



Towards a Return to One' s Essence : Some Reflections on Nietzsche and Heidegger

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[Essay]

Towards a Return to One's Essence Some Reflections on Nietzsche and Heidegger

Dennis A. de Vera*

Abstract

This paper looks at the possibility of a return to one's essence through a comparative exposition of some fundamental themes in both Nietzsche's and Heidegger's ambivalence to modernity. Central to Nietzsche for example is an immanent critique of modernity, attempting to retrieve man from the snares of the modern culture. Heidegger on the other hand, sets forth an immanent questioning of historicity, attempting to recover the truth about man from the concealment of the technocratic culture. Whereas a genealogy of morality affords Nietzsche a basis by which to retrieve man from the tragedy caused by a bifurcated sense of life (oscillating between the Apollonian and the Dionysian arts), a hermeneutical phenomenology of the historicity and temporality of man allows Heidegger to recover the truth about man from the "tragic double bind" that ensues from the technocratic culture's trappings and manipulation of *physis*. While Nietzsche's genealogy of morality offers a moment of critical retrieval by which an understanding of man's condition is made pronounced as essentially alienated from one's nature, Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology provides a temporal recovery of truth through which a creative appreciation of man's relation with *physis* is made visible. In as much as Nietzsche offers a return to man's nature through an overcoming of the sense of the tragic via an immanent critique, so Heidegger as well, offers a return to man's essence by appropriating man and the *physis* via immanent questioning. As Nietzsche situates his immanent critique within the genealogy of man's tragic sense of morality, and thus promises a return to one's nature, so Heidegger does the same and situates his questioning within the tragic sense of truth encapsulated in man's works of arts.

1. Introduction

Nietzsche and Heidegger are ambivalent to modernity. Central to Nietzsche for example is an immanent critique of modernity, attempting to retrieve man from the entrenchment of the modern culture.¹ Heidegger on the other hand, sets

* Instructor of Philosophy, Department of Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, Central Luzon State University, Science City of Muñoz, 3120, Nueva Ecija, Philippines.

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¹ David Owen. *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault and the Ambivalence of Reason*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 34.

forth an immanent questioning of historicity, attempting to recover the truth about man from the concealment of the technocratic culture.² Whereas a genealogy of morality affords Nietzsche a basis by which to retrieve man from the tragedy caused by a bifurcated sense of life (oscillating between the Apollonian and the Dionysian arts), a hermeneutical phenomenology of the historicity and temporality of man allows Heidegger to recover the truth about man from the “tragic double bind” that ensues from the technocratic culture’s trapping and manipulation of *physis*. While Nietzsche’s genealogy of morality offers a moment of critical retrieval by which an understanding of man’s condition is made pronounced as essentially alienated from one’s nature, Heidegger’s hermeneutical phenomenology provides a temporal recovery of truth through which a creative appreciation of man’s relation with *physis* is made visible. In as much as Nietzsche offers a return to man’s nature through an overcoming of the sense of the tragic via an immanent critique, so Heidegger as well, offers a return to man’s essence by appropriating man and the *physis* via immanent questioning. As Nietzsche situates his immanent critique within the genealogy of man’s tragic sense of morality, and thus promises a return to one’s nature, so Heidegger does the same and situates his questioning within the tragic sense of truth encapsulated in man’s works of arts.

These parallel themes are roughly construed. I am rather uncertain as to whether they are indeed of such nature. I shall try to explore how far they can be demonstrated to be important themes within the context of the human condition.

2. A Genealogy of the Present: Significant Divides

The human condition is condemned to self-destruct, to totally annihilate itself. There are reasons to believe that it is in fact gearing towards that direction. Part of the reason perhaps bears a closer connection to one’s sense of morality, the other part, to one’s sense of technology. Unarguably, had one a sense of morality or a sense of technology, the human condition might be fated or destined to something other than its own destruction. It might have been, in effect, a return to man’s nature thereby preserving the human condition.

² The notion of immanent questioning of historicity for example is also evident in Veronique M Foti’s ‘Heidegger, Hölderlin and Sophoclean Tragedy’ in James Risser (ed.). *Heidegger Toward the Turn: Essays in the 1930s*. (Albany: State of University of New York, 1999), pp. 163-165. See also, George Joseph Seidel. *Martin Heidegger and the Pre-Socratics: An Introduction to His Thoughts*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 15f.

