view of things, appear as if animated, in stark contrast to the scientific view of nature as disenchanting.^{vi} This is the more complete and satisfying re-enchantment that Heidegger's naturalism provides. In contrast to McDowell's ethical naturalism, the framework by which meaning comes into view is fittingly received as a gift from nature itself. I close by situating Heidegger's aesthetic naturalism even further from its contemporary counterparts. I suggest that it offers a view of the world that prepares us for the gods or god, taking the concept of preparation as indicating epistemic conditions which are centered on 'aesthetic faith' (fourth section).

<A> 1. Being and Human Nature <>

The first plank of the interpretation is the claim that we ought to understand Being as a power of human nature. To this suggestion, I can imagine a quick counter-argument, which might be called the *metaphysical humanist objection*. Metaphysical humanism is the view that man is at the centre of things.^{vii} The objection would be that such a naturalizing approach is ineliminably humanistic because, foregrounding human nature, it reduces Being to the human being. We know that this is unacceptable because Heidegger insists that we need to ask about the "relation of being to the essence of the human being."^{viii} The error of all forms of metaphysical humanism, or subjectivism, is that they fail to register that the *humanitas* of man consists in his being "more than merely human," that is, "more essentially [than being human] in terms of his essence."^{ix} The truth, contrary to metaphysical humanism, is that our "proper dignity" lies in our relation to Being; to attend to the dimension that governs our essence is to "honor" Being rather than to vindicate human civilization or culture.^x Of course, Being is not an isolated Absolute. Being needs the human being

to receive the gift that it gives; in attending to this gift, the human being completes, fulfils, his nature. Each belongs to the other. The quick counter-argument to an interpretation of Being as a power of human nature is that it necessarily covers over this crucial mutual belonging of Being and man.

The objection can be parried, however. Let us call later Heidegger's position 'anti-humanism' (he also tentatively describes it as humanism in an "extreme sense").^{xi} A form of 'anti-humanist naturalism' is entirely possible. Aristotle, suitably interpreted, provides a good model. According to Aristotle, there is a power of our nature (intelligence, *nous*) that, when engaged, completes our essence. This inner activity of intelligence, our "authoritative and better element," which each of us "would actually seem to *be*" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1178a3), is either "something divine, or the divinest of the things in us" (1177a17).^{xii} That is, we become the animals we are, fulfilling our species-essence, by attaining a state whose functioning represents a transcendence of the human. Furthermore, our relation *to* this inner activity, Aristotle remarks, ought to be one of "devotion." The thinker rightly "cherishes" and "honors" the 'more than human' power of their innermost nature (1179a23-28). These Greek terms ('cherishing,' 'honoring,' etc.) are conventionally used in relation to the virtue of piety (*to hosion*).^{xiii} The thinker displays piety, but of a distinctive kind; this is a 'piety of thought' (the echoes of Heidegger are self-evident), in which the thinker devotes himself to (i.e., he honors) 'thinking itself.' Indeed, this is not all. Aristotle remarks, puzzling commentators, that the gods benefit in turn the thinker who devotes himself to what they themselves love (1179a29). How can Aristotle talk of the gods intervening in human affairs, given what we know of his philosophical theology? Sarah Broadie argues that we can understand the concept of divine benefit along the following lines. This is not material prosperity or good fortune, which are external goods of little use to the thinker. Rather, the benefit or favor Aristotle is getting at is the gift of "rational inspiration." The reward of the piety of thought is a bestowal of cognitive insight, manifest in those eureka-moments when everything falls into place and a problem is solved.^{xiv}

This is not the place to evaluate Broadie's reading of Aristotle, although the affinities to Heidegger are striking. The point is what we have is a form of naturalism which, when suitably interpreted, focuses on the inner activity of a natural disposition and which nonetheless is able (at least, up to a point) to accommodate an anti-humanist perspective. We are a kind of animal whose nature it is to transcend that very nature. This transcendence occurs when a distinctive power of our nature is engaged. The best life is one that cherishes this power. What matters, then, is the mode of relation between the human being and the appropriating power of its nature. *This* decides whether we end up with humanism or anti-humanism. Is this power at our disposal or are we at its disposal?

A naturalistic interpretation of Heidegger rules nothing out at this stage. Naturalism, in sum, does not entail humanism.