The human condition is doomed. It is built upon the dialectic of the pre-ordained beauty and order that emerge from man's illusions of timeless forms and appearances while the arbitrary, the ugly and the beast, or the 'real' of the human condition, prowl behind. This sense of pre-ordained beauty and order, a trace of the Apollonian art, likewise steps in and creates a moral universe of unassailable meanings and conditions of moralizing at the expense of the banality of everyday morality. I suppose, through the coupling of art and morality, an Apollonian symbolic order ensues, an art of morality and a morality of order and beauty. Within this symbolic order however, the irresistible urge to break loose lurks. The natural urge that drives man to be the Dionysian that he is, as he imagines himself transfixed within a horizon of unmitigated suffering and absurdity of existence. The urge that drives man to imagine and create essentially that sense of insecurity, of frailty, or the anticipated sense of nausea of the human condition. He is thus trapped within the narrative of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. As such he finds himself ordained with such desire for the beautiful and the chaotic as well as for the reverent and the irreverent.

Man's reverence for his own existence, for example, by being lured to the Apollonian art, indicates how far-flung he has forgotten his own dynamic moral bearing. He has lost that sense of immanent critique that Nietzsche spoke of, on account of the sheer appearances or visible forms of the moral intoxications of the Apollonian symbolic order, which is emblematic and figurative of order and perfection. The symbolic nature of the Apollonian art as perfection, demystifies that moral bearing into an idealized image of the moral man thereby creating a moral universe characterized by disconnections from their conditions of applicability. By subsuming man into the dreams and fancies of perfection, man is lured into an inner world of fantasy, of dreams, of illusions, symbolic of all plastic arts, while "the incompletely intelligible everyday world" lurks behind. In *The Birth of the Tragedy* for example, Nietzsche writes:

The beautiful appearance of the dream-worlds, in creating which every man is perfect, is the prerequisite of all plastic arts, [...] In our dreams we delight in the immediate apprehension of form; all forms speak to us; none are unimportant, none are superfluous. But, when this dream-reality is

most intense, we also have, glimmering through it, the sensation of its appearance.³

The delight that man takes in the sensations that arise from this Apollonian symbolism, the unfathomable belief that he can be perfect, makes him the Apollonian god he dreams to be, capable of erecting images, appearances and forms to the detriment of the life energies that surround the human condition. As the Apollonian god that he is, he turns away from the intelligible present and hides in the illusions of control arising from the sublimity that embeds in the “joy and wisdom of the apollonian appearances of perfection”.⁴ To the effect that man considers himself the Apollonian god he is by erecting such phantoms and fancies, a world of dreams, so to speak, he believes he has escaped all the nausea that befits life. An escape from life’s seeming contradictions and tragedies, from pain and suffering that arise from the fear of the meaninglessness of the human condition, the conditions of the Dionysian man. By becoming the Apollo himself, by turning into the god of all plastic arts, he thinks he has conquered such contradictions and has triumphed over the Dionysian reality. Nietzsche for example writes:

Apollo dispels the suffering of the individual by the radiant glorification of the eternity of the phenomenon: here beauty triumphs over the suffering inherent in life; pain is in a sense obliterated from the features of nature.⁵

Nietzsche however recognizes, that despite the beatific sense of life the Apollonian representation of perfection brings to man, as man is temporarily removed from the intelligible, contingent and fragmentary activities that govern the present by living into an illusion of escape from its banality, the Apollonian representation of timeless appearances such as beauty and perfection, is also an “analogon” for a possible affirmation of life.⁶ Matthew Rampley for example notes that “Nietzsche’s Apollonian form supplements the essential lack of negativity at the base of existence”.⁷ While the Dionysian symbolism of the

³ Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of the Tragedy*. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), p. 2.

⁴ Nietzsche, *The Birth of the Tragedy*, p.3.

⁵ Nietzsche, *The Birth of the Tragedy*, p. 59.

⁶ Nietzsche, *The Birth of the Tragedy* p. 1.

⁷ Matthew Rampley. *Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

imagined nausea and pessimism of the human condition are made hidden by this apollonian turning, Nietzsche nonetheless makes the apparent opposition and contradiction as a site for a possible affirmation and return to one's nature. Keith Pearson and Duncan Large for example explain:

For Nietzsche, the task is one of articulating a pessimism of strength and of locating the origin of tragedy in overflowing health and fullness of life, *within which the affliction of life is not viewed as a mere curse but as a promise.*⁸

The imagined sense of nausea and the pessimism that symbolizes the Dionysian art, in contrast to the Apollonian symbolic order, reflects the banality of the human condition. It is a condition of Heracliteian flux, of the frequently changing features of the daily contingencies of human existence, a state of temporal activity, a moment of fleeting "presents" where various pessimistic tendencies are within man's reach. Within the Dionysian art, Nietzsche grounds the possibility of affirmation of the transitoriness of human existence, along with its various drives, including the drives for destruction and war. Nietzsche thus, through the Dionysian art articulates, in effect, "the rejection of everything permanent" and affirmation of becoming, of a return to one's nature despite the tragic sense that characterizes life itself.⁹ Nietzsche aptly puts it:

In Dionysian art and symbolism the same nature cries to us with its true, undissembled voice: "Be as I am! Amidst the ceaseless flux phenomena I am the eternally creative primordial mother, eternally impelling to existence, eternally self-sufficient amid this flux of phenomena."¹⁰

The symbolic opposition thus between the Apollonian and the Dionysian not only probes the confines of the arcane and the naïve but also transcends those limits in order to create meanings, representations and realities of the imagined nauseous predicaments of the human condition.¹¹ At the heart of this symbolic

2000), p. 95.

⁸ Keith Pearson and Duncan Large (eds.). *The Nietzsche Reader*. (Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 36, emphasis added.

⁹ Pearson and Large, *The Nietzsche Reader*, p. 38.

¹⁰ Nietzsche, *The Birth of the Tragedy*, p. 59.

¹¹ Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity*, p. 93.

opposition, nevertheless, Nietzsche recognizes the apriority of a universe of intelligible meanings, realities and values which are already pre-ordained by the symbolic order. Thus, he finds himself within the same existential dilemma lurking the human condition – the dilemma of finding the meaning, the value as well as the reality of life. In effect, by introducing the great divide between the Apollonian illusions of timeless perfection and the Dionysian reality of fleeting arbitrariness, Nietzsche attempts to retrieve, within these boundaries of total resignation, nihilism and mediocrity, *the will to live or the return to one's nature* in the midst of such divide.

Heidegger in the same way faces a similar predicament. Given the pre-ordained meanings evident in the human condition, he finds himself asking the same question. What is the meaning of being? What is truth? How can truth reveal itself if its meaning were pre-ordained?

Heidegger's response, similar to Nietzsche, is situated in the tragic sense of the concealed truth, which is hidden in the work-object divide of art. Just as Nietzsche's attempt of retrieval is fuelled by the belief in the eternal return, Heidegger's attempt of recovering the truth is propelled by the belief in the clearing of the eventual revealing of the truth. He sets out his answers though within the works of arts in so far as he regards these works as primal examples of the event of truth.¹² He however makes a distinction between an object of art and work of art just as Nietzsche does between the Apollonian and the Dionysian arts.

Heidegger's symbolic divide or semantic bifurcation between what is an object of art and a work of art is essentially revealing. At one point, it reveals the artist. At another point, it reveals the artwork. Still, it also reveals the art itself. Whatever its worth nonetheless, the revealing itself is significant as much as it is also an event of concealment. It conceals the artist, not only his art, revealing only the work, by virtue of which the artist becomes what he is.¹³ Thus, in work of art, there is a happening, an event-ation, a bringing-forth of truth, whatever it is. This bringing-forth or event-ation, or the happening of truth sets itself forth only through clearing or what he himself calls the *disclosure*.¹⁴ Disclosure however takes place as well only if one were attuned with what is happening.¹⁵

¹² Patricia Alternbernd Johnson. *On Heidegger*. (CA, USA: Wadsworth, 2000), p. 46.

¹³ Martin Heidegger. *Poetry, Language and Thought*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 18.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time*. (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), p. 125.

¹⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 126.