<A> 2. Rhythm as the Measure of Man <|>

I wish to make a bold claim. If later Heidegger had a motto, it would be this: ‘*All hail Rhythm!*’ Being, that is, is (a) a power of human nature and (b) this power is rhythm. According to this view, to attend thoughtfully to the dimension of the truth of Being that governs the essence of the human being is to honor and cherish rhythm. To enact rhythm is to realise the “proper dignity” of man (this can happen in different modes, corresponding to the different natural powers). I will try to justify this interpretation in two ways: by citing textual evidence and by highlighting the way the claim provides a singularly illustrative schema for grasping later Heidegger. The textual evidence is dealt with in this section; the schema is sketched throughout the rest of the paper.

First, the textual evidence. In a seminar on Heraclitus, conducted between 1966-7, Heidegger makes the following remark, referring to the work of the musicologist Georgiades:

<EXT> [H]e has spoken excellently about language. Among other things, he asks about rhythm, and shows that ῥυθμός has nothing to do with ῥέω (flow), but is to be understood as imprint (*Gepräge*). In recourse to Werner Jaeger, he appeals to a verse of Archilochos, Fr. 67a.... The verse reads... “Recognise which rhythm holds men.” Moreover, he cites a passage from Aeschylus’ *Prometheus*, to which Jaeger likewise has referred and in which the ῥυθμός... has the same meaning as in the Archilochos fragment.... (Prometheus 241). Here Prometheus says of himself, “... in this rhythm I am bound.” He, who is held immobile in the iron chains of his confinement, is “rhythmed,” that is, joined. Georgiades points out that humans do not make rhythm; rather, for the Greeks, the ῥυθμός is the substrate of language (*das Substrat der Sprache*), namely the language that approaches us. Georgiades understands the archaic language in this way. We must also have the old languages of the fifth century in view in order to approximate understanding of Heraclitus.... In the sentences of the archaic language, the state of affairs speaks, not the conceptual meaning (*In den Sätzen der archaischen Sprache spricht die Sache und nicht die Bedeutung*).^{xv} <|>

Rhythm, first, ought to be understood as character or imprint (*Gepräge*) and not flux or flow; second, rhythm is the substrate of language; third, in the archaic language, the “matter” itself speaks rather than the meaning.^{xvi} In relation to the first claim, already in a lecture on Stefan George, delivered in 1958, Heidegger notes that rhythm, *rhythmos*, does not mean flux or flowing but form. Rhythm is “what is at rest, what forms the movement of dance and song, and thus lets it rest within itself.”^{xvii} What he means is that rhythm represents the coming-to-rest-in-itself or gathering-itself-into-form of that which lacks natural fixity (as, for example, a dancing body ‘resolves’ into a pattern or figure of movement). Jaeger makes this very point, alongside his comments on Archilochus: it is not flow, he remarks, but pause, the steady limitation of movement, that lies beneath the Greek discovery of rhythm in music and dancing.^{xviii} Heidegger (and Jaeger) are most likely thinking of Plato, who explicitly develops the familiar connection between rhythm and the movement of dance and song. In the *Laws*, we are told that “whereas animals have no sense of order and disorder in movement (‘rhythm’ and ‘harmony,’ as we call it), we human beings have been made sensitive to both and can enjoy them. This is the gift of the same gods whom we said are given to us as companions in dancing.”^{xix}

But the message of Heidegger’s remark in the Heraclitus seminar, with its reference to the archaic lyric poets, is that, for the Ancient Greeks, at least before Plato, the rhythm of dance and song is secondary. The original meaning of *ῥυθμός* is ethical and refers, in a broad sense, to the form of a person’s character.^{xx} But this is not yet a conception of character as a state or condition whose formation is under the agent’s self-conscious, voluntary control, as it is by the time of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (1114a9). To be ‘rhythmed’ is to be brought-into-form or ‘held’ in bounds and, in being bound in this way, for one’s distinctive character to take shape. This is noted by poets other than Archilochus. Theognis, for example, also counts *ῥυθμός* among man’s distinctive traits: “never praise a man before knowing clearly his feelings (*ὄργη*), his disposition (*ῥυθμός*), his character (*τρόπος*).”^{xxi} Indeed, there is a residue of this archaic sense of *ῥυθμός*, even in Aristotle. “What kind of talking,” he asks (incidentally, a few lines after quoting Theognis) is able to “transform” the “rhythm of [a person’s] life”? It is not possible, Aristotle goes on, “for words to dislodge what has long since been absorbed into one’s character-traits” (1179b17-18). One’s rhythmic disposition, in the archaic sense, then, appears to be a measure that is neither an external, heteronomous imposition on the agent nor a subjective form that this agent self-knowingly produces. Rather, *ῥυθμός* is a normative constraint that both comes from ‘within’ and from ‘without’ the being of man.

In the Heraclitus passage, Heidegger does not explain the transition from rhythm considered as an ethical disposition to the idea that rhythm represents the substrate of language. But we are able

to connect the dots. Language is the second nature of human beings. Our first nature provides us with certain biological propensities, often shared with other animals. But being brought up within a language, becoming encultured, involves, amongst other things, the shaping and moulding of ethical character. This upbringing (*Bildung*) in language-using animals is grounded in $\rho\upsilon\theta\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$. So, what Heidegger seems to be saying is that the linguistic form of life that *informs* our existence is rhythmic, in its essence. By holding our existence in this way, it is the rhythm of language that gives us our distinctive character (*Gepräge*). This is a decidedly non-metaphysical conception of language. Here, language is not considered merely as an instrument for the communication of thought and feeling; language is not possessed by human beings. Rather, the rhythm of language “approaches us,” that is, holds sway over us, appropriates us. This ease with which the concept of $\rho\upsilon\theta\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ fits into Heidegger’s conception of language, as demonstrated in the Heraclitus passage, should not surprise us. We know that the “most appropriate mode of appropriating,” indeed, the “mode in which Appropriation speaks” is the “saying” of language.^{xxii} This saying is a movement or “way” that “form[s] a way” and “clears a path.”^{xxiii} However, this movement, through which language ‘speaks’ to man, is not arbitrary or haphazard but normatively binding; it has precisely the order-in-movement, the purposefulness without purpose, that $\rho\upsilon\theta\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ displays. Indeed, in a lecture on Georg Trakl, in 1953, Heidegger comes close to making this exact point.^{xxiv} But, by 1966, he is explicit: it is through rhythm that the “matter” of language ‘speaks.’

We need to know, of course, *how* exactly the $\rho\upsilon\theta\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ of language, our second nature, informs our character. I say more about this in the next section. Before we get to this, let us consider another reason why thinking of Being as $\rho\upsilon\theta\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ might be considered singularly appropriate. We know that Being (*Sein*) essentially unfolds as the event of appropriation (*Ereignis*). We know that the ‘it’ that gives Being, in the *Ereignis*, is Being itself. Being is at once giver, the activity of giving and that which is given. The source of Being, in other words, is not *something*, such as a cause or an all-perfect, supreme entity. We also know that Being holds sway as *Ent-eignis*, as the withdrawal and concealing of Being. Expropriation, that is, is an essential form of the mystery of *Ereignis*; it marks the way in which Being holds itself in reserve. Finally, in being appropriated by Being, man is brought into his ownmost essential being. To be appropriated in this way is for a human being to achieve a kind of freedom.^{xxv} These points are uncontroversial; what Heidegger means by them is less so. But consider the way in which the concept of rhythm is apt as a concrete schema for grasping these abstract ideas. Rhythm *gives*. The gift of rhythm is impersonal; no transcendent, personal giver gives rhythm. Rather, rhythm *gives itself*. In being brought into rhythm, the human being is ‘bound’ or ‘held.’ This is a form of normative and not causal constraint. Yet no principle of reason lies at the heart of this mysterious gift. Rhythm has no ‘Why?’; simply, *there is* rhythm.

When gripped in this way, in an *Ereignis*-experience, the sublime beauty of rhythm brings the thankful, inspired, dancing animal, receiving its gift, into the dimension of its innermost essence.

In all, one might say that the concept of rhythm ‘forces itself upon us’ when we try to make sense of the *Ereignis* (especially when combined with Heidegger’s own remarks on the matter). The resulting picture is naturalistic--in fact, almost Feuerbachian--but this is naturalism of a distinctively anti-humanist kind. The proof of the pudding, though, is in the eating. It is to the implications of this picture, assuming it is generally correct, that I now turn.