One's familiarity with the work of arts, for example, might be possibly thought of as an attunement. Heidegger often speaks of attunement as an essential mood of being there. Yet, I am saying that familiarity with the work of art is an attunement. It leads to a fundamental questioning of the nature of the art itself, let alone the greatness of the work of art. Heidegger thus grounds his immanent questioning in this way. He sets himself the task of differentiating the thing from the work in the hope that such differentiation might lead to the disclosure of the truth itself. In *The Origin of the Work of Art* for example, Heidegger writes:

[...] the art work is something else over and above the thingly element. This something else in the work constitutes its artistic nature. The art work is, to be sure, a thing that is made, but *it says something other than the mere thing itself is*, *alloagoreuei*. The work makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other: it is an allegory. In the work of art something other is brought together with the thing that is made.¹⁶

The idea that there is something other than the work or the mere thing, for Heidegger sets a possible disclosure of the truth. While it is *prima facie* evident that man is familiar already with works of art, it is also evident that one recognizes that there is something other in the works themselves aside from their being objects of art. As objects of art, man does not really pay attention to how they come to be or what they are in themselves so long as they serve their purposes as mere objects or tools. Man bothers not to inquire whether there is more to them than being instruments or objects as well as things that man fancies about. More often, man does not really give much credit to them especially so when they have outlived their usefulness or equipmental quality, that is, when they are no longer reliable. When things are no longer reliable, the truth that it carries and brings forth, whatever truth there is, hides into the oblivion of one's forgetting of truth. Thus, Heidegger is faced with the question, how shall it be grasped or recovered from such tragic sense of forgetfulness and concealment? Within the boundaries of forgetfulness, concealment, familiarity, and attunement, how shall it be recovered if in itself, the truth loves to hide?

¹⁶ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought*, pp. 19-20.

3. In the Beginning Was Concealment: Instinct and Thing

There is lamentably a certain degree of concealment of will and truth in the discussions earlier introduced. In Nietzsche, there is an apparent concealment of the will, as the will is forced to oscillate between the Apollonian and the Dionysian aesthetic cultures. He finds himself unable to articulate, in effect, the difficulty of having to decide for himself the kind of life he wishes to live. Either he gives in to the illusions of perfection and order perpetuated by his Apollonian tendencies or succumbs to the arbitrariness of his Dionysian lineage. In either case, he finds himself already immersed within the pre-ordained world of beauty, values and morality and unable to create for himself the sort of beauty, values or morality he finds meaningful. In Heidegger, there is also an apparent concealment of the truth, as truth is hidden in the object-work divide of art. Man is unable to discover this truth as he is absorbed as well within the pre-ordained systems of distinctions between objects, works, and arts – in short, things. He finds himself already in a world of things with pre-ordained distinctions. Either he discovers the truth about the object and finds that it is only a thing carved out of nature or he seeks the truth about the work and finds out that it is only a thing with a utility value. In either case, he finds himself already in a world of things, with things and unable to discover for himself the truth about himself as well as the truth about the thing. He is so immersed that he thrusts into the depths of things without questioning as to whether there is any truth in the thing. It may be asked though, how is such concealment possible? How did it arise?

The concealment of the will in Nietzsche is pre-ordained by custom and tradition and so is the truth of Heidegger. The culture that arises, for example, from the Apollonian-Dionysian divide begins with the establishment of customs and practices. Customs and practices, in this regard, set forth a world of meanings, of representations and of values.¹⁷ The customs and the practices thus, constitute a world of calculable actions and regulated conducts, which, in turn, entrench and transform the natural drive to live. As man is enthralled in this established customs and practices, he is likewise constituted and regulated as the kind of man he is. In *The Genealogy of Morals*, for example Nietzsche writes:

¹⁷ Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, p. 36.

The task of breeding an animal which is entitled to make promises presupposes as its condition a more immediate task, that of first *making* man to certain extent necessary, uniform, an equal among equals, regular and consequently calculable. The enormous labor of what I have called the ‘morality of custom’ – the special work of man on himself throughout the longest era of the human race, his whole endeavor *prior to the onset of history*, all this finds its meaning, its great justification – regardless of degree [...].¹⁸

The genetic breeding of man, as a regulated and calculated man, through the morality of custom generates as well the conditions for its [genetic breeding] triumph. Following Foucault’s terminology, the genetic breeding which Nietzsche talks about is no other than a disciplinary mechanism.¹⁹ The necessity to discipline or to breed man into a regulated animal and the impetus to inculcate obedience to custom create, in effect, an instinct to live. Eventually such instinct becomes the dominant drive that propels the desire to live.