<A> 3. Later Heidegger’s Factual Ideal <\>

Thinking, after the Turn, “abandons subjectivity.”^{xxvi} It is tempting to take this proposition, allied with the fact that we do not have a detailed description of ordinary human experience in the later work, as indicating that the Turn marks a turn *from* ordinary, human experience. But the one does not necessarily follow from the other. To ‘abandon subjectivity’ is to deepen and recast our grasp of human experience, not to jettison it in favor of Being itself. We ought to take more seriously Heidegger’s assertion that Being itself could not be experienced without a more original experience of the essence of man.^{xxvii} This original experience of the essence of man can only take place within the bounds of ordinary (or, more precisely, extra-ordinary) concrete experience. It is common knowledge that Heidegger focuses on the creative activities of poets and great thinkers after the pragmatism of *Being and Time*. But we have been led by the lack of a detailed, systematic, phenomenologically nuanced description of *Ereignis*-experience (i.e. the sort of personal, transformative experience during which we dwell in the truth of Being) into overcorrecting our focus to Being itself. The advantage of using the concept of rhythm as the guiding thread of our interpretation is that it functions to prevent this excessive drift from man to Being, without neglecting the insights that necessitated the abandonment of subjectivity. The presencing of rhythm is nothing, after all, but *as* and *how* it occurs in the life of human beings.

The discussion can be oriented by reference to a concept Heidegger introduces in *Being and Time*: a ‘factual ideal.’ A factual ideal is a “definite ontical way of taking authentic existence,” one that underlies any “ontological Interpretation of Dasein’s existence.”^{xxviii} This ontical way of taking authentic existence is, one might say, an immediate, concrete interpretation of the world-historical situation (or factual life-context) one finds oneself in. We do not have later Heidegger’s factual ideal but we *do* have a skeletal “ontological Interpretation” of this ideal, as laid down in abstract concepts such as ‘it gives,’ the ‘truth of Being,’ the ‘event of appropriation,’ and so on. The factual

ideal is missing, in other words, but we ought to take this lack as unfinished business rather than as a principled omission. What is required is a reconfiguration of the factual ideal and not its abandonment along with subjectivity.

I propose, as a hypothesis, that we take the following passage from Nietzsche as crystallizing later Heidegger's factual ideal. This will help further orientate the discussion. Nietzsche describes, with astonishing clarity, the fundamental elements of the experience of inspiration:

<EXT> Does anyone... have a clear idea of what poets in strong ages called *inspiration*?... If you have even the slightest residue of superstition, you will hardly reject the idea of someone being just an incarnation, mouthpiece, or medium of overpowering forces. The idea of revelation in the sense of something suddenly becoming visible and audible with unspeakable assurance and subtlety, something that throws you down and leaves you deeply shaken -- You listen, you do not look for anything, you take, you do not ask who is there; a thought lights up in a flash, with necessity, without hesitation as to its form, -- I never had any choice... [A] perfect state of being outside yourself... [A]n instinct for rhythmic relations that spans wide expanses of forms--the length, the need for a rhythm that spans wide distances is almost the measure of the force of inspiration... All this is involuntary to the highest degree, but takes place as if in a storm of feelings of freedom, of unrestricted activity, of power, of divinity...^{xxix} <\>

We have no better description of an *Ereignis*-experience. This is nothing other than the (extra-)ordinary 'event' of inspiration. Being is the source of inspiration but it ought not to be taken as *something*, an opaque X working behind the scenes. To reflect *on* Being *is* to turn our attention *to* the 'meaning-giving process'--mediated by the experience of inspiration--*as* that very process gives itself to us. This is the focus of later Heidegger's work. And we can see what is, for Nietzsche, the measure of the force of inspiration: rhythm. In this "perfect state of being outside [itself]," gripped by rhythm, inspired *Da-sein* becomes full-of-the-truth in the archaic sense of being freely 'open to' the truth as 'it speaks.' To dwell *in* the truth of Being is for the truthful, inspired one to be in a position to repeat the words of Heraclitus: listen not to me but to the *logos*. But to say this is *not* to abandon the immanent domain of human experience. This domain remains the centre

ground (and not ‘Being itself’). What is brilliant about later Heidegger is that he provides the conceptual tools, the categories, for deepening and systematizing the sort of factual experience that Nietzsche merely gestures towards in this passage.