In Heidegger, the idea of concealment is much more tragic. If Nietzsche’s concealment is grounded upon the morality of custom, Heidegger’s concealment is founded upon the dogma of metaphysics.²⁰ Metaphysics in Heidegger’s understanding has forgotten the authentic truth of being. It has degenerated truth by focusing on things. The questions it asks are no longer questions that concern the truth of being. Instead, they are questions about things rather than the truth of being. For Heidegger, questions about things conceal the essence of truth, its origin and its play. The truth of being cannot simply be defined by the logic of things, by the questions about things – it transcends those questions in so far as it is a universal concept, indefinable and incomprehensible yet self-evident. Heidegger nonetheless recognizes that while the truth of being is self-evident, it has been degenerated and concealed because the questions themselves are misdirected and misappropriated. The task therefore of retrieving the truth of being in the concealment of metaphysics is to be found in an immanent questioning of how the questions themselves are to be formulated. It is therefore

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche. *On The Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 40.

¹⁹ The term *disciplinary mechanism* is used here in Foucault’s sense. See Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), Part III, especially chapters 1 and 2.

²⁰ Seidel, *Heidegger and the Pre-Socratics*, p. 27.

an appropriation of the question concerning the question of being. In *The Introduction to Metaphysics* for example, Heidegger issues a reminder concerning the nature of being by returning to the Greeks. He says that the Greeks' understanding of being is closely linked to an understanding of *physis*. For the Greeks, "the essent of things is *physis*".²¹ They understand *physis* as "emerging", "growing", "standing and remaining still" and "emerging into the light".²² For being to emerge and come forth into the light therefore, it must be sought within its association in and with nature.²³ The appropriation of the question of the truth of being, thus must start from things.²⁴ And just as Nietzsche is afforded the opportunity to retrieve the will to live by appropriating the will within a genealogy of morality, so Heidegger as well is afforded that opportunity to recover the truth of being by appropriating the thing, in effect, within the structure of questioning.

4. The Pathos of the Unconcealed: Twilight of Will and Truth

One might imagine, though, based on the aforementioned, a certain lament and sense of the tragic about the concealment of the will itself and the truth in things. Within the larger context of the human condition, where various sorts of Apollonian-Dionysian drives loom attempting to influence the will and where different kinds of things emerge trying to hide the truth in things, one might imagine still whether the pathos of the unconcealed can be possibly reversed. At the rate things are going within the larger context of the human condition, I am tempted to think, that indeed, the odds are unsympathetic. There is indeed the pathos of the unconcealed. What is this pathos of the unconcealed? How did it come to be?

I am tempted to think that this pathos of the unconcealed in Nietzsche, traces its origin from the Apollonian-Dionysian divide and culminates in the genealogy of morals. In both *The Birth of the Tragedy* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*, I suspect that the will is concealed and supplanted by instinct. That the will is concealed is the pathos. And as the will is concealed, is its demise as well. It is therefore the misery of the will.

²¹See Martin Heidegger. *Introduction to Metaphysics*. (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books / Double Day and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 13.

²² Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 59.

²³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 62-63.

²⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 63.

Nietzsche's elaboration for example of the Apollonian-Dionysian divide vividly illustrates how the will is dominated by instinct. For Nietzsche, this following is a form of forgetting and of concealing. Akin to an animal, in either drives, man fails to have a sense of time, of cause, of effect or a sense of willing. Man's will thus is chained and hypnotized by that moment of following either drives. Man acts instinctively, like an animal.²⁵ In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* for example, Nietzsche writes:

What is the ape to men? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. And just so shall be to the superman: A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now man is more of an ape than any ape.²⁶

That man is an ape is captured by man's being slave to either drives, unable to grasp the very meaning of "living as a superman". As an ape, man's behavior is governed by instinct and that is miserable – a pathos in itself. That man is governed by instinct is vividly illustrated too by man's being conditioned to obey either the Apollonian or Dionysian drives, akin to an ape that has to be conditioned in order to ensure that it obeys. That man is conditioned to obey either drives is reflected in man's submission to the illusions of timeless forms of perfections and arbitrariness of everyday existence. As man submits himself to such timeless forms and arbitrariness, man fails to create for himself a world of his own. He recognizes the Dionysian misery that lurks in his imagined sense of the absurdity of human existence. Yet, because of his weaknesses, the fragility of life, as well as its seeming meaninglessness, because of the fear of the unknown, he hides himself in the curtains of the Apollonian illusion. He refuses to create for himself a world where he affirms such misery by resisting it, by pushing it further, by probing its limits. For Nietzsche, this is indeed an embarrassment, a laughing-stock among men, even more so to the "superman".