Let us consider how this systematization might work. There are a variety of active and passive natural powers. We have the passive power to see and active powers to move our bodily limbs, to deliberate and act morally, and to engage in theoretical cognition. There are a range of modes of operation associated with these powers. These modes lie on a scale, from the active exercise of our powers all the way through to their passive actualization. Thinking, the formation of judgment, for example, involves the active exercise and synthesis of our concepts, in thoughts of the form x is y . Further down the scale lies the entertaining of suppositions; further down still day dreaming or idle fantasy. At the opposite end lies mere actualization. Our perceptual powers, for example, are passively actualized. We have no choice, we cannot help what we see, even though we might decide to scan the horizon or open our eyes. But the operation of our sensibility is not devoid of rationality. On the contrary, we come to see that x is y . This experience, in which our concepts are involuntarily actualized, entitles us, rationally, to form beliefs on the basis of what we perceive. So, running alongside the operation of our natural powers is a parallel scale of operation of conceptual capacities. A specific mode of operation of a natural power is also, in other words, a specific mode of operation of a conceptual capacity.^{xxx} To exercise the power of bodily movement is also to exercise a practical concept, and so on.

The reason why the operations of even our passive natural powers are structured by concepts is that we are animals that have the *logos*, that is, we acquire language, our second nature, as part of our upbringing (*Bildung*). This second nature acts as a kind of linguistically-mediated cultural repository or tradition, one that acts as a prism through which we see and engage with the world, down to the very workings of our natural sensibility. Now, in relation to this picture, there is, in modern analytic philosophy, generalizing in a rather crude way, what we might call an ideological commitment to an exemplary or paradigmatic mode of operation of our natural powers. This is their *exercise* in acts of judgment.^{xxxii} Exercise of our capacities (which might also occur in practical, deliberative contexts) is taken as a sort of regulative ideal: it is the mode of engagement that is believed to represent the capacity human beings have for autonomous freedom. Free spontaneity, on this picture, is being in self-conscious, voluntary control of one’s thinking (or acting). But this *is* mere ideology. Later Heidegger provides an alternative factual ideal, one that abandons the metaphysical subjectivism that this picture inchoately endorses. We can set out the alternative as follows.

There is a hidden, fundamental mode of operation of our natural powers, aside from their actualization and exercise, a sort of hidden, unifying root from which ‘exercise’ (understanding) and ‘actualization’ (sensitivity) emerge as two stems. This hidden root is what Heidegger refers to in the Heraclitus passage as the $\rho\acute{\upsilon}\theta\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ of language. When our natural powers are affected by rhythm, in an *Ereignis*-experience, the concepts that structure them are neither passively actualized nor actively exercised but spontaneously animated. The conceptual content of this sort of experience has an imperative form (‘Do *x*!’); its verbal representation is given in the hortative mood. Things, that is, appear, in an inspired experience, as if they are ‘speaking’ to us. This can happen across the full range of our natural powers. Let us apply this framework, for illustrative purposes, to the active powers, that is, to the bodily, moral and intellectual powers.

§1. *Bodily Powers*. When the bodily power is affected by rhythm, things in the world (if the agency is object-directed) or the body itself (if the agency occurs for its own sake) appear as if ‘speaking’ to the agent. For example, when a rock climber is in the zone, the foothold appears to say ‘Adjust your toe *like so*!’ Inviting a response, it admonishes ‘Decelerate your swing!’ That is, the rock face appears as if *it wants* the agent to *x* or to *y*. The rock climber no doubt has the intention ‘Climb the V7.’ But it is the overarching and ongoing unity of his practical reasoning that strikes the inspired climber as he climbs. In this experience, there is an involuntary animation of the climber’s practical concepts--not their voluntary exercise.^{xxxii} This is not acting-in-flow, as if the climber’s bodily movements are detached from his rationality, so that, when asked, ‘Why did you adjust your foot?’ he might simply reply ‘It just felt right.’^{xxxiii} Rather, an expert climber will cite a reason, whose content will have conceptual form. But he takes the idea to have come *to* him. To be inspired is not to undergo a state of Dionysian flux but an austere, Apollonian lucidity, as clear as the mountain air. In these moments, when one’s practical rationality is guided by $\rho\acute{\upsilon}\theta\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$, one’s movements are shaped by a form of purposefulness that is yet external to the autonomous ‘subject.’ An event of Being, that is, happens *to* the mindful agent, an event whose command *his body* expresses.