One might think that following one's instinct is quite incorrect. This is not simply the case with Nietzsche. The problem I think rests upon not in man's use of his instinct, but rather its essential valorization at the expense of his

²⁵ Owen, p. 34.

²⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One*. (London, England: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 41.

consciousness. For Nietzsche, it is instinct that drives man to resist, to break loose and eventually to overcome whatever pathos lurks behind, except that it must be in accord as well with the development of his consciousness. In *The Gay Science* for example, Nietzsche writes:

Consciousness is the last and latest development of the organic and hence also what is most unfinished and unstrong. Consciousness gives rise to countless errors that lead an animal to perish sooner than necessary, “exceeding destiny”, as Homer puts it. If the conserving association of the instincts were not so very much powerful, and if it did not serve on the whole as a regulator, humanity would have to perish of its misjudgments and its fantasies with open eyes, of its lack of thoroughness and its credulity – in short, of its consciousness; rather, without the former, humanity would long have disappeared.²⁷

Nietzsche thus affords to instinct its due, since it has, so to speak, become a *tour de force* that forms customs, practices, communities as well as families necessary for human existence. But too much valorization of instinct, without its regulating capacity, is destructive. Without its regulating capacity, it becomes a dominant force, a *fierce dog* hiding in one’s cellars, uncritical of the timely experiences that might be unearthed in the arbitrariness of daily existence.

There is also a pathos of the unconcealed in Nietzsche’s divide between the master and slave morality. It too is a source of the twilight of the will. As Nietzsche divides morality into master and slave, he as well divides the will to live. But the pathos does not lie in the fact that there is a divide, it lies in between the divide, in short, in its history. As the origin of morality arises out of the experiences of the masters, setting up a collection of values, rules, and goals which might be otherwise called noble and elite, so a will of like nature also arises, distinct and different. The morality of the slaves on the other hand, while essentially of a different type, arises out of the need to provide meaning to the existential predicament of suffering and lack of value. As this morality arises from this need, so a will of like nature also evolves, a will that is subservient to the other, but no less important. This fact of subservience of the will of the slave, nevertheless, is historically important for Nietzsche. As this will is endowed

²⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 37.

with meanings shaped by its suffering, it is able to overcome the pathos of the unconcealed originating from the master. It is therefore a historic moment for Nietzsche. David Owen for example notes that “the moment of history, for Nietzsche, marks the possibility of the slaves overcoming these dilemmas, that is, the possibility of consciousness becoming reflective”.²⁸ And for Nietzsche, such possibility of reflective consciousness signals the possibility of a return to one’s nature as an affirmation of life.

In Heidegger, on the contrary, the pathos of the unconcealed is difficult to grasp. Part of the reason perhaps arises out of the difficulty of deciphering his language. His distinction for example between the object of art and work of art risks a reader-centered hermeneutic, thereby risking as well the very purpose through which he has grounded his attempt of recovering the truth. The other part arises, I suppose, from the enormity of the task he sets for himself: the task of recovering being or the truth of being as a being-in-the-world-existing-alongside-things. In as much as the tasks ahead are enormous, even if uncovering the pathos of the unconcealed is possible, that uncovering itself, forms part of the pathos. There is, in effect, already a misery ahead, a certain pathos of inquiry, of questioning. On the other hand, it is also this pathos that drives the truth to reveal itself in things. And I take it to mean the same in this short inquiry concerning the pathos in Heidegger’s questioning of the structure of the question of truth in things.

A central theme in Heidegger’s discussion in *The Origin of the Work of Art* is his distinction between an object of art and a work of art. This distinction, I suppose, sets forth the context by which one might inquire about the pathos of that which is concealed in any work of art. The pathos, if I may, is not in the thing, in the ordinary sense of thing as a mere thing. It is not in the work of art either, in the ordinary sense of work as a mere work of art. The pathos, I am persuaded, rests upon “man”, and this for a number of reasons. First, man sets himself apart from things. Second, things are of value to him only if they are useful. Third, man has a tendency to overvalue things to the extent that the tendency becomes destructive of things. Finally, as soon as things outlived their value or equip-mentality, they are forgotten. In so far as man treats things in this manner, the pathos always lurks in things.

²⁸ Owen, p. 42.

Man however, fails to grasp that in thinking about things or being conscious of them, he makes things the way they ought to be.²⁹ Things are things because of man. As mere things, the truth about them is concealed from us. It remains hidden in man's absence, in man's disavowal of things. They appear however whenever man comes before things as things ready-to-hand. When man transforms the presence of things into readiness, they manifest the truth about themselves, they appear. In such transformation, there is an "event-ation" of truth. The truth happens. There is an event of truth. Man invites the truth to come forth. It appears because something shows itself.³⁰ In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger writes:

The equipmental quality of the equipment was discovered. But how? Not by a description and explanation of a pair of shoes actually present; not by a report about the process of making shoes; and also not by the observation of the actual use of shoes occurring here and there; *but only by bringing ourselves before Van Gogh's painting*. This painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be.³¹

The pathos of the unconcealed truth thus lies in man's failure to come before things and invite the truth to come forth. For Heidegger, the truth is never self-showing. It does not appear by itself although it is there somewhere, lurking behind things. As it lurks in things which are otherwise ignored, it also lures man before it in order that it may show itself.

5. The Reversal of the Pathos: A Return to One's Essence

I have tried to present, in the least, some parallel themes in Heidegger and Nietzsche. I am persuaded, nonetheless, that while there are striking parallelisms evident in their respective works, I am tempted to think as well that they are, on account of my presentation, not uncontroversial. Be that as it may, I shall try to conclude this essay with the possibility of reversal of the pathos.

²⁹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought*, p. 29.

³⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 30.

³¹ Heidegger, *Poetry*, p. 35.

The possibility of reversal of the pathos is first and foremost a function of two opposing themes. David Owen explains this possibility of reversal within the context of modernity which Nietzsche himself despises. At one point, he says that “the modern individual has a capacity for self-reflection which rules out the unreflective grounding of value in social position characteristic of the classical noble”.³² At another point, “the modern individual is confronted by the death of God as the inability authentically to accept a transcendental ground of value in the manner of the Christian”.³³ Given David Owen’s themes, how is this reversal possible with Nietzsche?

The possibility of reversal is grounded upon Nietzsche’s teaching of the “Übermensch” or, independent of Nietzsche, perhaps the reversal may be grounded upon any will that engages its own limits by means of its own narrative. Although the idea of the “Übermensch” is embedded with several meanings, it remains nonetheless crucially important a principle for a possibility of reversal. In Nietzsche’s *Gay Science* for example, he characterizes the “Übermensch” as someone who “can posit his own ideal” and from such derive his own joys, laws and rights.³⁴ In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* on the other, he characterizes the “Übermensch” as a perpetual and dynamic overcoming of the unknown: thus, he says, “man is something that must be overcome”.³⁵ Nietzsche however makes it explicit that the “Übermensch” is not an end but a bridge.³⁶ As a bridge, it connects things, people or the earth perhaps, in their down going or crossing over. It embraces all and welcomes all. It is therefore a “coming to be unceasingly”, amidst downfall or rising still. As a coming to be unceasingly, the “Übermensch” must be a friend to the earth because earth is his meaning.³⁷ As much as the earth is its meaning, it therefore carries the earth in itself. It embraces the earth as its own. As much as the earth is its meaning, the “Übermensch” has to be a strong spirit in order to bear the earth itself and the miseries that hide in it, its absurdities as well as its meaninglessness or perhaps the nausea of human existence. The “Übermensch” must also be a lion, in order to confront the multiple contradictions that the earth carries. As a lion, the “Übermensch” must be fierce enough to face the great dragon that imposes its

³² Owen, p. 67.

³³ Owen, p. 67

³⁴ Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, p. 127.

³⁵ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 41.

³⁶ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 43.

³⁷ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 42.

will upon the earth as the absolute norm, as an unassailable truth. The “Übermensch” must be a lion enough to break loose from the hold of this dragon. Finally, the “Übermensch” needs to possess the innocence and forgetfulness of the child. It must possess the child’s sense of curiosity, of wonder in order to be self-propelled, in order to initiate new beginnings and set things in perpetual motion.³⁸ The reversal of the pathos therefore is a return to that will to live as an “Übermensch”.