§2. *Moral Powers*. The world that ‘speaks’ in a different, higher register is also the moral and intellectual world, the object respectively of our moral and intellectual powers. The *phronimos*, the ethically wise individual, when in the zone, with his power of moral deliberation (*bouleusis*) fully engaged, catches the inner voice of conscience. Attuned to its whisper, a decision (*prohairesis*) settles in his soul. The *phronimos* makes this choice but it is a choice that *comes to him*, that impresses and forces itself *upon him*: ‘Return the letter!’ or ‘Save your friend!’ Here, the imperative content of his moral perception is categorically, not hypothetically, structured. ‘You *must* save your friend!’; ‘This is your *duty*!’ Inspired in this way, the conscience of the *phronimos* is shaped by the

ρῦθμόϛ of the moral situation as it ‘calls.’ In such an inspired state, which is far from being a state of affective flux, a person, in whom the truth of Being dwells, attains “truth, of a practical sort” (1139a27).

§3. *Intellectual Powers*. A thought “lights up in a flash,” Nietzsche remarks, “com[-ing] when ‘it’ wants and not when ‘I’ want.”^{xxxiv} The nature of this paradigmatic event returns us to the analysis of Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The absorbed thinker, when in the zone, lets the concepts themselves ‘speak.’ A thought presses itself upon us: ‘This way!’ When we are struck by a thought in the midst of grappling with a complex problem, we suddenly realise *how* to do something. But this sudden flash of inspiration is not the rapid, inner execution of *what* one knows how to do--or of content that is subsequently ‘matched’ in outward expression. Rather, when ρῦθμόϛ engages the theoretical powers, it points us in a direction and “clear[s] a path.” When Being ‘speaks,’ it does not point to an already well-trodden path but to a new one, as a path is cleared through a snow-covered field.^{xxxv} Nietzsche is quite right that it is a “superstition of the logicians” to say that the ‘it’ is just that “famous old I.” But that the “subject ‘I’ is the condition of the predicate ‘think’”^{xxxvi} remains, precisely, a foundational assumption of recent philosophy, which later Heidegger’s work invites us to challenge. There is more to the process of thinking than the voluntary exercise of our concepts.

The kinds of activities occurring in modes §1-3 appear “involuntary to the highest degree” but also take place as if in a “storm of feelings of freedom, of unrestricted activity.” Let us say, in Heidegger’s terms, that these activities, as such, display a relation of “needful usage” (*Brauchen*).^{xxxvii} On the one hand, the agent appears as if ‘used’ by ρῦθμόϛ. The necessity (or compulsive involuntariness) of proper usage, in which man is maintained by Being, is a use that “handles” or “fit[s] itself to the thing,” in order to summon it to its essential nature.^{xxxviii} On the other hand, ρῦθμόϛ ‘needs’ the site of human thought for its realization, whether this is mediated through our bodily, moral or cognitive powers. Yet, being summoned into its ownmost nature by the call of ρῦθμόϛ, the ‘event’ of inspiration also “establishes the free scope of freedom in which free human nature may abide.”^{xxxix} The free, unrestricted activity in which the agent spontaneously engages is the activity of a thing that has been released (by ρῦθμόϛ) into the essence of its innermost nature. Later Heidegger’s notion of freedom is compatibilist, then, but of a distinctive and original kind. Freedom arises when one’s uninhibited activity is determined by one’s nature but such determination is precisely not a form of metaphysical or humanist *self*-determination.

Let us return to the beginning. When Heidegger remarks that, for example, “[B]eing owned over into enowning... amounts to an essential transformation of the human from “rational animal”

(*animal rationale*) to Da-sein” the transformation he is referring to can seem quite mysterious. It is tempting to think of this as some sort of fantastic, radical change in our metaphysical constitution. But it is possible to domesticate Heidegger’s rhetoric. If we see Heidegger’s picture through naturalistic eyes then what he is pointing to is a kind of paradigm-shift in what we take to be the exemplary forms of human, factual life. To conceive of man as an *animal rationale* is to conceive of him as, first and foremost, a biological organism with a variety of attributes, including the distinctive attribute of *logos* possession, used, instrumentally, to represent and communicate thought and feeling. But to conceive of man as Da-sein is to transform our factual ideal; it is to conceive man as, first and foremost, the ‘inspired animal,’ the animal that can listen to the heartbeat of the world. That is, it is to lay down and systematize the exemplary forms of factual existence sketched from §1-3. To live in this way is to “learn to live in the speaking of language,” as Heidegger urges us to do.^{xl} In this sort of life, one receives the stamp (*Gepräge*) of Being. This is the kernel of later Heidegger’s aesthetic or romantic naturalism. In order to achieve this transformation--as difficult as it may be--we do not have to take one step out of mundane, material, human existence.