To some extent however, “Übermensch” might also be construed as man’s “immanent critique” of the socio-political conditions where he is in – a critique that challenges the dominant forms of lives that are being imposed to the detriment of the weak. But, not simply a critique that challenges, but more so a critique that carries the earth as its meaning, by creating possibilities of connections, of communion and of solidarity to generate conditions that will affirm life itself. Only by affirming life itself that “Übermensch” has a meaning, only then that a reversal is possible.

In Heidegger, the reversal is articulated in man’s will to set up a world that nourishes the earth. Quite heroic in one sense but is rather true in itself. Heidegger’s will to truth or his attempt of recovering the truth, I suppose, is not grounded upon anything, other than the truth that is due the earth (even Heidegger’s famous *Da-sein* needs the earth as a ground of possibilities and discoveries). How man looks upon the earth is perhaps reflective of the truth which man seeks to discover.

The example set forth by Heidegger, for instance, is illustrative of this discovery of the truth. Man is desirous of things so long as these things are of value to him. Man’s truth thus lies in it. But there is more that can be unearthed through that example. It does not need a Heidegger or a Nietzsche. Perhaps a little care will do, or a sensitive common sense will make the caveat known.

In the ordinary sense of the word, stripped of any philosophical jargon or semantics, the earth is man’s home. It is man’s primal abode. There is no other planet in the universe that can provide that home, at least, not for now. In that abode, man is a settler. He is the earth’s inhabitant. As a settler and inhabitant, he has to take care of his home, of his abode. The sense of care here, might be possibly viewed in many ways. Care may mean beautifying the abode or perhaps decorating it with things that can be found in it. Care may also mean

³⁸ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 55.

cleaning one's abode by dusting off elements that are detrimental to it. Still, care may also mean preserving one's abode through one's intervention. A broken window for example may be repaired or an ailing post perhaps. In the same way, the earth may also be repaired by preserving it, by replacing its broken parts, by sustaining its nature as one's abode. This is as easy as one might imagine.

The problem however is not as easy as it appears. There are historical contingencies that are of crucial importance. First and foremost, man has learned a lot of *technai*. Secondly, man has developed technology. Finally, man has inherited an unequal and unjust world. These are factors affecting man's disposition towards his abode – the earth.

At the risk of cutting off the trail, man's use of technology or man's *techne* appropriate to technology ought to be a bringing forth of the earth in the Greeks' sense of *poiesis*. Similar to the work of art, it is also a form of revealing or better, a way of revealing.³⁹ For Heidegger, "technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment takes place, where, *aletheia*, truth, happens".⁴⁰ Revealing in the sense of bringing forth is thus the essence of technology.

In modern technology however, such bringing forth does not occur as a *poiesis*. Instead, Heidegger laments that it challenges forth the earth unreasonably, demanding too much of what it is able to give. Technology thus expedites the earth to the brink of its destruction. It separates man from nature in that it sets up a world that is unfamiliar to man and eventually lures man into it. What is once a mountain, for example, turns into a mining field and its soil a source of mineral deposits.⁴¹ Heidegger remarks that although technology is also a setting upon of a world, its manner of revealing is nonetheless a challenging forth in the sense of "Ge-stell".⁴² In the course however of this challenging-forth in the sense of "enframing" (*ge-stell*), man finds himself controlled by the technology he set up. He has lost that sense of control and dominion of nature in the sense of care and preservation. Instead, he has succumbed to that unlimited expedition of nature as he is driven by his own desire and need for technology. He thus endangers himself through technology and therefore endangers his

³⁹ See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1977), p. 12.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, *The Question*, p. 13.

⁴¹ Heidegger, *The Question*, p. 14.

⁴² Heidegger, *The Question*, p. 19.

abode as well. Enframing, in this regard, “blocks the shining-forth and holding-sway of truth” concerning technology.⁴³

If such were the case, then, what ought one to do? Shall passivity or detachment do the thing? Or shall one heed Heidegger when he says “The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become”.⁴⁴ Is it really the case that “only in the precipice of destruction that one comes to realize the need to change”?⁴⁵

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⁴³ Heidegger, *The Question*, p. 28.

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