<A> 4. The Aesthetic-Practical Argument from Inspiration <|>

A problem, in Heidegger’s opinion, with the conception of man as *animal rationale* is that the human being is conceived as a living thing alongside plants and animals. On the one hand, beings of nature are “most clearly akin to us,” given our “bodily kinship” with them. But, on the other hand, “... it might also seem as though the essence of divinity is closer to... our ek-sistent essence.”^{xli} Heidegger spells out the sort of proximity he has in mind. After Being has been experienced in its truth, the holy (*Heilige*) begins to radiate. The radiating of the holy, in turn, prepares a dimension within which the god or gods can appear:

<EXT> Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the Holy be thought. Only from the essence of the Holy is the essence of divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word ‘God’ is to signify.^{xlii} <|>

Heidegger comments in an interview, in 1966, that “we cannot think [the god] into being here; we can at most awaken the readiness of expectation.” This preparation of readiness is, furthermore, “connected with the fact that what I name with the word Being... requires humans for its revelation, preservation and formation.”^{xliii} One might imagine that a purported naturalistic interpretation of Heidegger would struggle with these passages. However, on the contrary, the naturalism of the factual existence sketched from §1-3, although it is resolutely secular, nonetheless invites a sort of supernaturalism to grow from its soil. Nietzsche’s precise words are so telling: “If you have even the *slightest* residue of superstition, you will hardly reject the idea of someone being just an incarnation....” That is to say, the categorical structure of the experience of inspiration, more than any other experience, provokes the further thought of a divine giver of this gift. The point is that this provocation has rational warrant. The category ‘gift,’ with similar concepts such as ‘thankfulness,’ implies at least two things. First, when we are struck by a thought, in a eureka-moment, this ought not to be taken, phenomenologically speaking, as the effect of a causal impression. One cannot receive a gift from a brute cause, whether conceived as a psychological mechanism or an environmental stimulus. Second, as an experiential state, this cannot be a gift from another person (even if they help me to this insight); nor, because of its law-like form, can this gift be one that I can give to myself. One is entitled, then, rationally, to interpret an *Ereignis*-experience as a sort of divine benefit (as Aristotle seems tempted to do in Book X).

So, when Heidegger remarks that “only from the truth of Being can the essence of the Holy be thought,” we can take this as the stipulation of an epistemic condition. Let us call this Heidegger’s aesthetic-practical argument from inspiration. The point is that this is not a theoretical proof of divinity; it is a possible stance, taken on aesthetic-practical grounds. One is entitled to believe in the existence of the divinities (or God) as a kind of aesthetic-practical postulate of our aesthetic consciousness. That is, we take postulates such as these to set out what *must* be the case if we are to comprehend, in the fullest sense, the ‘facts’ of the experience of inspiration. But this is not a proof, along the lines of ‘It is certain that gods (or God) exist’ but rather in the sense of something like, ‘I am (aesthetically) certain that the gods (or God) exist.’ The perfections of this dark god (whatever they are) will, of course, be restricted by the requirements of the aesthetic-practical purview. This stance--let us call it ‘aesthetic faith’--I take to be what Heidegger means by the Holy. Inspired Da-sein is entitled to enter the dimension of aesthetic faith, given the facts of aesthetic consciousness, and, furthermore, on the basis of this faith, to postulate the existence of supernatural beings as conditions for this consciousness. There are intimate threads of epistemic support, then, tying the various stages identified by Heidegger (truth of Being, the holy, the gods etc.). He is certainly not advocating a return to some kind of mysticism or irrationalism. But the standpoint of

aesthetic faith, favored by the poets, does not *have* to be taken. The thinker is able to prepare--and tarry within--the naturalistic soil of faith. Here, ρῦθμόζ, the gift of our nature, remains solely worthy of worship. But this *is* naturalism of a radically different kind from the aggressively atheistic naturalism that is part and parcel of contemporary scientism. Heidegger, in laying down an alternative factual ideal, is challenging the ideological grip that scientism has on our concept of nature rather than relinquishing it in favor of a super-naturalistic conception of Being.

A final thought. The concept of the *Ereignis* is Janus-faced. It has a microstructure (which I have analyzed as an *Ereignis*-experience) and a world-historical, socio-cultural macrostructure (which I have not discussed). The approximate connection between these two faces is relatively clear. The work of the inspired thinker creates a site for Being to appear and thus for an Epoch of Being to be established. But Heidegger's technical vocabulary at the level of the macrostructure is ripe for naturalization. We need to see linkages between concepts such as  *Weltanschauung*, world-formation and niche-construction. The thinker, inspired by ρῦθμόζ, is a person who makes sense, that is, who renders things intelligible in a productive sense, as a spider spins its web or a bird builds its nest. This philosophical labor of the concept engineer, re-fashioning our view of how things hang together, must be seen as part of the natural history of our species. Only when both aspects of the *Ereignis* are developed will this sketch of later Heidegger's naturalism be complete.

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- i[¶]Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, 211.
- ii[¶]Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, 3.
- iii[¶]McDowell, *Mind and World*, 85.
- iv[¶]McDowell, *Mind and World*, 87-88.
- v[¶]McDowell, *Mind and World*, 184-5.
- vi[¶]The contrast would be with naïve animism. This distinction deserves further comment. I mention it here only to put it to one side.
- vii[¶]Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism,' 245.
- viii[¶]Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism,' 245.
- ix[¶]Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism,' 260.
- x[¶]Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism,' 251.
- xi[¶]Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism,' 261.
- xii[¶]Unattributed citations henceforth will be from the *Nicomachean Ethics*.
- xiii[¶]Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 447.
- xiv[¶]Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 441, 448-9.
- xv[¶]Heidegger, *Heraclitus Seminar*, 55.
- xvi[¶]I put to one side the connection Heidegger makes between rhythm and the jointure of Being. But it does point in interesting ways towards Heidegger's 'The Anaximander Fragment' and so to the ~~the~~ concepts of 'justice' and 'historical fate.' On this, see the closing comments on the 'macrostructure' of the *Ereignis*.
- xvii[¶]Heidegger, 'Words,' 149.
- xviii[¶]Jaeger, *Paideia*, 126.
- xix[¶]Plato, 'Laws,' 1345, lines 652-4. Note that this claim could act as a foundation for philosophical anthropology. It has, additionally, a significant degree of empirical support. See, Schachner, 'Auditory-motor entrainment in vocal mimicking species.'
- xx[¶]Jaeger makes this point (*Paideia*, 126), as does Beneviste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, 287.
- xxi[¶]Theognis, 'Elegy and Iambus,' 343, lines 963-4.
- xxii[¶]Heidegger, 'The Way to Language,' 135.
- xxiii[¶]Heidegger, 'The Way to Language,' 113, 129-130.
- xxiv[¶]Heidegger, 'Language in the Poem,' 160.
- xxv[¶]Heidegger, 'Time and Being,' 8-10, 12, 23.
- xxvi[¶]Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism,' 249.
- xxvii[¶]Cited (GA 55, 293) in Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, ix.
- xxviii[¶]Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 358.
- xxix[¶]Nietzsche, *Ecco Homo*, 126-7.
- xxx[¶]McDowell, *Mind and World*, 77.
- xxxi[¶]McDowell, *Mind and World*, 13.
- xxxii[¶]Nor is absorbed engagement to be interpreted as the *unreflective* but voluntary exercise of our practical concepts. This is McDowell's position. See, *Mind, Reason and Being-in-the-World*, 53. The problem with this position is that it distorts the phenomenology.
- xxxiii[¶]This is Dreyfus' position, the dialectical opposite of McDowell's. According to this view, engaged agency is detached from the agent's rationality. See, *Mind, Reason and Being-in-the-World*, 28. Later Heidegger offers us a middle path between these alternatives.
- xxxiv[¶]Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 17.
- xxxv[¶]Heidegger, 'The Way to Language,' 129.
- xxxvi[¶]Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 17.
- xxxvii[¶]Heidegger, 'On the Question of Being,' 308.
- xxxviii[¶]Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 187.
- xxxix[¶]Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 133.
- xl[¶]Heidegger, 'Language,' 210.
- xli[¶]Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism,' 248.
- xlii[¶]Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism,' 267.

xliii Heidegger, 'Only a God can Save us,' 107.